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The voices of African American women's transition experiences from a community college to a four-year college sharing a campus

Lola Ames

**THE VOICES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S TRANSITION
EXPERIENCES FROM A COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO A
FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE SHARING A CAMPUS**

by
Lola Ames

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Dedication

To my husband Robert who on April 10, 1977, focused me on my postsecondary educational journey with this question, "Shouldn't you be in school full-time?" His love, unwavering support, gentle strength, critical questions on phenomenology, and "Lola, how's the paper coming?" have brought me to this place in my life.

To my children Aysha and Jamal, who are my encouragers and role models for Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

To parents my Marcus and Bernadine Fields Vann, who instilled the importance of education, self-reliance, and family in my siblings and me.

To my great grandmother, Lola Jackson Fields who delivered me into this world and also known as the midwife who carried a doctor's bag.

To my grandmother Sallie M. Vann who made sure that I understood my role as an African American woman during my formative years.

Abstract

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African American women make up a substantial percentage of the higher

education student population. Research on their participation is disproportionately

underrepresented and in many cases embedded within the experiences of Euro-American

women and African American men. This method of grouping has potentially led to their

invisibility in research on higher education experiences. To overcome this mishap,

African American women's experience should be disaggregated from those of Euro-

American women and African American males. In order to separate African American

women's experiences, a phenomenological research design and theoretical framework,

such as Black feminist thought are prudent.

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to describe the lived

transition experiences of African American women transferring from a community

college to a four-year university that share a campus. Using Black feminist thought as a

theoretical framework and Husserl's (1964) descriptive approach to phenomenological

research, four African American women were asked to share their lived transition

experiences. Their narratives were analyzed using Colaizzi and Giorgi's data analysis for

phenomenological approach. The analysis revealed the following themes, the acquisition

of racial socialization, acquisition of social capital for academic excellence, utilizing

racial socialization, reentry, utilizing racial socialization, interlocking oppressions (race, class and/or gender, self-validation and self-definition, and advice to others.

Some of the findings were consistent with the research on transition experiences, transfer shock and transfer ecstasy. Additional findings revealed the impact of interlocking oppressions, race class, and gender embedded within the transition experience, which affect their transition, but did not hamper their desire towards baccalaureate attainment.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The road to baccalaureate attainment for many students has always been paved with the community college transfer mission (Townsend, 2001). According to National Center for Educational Statistics (1997) from1989-1990 39% percent of the students enrolled in community college transferred to a four-year institution. Later on Handel (2013) reported that 81% of first-time students enrolled in community colleges intend to transfer to a four-year institution. These percentages are expected to increase as President Obama and educational leaders call for 10 million more graduates from community colleges and four-year institutions by 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In order to respond appropriately to the challenge, higher educational institutions are compelled to facilitate graduation initiatives that will accomplish the 2020 goal.

Kanter, Ochoa, Nassif, and Chong (2011) recommended that colleges and universities widen access by making tuition more affordable; thereby, increasing entry to colleges and workforce training. The authors also suggested that special attention should be paid to adult learners, low income and under-represented minorities. In addition to providing greater access, Kanter et al. also suggest that colleges accelerate their completion rates with special emphasis on first generation, underrepresented, and economically disadvantage students. For many, according to United States Department of Education (2011) the community college transfer function is vital to the 2020 postsecondary initiative. Under-represented minorities, first-generation college students, adult learners, and economically disadvantaged students use community colleges as their

point of entry to postsecondary education and use the transfer mission as a springboard to baccalaureate attainment (Handel, 2013).

The previous assertion on the transfer function has been documented in the history of the community college. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, initiated the junior college movement by dividing the University of Chicago into a junior and senior college (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Townsend, 2001). Those that completed the lower would receive an associate degree. Those that chose to remain would complete and move on to graduate studies. Harper eventually realized that the university should refrain from offering associate degrees and relinquish the responsibility to high schools. J. Stanley Brown, principal of Joliet High School, agreed to establish a six-year high school program (Jurgens, 2010). Students who completed the six-year program were offered an opportunity to transfer to the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, or Northwestern University as third year students (Handel, 2013).

Later, in 1901 Joliet Junior College was created in Joliet, Illinois to facilitate the first two years with the promise of transferring to a four-year college to earn a bachelor degree (Kane & Rouse, 1999). While transfer was the fundamental mission of the two-year college, their growth resulted in a change to include training for vocational occupations. Nevertheless, transfer experts found that the majority of students enrolling in community college for the first time desired to transfer and earn a four-year degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Crosby, 2002; Cross & Fideler, 1989; Handel, 2013; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Thus, research on students transferring from a community college to four-year college has garnered much attention.

The focus of the studies on transfer student tends give prominence to transfer definition (Bradburn, Hurst, & Peng, 2001), calculating transfer rates, and behavior (Arguijo & Howard, 2010; Grubb, 1991; Handel, 2013; Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003; Sylvia, Song, & Walters, 2010; Townsend, 2002). Additional research provides insight into the academic performance of transfer students. Hills (1965) found that students experience transfer shock, a drop in grades during the first semester after transferring from a two-year to a four-year college.

Recent research examines the impact of articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions on transfer rates and credits (Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Ignash &Townsend, 2000; Montague, 2012; Roksa & Keith, 2008; Kasper, 2002; Pager, 1993; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Articulation agreements are designed to address the course requirements and transfer credits, which facilitate a seamless transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution. In addition to research on articulation agreements, more recent research examines the affect of effective two-year and four-year partnerships on student transfer rates and baccalaureate attainment (Amey, Eddy, Campbell, 2010; Bailey, 2012; Gentile, 2012; Kisker, 2007). Nevertheless, there is limited research on a new partnership between two-year and four-year colleges sharing a campus.

Problem Statement

Community colleges and four-year universities are providing an alternate meaning of partnership. These partnerships offer community college transfer students the option to remain on the community college campus and earn a baccalaureate degree (Ender, 2011; Hardee, 2012; Isekenegbe, 2011). Selected community colleges in Illinois, Ohio, and New Jersey have built and opened university centers to provide a seamless

transfer (Hardee). The university centers are made up of partnered universities, which offer opportunities to earn bachelor and master degrees. The university centers also eliminate many of the structural barriers, such as parking, campus size, and the navigation of an unfamiliar physical environment common to transfer students (Hardee). In addition to the limited research on community colleges and four-year institutions that share a campus, studies on the transfer students' transition after transferring are limited (Laanan, 2007). To take it a step further, little is known about the transitioning experiences of African American women transferring from a community college to four-year university sharing a campus.

African American women's participation in postsecondary education can be traced back to the post-Civil War era (Cowan & Maguire, 1995; Evans 2007). Dubois (as cited in Evans, 2007) revealed that by 1890, approximately 132 African American women were college graduates. In 1900, out of the 2,541 bachelor degrees awarded to African Americans, African American women earned 252 (Evans). Between 1977 and 1991 the degrees earned by African American women doubled that of African American men (NCES, 1995). NCES (2010) reported that out of all the postsecondary degrees earned by African American students in 1997-1998 and 2008 -2009, African American women earned the majority. They were awarded 68% of the associate, 66% of the bachelor, 72% of the master, and 67% of the doctoral degrees (NCES, 2011). Unfortunately, African-American women's experiences were embedded within Euro-American women and African-American men resulting in their invisibility (Guy-Sheftall, 1982; Howard-Vital, 1989; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Moses, 1989; Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

Noble (1956, 1957), began the conversation on the absence of tangible research on the experiences of African American women in postsecondary education. Noble (1957) conducted a critical analysis of print media. She found that a substantial amount of print media ignored the presence of African-American women in newspapers, journal articles, and textbooks. Noble also discovered that volumes of books, magazine articles, and research detailed the differences between the experiences of Euro-American women and men, but presented African-American women and men as a single entity. Noble (1956) concluded that this invisibility in printed media parallels the African-American woman's unique position in history. This unique position, asserts Noble has two distinguishing features, "the degradation of Negro womanhood as contrasted to the elevation to that of white womanhood in the plantation system, and the development of a Negro matriarchal family system as contrasted by white patriarchal family system" (p. 17). Beale (2008) Davis (1983) Collins (2000) Hooks (1981) and Lorde (1984) confirmed Noble's (1957) observation of African-American women's unique position. They also surmised that the African American women's position is embedded in the history of slavery and the negative stereotypical images. These researchers concluded that their distinctive position was the trajectory for African-American women's journey through American society, which led to their oppression and invisibility.

King (1992) added, "Many scholars perpetuate the invisibility of Black women through continual reference to African Americans as a monolithic genderless population" (p. 40). Aiken, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2000) also posit that the experiences of Euro-American females are considered the norm; therefore, literature is scant on other female ethnic groups. In reference to African-American women, Lourde (1984)

propounds the absence of their experiences forces them to become the other, "the outsider whose experiences and traditions are too alien to comprehend" (p. 117). Among those alien experiences are, the impact double jeopardy, simultaneous discrimination due to being African American and female (Beale, 1970), intersection of gender, class, and race; and societal negative controlling images (Collins, 2000; Moses, 1989). Crenshaw (1991) and Johnson-Bailey (2001) posit that these constructs are ingrained in society. They cannot be untwined when researching African American women in a context, such as postsecondary education. As a result of the unique experiences, many researchers are calling for studies that continue to isolate African-American women's experiences and uncover their voices.

Researchers are responding to the need to uncover the stories of African American women and are reporting that they experience isolation, invisibility, and double jeopardy as documented by Copper (1988) and Noble (1956). In a qualitative study, Walpole (2009) examined the affect of campus experiences on African-American women at two highly selective predominately White universities. Walpole discovered that the interlocking of race, class and gender, as well as isolation and marginalization continue to permeate the college experience of many African American women. The researcher also discovered that to offset these negative experiences, the participants used academic and social counter-spaces. Finally, Walpole found that while some of the women encountered discriminatory practices from Euro-American, they sometimes felt belittled and isolated within the African American circle.

All in all, the research on African American women's experiences does not equate to their increasing participation in postsecondary education (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). If

they are included, many times they are concealed under the headings of women and African Americans. The masking of their involvement, according to Guy-Sheftall (1982), Johnson-Bailey (2001), Noble (1955) and Thomas and Jackson (2007) can be problematic for African American women and the higher education community. The African American women will continue to invisible and higher education will maintain an inaccurate view of their college experience.

By the by, existing research suggests that as more studies on the unique experiences of African American women become part of the literature on women, the higher education community can begin to address the issues and nurture an environment that is conducive to learning for African American women (Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001). Not only that it necessary to examine their post transfer experience.

Purpose Statement

While the existing research provides information on the transfer experiences of women of color, students in general, and reentry women, absent from the research is the lived transition experience of African American women. Women in general encounter the multiplicity of roles and isolation, which may interfere with their success in their pursuit of postsecondary education (Reyes, 2011; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Johnson, Schwartz, and Bower (2000) surmised that the conflicting of roles, such as family, work, and school are the primary stressors for many women. Women often feel uncomfortable and regretful for the choice to pursue a degree while attempting to juggle their responsibilities (Jacobs & King, 2002). In addition to the multiplicity of roles, the women do not live on campus, and have limited support from family and friends; therefore, they

tend to feel isolated (Johnson et al.; Reay, 2003; Shank, Winchell, & Myers, 2001; White, 2002).

On the other hand, for African American women in pursuit of postsecondary education the journey is more complex than conflicting roles. They encounter the interlocking oppressions and racial stereotypical images. Therefore, understanding the effect of these mitigating factors which are unique to African American women will assist in investigating their experiences more thoroughly; and provide them a seat at the academic table (Collins, 2001; King, 1988; Thompson, 2004). African American women experience double and triple jeopardy frequently in their day-to-day existence; therefore, their presence is felt in education (Johnson-Bailey 2001; Sealey-Ruiz, 2012). Researchers posit that in addition to the gender bias that beset all women (Bryant, 2001; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002), African American women in higher education experienced overt and covert forms of racial discrimination from Euro-Americans professors and students (Blue, 2001; Woods, 2001). Additionally, they were often expected to be knowledgeable about all aspects of the culture and educational abilities of all African American people (Coker, 2003; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996; Moses, 1989). In short, African American women have a plethora of defining characteristics that shape them as women and students (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Noble, 1955, 1978; Sealey-Ruiz, 2012). Researchers are stating that these defining attributes and African American women's participation are under researched in higher education and important to the higher education community (Evans, 2007; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Noble, 1956; Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

Studies and statistical data specific to the African American women's transfer experience are limited, not disaggregated, addressed, or considered. For example, Wawrzynski and Sedlacek (2003) conducted a quantitative study to examine the non-cognitive differences in the transfer experience of students based on race and gender. The sample consisted of "2,492 participants. Of the sample, 53% were females, 47% males, 14% African Americans, 14% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 6% Hispanic, and 65% White. Wawrzynski and Sedlacek investigated the following through racial and gender lens: expectations, self-perceptions, past academic behaviors, and attitudes of students who transferred to a doctoral extensive university. The researchers concluded that racial and gender differences were evident in expectations, learning outcomes, and academic behaviors. However, the analysis did not delve into the reasons for the differences. Wawrzynski and Sedlacek vaguely alluded to race as being an important factor to college women in their discussion and implications section. While these researchers were cognizant of the possibility of race and gender in the transfer process, others extended the constructs further.

Reyes (2011) conducted a series of interviews to capture the lived experiences of the community college transfer experience from the perspective of women of color in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). The race/ethnicity of the women were: "African American, Native Americans, Hispanics, African-born, Asian-born, Anglo-American and other" (p. 247). These multiple voices articulated the challenges they encountered. According to Reyes, one challenge is the feeling of isolation and invisibility. This barrier appeared in subtle and explicit forms of discrimination from

faculty, advisors and peers. They also experienced absence of social capital, multiple role conflicts and inadequate academic preparation (Berger & Maloney, 2003).

Along the same line, Jain (2010) investigated community colleges' transfer experience from the perceptive of "women student leaders of color" using critical race theory as theoretical framework (p. 78). These women of color include African Americans, Chicanas, Native Americans and Asians. Critical race theorists postulate that racism is inherent in America and normal in the lives of people of color; therefore, it is virtually impossible to analyze occurrences outside of the construct of racism (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). According to Jain (2010), critical race theory was instrumental in analyzing race and gender in the "democratic promise of academic transfer" (p. 78). The research revealed the perception of sexism and racism in the transfer process as well as discrimination from instructors and peers. The absence of social capital was evident in the findings. Jain reported that women spoke of multiple years at the community college without any knowledge of the transfer process and were apprehensive to request information due to feeling inadequate.

While these studies contributed significant findings to the transfer literature their scope does not address the transition experiences of African American women who transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. Therefore, to investigate, identify, understand, and find the African American women's voices in the transfer experience and add to the body of literature, a qualitative phenomenological study was designed. A qualitative phenomenological study enabled me to embed myself in the research while constantly bracketing to capture the reality of the participants (Collins, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1990).

As mentioned previously, by the year 2020 colleges and universities are expected to increase the number of college graduates. Community colleges will play a pivotal role in this graduation initiative. Many students use community colleges transfer function as a mean to baccalaureate attainment. Lodged within the transfer population are African American women. However, absent from the body of research on African American women and the transition experience are the lived experiences of African American women that from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe the lived experience of African American women transfer students as they transition from a community college to a four-year institution sharing a campus.

Research Questions

To address the uniqueness of the African American women lived transfer experiences and gain a rich description the following research questions were posed:

1. How did the African American women describe their early educational experiences?

2. How did African American women describe their community college experience?

3. How did African American women describe their lived transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus?

4. What additional factors affected the transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus?

Significance of the Study

Community college is the avenue to a baccalaureate degree via its transfer mission for many students seeking to enter a four-year collegiate institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Crosby, 2002; Dougherty, 1992; Townsend, 2001; Wellman, 2002). Research on the transfer experience has been well documented (Bailey & Weininger, 2002; Ceja, 1997; Hills, 1965; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010; Laanan, 1996, 2001, 2004; Nickens, 1975; Office of Institutional Research, 2010; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). The studies found that students experience transfer shock, as well as social and psychological challenges (Ceja, & Kaylor, 1997; Hills; Laanan). These studies tend to investigate the transition experiences from a universal perspective meaning that researchers examine the involvement of all students or women. Studies of this nature are significant to educational institutions and students; they are investigated from a global standpoint. They are also limited to transfer students that transfer from a community college and commute to a four-year institution.

Transition from a community college to a four-year university may potentially present challenges for the transfer student. Little is know about African American women as they transition from a two-year college to a four-year university sharing a campus. This phenomenological study on the lived realities of African American women transitioning after transferring from a community college to a four-year institution that share a campus is significant for several reasons. This study filtered out factors that affect many transfer students, such as becoming familiar with a new campus, commuting, and parking. It raised the possibility of additional factors that are underpinning the academic, social, and psychological challenges of African American women which researchers

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attribute to all students (Laanan, 2004). Those additional factors are the interlocking of race, class, and gender. Collins (2000) asserts that race, class, and gender negatively impact African American women in society; therefore, they are present in higher education. Armed with this information on the issues that affect African American women, community colleges and institutions granting four-degrees can take a closer look at African American women's transition experience. This study expands the knowledge of the transition experience from the perception of African American women.

African American women are often left out of the discourse on issues that concern them; therefore, this study gave them a voice. Not only, did they have a voice; this study documented their lived experiences while providing the visibility that they are oftentimes denied in research. Finally, a paucity of qualitative of research examining African American women's lived transfer experience exists. This phenomenological study of African American women transferring from a community college to a four-year university that share a common campus will contribute to the qualitative transfer research. In addition to contributing to the transfer research, it may potentially open the door for examining the transition experiences for community colleges that house four-year university centers on their campus. Additionally, this study was designed to continue the dialogue of investing the experiences of African American women as a separate entity and not from a one size fit all research study.

Operational Definition of Terms

1. *African American women*: For the purpose of this study, a woman of African descendant born in the United States.

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2. *Articulation agreements*: Formal written agreements between states and/or two or more postsecondary institutions for the purpose of providing a seamless transfer of credits.

3. *Controlling images*: Specific stereotypes used to negatively describe African American women

4. *Double jeopardy*: Dual discrimination of African American women because of race and gender.

5. *Euro-American*: For the purpose of this study, a person described as White or Caucasian. Euro-American and White will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

6. *Interlocking oppressions*: The simultaneous discrimination based on race, class, and gender.

7. *Receiving institution*: The four-year college the community college student transferred to attain a bachelor degree.

8. *Social capital*: For the purpose of this study, it means the resources the African American women used to navigate their transition experience.

9. *Transfer*: Initial enrollment at a community college followed by a subsequent enrollment at any four-year institution (Bradburn, Hurst, & Peng, 2001).

10. *Transition*: Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) describe transition as "any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (p. 47). For the purpose of this study, transition is used to describe the adjustment or challenges perceived by the participants in this study.

Summary

The transfer mission has been and continues to be the pathway to baccalaureate attainment for many community college students. Studies on the transfer students' experiences are oftentimes investigated through the transfer rates, behavior, and academic performance. Recent research focuses on the roles of two-year and four-year articulation agreements and partnerships and the transfer process. These studies provide limited insight into the transition experiences and two-year and four-year colleges that share a campus. Not only that, research on the experiences of African American women's transition is insufficient.

This phenomenological qualitative study of African American women transition experience after transferring to a four-year university that share a campus will investigate and describe the experiences while uncovering their voice and answer the research questions.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on studies that are significant to the lived experiences of African American women who transfer from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. After a comprehensive search of recent literature it was revealed that African American women's participation in higher education is under-researched, and a paucity of empirical studies exists (Guy-Sheftall, 1982; Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Noble, 1957; Walpole, 2009). Most importantly, a review of the literature brought to light that the study of African American women's transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus might be unchartered research. This chapter will present insight into the literature that potentially contributes to African American women's lived transfer experiences.

Since community colleges are the entry point to higher education for many African American women, it is imperative to understand their historical origin and position in higher education. Community colleges are known for their open door policy, affordability, proximity to the community, and transfer mission (Cohen & Brawer, 2009). They are oftentimes the means by which many women reenter higher education (Phillippe, 2000; Twombly, 1993; White, 2002). For that reason, literature on reentry women was examined. Community college and baccalaureate attainment, the transfer process, student transition and adjustment, and participation in four-year colleges are relevant to the African American women's transfer experience; therefore, a review of the literature was conducted in those areas. Researchers suggest that a person's early

educational experiences influence baccalaureate attainment; therefore, studies on African American girls' experiences are included.

While many studies offer an examination of the higher education experiences from a generic student point of view, some literature offered qualitative research on African American women's experiences. These experiences are interwoven throughout the review. Finally, the core of any research on African American women is the appropriate theoretical framework (Collins, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This chapter also contains a review of articles and studies implementing the Black feminist thought as well as the researcher's theoretical framework.

Historical Background of Community Colleges

American community colleges are embedded in the Morrill Act of 1862. This act was established to provide land to states to construct colleges that would offer education in the areas of agriculture and mechanic arts. The Land Grant Act was also designed to provide access to higher education for students that were excluded, such as farmers and those that lacked the financial resources (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

As a result of the Land Grant Act, many junior colleges were established. William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago, established the first junior college at the university in 1891 (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2009). Later, in 1901, J. Stanley Brown, superintendent of Joliet Township, partnered with Harper to establish Joliet Junior College as "an experimental postgraduate high school program that paralleled the first two years of college" (Joliet Junior College, 2011 p. 1). This program was also designed to accommodate students who wished to remain within the community while earning a post-secondary degree and those interested in transferring

to a four-year institution (AACC, 2011; Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Drury, 2003; Joliet Junior College; Vaughn, 2006). Many Americans were content with the junior college and its mission of open access to postsecondary education.

Unfortunately, their emergence took place during the height of racial segregation and African Americans were denied access to this window of postsecondary education. To rectify this misfortune, the Morrill Act of 1890, allocated land for the building of postsecondary institutions for African Americans. As a result, the first junior college for African Americans, Mississippi Southern Christian Institute, which was established in 1895 (Lane, 1933). Subsequently, 18 more junior colleges were established.

After World War II, many returning servicemen were seeking postsecondary education, which resulted in the creation of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (GI Bill). This bill provided educational funding to returning servicemen (Vaughn, 2006). The purpose of the GI Bill was to continue to democratize higher education by removing the barriers that prohibited access to educational opportunities beyond high school. In order to fulfill this charge, Vaughn asserted that the Truman Commission on Higher Education recommended a network of community colleges to be established throughout the country that resulted in the name change from junior to community college to reflect a community-minded mission.

Following the name change, community colleges redefined their missions from agricultural and teacher training to include a community-based philosophy (Ayers, 2002; Bailey & Averianova, 1998). For example, they provide: adult and continuing education; developmental, remedial and college preparatory classes; access to licenses and certificates; cultural and social activities, and career and counseling services (Cross &

Fidler, 1989; Levin, 2000). Although the name was changed and mission redesigned, community colleges continued to be noted for their open door policy and access to a four-year institution through its transfer agenda (Dowd, 2003; Kasper, 2002; Kolesnika (2009).

Community colleges enroll 35% of the students in post-secondary education primarily because of its open-door admission policy (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). They enroll more of the low socioeconomic status populations, African Americans, women, low academic performance, first generation, and nontraditional students than any other postsecondary learning institution (AACC, 2011; Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Kolesnikova, 2009). Brint and Karabel (1989) assert that community colleges offer flexible scheduling, are economical, and conveniently located. AACC (2011) demographical statistics on community college students for 2007-2008 supports Handel's (2013) thought. For example, the students are diverse: 58% are women, 42% are men, 45% are minorities, 13% are Black, and 16% are Hispanics. The statistics also revealed that 42% of the students are the first in their family to attend college, 40% are 40 or older, and 3% are veterans. While Cohen and Brawer (2009) succinctly suggests that these diverse students are drawn to community colleges for what they offer, ACCC posits that many uses it as an reentry point to transform their lives.

Reentry Students

Reentry students are adults who return to school full or part-time while maintaining jobs, families, and other responsibilities of adult life (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Reentry students are generally women, achievement oriented, over the age of 25, and may or not have previous college experience (Benshoff & Lewis; Carney-Crompton,

2002; Compton, Cox, & Laanan, 2006; King & Jacobs, 2002; NCES, 2002, 2008).

Phillippe and González-Sullivan (2005) found that from 1993 to 2002 women have

consistently made up 58% of the community college population and approximately 60%

are over the age of 25. Townsend and Twombly (2007) suggest that the statistics are not

surprising. Since their conception, community colleges have always opened their doors to

all women. The authors posit that women have accepted the invitation due to its

academic, financial, and geographical accessibility. Women are able to maintain familial

responsibilities, employment as well as attend full or part time. As women reenter,

research on their motivation for reentering has garnered much attention.

   Motivations for reentry. Researchers found that women are reentering due to

"triggers and transitions" ((Benshoff & Lewis, 1992, p. 81) that present themselves in

their lives (Carney-Crompton, 2002; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Kim, Sax, Lee, &

Hagedorn, 2010; Rountree & Lambert, 1992). For instance, several women reentered to

become more marketable in their profession or career and self-fulfillment (Benshoff &

Lewis, 1992; Carney-Crompton & Tan; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

While others encountered life-altering moments, such as divorce, death of a spouse, the

necessity of additional income, children entered school for the first time, left for college,

or loss of employment (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Compton, Cox, & Laanan, 2006).

   Using a qualitative approach, Deutsch and Schmertz (2011) presented a holistic

view of the women's reentry experience. Through a feminist theoretical framework and

focus groups, they explored the experiences of women returning to school to earn

bachelor degrees. The research revealed that the women's experience and education were

"often linked to gendered experiences and social structures" (p. 485). Deutsch and

Schmertz found that the pathway to bachelor degrees for these women were to fulfill

personal goals, become role models, and provide a better life for their children. The study

also revealed that the women returned due to "unsustainable patterns". These

unsustainable patterns seemed to highlight the gender issues. For instance, the

participants reported fear of limited employment opportunities, denial of promotions,

watching as positions went to college-educated men, and desiring professional

certificates. Deutsch and Schmertz found that returning to school also triggered stressors.

The researchers reported that family members, children, and spouses as well as the

financial burden of returning to school produced stress.

Miles (2009) conducted a quantitative study of adult undergraduate African

American women reentering higher education. The results were congruent with the

findings of women in general. The participants reported that they were returning for the

opportunities for better employment, fulfill personal goals, be a role model for their

children, and learn for the sake learning. In the implications for further study, Miles

asserted that a qualitative or mixed-method approach might have been better approaches

to investigate the experiences of the African American women. The researcher stated,

"The women shared that they were faced with personal issues, depression, self esteem,

financial concerns, and frustrations just to name a few" (p. 130). Few, Stephens, and

Rouse-Arnett (2003) validated Miles' observation of the importance of using an

appropriate methodology approach when researching African American women. An

approach that would encompass the uniqueness of African American women in the

contexts of history, culture, race, class, gender, and other forms of oppression" (p. 290).

Yet, Spanard (1990) offered a more insightful reason for reentering. The researcher surmised that students reentering college do so with the intent to make a change. This change could be to their future or to cope with change that has already taken place. The researcher suggests that the intent to reenter is a process. The adult develops a new or acknowledges an existing desire to return. Then he or she, assesses whether the intent to return "is strong enough to justify the displacement" of their current roles and responsibilities (Spanard). Roles as defined by Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) are parent, spouse, worker, child, or friend. If the adult concedes that the benefits of returning to school outweigh the cost, they reenter, add the role of student, and face the challenge of juggling multiple roles. According to Fairchild (2003) and Spellman (2007), when these roles collide, they potentially act as a proverbial wall between the reentry student and their educational goals. While the intent to reenter postsecondary education and role demands are applicable to all students, the subsequent studies on reentry students will show these issues as transparent and prevalent in community, undergraduate, and graduate college reentry women.

Multiplicity of roles for reentry women. Johnson, Schwartz, and Bower (2002) concluded that as community college women and as return to school with zeal, determination, and commitment they are often oblivious to the impact reentering has on their lives. Johnson et al. also indicated that the participants frequently felt overwhelmed by stress of their roles and responsibilities as student, parent, and spouse. These stressors, according to the researchers, are replacing their zeal, determination, and commitment with hopelessness and defeat.

Home (1998) clarifies and supports the previous researchers thoughts on the impact of multiple roles and their impact on reentry. The researcher investigated role demands and their affect on adult women's persistence after reentry. The researcher conducted a study of role strain on 443 undergraduate female students over the age of 35. Home was attentive to "three distinct dimensions of role strain that are perceived as barriers among women" (p. 86). Role conflict arises as incompatible demands present themselves simultaneously. Role overload happens when there is not enough time to meet all obligations. Role contagion is preoccupation with one role while performing another.

Home (1998) found that mothers of young children, low socioeconomic status, and full time students experienced the greatest role conflict. Role contagion, students' perception, family, and job responsibilities also contributed to role strain. Single mothers and mothers young of children, experienced the greatest amount of role overload. Role contagion, according to the study, occurred among full-time students, those caring for disabled family members, and receiving financial aid. In each area of role strain children appeared to be the dominate factor.

Another noteworthy qualitative case study offered insight into the experience of the doctoral students. Padula and Miller (1999) found that reentry doctoral women return for the same reasons as presented earlier; however, tuition reimbursement was an additional motivator. The findings also revealed participants experienced role overload, insufficient time to meet the demands of graduate school. In addition to role overload, they encountered role strain; the inability to invest the time in to family relationships.

Although the definition of reentry females, motivations and the obstacles they face attempt to encompass all women. The perception of reentry African American

females is minimally unaccounted for in this description of reentry women (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996). African American women experiences are unique. Their uniqueness should be viewed and analyzed through a different lens and investigated through an approach, such as qualitative research (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2000).

African American Women Reentry Students

African American women have traditionally used the community college as their springboard to higher education (Baker & Velez, 1996). Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1996) used a narrative approach to investigate whether the presence of race, class, and gender. These constructs adversely affect African American women in society were evident in higher education. The reentry African American women reported the negative impact of race, class, gender, and skin color were consistent with society. To address racism, African American women used silence, negotiation, and resistance as coping strategies (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero). In a later qualitative study, Johnson-Bailey (2000) looked at the experiences reentry of African American women. The researcher's findings were consistent with the results in the 1996 seminal study on reentry African American women. Congruent with the literature on all reentry women, the multiplicity roles of African American women oftentimes created a conflict in their pursuit of a college degree. However, as they participated in higher education the negative omnipresence of race, class, and gender was evident. As reported in the 1996 study, the women used resistance, silence, and negotiation as a response to the negative impact of race, class, and gender (Johnson-Bailey).

Along those same lines as Miles (2009), Thomas (2001) used a mixed methods approach to examine the educational and transitional experiences of a diverse group of reentry women. In the first part of the study, a quantitative phase, she used a survey instrument to investigate the women's experiences. The results reinforced the previous studies on reentry women. For instance, women were returning to higher education to increase employment opportunities, to be role models for their children and for self-fulfillment. A major challenge for them was managing the multiplicity of roles that returning to school introduced into their lives. In the second study, the qualitative phase, Thomas targeted the same African American women studied in the quantitative phase and conducted semi-structured interviews with them. According to the researcher, the African American women reported the situational barriers, such as financial constraints, managing the multiplicity of roles and a lack of support was intensified because of their race. The African American women also reported the issue of "double jeopardy" being Black and female. Thomas concluded that whether or not individuals or groups acknowledge it, racism does exist and is a barrier for many people of color. When racism is exacerbated by the still extant prejudice towards oppressed women in some areas, African American women reentry students may feel doubly oppressed.

Coker (2003) touched on this in her study on the motivations and coping strategies of African American women participating in postsecondary education. The researcher concluded that these adult learners encounter marginalization, racism, and sexism. Common coping strategies for racism, genderism, and marginalization used by, African American women included "humor, compromise, confrontation," and a commitment to excel academically (Coker, p. 670).

Following a similar understanding, Sealey-Ruiz (2012) conducted research on African American reentry mothers through the critical race theory and Black feminist thought epistemologies to analyze their counter-narratives. Sealey-Ruiz surmised that African American mothers reentered higher education to develop a positive self-image as a vehicle to resist the stereotypes that society has placed upon them, such as mammy, matriarch, and welfare mother/welfare queen. Sealey-Ruiz supported Deutsch and Schmertz (2011) findings as well, the African American women in this study also reported returning to school was a means to get their daughters interested in education.

Regardless of the difficulties sometimes presented by the multiple roles and the intersection of class, gender and race, African American women continue to participate in higher education (Matthews-Armstead, 2002; Sealey-Ruiz, 2012; Thomas, 2001). According to Matthews-Armstead, in a study on "African American women from poor communities," enrolling in college for the first time found these women were confronted with "social factors, such as poverty, inadequate educational institutions, and multiple systems of oppression (race, class, and gender)" (p. 48). Some African American women might view these factors as hindrances to higher education. These women saw them as insignificant and used them as an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to overcome the odds.

The aforementioned studies collectively address the significance of investigating the experiences of African American women separately from those of other women because of the issues unique to that group. They also reveal the coping strategies many African American make use of to address the racism and discrimination to maneuver

their way through higher education. These skills may have been acquired during their early educational years.

African American girls. Fulghum (1986) wrote, "All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten" (p. 2). Fulghum continues with a list of ideas he learned. "Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Don't take things that aren't yours. Live a balanced life. Say you're sorry when you hurt someone." He also adds, "Everything you need to know is in there somewhere…Ecology and politics and equality and sane living" (p.3). According to researchers, African American girls also learn race-gender differences in their early schooling.

Grant (1984) conducted a qualitative study of race-gender differences in African American and White first-grade girls in a desegregated public school setting. Grant acknowledges that race-gender socialization is acquired prior to attending school. Not only that, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) asserts that schools replicate the views of the dominant societal culture; therefore, the power relations that exist in society also are inherent in education. Grant found that teachers in her study do perpetuated society views on race-gender socialization of African American. Black girls have a prescribed in *place* in the classroom.

This *place* is "a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent embellished and well articulated" (Goffman (1959) as cited in Grant p. 109). As claimed by Grant in this study, the teachers' perception of maturity differed for African American and White girls. The translation of maturity of African American did equate expectations of high academic achievement, but helpful and independent. On the other hand, for maturity for White girls denoted "cognitively mature and ready for school" (p. 102). Additionally, African

American girls were praised for academic achievement; however, White girls received "noteworthy" praise, the opportunity to tutor peers or provide orientation to new students. Additionally, African American girls were seen as the go-between, a student that acts as a liaison between the teacher and students; primary caregiver for all classmates; recipient of racial comments; and less likely to be intimidate by peers. According to Grant the classroom environment, is a place were societal norms for African American girls are solidified. Their *place* in the classroom substantiates their outside-within status, their structural position, and socially located knowledge. It also supports and that of the dominant culture and its conception in their lives (Collins, 2000).

Damico and Scott (1987) continued the conversation in a study of the behavioral differences between African American and White females in a desegregated school setting. They found few differences between the early educational experiences of White girls and African American girls. However, the teachers' treatment towards both groups was different. As reported by Grant (1984) academic behavior was reinforced among the White females and social skills among the African American females. The researchers, Damico and Scott suggest that the differential treatment African American and White females presented in their early educational years by teachers continued through high school. These factors attributed to African American females negative self-perception, isolation and evaluations made by other pupils. The researchers assert that teachers are influential role models in the educational environment, thus assist in designating the *place of* African American girls' position in society.

While Grant (1984) and Damico and Scott (1987) studied the race-gender socialization of African American girls at desegregated schools, Morris (2007) examined

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the barriers and perceptions African American girls encounter in a predominately minority setting. The researcher found that the African American girls performed well academically; their overall conduct was oftentimes under scrutiny by educators. The study revealed that African American girls' assertiveness was perceived as loud, abrasive, aggressive, and unladylike; therefore, disciplinary actions were designed to encourage them to behave more like ladies. This encouragement cites Morris, portrays African American girls' femininity as inadequate compared to society's perception femininity. The researcher attributes this treatment of the African American girls behavior to the interlocking of race, class, and gender.

Along the same line, Fordham (1993) investigates the impact of gender diversity on academic achievement. She addresses the significance of loudness found in Morris (2007) study on the social behavior of African American girls. Fordham defines loudness as "a metaphor proclaiming African American women's existence, their collective denial of, and to their socially proclaimed powerlessness, or nothingness" (p. 25). The researcher asserts that loudness is used to resist what is perceived as disrespect or hostility from teachers. The study however, focuses on high achieving African American females that defy loudness through gender passing. Gender passing is defined as "masquerading or presenting a persona or some personae that contradict the literal image of the marginalized or doubly refracted other" (p. 3). Fordham found that high achieving African American girls acknowledged that there were certain norms that should be followed to be academically successful in school and life. The researcher found the in order for the high achievers to be taken seriously, they had to be silent, invisible, and avoid being loud and the loud girls.

Following Fordham (1993) Eggleston and Miranda (2009) investigated the perception of African American females educational environment at a predominately White high school. They also found that African American girls are concerned with the loud female label; therefore, strive to display the appropriate behavior. These females encounter academic stereotypical perceptions and racial insults.

Wood, Kurtz-Costes, Okeke-Adeyanju, and Rowley (2010), in an empirical study investigated the role of academic gender stereotypes among African American mothers of students in seventh and eighth grade. They found that mothers held higher educational expectations for their daughters than for their sons. Both groups lived up to their expectations. On the other hand, Mickelson and Greene (2006) in an empirical comparative study on the gender differences in African American middle school students' achievement investigated the sources that affected the students' outcome on the North Carolina end of the year assessment. They found that there were no gender differences in academic achievement in the second grade, but by middle school girls out performed boys. The study also revealed that peer relations, attitudes about education, and school climate affected the males' achievement. However, African American girls' achievement is affected by family socioeconomic status and cultural capital.

In a similar empirical study of African American high school students, Saunders, Davis, Williams, and Williams (2004) explored the gender differences among African American males and female high school sophomore students. Saunders et al. surveyed 243 African American sophomores. They explored the self-perception and academic outcome. They found that although African American males and females had a high self-

efficacy and academic outcome, African American females reported a higher self-efficacy and school completion.

Dixon and Chambers (2009) viewed the experiences of African American female high school students using critical race feminism. They explored factors that contributed college attendance. Critical race feminism, defined by Dixon and Chambers "is the notion that women of color face discrimination on multiple, often interlocking/intersecting levels that include, but are not limited to gender, race, and class" (p 24). The researchers found that the African American female students' background, academic achievement, parental involvement; school climate, teacher relationships, and peers influence affect their college predisposition. Chambers (2009) using the data and statistics from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey of 1988 went a step further and assessed the early educational investments of African American girls. The college enrollment of these women was 62%. Chambers look at the student social capital, family and school cultural capital. Chambers found that the human capital does pay off towards postsecondary attainment. However, social and cultural capital had minimum affect on college enrollment.

In short, regardless of the barriers that all reentry women encounter, the early learning experiences with race class and gender bias. African American women perceive education as paramount to their future; and many seek to earn a baccalaureate degree by way of community colleges followed by transferring to four-year colleges and universities.

Community College and Baccalaureate Attainment

While African Americans may often use community college as a first step to baccalaureate attainment, this in itself can be problematic because of the mindset these students may encounter at the community college level. Community colleges are known as the "equalizer" in reference to higher education, yet some authors question their position as a pathway to baccalaureate attainment. In a seminal study, Clark (1960), contends that community colleges perpetuate the lack of baccalaureate attainment through their counseling procedures known as the "cooling out process." It was often found that community college counselors refocused the aspirations of academically underprepared student to a career that is more suitable to their academic preparedness (Clark; Moore, 1975). As a result of the cooling out process, students are positioned as latent terminal students; they do not transfer to four-year schools, and their quest for baccalaureate attainment is terminated at the associate degree level (Bahr, 2008; Moore; Pascarella, Wolniak, & Pierson, 2003).

In a later study on women in community colleges Moore reinforced the idea that the cooling out function does exist. However, she also found parents of female students, uncontrollable circumstances (finances), gender, and the channeling of female students towards stereotypical female careers also deterred women's participation in continuing in higher education. Additional researchers contended that community colleges could not shoulder the responsibility for lack of baccalaureate attainment. They surmised institutional characteristics, an unequal proportion of minority students and women, and the selection of college also affected persistence to baccalaureate attainment (Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Leinbach, & Kienzl, 2006; Lee, Mackie-Lewis, & Marks, 1993).

Following Clark (1960), Bahr (2008) investigated the role of the advisor as the cooling out agent on the student's academic success and transfer possibility. This study focused on the correlation between students' transfer and remedial math courses and the counselor's role. Bahr found no relationship; however, he discovered that the cooling out process was race specific. African American students on the average were redirected from ambitious academic goals in favor of what were perceived as aspirations considered more suitable for historically disadvantaged students. Bahr suggests that the counseling procedure may reflect everyday stereotypes and biases and spill over into the counseling of academic placement (Bahr). This spillover reflects the permanence of racism in society while supporting the theory that education reflects ideas produced by the dominant culture (Bell 1992; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Bahr also noted that the African Americans that did not receive counseling appear to fare better because they were not subjected to the racial stereotypes presented during academic counseling.

Those African American students may have fared better due to their social and academic capital. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) tell us that some students bring high school, academic experiences, and knowledge of what to expect in college; thus are able to navigate through the college environment. Wells (2008) posits that this knowledge base may have a positive effect, thereby leads to baccalaureate attainment. Conversely, students without this knowledge, such as those who are first in their family to attend college, often are at a disadvantage (Pascarella et al). Many of them lack the social and academic capital. If the social capital is absent, these students Pascarella et al. posit are more than likely to have difficulty negotiating the post

secondary system, which could potentially have an adverse on affect their persistence to baccalaureate attainment. On the other hand, those that have high levels of social and cultural capital are able to navigate the postsecondary road to success (Wells, 2008). Cultural capital as used by Bourdieu and Passeron (1997), makes reference to knowledge of cultural norms, such as music, fine art, history, and language. Students with cultural capital are at an advantage; this capital facilitates learning. Students without cultural capital might find it difficult due to the fact that schools tend to make reference to untaught cultural knowledge.

According to Coleman (1988) a child's social capital is contingent upon the parent's human capital. Human capital, Coleman posits, is "measured by parents' education and provides the potential for a cognitive environment for the child that aids in learning" (p. 109). The concept of human capital is relative to social capital. Social capital is the time and effort parents spend communicating their ideas about education or dispensing knowledge (Coleman). Caldas, Bankston, and Cain (2007) social capital is transformed as social resources. When social capital presents itself as a social resource, children can withdraw from it as needed to succeed in any environment. Coleman further asserts that the child uses it as a resource and withdraws from it as needed to succeed in any environment. These social resources are "reading habits, high educational expectations" and community resources that aid in the academic and social development of the child. These resources are tied to educational achievement. Coleman asserts that when the links between family and community are strong, social capital is effective children do well in educational settings. On the other hand, if the structure is deficient,

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students are unable to withdraw from these resources and they may potentially be unsuccessful in school.

Irvin, Farmer, Leung, Thompson, and Hutchins (2010) offered an extended view social capital that describes the impact of a child's involvement in extracurricular in the community, school and church involvement and its relationship to academic achieve African American middle school students in a rural community. The results demonstrated that church activities impacted academic achievement. Adding to the conversation, Dennis, Calvillo, and Gonzalez (2008) and Zamani (2001) noted that lack of financial resources and academic preparedness also acted as barriers to baccalaureate degrees for African American and Hispanic community college students.

Research conducted by Adelman (1999) also found that academic resources were important determinates in the attainment of a baccalaureate degree. He concluded baccalaureate attainment could be based on the following: the intensity of the high school curriculum, students' academic performance in high school and continuous enrollment once a student has begun in post secondary education. Adelman also suggests that African Americans and Latino students were significantly less likely to have completed rigorous high school curriculum; therefore, these factors affected their persistence to baccalaureate attainment.

While the previous researchers concluded that lack of financial resources and academic preparedness, social and academic capital are variables in baccalaureate attainment, Cox (2009) offered an additional conundrum. Cox revealed that persistence to a baccalaureate via a community college might be connected to students' characteristics. In a study of African American and Latino community college students in an English

composition class, Cox found lack of commitment, fear of failure and the absence of student engagement were the primary factors in the students' success or foundering.

Finally, Melguizo, Kienzl, and Alfonso (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of community college transfer students and the "rising juniors" from a four-year institution and concluded that there were no statistical differences in the attainment of a baccalaureate degree. Melguizo et al. further concluded that community colleges have the potential to prepare the students for the demands of a four-year institution.

One such population of students in all likelihood is African American women. These studies have examined the transfer rate and baccalaureate attainment. As mentioned previously, community colleges are the path many students take to obtain a baccalaureate degree; understanding transition after transferring is paramount.

Transfer and transition to baccalaureate attainment

Initially community colleges were designed to facilitate student transfers to a four-year university (Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Levin, 2000; Townsend & Twombly, 2001; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). The process of transferring is generic. The students take the necessary credits required and then apply to the receiving institution. After their acceptance students may participate in a brief orientation and proceed with the course of study with minimum attention to their adjustment. Eventually, research examined the academic adjustment of the transfer student.

Hills (1965) examined 32 years of past research on the academic performance of junior college students. He concluded that community college students experienced "transfer shock, a severe drop in performance after transfer" and academic unpreparedness (p. 202). Additional researchers support the transfer shock phenomenon.

Glass and Harrington (2002), Pascarella (1999) and Rhine, Milligan and Nelson (2000) found that community college students experience transfer shock, which could adversely influence their transition to a four-year institution.

Nickens (1975), on the other hand, studied the academic performance of students transferring from a Florida community college to four-year university in the Florida State University system. The study revealed that while students experienced transfer shock in the areas of computer science, business, agriculture, and biological studies; transfer ecstasy occurs in liberal arts, education and social sciences. Additional researchers Cejda (1997), Cejda and Kaylor (1997), and Cejda, Kaylor, and Rewey (1998), extended the transfer shock conversation on community college transfer students college students. They investigated transfer shock from a "discipline-based perspective" at public and private liberal arts colleges. The studies concluded that transfer shock exists within the math and science disciplines, but transfer ecstasy was experienced in education, fine arts and humanities, and social sciences.

Academic transition was a major concern for transfer population; however, researchers also recognized that additional factors affected the post-transfer experience and baccalaureate attainment. Davies and Dickmann (1998), Harbin (1997), and Kodama (2002) found that while many transfer students were content with their academic performance, they felt isolated; had difficulty navigating the campus and connecting with other students; and oftentimes viewed as interlopers on the four-year campus.

Ishitani and McKitrick (2010) supported the previous researchers findings in a comparative study of native students (students that began their education at the four-year college) and community college transfer students. The researchers found after transition

community college transferees were less engaged than native students. The lack of engagement affected their sense of belonging. Ishitani and McKitrick also noted that the transfer students' timing of matriculation, lack of orientation, and unfamiliar surroundings placed transfer students at a disadvantage. On the other hand, Dennis, Calvillo, and Gonzalez (2008) and Hatton, Homer, and Park (2009) attributed the transition dilemma to the lack of social capital. They found that transition was adversely influenced by inadequate academic skills, lack of family support, limited financial resources and low peer support group.

On the other hand, as the transfer population increased, transfer experts began to investigate; additional factors came to light. The literature revealed that researchers have used student development theories to understand student adjustment and post-transfer experience. One theory, Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) emphasizes the importance of student involvement. Astin defines student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). This involvement has several forms, the students' engagement in academic work, interaction with peers, faculty and other institutional personnel, and participation in sports and social groups. Astin (1993) concluded that the more involved student would have greater opportunities to learn from the educational environment, which leads to personal growth. In addition to Astin (1984), Pace's (1982) Quality of Effort was used to investigate two dimensions, time and quality of effort a student put into college. He described time as the frequency and effort as quality. The student's quality of effort shifts the responsibility from the institution to the student.

Lanaan (2004) implemented Astin's (1984) Theory of Involvement and Pace's (1982) Quality of Effort theories to develop data collection tools to gain understanding of community college students' adjustment at a four-year university. Laanan asserts that transfer shock "described the cognitive concerns of the student adjustment process" (Laanan, 2007 p. 37). She asserts that the transfer student encounters psychological and social challenges as they transition to a four-year university. Therefore, to move beyond the transfer shock phenomenon, Laanan designed the Laanan-Transfer Student Questionnaire (L-TSQ) to provide a more in-depth view of the transfer experience. The questionnaire was designed to gather demographical data (race, gender, age, parental education and income) and perception of transfer experience (academic, psychological and social). Using the L-TSQ, Laanan (2007) conducted a of 717 community college students of various races and ethnicities who transferred to a southern California university. The data revealed that the transfer students who are involved in extracurricular activities, interact act with peers and staff at the receiving institution, spend quality time studying had a positive academic and social experience.

Townsend (2008) provided another dimension to the transition literature. She asserts that the transition has two parts. The first part consists of the decision to attend. During the decision making process the transfer student considers the following: cost, application process, distance from community college, and transferrable credits. Part two, transfer transition, and oftentimes consist of transfer student orientation. Students attend classes and attempt to create a sense of academic and social adjustment. Although the transfer students had college experience, according to Townsend, the transfer students reported, "feeling like freshmen again" (p. 73). They were unfamiliar with the structural

components, such as parking, advisement office, and adjusting to the size of the campus. The students also reported feelings of isolation and invisibility.

Earlier researchers support Townsend's findings. Harbin (1997) found that community college students were satisfied with their academic preparation received from a community college. However, they did report that they were concerned with the availability of information about the transfer process, financial aid information, feeling uncertain about using the facilities, problems with commuting and isolated. Consequently, to facilitate a more seamless transition from a community college to a four-year institution transfer experts have made the following recommendation: student mentors, orientations specific to the transfer students' needs (Davies & Dickmann, 1998; Townsend, 2008).

To improve the transfer pipeline between public community colleges and four-year universities, several states established articulation agreements to facilitate the transfer. Articulation agreements eliminate the ambiguity when addressing transfer credits by outlining credits for a specific course of study when a student transfers from one institution to another (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Just & Adams, 1997; Roksa & Keith, 2008). Montague (2012) outlined the benefits and limitations of articulation agreements. First, articulation agreements provide a platform for universities to development of curricula that will guarantee the transferability of credits in a baccalaureate program. Second, they act as pathway to ensure access for underrepresented students to a baccalaureate while providing diversity to the four-year campus. Finally, articulation agreements are instrumental in standardizing the curricula. For instance, they provide consistency to course requirements; thereby enabling the two-

year and four-year faculty and staff to advise the transfer students in a fair and equitable manner.

Along that same vein, Ignash and Townsend (2000) evaluated 43 state level articulation agreements. They investigated transfer patterns (vertical or reverse transfer direction); completion of Associate's degree prior of transfer; and faculty involvement. They found that in general, the states' articulation agreements are promoting effective student transfer practices. According to the researchers undergraduate transfer students move in many directions called swirling. The transfer students move vertically, from two-year to four-year or reverse from four-year to two-year. No matter what the direction the transfer student chose, Ignash and Townsend found that overall the states that participated in the study are participating in good practices that promote effective student transfer.

Overall, articulation agreements were intended to impact post-secondary attendance, improve the quality of information to students, two-year and four-year colleges, and provide consistency for the transfer population (Roska & Keith, 2008). Kisker (2007) posit that two-year and four-year institutions must move beyond the articulation agreements to creating sustainable partnerships. In addition to articulation agreements to improve the transfer transition, community colleges and four-year institution created partnerships. Like articulation agreements, Kisker (2007) found that the purpose of partnerships was to increase minority transfer of students, implement strategies that accelerate underprepared students, and provide an opportunity for two-year and four-year colleges to dialogue. Articulation agreements and university partnerships have the potential to impact the transfer students in a positive manner. The previous

studies are informative and provide valuable insight into baccalaureate attainment and post transfer experiences of students transferring from a community college to a four-year institution. Nevertheless they do not include the African American women's post transfer experience. According to ACCC (2011), many African American women use community colleges as stepping-stone to baccalaureate attainment; their experiences should be noted to provide an accurate picture of the transfer transition data. Thus, the following research provides a view of the postsecondary experience from the African American women's perceptive.

African American Women's Experiences in Higher Education

While notable researchers have examined and reported the postsecondary experiences of African American women, they have appealed to the research community to do the same (Beale, 1970; Evans, 2007; Guy-Sheftall, 1982; Hill Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Ladner, 1972; Lorde, 1984; Moses, 1989; Noble, 1955; Slowe, 1933). Consequently, current researchers are recognizing the importance of this monumental task and uncovering the significant challenges African American women encounter. Studies on African American women's participation in higher education revealed that racism and genderism are prevalent in a predominately White university. While a few of these colleges provided access to African American women centuries ago, Evans (2007), Howard-Vital (1989), Moses (1989), and Thomas and Hollenshead (2001), aver that African American women continue to encounter race and gender bias, isolation, invisibility, along with subtle and overt forms of racism. Pierce (1970) identified subtle forms of racism as racial micro-aggressions; they are automatic verbal or nonverbal acts directed towards people of color. Racial micro-aggressions are often difficult to identify,

articulate, and leaves the respondent baffled about the comment or action (Wing Sue et al., 2007).

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), added to the literature in a study of the affects of racial microaggressions in higher education. The researchers surmised that racial microaggressions oftentimes produce uncomfortable academic and social climates. As a result, Solórzano et al. concluded that these climates negatively impacts many African American students' academic and social well-being. The students echoed the themes of invisibility, stereotyped, self-doubt, and general discomfort. To counter-act the negative affects of racial microaggressions, students created positive academic and social counterspaces.

Schwartz, Bower, Rice, and Washington (2003), conducted an empirical study on experiences of African American women graduate students at a predominately White research university. The researchers examined the, "twoness" being African American and female. Schwartz et al. assumed that the issue of gender and race would be fairly balanced or gender would be more prevalent. The participants identified race as salient. They reported common experiences of exclusion from study groups and organizations because of their race. In addition to exclusion, the African American women described subtle forms of racism from instructors. Although race was salient in the study, as previous research suggests modeling educational attainment to their children and family support were also very significant.

Continuing along the same vein, Sule (2009) investigated the African American graduate students at a predominately White university. The researcher reported microaggressions. Additionally, the women experienced what the researcher term the

"new racism" a change in policies and procedures that are perceived to be equitable and fair to all, but they are an attempt to maintain the present position of power. The African American women experienced epistemological racism, being advised against researching a marginalized population. Sule also found the lack of faculty and peer support along with the feelings of tokenism adversely affected the African American women experience at the predominately White university.

While those experiences were prevalent at predominately White colleges and universities, Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek (2004) concluded that African American women attending historical Black colleges and universities (HBCU) experienced a receptive culture and sense of belonging. Nevertheless, African American women reported positive experiences, but seminal research infers gender inequities due to the patriarchal influence at HBCUs (Evans, 2007; Gasman, 2009; Harper et al.; Moses, 1989). African American women attending HBCUs were encouraged to aspire "lower-prestige careers", such as teaching, nursing, and secretarial position (Evans; Harper et al.; Moses). However, current research shows that African Americans have expanded their professional choices to law, business, dental, and medical schools (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2003, 2005).

Several qualitative and empirical studies revealed and supported that the salient theme of the interlocking of race, gender, and class also emerged when African American women become a part of academe (Aiken, Cervero, & Johnson, 2001; Coker, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998; Winkle-Wagner, 2008). These interlocking components negatively affected their participation and their approach educational social interactions, peer and instructor relationships (Aiken et al.; Collins,

2000; Johnson-Bailey, 1997; Reyes, 2011). According to Coker, the stereotypes, intersection of race, class, and gender "obstruct the journey toward intellectual, personal, financial and political power" (p. 659).

Researchers posit the point of entry plays a major role in the acquisition of a baccalaureate degree (Long & Kurlaender, 2009). Buck (2009) conducted a comparative analysis of African American women who received doctoral degrees that used community colleges as their entry point verses those that began at a four-year institution. Buck concluded that 11% of those receiving a doctorate began at a community college.

Finally, albeit African American women are participating in postsecondary education and experiencing challenges that some may consider as insignificant; however, research on the participation is limited. In order to address African American women's participation in higher education an appropriate theoretical lens should be used, such as Black feminist thought.

Black Feminist Thought as the Theoretical Lens

Black feminist thought began in the sociology arena to identify the marginalized position of African American women in American society (Collins, 1986, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Collins identifies the African American woman's marginalization by describing it as an outsider-within status. As an outsider-within, most African American women understand that they are participants, but never fully accepted. Yoder and Aniakudo (1997) examined the outsider-within perspective of African American women firefighters. They found that African American woman firefighters experienced overt and covert forms hostility from co-workers, a lack of support from administration, inadequate training and negative stereotyping undergirded by race and gender. However, the African

American women used the exclusion as a counter space to self-define and self-validate among themselves. Along that same line, Hinton (2010) investigated the lived experiences of an African American woman at a predominately White institution. The researcher found that the participant also experienced marginalization. She reported a feeling of tokenism (perfunctory role of representing African American women in a seemingly diverse environment), isolation, and opportunity deficiency.

While the outside-within position may oftentimes appear to place African American women at a disadvantage, Hooks (1984) asserts that this status is unique. The position, also known as the center, offers a view of those who make and define the rules. Collins (2000) also believes that the outside-within position is unique. African American women see the events from the viewpoint of the inside and the outside. This unique perspective allows the African American women to observe and understand the difference between the two worlds. The African American women's survival espouses Hooks, in many instances depends on their ability to understand that there is a major difference between the margin and the center. As stated earlier, this concept is learned during the African American women's early educational experiences (Grant, 1984; Morris, 2007).

Black feminist thought, focuses on the African American women's meaning of a phenomenon through their realities or standpoint. Collins (1986) posits, "Black women's political and economic status provides them with a distinctive set of experiences that offers a different view of material reality than that available to other groups" (p. 747). As platform, Black feminist thought is necessary to uncover African American women's voices to their capture experiences from their standpoint or group knowledge while

separating them from women and African American men (Giddings, 1984; Hull et al., 1982). Standpoint or group knowledge implies that all African American women have encountered racial challenges; however, it does not mean that they all have had the same experiences. It also suggests that in spite of the common challenges, they also may respond to them differently. Furthermore, this group knowledge suggests that at some point in their lives all African American women have been impacted by differential treatment in a society that restricts them to inferior education, housing, neighborhoods, healthcare, employment and public mistreatment (overt and subtle forms of racism).

Collins (2000) further asserts that society camouflages this differential treatment behind "common beliefs about Black women's intelligence, work habits, and sexuality" (p. 29). As a result, these common barriers experienced by African American women, are transformed into "recurring patterns of experiences for individual members of the group" which validates their standpoint or group knowledge (p. 29). To understand the depth of the African American experiences, Collins outlined three tenets of Black feminist thought, self-validation and self-validation, interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture. These tenets are shaped and produced by the lived experiences of African American women's lives (Collins, 1986).

Self-validation and self-definition. African American women's identity is anchored in the historical context of stereotypes that are rooted in the enslavement of African American people (Beale, 2008; Davis, 1983; Hooks, 1992). According to Collins (2000) and Hooks (1984), African American women's positions in the slave experience lead to their devaluation as women; and linked them to a political, economic and social oppressive state. Slavery assisted in allowing power and privilege to be placed in the

hands of White males. This status of power and privilege provided the landscape for the description of women (Davis; Hooks). According to Collins (2000) and Noble (1955), White women were described as having possessing piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. African American women were not suitable for qualities or descriptions due to their position as slaves (Collins; Davis; Lorde, 1984). They were subjected to the controlling images, Mammy, matriarch, and Sapphire which were intended to subjugate their significance in America's society while maintaining them in an oppressive state (Coker, 2003; Collins, 1986; Lorde; Noble, 1957; Woodard & Mastin, 2005).

Simms (2000) examined the concept of controlling images Mammy, Jezebel, and the mule as "preeminent features of the dominant ideology that justified the exploitation of female slaves that contributed to the social construction of their gender" (p. 880). Collins (2000), Hooks (1981), and Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) support Simms' thought. The socially constructed controlling images for African American women, matriarch, Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel are embedded in the slave experience. These images set the stage for African American women's place as "other and outsider within" which is the basis of their domination (Collins; Hooks; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). The term "other" leads to the objectification of African American women in general (Collins).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), in a study on African American girls and women and objectification, arrived at an operational term for objectification, "girls and women that typically acculturated to internalize an observer's perspective as a primary view of their physical selves" (p. 173). Objectification is a form of domination, which acts as outliers in reference to African American women's position in society (Collins, 1986).

African American women possess what Dubois (2003) calls "double consciousness" (p. 9). Double-consciousness is viewing oneself through the eyes of others and "measuring one's soul by the tape of a world" that watches them through lenses of "amused contempt and pity" (p. 9). Therefore, the lenses through which many African American women and girls view and measures themselves are the ones that excludes them from society and leads to their objectification. The lens through which many African American women are viewed and objectified are society's controlling images (Hooks, 1981).

Hooks (1981) infers that the depiction of the African American woman as the matriarch implies that she acts as father and mother as well as the provider for the family. Collins (2000) contends that the position as matriarch permits African American women to be held accountable for the "success and failure" of African American children (p. 75). The image of Mammy expresses the African American woman's role during slavery as submissive, faithful, and obedient domestic servant (Collins; Davis, 1983; Simms, 2001). Mammy, according to Simms, enabled the slave master to maintain dominance and perpetuate the ideal master slave relationship. The image of Sapphire, a character from the Amos and Andy radio and television, characterizes African American women as hostile, indignant, begrudging, comedic, and nagging (Hooks; Thomas et al., 2004). Finally, the image of Jezebel positions African American women as promiscuous and immoral (Collins; Hooks; Jones & Shorter-Gooden).

Although these controlling images were intended to subjugate African American women, according to Collins (1986, 2000), African American women are self–defining and self-validating themselves. Self-definition allows for African American women to

challenge the controlling images and replace the images with "authentic Black images" (Collins, 1986, p. 517). By doing so, African American women are rejecting the stereotypes and giving themselves the power to self define and analyze. Self-validation calls for African American women to embrace the meaning images convey and use them to their advantage. Collins (1986) asserts that the images are intended to evoke a negative feeling. The image of Sapphire is meant to question African American women's femininity and imply aggressiveness while putting African American women in their place. Collins (2000) advocates embracing the assertiveness, valuing their sassiness and implementing them to rise above the circumstances that beset many African American women. Self-definition and self-validation provide the backdrop for African American women to reject the controlling images and provide a space for them to self-define and self-validate themselves.

Researchers have begun to investigate the controlling images and their effect on African American women. For instance, in an empirical study, Thomas et al. (2004) attempted to measure whether the stereotypic roles, Mammy, Sapphire, Superwoman (Matriarch), and Jezebel affected African American women. The findings revealed that the women were able to relate to the images and view themselves and other African American women through the images. Regression analysis revealed that Mammy and Sapphire negatively impacted African American women's self-esteem. Collins (2000) asserts that addressing the controlling images allows for the transparency of the interlocking of race, class, and gender effects on African American women's interaction with society (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersection of race, class, and gender. The interlocking nature of oppression, race, class and gender, is another theme of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1986, 1998, 2000). Intersectionality, as defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), is "the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and their combination plays out in various settings"(p. 200). Collins (1986) attends that researchers tend to examine each component separately in an attempt to prioritize one over the other. Black feminist thought asserts that there is no hierarchy within the body of race, class and gender; they are of equal status. Furthermore, Collins (2000) asserts that this intersectionality justifies African American women subordinate status. For example, Collins (1986) uses an illustration that clearly makes the point. "Denying Black women literacy- then claiming that they lack the facts for sound judgment-assigning a group inferior status, then using that inferior status as proof of the group's inferiority" (p. 46).

Interlocking of race, class, and gender define African American women's position in society social, educational, political, and economic spaces. Hooks (1984) maintains that helps to explain their invisibility in research. Johnson-Bailey (2001) concurs that higher education is an area in which African American women experiences are absent.

Importance of Afro-American women's culture. Finally, the importance of being attentive to African American women's culture undergirds Black feminist thought (Collins, 1986, 2000). Collins asserts that when researching African American women one must be mindful of "the relationship between oppressed people's consciousness of oppression and the actions they take in dealing with the oppressive structures may be more complex" (p. 523). African American women have a way of coping to combat the oppressive structures that are in place, such as humor, silence, prayer, and confronting the

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issue (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Giddings, 1992; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Lastly, African American women use culture as a means of developing a sisterhood and sharing strategies for self-defining and self-validating manage the controlling images and the interlocking of race, class and gender. Black feminist thought is an appropriate theoretical framework for researching African American women in various contexts (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Black feminist thought is a theoretical lens through which many current researchers tend to investigate African American women's unique experiences (Coker, 2003; Evans, 2007; Few et al., 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Schwartz et al. 2003; Stephen & Phillips, 2005; Thomas, 2004). Aiken, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2001) investigated the participation of Black women in nursing education program and their completion. The researchers studied the encouraging and discouraging factors. They concluded that the participants entered the program for occupational advancement, but discovered discouraging factors: the intersection of race and gender, which contributed to their otherness. According to Aiken et al., a participant noted that terms, such as they, and White women were used to denote White people; however, African American women were under the umbrella of African Americans.

Thompson (1998) conducted a content analysis of colorblindness in psychological literature and the ethic of care in educational settings using Black feminist thought as a theoretical lens. Delgado and Stefanic (2001), Tate (1997), and Thomas (2004) postulate that colorblindness refuses to acknowledge the race and culture differences in people; thereby, operating on the assumption that everyone is being treated equally and they are not. Thompson (1998) suggests that the using Black feminist perspective to investigate

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the ethic of care will aid in eradicating the historical assumptions and eliminating colorblindness in the educational arena that affect teaching and learning. Collins (2000) furthers the dialogue on the ethic of care in Black feminist thought by suggesting that the ethic of care emphasizes uniqueness, allows for the use of emotions in dialogue, and empathy.

Many researchers have discussed the importance disaggregating African American women experiences from those of Euro-American and African American men to address their uniqueness (Collins, 1986; Few et al. 2003; Hooks, 1984; Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Noble, 1955). Collins (2002) states: "Black women's concrete experiences as members of specific race, class, and gender groups as well as our concrete historical situations necessarily play significant roles in our perspectives on the world" (p. 122). Therefore, researchers are to incorporate these constructs and be mindful of these perceptions of the world when researching African American women while recognizing the significance of investigating their experiences.

African American women's participation in higher education continues to increase (NCES, 2002, 2012). Their participation is now beginning to capture the attention of researchers such as, Chambers (2009) and Walpole (2009). However, studies on their experiences are still few and far between or concealed under the headings of women and African Americans (Collins, 1986; Thompson, 2004). Johnson-Bailey (2001) proposes that the experiences of African American are identical to that of White women and African American males because of the way the findings are presented. That conclusion is a misnomer and potentially leads to a misrepresentation of their experiences (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1981; Hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is synthesis of the literature on the transition experiences that potentially affect African American female students' transition path from a community college to a four-year institution transition. Figure 2.1 is a presentation of the relationship of those factors that may potentially affect those factors. First, the early educational experiences may affect the transition. Fulghum (1986) surmised that everything is learned in kindergarten. According to Damico and Scott (1987), Grant (1984) and Morris (2007) support Fulghum theory. They concluded that African American girls experienced racism and discrimination in in elementary school. These experiences establish their place in the education environment.
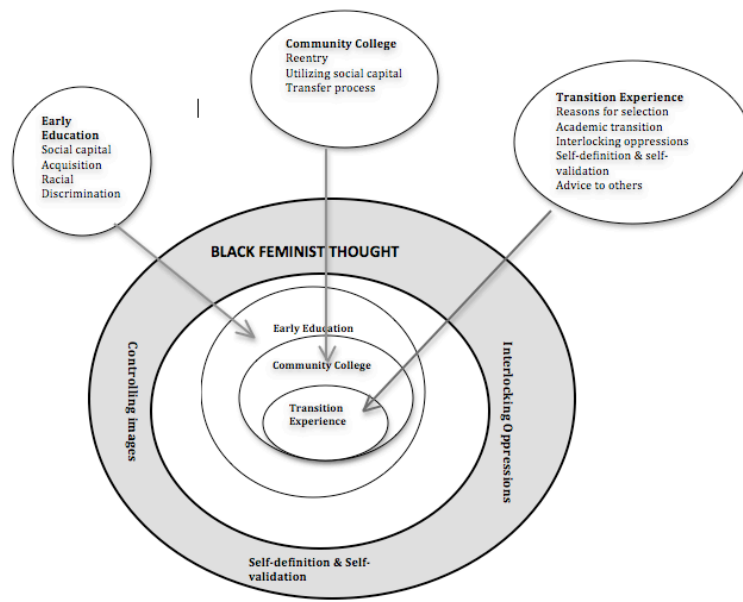
Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework of African American Women's Transition Experience

Pascarella et al. (2003) and Lee et al. (1993) assert that high school preparedness and social capital are determinates in a successful transition. Social capital as stated previously is considered the resources students acquire from their family and community.

The social capital is converted to academic resources to be dispensed when needed. According to Pascarella et al. (2004), a student's early academic educational and nonacademic experiences have a direct impact on a their postsecondary experiences. The experiences may include study skills, high grade point average, and parents' perspective of postsecondary education. The literature revealed that community colleges and four-year work collaboratively to ensure a seamless transfer through their creation of formal articulation agreements and partnerships. However, the students are sometimes forgotten during the transition phase and research lends itself to academic adjustment of the transfer student (Lanaan, 2004; Townsend, 2007). Flaga (2006) and Lanaan (2007) posit that the transition experience extends beyond academic adjustment to include the psychological, and social adjustments. When included in the analysis of the transition experience they provide a comprehensive view of the experience.

A synthesis of the literature also revealed that African American women's view of their experiences are oftentimes incorporated with women as group and African Americans or disregarded all together. According to the literature reviewed, African American women occupied a unique standpoint in from elementary through postsecondary education. The conceptual framework displayed in Figure 2.1 shows that African American women's lived early education, community college, and post transfer experiences are embedded in Black Feminist Thought. As mentioned previously, the underlying principle of Black Feminist Thought is to deconstruct the myths concerning African American women by including their voices in the center of the research process (Collins, 2000; Few et al.; Johnson-Bailey).

As a framework for understanding African American women, Collins (1986) maintains that it provides a space for uncovering the root of African American women's life-world. Black Feminist Thought is necessary to capture their experiences from African American women's ways of knowing and position these understandings in their world. Black Feminist Thought clarifies and substantiates the impact of the interlocking oppressions and controlling images on the lives of African American women. Collins asserts that historically African American women confront and manage these constructs by self-defining and self-validating. Black feminist thought will enable me to illuminate, understand, and present the African American women's voices on the transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus.

Summary of the Literature Review

African American women have had a consistent presence in postsecondary education; however, their experiences are not well documented from early childhood to postsecondary education. Many researchers have argued that African American women's experiences have been hidden under the headings of African Americans or Euro-American women. Their position in research is the source of their invisibility (Johnson-Bailey, 2000; King, 2000; Slowe, 1933). They further posit that African American women's experiences in general are different from those of African American men and Euro-American women because of their subjugated position in history. Even more so the African American women's transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus also appears to be undocumented.

As a result of the scarcity in research on African American women's experiences this literature review consist of studies that aided in understanding and revealing the

African American women lived transition experiences. Therefore, the literature review path led me to the history and role of community colleges and baccalaureate attainment, reentry experiences, studies on African American girls, and transition. In addition to the aforementioned, a survey of African American women's higher education experiences was conducted. These studies revealed the invisibility, isolation and racial discrimination that African American women encounter as they pursue postsecondary degrees.

The literature suggested that African American women experience race, class and gender biases that a have affected their participation in postsecondary education. A review of Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework is presented to provide relevance for viewing African American women through lenses that would address the uniqueness and provide holistic perspective of their lived transfer experience.

Chapter III

Methodology

There is a growing body of research that recognizes race and culture as significant constructs when investigating the experiences of people of color (Parker, 2003; Pillow, 2003). As a result, researchers are calling for methodologies, frameworks, and approaches that incorporate the racial and cultural differences in research practices while embracing lived experiences as reality for people of color, such as African Americans (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Pillow, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997; Tyson, 2003). Tillman (2002) suggests that in order to truly examine and embrace the experiences of African Americans in the research process, a culturally sensitive approach is necessary. This method recognizes ethnicity and position culture as the core of the research process; and acknowledges the historical and current cultural experiences of African Americans (Agyeman, 2003; Collins, 2000; Tillman). These critical factors are sometimes ignored or inadequately addressed; thereby, providing an inaccurate view of African Americans' experiences in research (Agyeman; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009).

Culturally sensitive approaches call for investigational practices that are underpinned by a methodology that would embrace the uniqueness of an underrepresented and marginalized population, such as African American women (Tillman, 2002). These investigational practices petition for research designs, frameworks, data collection and analysis, while embracing life stories, interviews, artifacts, and lived-experiences as criterion of knowledge. A methodology that addresses and embraces a cultural sensitivity approach is a qualitative research (Creswell, 2007;

Few et al. 2003; Tillman). A culturally sensitive approach fulfilled the purpose of this study. The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of African American women transfer students as they transition from a community college to a four-year institution sharing a campus.

Research Questions

1. How did the African American women describe their early educational experiences?

2. How did African American women describe their community college experience?

3. How did African American women describe their lived transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus

4. What additional factors affected the transfer and transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings that are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p. 17). Thus, a qualitative research approach is the template for fulfilling the objective of holistically investigating the African American women's transfer experiences. Hooks (1981), in this statement indubitably captured the need for research on African American women while indirectly calling for a methodology that would appropriately document their experiences.

> No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence, as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate as distinct from black men, or as a part of the larger group "women" in this culture (p. 46).

A qualitative research design undergirded by a culturally sensitive approach has the potential to recognize, report, and distinguish their experiences from those of African American males and women as a group.

Qualitative methods are intended to encompass the entire process of the study from the selection of the research topic through to the writing and reporting of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Walker (1987) assert that a qualitative methodology is useful in making sense of an experience when hardly anything is known. A qualitative approach is interpretive and frequently used to uncover and gain insight into a phenomenon from the participants' perspective while maintaining their integrity (Creswell, 2009).

The qualitative researcher investigating an experience is considered the "human instrument of choice" in data collection and vital to the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data are collected through interviews, observations, field-notes, and journal entries (Straus & Corbin, 1990). The researcher as an instrument, according to Hoepfl (1997), "is responsive to environmental cues, and able to interact with the situation; perceive situations holistically; and explore atypical or unexpected responses" (p. 51). The researcher also seeks to provide comprehensive descriptions of the perception and exhibit empathy during data collection and description of the findings. This comprehensive description allows the language and voices of the participants to resonate throughout the text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Qualitative inquiry acknowledges the fact that as researchers we enter the study with a distinctive set of bias and assumptions; therefore, a space is provided for us to address our biases and assumptions through the process of bracketing (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research calls for an interpretive lens through which the study is framed, such as Black feminist thought. An interpretive stance in qualitative research incorporates all aspects of the study, such identifying the research problem, formulating the research questions, data collection and analysis, and reporting of the findings. Creswell (2007) asserts that researchers using an interpretive lens are concerned with under-represented or marginalized populations. They are seeking to understand, describe, or provide a voice through the research and statement of purpose (Creswell; Maxwell, 2005).

Furthermore, qualitative research is characterized as emerging. The research questions and design and data collection procedures may change during the course of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Finally, qualitative researchers are bound by a set of standards to assess the validity and reliability when conducting research (Maxwell, 1992; Toma, 2011). These standards and their implementations are discussed in detail in the Data Analysis of this dissertation. In short, a qualitative research method seeks to understand the participants' meaning of a phenomenon; employs a naturalistic inquiry process; uncover voices; provide detail descriptions; and is constantly emerging.

However, in order to thoroughly investigate the researcher's qualitative topic of study, an approach must be chosen. According to Collins (1986) and Johnson-Bailey (2000), African American women make meaning of their world through their lived experiences. Phenomenological research emphasizes describing a person's experience through their reality (Creswell, 2007). To answer the research questions and provide a culturally sensitive research environment a phenomenological research approach

buttressed this investigation of the lived experiences of African American women transferring from a community college to a four-year institution that share a campus.

The Phenomenological Approach

Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician and philosopher, is credited for introducing descriptive phenomenology as a means to investigate human experiences (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 1997). Husserl believed that human experiences were directly related to consciousness; thereby, consciousness is important and should be the focus of scientific investigation (Husserl, 1964; LeVasser, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Giorgi further asserts that the consciousness "enjoys a privileged status because it can not be avoided" (p. 236). Consciousness, in its privileged status presents an event or object to us; this presentation is known as intuition (Giorgi, 2009; Husserl). Intuition, according to Moustakas (1994), tells us "what presents itself of its own accord does not betray me" (p. 32). This idea provides a more concrete definition of the word "experience." Therefore, experience is my perception of reality and my reality does not betray me (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas).

Phenomenology is a qualitative research paradigm that seeks to capture an in-depth and rich understanding of the meaning of a person's every day experiences through descriptions (Van Manen, 1990). An in-depth understanding of the experience is gained by asking, "What is this experience like?" (Van Manen, p. 9). Answering the question can be accomplished by studying the lived experiences or life-world (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Lived experiences refer to how a person experiences and interprets his or her world (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen).

The sole intent of phenomenological research is to describe with care the meanings of the lived experiences while reframing from any resources, which has the potential to distort or distract from the meaning of the life-world (Giorgi, 1997, 2009; Husserl, 1964; Van Manen, 1990). Finally, I was seeking to describe the lived experiences of the African American women's transition experience in rich details. The rich details would authenticate the experiences and provide a view of the African American women's perceptions. To gain access to the experiences and extract rich and bold meanings, Husserl's descriptive phenomenology was implemented. The philosophical tenets of descriptive phenomenology are outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

Descriptive Phenomenology

Husserl is known as the father of phenomenology as well as the framer of its descriptive approach to inquiry (Giorgi, 1997, 2009; Groenewald, 2004). This approach is unique in that it "uses only the data available to consciousness-the appearance of the objects" (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1962) considered the importance of knowledge and its relationship to experience. He states, "Natural knowledge begins with experience and remains within experience" (p. 45). Thus, experience is the foundation and meaning of knowledge. This phenomenologist further asserts that life-worlds or lived experiences (common everyday experiences, such as awakening, eating, etc.) are not always readily accessible; they are completed without thinking. Thus, Husserl, according to Giorgi and Moustakas (1994) sought to reexamine the life-worlds to unfold the various structures, such as perception, thought, memory, and emotions.

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When employing the descriptive method the researcher is obligated to describe the lived experience. Therefore, the use of the language of the participant is vital to the process. The use of the participant's language authenticates the lived experience while providing validity to the study. To delve into the structures of descriptive phenomenology, Husserl outlined three essential tenets: bracketing, intuition of essences and intentionality, which serve as guidelines when doing phenomenological research (Husserl, 1964; Moustakas; Van Manen, 1990).

Bracketing. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher using phenomenology approach is committed to setting "aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experiences and professional studies" (p. 22). This "mental purging" is known as bracketing or epoche processing (Giorgi, 2009; Husserl, 1970; LeVasser, 2003; Van Manen, 1990; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Husserl proposes that bracketing allows the researcher to view the participants lived experiences with a sense naivety. Entering the experience with naivety provides rigor. This rigor entails providing an "account for the differences between the past and present as well as the similarities" free from biases and assumptions (Giorgi, p. 91). To go a step further Wojnar and Swanson posit that scholars of descriptive phenomenology suggest reframing from completing an extensive search of the literature on the phenomenon. This will assist in minimizing assumptions and biases. According Giorgi, Husserl's, bracketing of prior knowledge concerning the phenomenon under study would also enable the researcher to pay close attention to the participant's lived experience and describe it with depth and objectivity.

Although bracketing is a critical component of descriptive phenomenology, researchers posit that it is virtually impossible for the investigator to completely purge themselves of all biases and assumptions. Therefore, the researcher should expose their biases and assumptions throughout the research process. While bracketing is crucial to descriptive phenomenology, intuition of essences is equally important.

Intuition of essences. Phenomenology is also the study of essence; it seeks to discover and describe the internal structures of the lived experiences (Giorgi, 2009; Husserl, 1964; Moustakas, 1994). Essences, as discussed by Van Manen (1990), are the "inner essential nature of a thing, the true being of a thing" (p. 177). This tenet searches for the "what" in the meaning of the phenomenon (Wertz, 2005). Thus, this researcher asked, what is the nature or essence of the lived transition experience of African American women? The "what" leads to a description; therefore, it has to be further elucidated (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl, according to Wertz, outlined a procedure for rigor in understanding of the essence or "what" called, free imaginative variation. The researcher begins by identifying "the concrete example of the phenomenon of which one wishes to grasp the essence and imaginatively varies it in every possible way in order to distinguish essential features from those that are accidental and incidental" (Wertz, p. 168). According to Wertz, the incidentals are easily recognized. They universal; hence, the experience is common to all. Accidentals are specific to a participant that is describing the phenomenon. To better understand the semantics of the transition experience from the vantage point of African American women, I participated in Husserl's free imaginative variation as outlined by Wertz.

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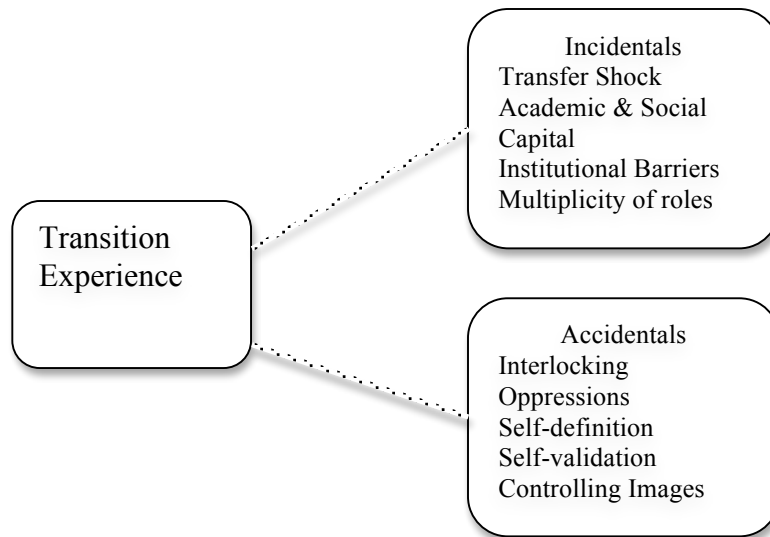
Figure 3.1. Essences of African American Women's Transition Experiences

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. In Figure 3.1 the concrete piece was the transition experience; therefore, it was explored to uncover the incidentals and accidentals. The incidentals were reentry, transfer shock, social and academic capital, institutional barriers, and multiplicity of roles. These incidentals may be common to many women that transfer from a community college to a four-year institution. The accidentals are unique to African American women. The accidentals, possibly the interlocking of race, class and gender, self-definition, self-validation, and culture, are common to African American women (Collins, 1986). This clarifying of the essences leads to intentionality (Moustakas, 1994).

Intentionality. Husserl (1964) described phenomenology as the science of essence of consciousness. Thus, phenomenologists deduced that all things are viewed from the perspective of the consciousness; it is the avenue for all knowledge. Intentionality is the core the consciousness because the mind is constantly directed towards an object or situation (Husserl; Moustakas, 1994). For instance, I see a book, think the sum of the

angles in a triangle is 180 degrees, hear my husband calling my name, drive a car, or like to walk. In other words, my mental life is relative to something beyond itself that has meaning to me.

While the consciousness is directed towards something, Koch (1995) posits our knowledge base for reality, begins with "conscious awareness" (p. 828). Therefore, the meaning of a lived experience is from the first-person point of view (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In order for intentionality to take place, content must be present in the consciousness to illicit the lived experience. Moustakas further asserts that to have knowledge of intentionality, we must understand that "self and world are inseparable components of meaning" (p. 28). Consequently, the intentional content acts as a description for the reality. The purpose is to discover taken for granted experiences and potentially reveal new or forgotten meanings (Laverty, 2003). To gain access to new and forgotten meanings of the lived transfer experiences African American women transferring from a community college to a four-year university that share a campus, a three-tier interview process was implemented. This process will be discussed in detail in the data collection selection of this dissertation.

The Role of the Researcher

My role as an African American female researcher in this study of African American women transfer experience has the potential to be tenacious and subjective. To this study, I bring a transfer experience that is masked under the term, racial integration. In 1965 as a fifth grader, I was one of three African American students and the only female to integrate an all White elementary school in southeast Georgia. As a fifth grader, I endured racial name-calling, harassment, and isolation. As a retired educator, I have

seen the educational system deny African Americans the opportunity to participate in college track courses because of their ethnicity; and their uniqueness ignored because of the inclusive color-blind philosophy. Finally, as an African American female I have experienced double jeopardy, racial micro-aggressions, and viewed through the historical controlling images at each level of my educational journey. My experiences with racial discord had the potential for me to look for or interpret the lived transfer experiences of these African American women from a jaded perspective. Therefore, I maintained a journal throughout this research.

On the other hand, my experiences afforded me the opportunity to take an in-depth view of the research process used to investigate the lived transfer experiences of African American women. My position helped me to realize that this process requires significant thought beginning with the research design to analyzing and reporting my findings (Collins, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). Therefore, a phenomenological qualitative research design and Black feminist thought as my theoretical framework guided the research process. Black feminist thought and phenomenological research complemented each other. They both were concerned with deriving the depth of the lived experience as it related to the participant. Black feminist thought and phenomenological research place lived experiences or perceptions as the primary sources of knowledge for participants (Collins, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). They both guided my creation of research questions, data collection and analysis, and the reporting of my findings. Additionally, Black feminist thought and phenomenology are concerned with keeping the participant at the center of the research.

As the researcher, I was cognizant of the challenges that may have precluded me from becoming an insider; thus, potentially compromising my ability to obtain rich and full data. For instance, these challenges may have included my position as a retired educator. There is an inherent possibility that I may have taught the participant or their children; therefore, there may have been an invisible hierarchical position. Becoming an insider equates understanding that my gender and race does not automatically provide access into their world. My participants and I share race and gender; however, there may be class, level of education, sexual orientation, skin color, and nationality that may have acted barriers (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Seidman, 2006). Therefore, I was mindful of my body language, speech, facial expressions, and "cues that influence the participant-researcher relationship (Few et al., 2003; Seidman, 2007). I made sure that the participants understood their rights and my responsibilities during this research study. I was attentive to the scheduling of the interviews according to their timeframe and adhered to the time specified (Seidman).

My position as a researcher compelled me to disclose my biases (Creswell, 2007; Few et al., 2003; Moustakas, 1994). As an African American woman I bring both past and current experiences of race, gender, and class discrimination. As an educator, I have preconceived ideas about the disparities in education pertaining to African American students as a whole. I also have a personal agenda. It is my goal to empower and encourage the African American women that encounter as they pursue their educational goals. I have plans to use the information gleaned from this study to advance my professional career. In an attempt to control my bias, I engaged in a self-reflexive process throughout the research study and did not lose sight of my research agenda

(Collins, 2000). My research agenda provided a format for the participants to validate their knowledge claims of the transfer experience.

As a researcher, I brought empathy and an ethic of care to the study (Collins, 2000; Few et al., 2003). Black feminist thought proposes that while African American women share a common standpoint, we may have not have shared the experience. However, I am aware of Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001), who surmise that the ethic of care is crucial in confronting sensitive issues involving individuals of marginalized populations. The ethic of care focuses on the importance of acknowledging the culture and diversity with special emphasis of listening, observing and responding to the participants in this research study (Shapiro & Stefkovich).

Research Site

To facilitate a seamless transfer and provide access to baccalaureate degrees, Miles Community College (pseudonym) has a series of guidelines in place. The community college provides academic advisement to potential transfer students. It has a co-registration policy; students can enroll simultaneously in courses offered at the four-year institution. The Miles Community College participates in articulation agreements to enhance the transferability of selected courses. Miles Community extended the possibility of obtaining a baccalaureate degree even further by constructing and opening a university center on its campus. Currently, there are eight satellite universities engaged in community college partnerships located at Hess University Plaza. The study of the lived transfer experiences of these African American women was conducted at Branch University located in Hess University Plaza.

Miles Community College is a public community college located in southern New Jersey. According to the New Jersey Department of Higher Education, there are approximately 2,364 full-time and 1,649 part-time students in credit bearing courses that will lead to an associate's degree. Forty-six percent of the student population is from underrepresented Hispanics and African American. The average age of the students is 26.

Miles Community College has a comprehensive mission with and open-door policy. It accepts students regardless of their academic background; however, potential students are required to take a placement exam to determine their course of study. Miles Community College offers certification and licensures in nursing, radiologic and paralegal studies. It offers continuing education in areas, such as technology, world languages, agricultural classes and babysitting. Finally, MCC offers associate liberal arts and science degrees, which will enable the students to transfer to a four-year institution (New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 2010).

At the time of this research study Branch University's on campus site had 296 students; 22 are African American females transfer students from Miles Community College. To be admitted to the university, the students must apply as outlined in each of the school's catalogs. Upon admission, students adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined by each school. However, the students may enter into a contractual agreement with Miles Community College and Branch University simultaneously. The students enter into an academic program, such as sociology at the community college with two classes remaining prior to obtaining an associate's degree. Then they begin taking classes at Branch University, which leads to a bachelor's degree in sociology.

The Sample Selection

For this phenomenological qualitative study on the lived transfer experiences of African American women, purposeful sampling was used. Qualitative research focuses on small samples that are chosen purposely to enable the researcher to garner in-depth inquiry and an understanding of the phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2003). Furthermore, Giorgi (2009) and Hycner (1985) assert that the ultimate goal is to illuminate and describe a phenomenon. Thereby, the researcher must seek participants that have lived experience in the phenomenon and are able to articulate their experience. Hycner also posits that phenomenological research generates a large quantity data from a single interview; so, a limited number of participants should be used to describe the phenomenon.

My purpose was to describe the life-world experience of African American women that transfer from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. It was most advantageous for me to have conservation with African American women who transferred under those circumstances. Keeping those thoughts in forefront the sampling was initiated. Although my goal was obtain 10 participants to share their lived transition experiences, four agreed to complete the study.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Branch University and my IRB, an appointment was requested with director of Hess University Center to discuss my intent. Upon his approval, contact was made with the academic counselor at Branch University to request perspective participants for my study. The academic counselor selected a Behavioral Science class, which contained the majority of African American females who transferred from Miles Community College. A time was

scheduled for me to visit the class to conduct an informational session about the study. A ten-minute overview of the study was presented to the entire class. The presentation included the purpose, number of interviews, as well as criteria for participation. The criteria included, currently enrolled in Branch University, transferee from Miles Community College, and self-identified African American female. A monetary token of appreciation was also made mentioned.

At the conclusion of the presentation, a show of hands was requested from those interested in participating. Nine African American women responded. The prospective participants were asked to write their name and contact number on a sheet of paper. The majority of the women listed both cell and landline phone numbers. After receiving the information, respondents were contacted the following day via text messaging and telephone calls to schedule semi-structured interviews. However, when contacted, four out of the nine African American women from the Behavioral Science class agreed to take part in the research study.

After analyzing the demographic data, I approached the academic counselor again to request students from other academic areas to provide diversity among the African American female transfer students. She reiterated that the majority of the African American women were enrolled in the Behavioral Science program. However, perchance an African American female meeting the criteria for my study entered the academic counselor's office for a schedule change. She was a Business major. Introductions were made. I provided an overview of my research study and she agreed to participate.

Demographic Data

Table 5.1 contains the demographic data obtained through the semi-structured interviews. All participants were assigned a pseudonym by the researcher at the beginning of each interview. This pseudonym was used to identify them throughout the study. Five women provided their lived transfer experience. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 49; and they all identified themselves as single and not married. Four of the women had children and one did not.

Each participant was a transfer student from MCC and currently enrolled at Branch University. Three held a high school diploma and one a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. The Associate Degrees held by the participants were Social Work, and Business Management. The demographic data also included employment status, remedial class participation, attendance status, and whether or not they considered themselves as reentry. Five women provided their lived transfer experience. Four of the women self identified as African American. The fifth woman self disclosed her Nigerian heritage; therefore, her lived experiences were not included in the findings.

Table 5.1

Profile of Participants

Name	Age	Martial Status	Number of Children	Diploma GED	Remedial Classes	Reentry	Employed	Full or Part time Student
Asha	49	S	4	HS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full
Gale	25	S	3	GED	Yes	Yes	No	Full
Juanita	33	S	2	HS	Yes	Yes	No	Full
Brenda	22	S	1	HS	No	Yes	Yes	Full
Clara	21	S	0	HS	Yes	No	No	Full

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews and locations were then scheduled at the convenience of the participants. For the first interview, two participants requested the local county library due to its proximity to their home. The remaining participants preferred the conference room at the Hess University Center. At the conclusion of the first interview, a time and place for the second interview were scheduled. One participant again chose the county library due to its proximity to her home. Another chose the Hess University Center conference while another participant moved to Delaware; therefore, the interview took place in her home. During the first interview the fifth participant self-disclosed that she was a native of Nigeria. The focus of my study was on the lived experiences of African American women. Therefore, her data was not included in this study. This study focused on the lived transition experiences of four African American women.

Within a qualitative research the researcher has a variety of data collection methods, such as interviews, field notes, and focus groups (Denzin &Lincoln, 1998). Although the researcher has several choices, Creswell (2007), Merriam (1998), and Hoepfl (1997) surmise that the approach, purpose of the study, and information needed to answer the research questions precipitate the data collection procedures. Three methods of data collection were used, semi-structured interviews, field notes and a focus group.

A phenomenology was the approach implemented in this study. Merleau-Ponty (1956) described phenomenology as a means to capture the essence of a lived experience by "defining the essence, the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness" (p. 59). To capture the essence, the phenomenological research interview is the core of a phenomenological research study (Moustakas, 1994). It is designed to extract rich and

bold data using the participant's descriptive experiential account of the phenomena under investigation as well as an insightful understanding (Moustakas; Van Manen, 1990). In order to gain access and provide an in-depth vivid description of the experiential knowledge, Seidman (2006) proposes the three-interview guideline. Each of the interviews maintains a different focus. The first interview requires the participant to reconstruct their life history as it pertains to the topic under investigation up to the present time. The focal point of the second interview is the specific details of the participant's topical experiential knowledge of the phenomena being researched. Finally, interview three necessitates the participant to reflect and make meaning of the matter under study as it relates to their reality.

This focus group was valuable; it provided sufficient opportunities for the participants to reflect, share, and make meaning of their lived experiences as a group (Calder, 1977; Krueger, 1988; Morgan & Spanish, 1984). The focus group acted as platform for the African American women to elaborate and recall specific events that affected their lived transition experience. Madriz (2003) asserted that focus groups are "cumulative and elaborative, stimulate response and aid in recall of life events" (p 73). This focus group was an opportunity to provided closure to the research while enjoying a meal together. The focus group offered me the opportunity to observe the interaction between the participants as they made sense of their reality through the questioning and response that took place among each other. I was able to be an active participant as well as triangulate the semi-structured interview data (Calder; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1996; Morgan & Spanish; Warr, 2005).

My third method of data collection was my filed notes. The field notes were instrumental in capturing the full context of the interview and its effect on the participants, such as participant's behavior and the environment (Marshal, 2002). In addition to capturing the full context of the interview, they provided me with feedback on my interview technique. For example, in my eagerness, I asked a participant, why. According to my notes, she paused and gazed out of the window before answering and then said, "I don't know." Therefore, I understood that I had to continue with, "Please tell me more." The field notes provided information about the focus groups, seating diagram and contributions to the conversation.

   Semi-structured interviews. Prior to the beginning of the first interview for each participant, I started the digital audio recorder and discussed the purpose of the study. The participants read the letter of consent silently. I discussed the contents. The researcher when necessary answered clarifying questions. The consent form was signed. The consent form is located in Appendix A. Interviews began with the 10-mintue collection of demographic data session. The researcher chose to write the responses of the participants with the intent of gleaning as much insight into their lived transfer experience to provide an in depth description. For instance, the participants were asked the number of years that it took them to complete community college. Asha (alias) responded.

> Well, I started in 1984. On and off I went for 20 years before I finished. I did two years, but I went on and off, but I didn't get my associates until 2004. Through deaths in my family having babies, just being a single parent-just life-not knowing what I wanted to do. Losing my mom at a young age (Pause) just going back and forth in life, but not giving up. I actually started college when I was 21 and I graduated with my associates at 40, so really just through life events.

Through this description, I was able to identify that she was a reentry student and factors that contributed to the delay of enter, while laying the foundations for probing inquiries.

All of the participants were assigned a pseudonym by the researcher at the beginning of each interview. This pseudonym was used to identify them throughout the study. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 49 and they were single. Four of the participants had children. Each participant was a transfer student from MCC. Four held high school diplomas and one a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. The Associate Degrees held by the participants were Social Work, Business Management, and Psychology. The demographic data also included employment status, remedial class participation, attendance status, and whether or not they considered themselves as reentry.

First semi-structured interview. After collecting the demographic data, I began the semi-structured interview. The interview lasted approximately one hour. I adhered to an adapted model of Seidman's (2006) three-tier interview Seidman (2006). Seidman suggests that the participants provide a historical background of the phenomenon. Therefore, the participants were asked to reconstruct their early educational experience. See Appendix B for Interview Protocol 1. The interview protocol included five questions. These questions were designed to bring to mind their early educational experiences and any critical incidents that affected their transfer experience. These questions were also designed to gain access to their description of how they define and validate themselves.

Second semi-structured interview. In the second interview, the consent letter and purpose of the study were reviewed. The first interview of each participant was discussed with each participant in order to prepare follow-up questions, provide an opportunity to

delete information, and gain additional clarity. For instance, a participant used the term "black-out" regarding an incident with her son. She was asked for an explanation of the term. The participant defined it as "pissed off-really really mad." They were also asked if they thought about the previous session and if they had anything else that they wanted to clarify, change or contribute. Four of the participants reflected on the previous session and provided additional descriptions, no one wanted to delete or change anything. Next, the participants reconstructed specific details about their early educational journey while providing information about their transfer experience (Seidman, 2006). The Interview Protocol is located in Appendix C.

While an adaptation of Seidman's (2006) interview structure produced a wealth of rich and bold data to answer the research question for four of the participants, an additional strategy was needed for the fifth. During the two interviews, I had a sense that I was not getting to the essence of her lived transfer experience. For instance, after hearing a question the response was, "I don't understand." Once the question was clarified or rephrased, she said, "Well, let me answer it this way."

Qualitative research encourages journaling as a means of data collection (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At the end of the second interview, I provided her with a spiral composition notebook and asked her to reflect on the interviews that we had engaged in and record her thoughts for seven days. She was requested to write the date and time on each entry for seven days. The participant did it for four days. I was invited to her home to retrieve the journal. While there, I was further able to get a sense of lived experiences through her home environment. I also met her

son, which aided in understanding her reality. One participant did journaling; therefore, I was able to arrive at lived experiences during semi-structured interviews.

Finally, while transcribing the interview data, the academic counselor's name was a common thread throughout the participants lived transfer experiences. For that reason, I was compelled to glean insight into academic counselor's interpretation of the transfer experience in regard to these African American women transferees. Consequently, I conducted a semi-structured interview based on the findings from the transcribed data. This interview was conducted with the academic counselor in her office at the university center. Without providing any information from the participants' transcripts, I asked the following question: Please describe your experience with African American women transfer students. The probing stimuli were: Please tell me more or please explain. How does that make you feel?

All interviews were digitally recorded and observational notes were taken. The interviews were scheduled to last one hour; however, with the two of the participants' the time was extended with their permission. On three occasions, the conservation continued as we walked to our cars. A request was made to restart the recorder, the participants agreed. After conducting two semi-structured interviews, the participants and the academic counselor of Branch University were contacted by way of telephone, text messaging, and email to participate in a focus group. All agreed to participate.

Focus group. Harris (1994) said this about a kitchen: "It's where meals and feelings are re-heated and served up anew. It's where life lessons are learned, where tears may be shed and dried, and where family comes together" (p. 6). Furthermore, Collins (2000) and Madriz (2003) posit that African American women have used conversation to

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self-validate and self-define and discuss issues that are important to them. With those thoughts in mind, I procured a private room at a local restaurant to conduct the focus group while we shared breakfast. My intent was to facilitate the session using the focus group protocol; however, the women steered it in a different and purposeful direction. See Appendix D for focus group protocol.

Prior to the women entering the room, I turned on the audio digital recorder and placed it in the center of the table. I wanted to record all conversation. The women entered the restaurant at various times, obtained their food, and preceded to the private room. As they sat down, they engaged in conversation. As each person entered, they joined in the conversation. I gave each a transcribed copy of their two semi-structured interviews and a highlighter. They continued to talk. Three of the participants were Behavioral Science majors and had taken at least one class together. The fourth participant was a Business major and had not taken any classes with the other participants. One participant did not attend.

Field notes. My final method of data collection was field notes. Field notes are written accounts of the researcher's observations (Marshal, 2002; Tjora, 2006; Wolfinger, 2002). Throughout the research process, I maintained a detailed written account of my experiences and interaction with the participants. They included body language, silence, physical environment, interactions, my thoughts and actions, and experiences during the semi-structured interviews and focus group. Before, during, and the end of each session with the participants I took handwritten notes or made digital audio recording. The purpose of the field notes was to gain as much data as possible to write an in-depth description of the African American women's transfer experience.

Data Analysis

The salient justification for using a descriptive phenomenological approach and Black feminist thought as an interpretive lens was to capture the meaning of phenomena and uncover the accidentals (Husserl, 1964; Koch, 1995; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990; Wertz, 2000). African American women's experiences are hidden within the experiences of all women and African Americans. Few et al. recommends using an interpretive lens that position African American women's in their realities. Consequently, Black feminist thought as an interpretive lens, was used analyze the transition experiences of African American women who transferred from a community college to a four-year college sharing a campus. Not only that, a descriptive phenomenological approach requires a researcher to participate in a rigorous analysis of the data (Moustakas, 1994). Each interview session was transcribed verbatim (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). To make it easier to reference themes and clusters during analysis, each line of the transcript was numbered using a feature of Microsoft Word. The analysis process for each interview consisted of eight steps. Figure 3.2 represents Colaizzi's (1978) (as cited in Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) and Giorgi's (1997) steps in data analysis to reveal descriptions of the lived transition experience.
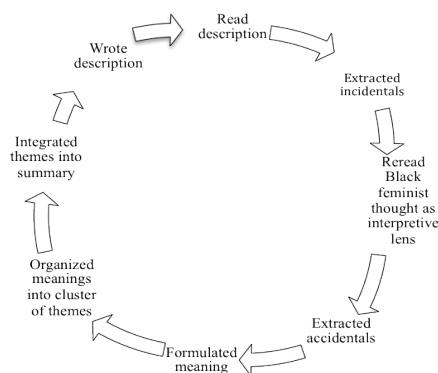
Figure 3.2. Adapted Version of Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi (2009) Descriptive Analysis

Giorgi (2009) asserts that the phenomenological approach is holistic; thus to get a feel for the African American women's stories and identify the incidentals and accidentals data were read through three times. Second, the incidentals were extracted, those transitional experiences that are common to all students. Third, the data were read to using Black feminist thought as an interpretive lens and the accidentals were extracted (transitional experiences unique to African American women). Fifth, meanings were formulated and organized into clusters of themes. The themes were integrated into a summary. Finally, description of each participant's phenomenon was written.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are the means of which quality research is assessed. Schwandt (2007) defines validity as the "criteria that serves as a benchmark for inquiry" (p. 309). Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that validity is one set of criteria in qualitative research to determine the trustworthiness of the naturalistic investigations and procedures of the study. Trustworthiness is the "quality of the investigation and its findings that made it noteworthy to audiences" (Schwandt, p. 299).

Although phenomenology is a qualitative research approach, Beck (1994) and Giorgi (1997, 2009) aver that reliability and validity in phenomenological research may have different meanings. Phenomenology is designed to illuminate and understand the meaning of the lived experience from first person point of view (Van Manen, 1990). The reality of the participant's lived experience participant is inherent (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, phenomenology seeks to describe the lived experience (Husserl, 1964).

Reliability and validity are assessed from the perspective of the lived experience. Reliability in phenomenology operates on the premises that "human perception is

perspectival and contextual" (Osborne, 1990). The human perception is based on a person's lived experience. Although the participants' are presented with the same phenomenon, their experiences will produce different meanings. These meanings are not repeatable; however, they create multiple realities that ultimately produce a coherent description of the shared phenomenon (Giorgi & Osborne). Phenomenology research is concerned with the meaning of an experience. In short, reliability stems from the same phenomenon, but different experiences. Reliability (same phenomenon) in this study was the transfer experience of African American women.

Osborne (1990) asserts that reliability measures the consistency and validity assesses the reliability. Giorgi's (2009) criteria for assessing reliability and validity was used in this phenomenological study of the lived transfer experiences of African American women that transferred from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. First, Giorgi suggest that the researcher should bracket his/her bias and assumptions and describe in detail the data collection and analysis. In order to bracket, I addressed my biases and assumptions on the transfer experiences of African American women, race, class and gender, racial micro-aggressions, and thoughts on education in a description of my role as a researcher. In addition to the addressing my biases and assumptions in my role as a researcher, I maintained a detailed journal of my experiences during the research process. Prior to and at the end of each session, I recorded my thoughts and reviewed them prior to each session. As Moustakas (1994) suggests, no matter how much effort you devote to bracketing, it is challenging.

Although bracketing throughout this study was challenging, I was extremely cautious during data collect and analysis stages. I used multiple data collection strategies,

Seidman's three-tier interview model, a focus group, and collected field notes to illuminate the transfer experiences. The interview protocols were designed to elicit an in-depth description of the transfer experience of the African American women (Van Manen, 1990). Throughout the course of extracting the meanings of the phenomenon, I adhered closely to the adapted versions of Colaizzi (1978) as cited in Love (2010) and Giorgi (1997, 2009) method of descriptive data analysis. The researcher Triangulation occurred through the corroboration of the participants lived transfer experiences found in data through the transcripts, researcher's notes (field notes) and focus group (Van Kaam as cited in Moustakas, 1994). According to Giorgi (1997) the final step in the assessment of validity is to what extent the description resonates with the experiences of other people who have experienced the phenomenon.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

According to phenomenological researchers Giorgi (2009) and Moustakas (1994), it is assumed that researchers will actively engage with the participants. The researcher is considered an instrument that is allowed access to the participant's lived world. Therefore, the experiences of the participants are subjected to human perception, recollection, and interpretation (Moustakas). Additionally, phenomenological researcher the researcher is required to bracket. As an African American female, there is an inherent possibility that I brought my lived experiences in the area of racial, gender, and class. The inability to completely bracket my biases during the research process can threaten the credibility of the study (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990).

It was assumed that African American women can articulate their transition experience best through oral narratives. The study operates on the assumption that

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participants will be honest in their responses to the questions. It is inferred that the participants will describe their lived experiences based upon their perceptions. It is conjectured that the participants will be willing to share their lived experiences with the researcher. The questions posed during the semi-structured may limit the response on the participants.

There is the possibility of time constraints for the researcher and the participants, such as participants may have responsibilities that conflict the scheduled interview or unable to participate in the three interviews.

Summary

The realities of African American women necessitate a research methodology that is culturally sensitive (Few et al, 2003; Tillman, 2002). A culturally sensitive approach is aware of African Americans' historical and cultural experiences. To answer the research questions and bring to light the voices of African American women transfer students, a phenomenological qualitative study was designed and implemented.

A phenomenological qualitative approach operates on the premises that "the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge" as well as a means of providing rich thick data for the study (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006, p. 163). This approach provided the backdrop for the use of Black Feminist thought as a theoretical framework. Black Feminist thought posits that the voices of African American women are valuable and viewed as a legitimate source of data (Collins, 2000). Phenomenology acknowledges the voice as an authentic method of data collection.

Hooks (1981) and Lorde (1984) assert that when investigating the lived experiences African American women's subjugated position in history should be

incorporated. Phenomenologist Keen (1975) says, "Because everything I do has something to do with my self, everything I do has something to do with my past and my future as well" (p. 82). Collins (2000) maintains, Black women have developed a distinctive standpoint by using alternate ways of "producing and validating knowledge" (p. 270). Phenomenology is an effective method for recovering the knowledge Moustakas (1994). All in all phenomenology is a valuable research method for uncovering the voices of marginalized groups, such as African American women.

Chapter IV

Participants' Narratives

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the transition experiences of African American women transferring from a community college to a four-year university that share a campus. Phenomenology is the study of the essences of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) asserts that phenomenology seeks to describe and illuminate the lived experiences with "richness and depth." In order to gain insight and draw out a vivid description of the African American women's lived experiences, research questions were developed to uncover the participants' early educational, community college, and transition lived experiences. As mentioned in Chapter III, Seidman's (2004) three-tier phenomenological inquiry process was implemented. This method of inquiry seeks to address the phenomenon in three concepts: past, present, and future.

As predicted by Hycner (1997) and Seidman's (2004) this phenomenological method of inquiry produced a large volume of data. The narratives presented are relative to answering the research questions and provide a brief insight into the African American women's perceptive of the transition. The narratives contain the participants early educational, community college and transition experiences, and advice to future African American women considering transferring.

Consistent with phenomenological research and Black feminist thought, the narratives are presented in the participants' voices, which reinforce the authenticity of their lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Collins, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Collins and Moustakas advocate the use of the participants' language; therefore, the

narratives are written in their vernacular. As mentioned previously, a vast amount of data was produced as the women told their stories and the content of the narratives is designed to answer the research question; therefore, to maintain continuity throughout the narratives, brief statements are inserted when applicable. To assist in understanding each African American woman's standpoint, a brief biographical sketch is presented before her narrative. The narratives place each African American woman in the center of her lived transition experience (Collins, 2000 & Moustakas, 1994).

All participants were assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentially. Great effort was also made to safeguard the participants' responses by altering any identifying information, such as city of residence, their children's and professor's names. As referenced in the sample section of Chapter III, the study focuses on the lived experiences of self-identified African American women (Black woman of African descendant born in the United States). During the initial sampling, Brenda, Gale, Juanita, Asha, and Clara responded to the request to participate as African American women. According to Davis (1983) Hooks, (1981), Lorde (1984) and Thomas (2004), African American women have a distinct view of events that impact their lives; their experiences with slavery, societal images. My purpose was to present the transition experiences from the perception African American women born in the United States.

Brenda

Brenda is a 22-years old single mother of an 18-month old daughter. She is currently employed part-time and a full-time student. Brenda attended a Historically Black College immediately after high school. She reported she was not ready for college and "stopped out." At the time of this study, Bernice was working simultaneously on associate and bachelor degrees in Business Management at Miles Community College and Branch University.

Early educational experiences. I started school in New York. The most that I remember about elementary school is my fifth and sixth grade teacher, Mr. Foster. I remember in his classroom it was never really a classroom. We use to learn in a classroom the first half of the day. After lunch he would take us outside in the schoolyard and we would draw with chalk- maps and math. He was my favorite teacher up until high school. I moved to northern New Jersey in seventh grade. After we moved, I didn't like school in seventh and eighth grade. I hated it. I didn't want to be in New Jersey. I didn't start to like school again until my junior year of high school mostly because I didn't have teachers that made me want to learn. I guess that it had a lot to do with me not wanting to be there-me wanting to still be in New York with my friends. I really didn't want to connect with the teachers and students. I did well in school. I just didn't want to be there.

In eighth grade we moved to south Jersey. My best friend that I have now she says she remembers me in freshman year. I would sit in the lunch room alone and do work. I didn't talk to anybody and I didn't want anybody to talk to me. I would do homework all throughout lunch and I would go home and watch TV. That was high

school up until junior year; I got involved with the track team. And then I started making friends and started liking school again because I found something I loved I got involved with the boys track team. I was the manager. I started writing on the school newspaper. I became a peer mediator. I guess that's when I started finding teachers that started to talk to me and find out that I am smart and I liked school. I just needed somebody that would find the time to get to know me.

Probably like many middle school students, Brenda was unhappy with moving and leaving familiar surroundings. After a period of adjustment, according to Brenda, a teacher showed interest and she opened up.

I guess it had a lot to do with me sitting in the back of the classroom, keeping to myself, and not letting anybody approach me. I would run out of class at the bell and come in class right before the bell rings. And leave right at the bell. I never really gave them a chance to get to know me. The teacher who actually reached out to me first was my math teacher, Mr. S. He made me love math. He asked me to tutor a student that really wasn't getting it. He started talking to me. Asking me where I was from and things like that. He actually became one of my favorite teachers. I talked to him up until maybe two years after I graduated.

In addition to making adjustments, Brenda was confronted with racism. She found the encounter uncomfortable and confusing.

When I was in seventh grade at a track meet one of the other coaches didn't like the fact that we had a Black runner running with all of the other White runners. My coach didn't like that. I heard this I was standing there. He said why is that nigger running with my runners pretty much. At first, I didn't really what to do. I guess being in seventh grade

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it made me feel bad because that was my friend. It made me feel weird to be around that coach. I was never exposed to that. My family was not like that. My mom she doesn't used those words. She never really talked like that around my sisters and me. She's just not that way. I was never really exposed to that kind of language. I guess I was kind of sheltered. I don't know how to deal with certain situations. So, in a situation like that I didn't know how to respond. I didn't know what to say. I looked at my coach like-what are you going to do? I didn't know what he was going to do. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what he was going to say, but I knew that he should do something. He went up to the official and told him that the coach was disrespectful and pretty much got the coach written up and all that stuff.

Brenda wove the stories of high school and middle school in her description. A sense of pride was observed as she described her pathway to college. However, the need to spend some time away from college was important. Brenda was not ready for that journey. As a result, she explained that it reflected in her academic performance.

I actually got accepted to two Historically Black Colleges. My sister told me I should come to Hillside (pseudonym), in Washington, D. C. I didn't mind because Hillside was my first choice. I had to take a placement test to see where I was at for math and reading. I think it was math and reading. They sent home what was going to be on the test. When they did that, my mom went to the bookstore and got all of this stuff to help me study. I had to study for that. They started in August, but still I had to go down there. I took the placement test in the middle of the summer. I had to do that which was fine. I didn't really mind that. I did pretty good. I didn't get in any remedial classes.

I went to Hillside for two semesters. As a freshman I just wasn't ready for school. I didn't want to go to school anymore. I just knew where my mindset was. I didn't want to be in school anymore. At that point, I was just done with school. I didn't want to go to a classroom and be sitting down doing work and writing papers. I wanted to go out and have fun. Maybe travel a little bit, but that didn't happen. I just did not want to go there and be sitting in the classroom and my grades showed that I really wasn't putting in the effort that I should have been; now A's and B's then Cs and Ds. I did enough to pass. Back then a D was passing. I was happy with a D back then. I passed. I didn't have to retake it. Now I do because it didn't transfer.

Community college experience. I finished my first year at Hillside and came back to New Jersey. When I decided that I wasn't going back, I didn't tell anyone. I didn't even tell my mom, so up until two weeks before classes started; my mom was still pushing me to go back. At that time, I didn't have a dorm room because my grades were so low. I was on academic probation, so you don't get housing. It was first come first serve which was based on your academics. So I didn't have housing. My sister was asking me to come and live with her because she went to that school and lived near there. I didn't want to do that either. I kept pushing back. I didn't want to give my answer, so when I started working. I said I'm not going back. I was happy being here. I went to Grant Community College (pseudonym) a week before classes started and applied. They transferred my credits from Hillside. I did not have to take another placement test because I had already been accepted at a four-year college. I started classes.

Brenda's description of her entry into community college fits the description of many that chose to go to community college. However, she expressed with sadness the inability to stay focus on her educational goal.

I did really well there-dean's list-honor roll-I started working at family services during my first semester there (community college). I was thinking…I think going to community college first it would have been better for me academic wise. Then I could have taken one or two courses, instead of being away and having to be fulltime. I could have taken one or two courses worked a little bit and still have my life and still do well in school. But then I kind of went down hill after the first semester. No more honor roll and Dean's list, but I kept my job. And then after that second semester I ended up getting pregnant. I took a couple of semesters off after my daughter was born. I back went to school and took one or two classes at a time, but I wasn't really interested. I went because I had a grant and got a refund check from financial aide. As long as I was enrolled, I would get a refund check from the money that was left over. That was the fun part. I still wasn't interested in going to school.

According to Brenda, the birth of daughter was a watershed moment. She realized the benefits of postsecondary education and made the necessary changes.

After I had my daughter, I kind of distanced my self from the people I was hanging out with. I realized that I can't make the life for her that I want being with them and being around them, so I needed to go to school and make something better for myself. I took summer classes at the local community college and did well. Then we moved to this area and I became interested in school again. I transferred from Grant to (MCC) as a business major right after moving here. I began to enjoy school again. Now, I

don't have the time to be bothered in anything. I wake up in the morning; drop my daughter off at daycare; and go straight to work. Pick her up; drop her off at my grandmother's or her father's house; go straight to school; and wake up and start all over again.

In addition to becoming more focused, Brenda expressed delight in her courses.

One thing that I remember the most was the psychology class that I had. The professor was one of my favorites. He would keep us the entire class time. I hate for a professor to keep us the entire time especially if it is a night class, but I loved this class. I loved psychology and he would sit there and talk to us about real life experiences and about real life situations, about patients. He would relate his patients that he has dealt with over the years to situations that are in the book. That way we can relate and understand. We would walk in the class and we would read from the book and he would explain it to us from his point of view from the patients. Most of us would understand it.

While the psychology class was a pleasure, Brenda's description of a history class discussion on slavery left her with feeling uncomfortable, confused, and perplexed.

Let's say we would be talking about slavery or something like that. Nothing in peculiar that sticks out in my mind, but things that students have said; teachers have said. It made me feel like isn't society passed this point to where things like that don't need to be said. I would be sitting there thinking like why would you say that? I don't remember any exact words. If we were talking about slavery, someone would say something like, if they weren't so lazy' that is the sort of thing they would say. A student would say something like, if they would do what they are suppose to do, they would not have gotten beaten-or attacked or something like that.

You know, I understand slavery and its affects. I am thinking they shouldn't be slaves; they are human beings. They are people and should not be own by another person. That's just my view. Obviously, that student's view was that person owns them and they should do what they are told. We are in 2012 right now or 2009 or 2010 wherever I was when I was taking that class. My mindset is you should have the brain cells to know that that was wrong to that a human being and that a person should not own another person.

I went to high school with these kids. I know where they lived and know how they grew up. In a big house having everything handed to them. Knowing that they can go home and ask for this and always get it. So, they didn't mind saying things like that. It was like a joke to them. I felt like they didn't want to understand how slavery made African Americans feel. and that they never really they never really want to understand it. So, I didn't respond because like I said I know these kids. No matter what I said to them it didn't matter. They are going to think what they want to think. They are going to brush me off and say whatever. The teacher didn't really help because it was an open classroom say what you feel and the conservations could not leave the room. I also felt like I didn't understand why would in this day and time people still think like that. I had hope that it would have gone away by now that's all.

According to Brenda, she understood the historical background of slavery and had an acute awareness of racial differences. Her goal was to put it all behind her and live her life in the present.

I knew that's what they were talking about but I didn't relate myself with that I don't know why. I don't ever really do. I know what it is. My great-great grandmother was a couple years shy of being in slavery. So, I know it is like right here in my family,

but I still kind of not thinking about my self being that or being there. It doesn't necessarily bother me. Being a descendent of that, but being I kind of separate myself from history. I guess I separate myself from that history. Either way that you put it, I try and separate myself from that history. And try and think of myself as I am now and in this society which is free and I can go anywhere and do what I want. I know that history does repeats itself sometimes. I hope that part doesn't. I guess I kind of live in a bubble because I don't like talking about it. I know about it. I acknowledge it. I don't want to say that it doesn't affect what I'm doing, but I don't let it hinder what I am doing. I know that Black people were treated different during slavery and I know that I am treated different.

While the class discussion on slavery was not directed specifically towards her, Brenda felt the subtle impact of racism in an encounter with the registrar at the community college.

The registrar staff I just feel like the couple times that I have been there-especially the one time I came in there and I had my daughter with me. The way she looked at me. I was sitting there trying to fill the paper work out. My daughter wasn't crying. She wasn't screaming. She was just standing there and looking around. That wasn't the first time she looked at me like that. I didn't really think about it as being something racial or her discriminating against me. I just thought she was having a bad week. So, I left it alone. I brushed it off. The second time it was a bit more obvious maybe because I had my daughter with me. It wasn't just me.

I noticed her looking at a couple of other African Americans like that. Just starring for no reason. The next couple of times I went in there, she was still doing it and the way that she down talked me. I needed to get approval to take three courses in one

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semester during the summer. She asked me why I wanted to do that. And she said, 'Don't you know that it is going to be hard to do. I told her, Yes, I do; I got approval. I just need you to sign the paper. She was very rude and disrespectful towards me. It kind of made me uncomfortable to be in her presence. The way she was talking to me in front of other people. There was another White student there and she was there with her mom. She was talking to them and she was pleasant.

Brenda became silent as if deep in thought. Finally, she acknowledged that her race, class, and gender might have contributed to her treatment by the registrar. Although the interlocking oppressions were presence, Brenda decided not to embrace the encounter and move on with her life.

I was thinking maybe it is because I had my child with me and she assumed that I got pregnant as a teenager. Which isn't true; that's what a lot of people think I am too young to have my daughter. I don't know. I think her assumptions of my class played in there and race. I had on sweat pants and a t-shirt I had my daughter with me she assumed that I was lower class. I thought about it some more how she looked at me and my daughter. But I think… I think after I leave a situation I will think about it for a minute. I try not to think about it anymore. I really try to. I'll think about it for a minute about the things that I could have done differently; things that I didn't like about the situation. Then I just put it to rest. I feel like I have too much going on now to dwell on things like that I don't let that bother me. I won't let it be a barrier to me. I won't let them affect me for 10 or 20 days not even 10 years or anything like that. I am going to let them have those five minutes and be done with it. I look at it as a learning experience and I can deal with it better.

Brenda attended a four-year college immediately after high school, transferred to two community colleges. Eventually, the decision was made to get a degree as soon as possible; therefore, Brenda inquired and decided to take classes at MCC and Branch simultaneously.

Transition experiences. I was tired of being in school for so long. So I knew that I wanted to finish as soon as possible. So when I knew that I was close to being done at MCC. I looked at my options. I discovered that I could take courses at Branch and MCC at the same time, which was considered a transfer. So I decided to go to come here because it was economical…I liked the fact that it had seven-week courses and Branch is located on MCC's campus. I came over and talked to one of the counselors and she told me I could start here and not finish at Miles. I picked summer classes. My plans were to finish at Miles this summer. So I did what I needed to do after that and registered for classes.

Brenda chose to transfer from MCC to Branch University for a pleothra of reasons. She expressed that initially the academic transition seamless; however, eventually it became challenging. The necessary steps were taken become successful in her new academic environment.

It was an experience. At this point academically I am very ready to be in school. I want to do very well and that transition period for me –the first block of the summer I did great. The second block, I took on more than I should've because I was still taking classes at Community College, so I overwhelmed myself-that was an experience in it self. I had migraine headaches and that sometimes hinder how worked.

But I loved the seven-week courses, I struggled with it in the beginning. I wasn't use to it yet. I was use to the full 13 to 14 week semesters to finish everything and then cramming everything into seven weeks. I wasn't there yet. I was good at it the first block. The second block I struggled. I was busy at work and taking two courses at University and one at Community College. I struggled horribly. My grades dropped. I am going to have to retake the class. I am taking it as a learning experience. So, I think I struggled with time management.

I got a planner. I am still figuring out how to use it because I never had to. I went as far as asking my mom how to use it. I was desperate. So, she showed me how to use it and I have been good. So far the first week I have been good. I got my stuff done early. Plus I have support from my family with my daughter that helps a lot. Her dad watches her two nights a week when I come to class. The rest of my classes are online, so my mom and grandmom watches her. Without the three of them I wouldn't get anything done. Other than my time management I don't think I struggled with transitioning over.

Brenda implemented corrective measures to ensure academic success during her transition. As she explained why it was imperative for her to finish school in a hurry she became sad and cried.

 The job I have right now (pause) I love my job. I just don't get paid enough. I am working in social work and it's part-time. It is one hour short of full time, so I don't get benefits. They do that on purpose so technically it's two part time jobs. They broke it up, so that they don't have to pay me benefits. One person left and they decided that they were not going to rehire for that job. Now, guess who has to do it. They decided that there was no money to pay me to do it. I am tried of doing it. *(Brenda begins to cry.)*

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I feel abused at work. I want to go to school, so that I can leave there and do something better for my daughter. I want to make more money, so that I can give her the things that I want her to have. I drive to work and I laugh about it. I have been working there for almost four years and I walk in the building and everything around me has changed. I feel like I have outgrown my job. I don't want to leave now without having the education. I am going to feel stuck somewhere else. I look online for jobs and I don't qualify for them yet, not until I finish school. I don't know what to do. I was thinking I should get my master's in behavioral science, but business is always my first love. All of my education is in business and my work experience is in social work that's my dilemma. But my first love is business.

Although Brenda's work experience is related to social work, she stated that she would continue on the business track. The classes were not very diverse; and she was the only African American female. These factors led to her concern about the absence of African Americans in business classes.

A lot of my business courses I am taking online, but some business courses I have are face-to-face. I don't see many African Americans. In the class that I had last night, I am the only African American female. I am the only African American in there period. My teacher he is African American. I feel-I don't feel so alone, but I look around and I am the only one that looks like me. It is not disheartening-but it's just- and I say where is everybody? I am thinking they chose a different major and they are not-not doing anything with their lives.

When Brenda was describing her business classes, she reported that oftentimes she is treated differently not because of her race and gender, but as a result of her gender.

I have gotten more of that-treated more different because I am female than African American. Like when we have group projects it was you do the research. If we have to present-you do the research and we do the talking type thing. I can get up and present just as well as you can. It is kind of like they overpower me because I'm female and they are three guys. This is from all guys, African Americans and Whites. So I get treated different more because I am a female than an African American female.

During the second interview, Brenda shared the source of her love for her current academic major. Not only that, she acknowledged the pressure of being an African American woman in a business class.

I guess when I was in high school-that's when I fell in love with business. I always had teachers telling me that it is good for African American females to be involved in business because we could go far because it's not just that part of it but businesses want to see females. They want to see African American females, so I have the double whammy. I just felt like more people should be doing it, but I guess it has more to do with do what you love – for me I love business. But it can be very good or it can be very bad. I mean they don't want to I mean they don't want to hire African Americans – they don't want to hire females they don't want females to go to the top at a lot of companies.

And I see the double whammy in my business classes. I am the only Black female, so it is either I am going to prove that I can do really well or I'm not going to do

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really well. A lot of times I feel that I have to do really well because I am the only Black female in there. Sometimes I do that to myself. I try not to because I know that I can only do so much with the way my schedule is. Especially when I am in a class verse being on line, so while I am in the classroom; I see that I am the only Black female in that classroom. I feel like I have to prove myself and do really, really, well. It's hard not to when you know that there are so many negative opinions of us. I feel like if I can show this one teacher who may have a bad view that I can do well and succeed in this classroom maybe I may change their view of African American females in the business world and in academics. I feel that I have to push myself even harder to do that.

As a result of her transition experience, Brenda offered a plethora of advice for African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year institution sharing a campus.

Advice to others. Don't take on more than you can handle. You know yourself academically because you have gotten this far. You know your personal life. You have a life outside of school you most likely work; have a husband; have kids-all of those things. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Once you do that, you will become over whelmed; trying to catch up here trying to catch up there. I was doing that this summer. I took on more than I should have. I knew that in the beginning. I knew that going in. I just figured that if I just push myself I can do it and I couldn't. I pushed myself too hard I burned out before the semester was over.

Don't take on more than you can handle. Know if you can do online classes or not if you do well in them then you may be okay with them. Know that online at Branch is not the same as MCC online. That was something that I had to figure out. The

Blackboard is set up it's the same. The way that they put in their assignments or posts or things like that are not the same, so you may miss stuff. As far as being in the classroom, some teachers are as not as laid back as community college teachers. They don't give you extension to do this and so that. They want it when it's due or you don't get graded for it, so recognize your due dates and stay on top of that. Take one or two courses in the summer just to get yourself prepared for the fulltime schedule. I'm failing. Doing the summer helped me for this semester because I know what to expect.

Stay on top of things when it comes to school and don't accept the first opinion. Always get second third and fourth opinion. The one person may not be necessarily telling you the wrong thing, but they may not be telling you everything. For example, when I call up the financial aid office I may ask a question and I may get the answer I'm satisfied with. I'll call back a week later get somebody else and ask them that same question and they'll tell me more information. That happened today like as far as when the loans are going to applied to my student account it was week before the due date bill and I was getting worried. I called there and they told me it was going to be applied on a certain date. I said okay and hung up. I called back because all of my money wasn't there and I got the whole story. You get what you are offered and then you get what your options are. Always ask them more than once.

Sit in the front. I find that if you sit in the front you participate more. You don't miss as much as you do when you sit in the back. Sitting in the back you have students in front of you who maybe distracting you. I know what distract means. I try and sit in the first or second row you pay attention more to the person up front.

In addition to offering advice to transitioning African American women, Brenda provided recommendations for both MCC and Branch University.

At Hillside there was the student center. There were upper classmen to help you and walk you through what you needed to get done, as far as picking classes, and knowing which classes to take. You had advisors to do that. A lot of times advisors aren't taking the classes it is the students. They know which teachers are easy to deal with. Which teacher may match your learning style with their teaching style. Only other students who have taken that course can do that because only other students know what you are going through. There is no transition not as far as that.

They academic counselor was great and she helped me a lot, but she hasn't sat in the classroom with these specific teachers. They haven't taken classes online with these specific teachers and if they have they may not be the teachers that I need. They may not be the classes that I need. Being partnered up with another student who just did it or has done it recently can help you a little bit more; and tell you to take this with this class. Don't take these to classes at the same time because they have done it. They know.

Brenda stated: "I needed to go to school to make something better for myself." This statement is indicative of her description of her transition experience. She understands the importance of academics. She insisted that she is not only going to school for herself, but for many African American women. Most of all she views education as a means to an end for she and her daughter; therefore, the transition experience appears to be apart of her master plan.

Gale

Gale is a 25 year-old single mother of three sons under the age of 12 and my former math student. She is currently employed and attending school fulltime. Gale dropped out in her senior year of high school, but earned her GED within the year she would have graduated. Gale reentered college two years after earning her GED. She has an associate degree in Social Science and currently working on a bachelor's degree in Behavior Science. As Gail shared her description of her transition experience, she was often very candid and intuitive about the issues of race class and gender.

Early educational experiences. I'll start with my first grade because these are the people that I always remember. I probably can't remember my second grade teacher. I remember Mrs. H. she was real stern. I had trouble with my vowel sounds a lot. She really tried to help me. I had speech therapy. Sometimes she would keep me after school and get in touch with my mom. Now that I am older I know that she didn't have to do that as a first grade teacher. She tried to get me into a lot of programs with different people like friends that she thought might could help me. My aunt that was in fourth grade, she would have her come down to the classroom and have her work with me and that kind of stood out for me. As a teacher, I felt like she was really concerned about my education.

Mr. Davis, in fourth grade, he was the type-he was the first teacher that ever let me express myself. The first adult that I can say let me express myself. He knew I had an attitude problem. I had an attitude problem. I was always either-I didn't bother people. I just didn't like to be bothered. And if you bothered me, I would lash out. I kind of threw tantrums, stomped away and rolled my eyes, and things of that nature. He let me express

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it by playing Rosa Parks. You know the scene on the back of the bus for Black heritage month. I was able to get that role. There were a couple of girls going for it, but I was able to obtain the role because I had the attitude behind it. That's what he wanted. With the attitude that I had I was able to express. I was able to feel it as if I was living it. I can say he took that energy and channeled it to something positive.

Let's skip to you now. I thought you were the meanest lady. I thought you were so mean, but now I see why you were like that. I just see that you wanted us to be stronger. You wanted us to make it basically. I use to be so scared of you, so with the other teachers I probably would have played around and talked, but I didn't do that with you because you didn't play that.

You are African American and a female and at that time you probably knew that where as us students didn't know what was needed for us to be successful and to be able to overcome a lot of obstacles that we would probably face. Some of those obstacles could have been learning obedience from a teacher so that we could get an education. At that age some of us should have probably had that kind of obedience to sit and get an education. But we didn't. Because society I feel like that there is a difference between what is expected of Blacks and what's is expected of Whites no matter where you are in society.

Gale was mindful of her history and the role her teachers played. She appeared to be very perceptive of position as an African American student; recognized the lack diversity among her teachers; and absence of the ethic of care among some of teachers.

In that school that I was attending you were the only African American teacher that I had. There weren't a lot of African American teachers whereas the school was

multicultural, but it had more African American students. And I just don't think that a lot of teachers-I don't want to judge. I am not trying to say that they were prejudice in no kind of way. I am saying they were there just to do their job. I don't think they really cared whether we (African American students) succeeded or not. I don't think they really cared whether we succeeded or not.

Not caring looks like knowing that I am struggling with something as far as the homework or schoolwork. Knowing that I am struggling with something and I am expressing as a student whether I express it verbally or nonverbally, but I am expressing it. You just don't take the necessary action to help or you don't have the time, or making time. For some teachers, I can't speak for all. Some teachers, I could be raising my hand for a question and we (African Americans) just don't get answered. Like it is always out there may be it is just a coincidence. I just looked at it as they felt like I didn't know the answer. Maybe they (White teachers) just didn't want to hear my answer; or something where they got a lot of awards. I don't feel like we were rewarded much; we, speaking as African Americans. I don't feel like we were rewarded for much of anything.

In addition to not feeling neglected, Gale felt like the positive reinforcement was not equally distributed. She eluded that the needs of the African American students were not addressed because of their socioeconomic status and the absence of her family's d academic and financial resources.

I say such as perfect attendance; whereas it just goes deeper into. I say perfect attendance; okay, Black families where a lot of them struggle maybe our parents or the single parent had to be somewhere and they wouldn't be back in time to pick us up, so we had to miss school. So, now just because we missed that day; no matter if we explained it

or not we wouldn't get that award for perfect attendance. Whereas I feel like they had more resources a lot of more resources for them. So something like that and another way. I would also say rewards in academics. They (African Americans) just didn't have it (education)-some of the parents. I know my parents-my dad he went to the eighth grade. By the time I was in the seventh grade, none of that work he was able to help me with.

My mom was at work by the time I got home from school. That left me to have to wait for my older brother to get home from school. So, I didn't have the necessary resources to help me at that time. So my struggle came from that my parents just didn't have it. My mom graduated from high school, but the new math she wasn't aware of any of that. My parents just couldn't help me. And that could very well be a case for a Caucasian family, but they just still have more resources. My extended family couldn't help me either because they are illiterate. Like literally my whole father's side is illiterate. A lot of them still have two parents in the household and even extended families or being able to go to the community centers. When I was in seventh grade there were no community centers. Their (White) churches had community centers and other places had community centers. We had no community centers. I think that maybe we should have had community centers, but somebody just didn't care enough about us to put a community center around places like the ghetto; meaning the low income poverty areas. Putting them in the low-income poverty areas could have a given us a chance to go far in life (sighed). All of that had an impact along with my own stuff; meaning like not feeling just having low self-esteem. I know I had problems with my vowel sounds. I struggled with that. That wasn't easy for me. I always knew that math was my favorite subject. I

never once stated that I had a problem with reading, which I did have a problem with reading. I was embarrassed.

Gale was forthright with her descriptions of racial and economical disparities she experienced in her earlier grades. However, according to Gale the impact of racism was more evident in high school. She described a feeling of helpless as she attempted to juggle the roles of motherhood and student while confronting overt racism.

In high school I really saw it (racism). At that point I had my first child and he was 2 I was in 11th grade. I was trying to get back on the right path as far as having a baby early and still in high school. And they were just so against me. I started day school and they let me last for about 2 months. They would just nick-pick with me. If I was late, a White security guard would come walking in my homeroom and say you have to go to the office. My homeroom teacher would say I could stay. They would say no, she has to go to the office. They did that so many times. I felt like they just picked with me-picked with me. There were times I had to take the baby to the doctors or something-they always had problems with something. They kicked me out of day school and put me in night school. I didn't know any white girls that it happened to, but I just felt like it was that it was racist.

This White security guard, he would just torment me. I would ask him why are you messing with me? My homeroom teacher said that she wanted me in class. He was like that's not the rule. The rule is you have to go to the office. I said, but she said it was okay. I said, you just leave me alone. I guess I did have an attitude. He said or what or what? Say it! Say it! I said what do you want me to do threaten you right, so you can call the cops on me? He said yeah I do. Say it! I would start calling him names, like stone

cold. He actually walked me all the way to the principal's office until I sat down and just tortured me. The principal was right there. Once I got into the principal's office, he said go ahead you want to say something go ahead say it, say it. That day they kicked me out of day school. I felt like if I wasn't African American... They took that (being African American) as just assuming my mother wouldn't have come and fought and try to see exactly what went on and what took place and fight for me to get back in day school where I should've been. They were right. So, I think that was a big part of it. I think that maybe if it was a Caucasian person that maybe they would assumed that we can't do that maybe will just suspend and give them a write up for being late. I don't think it would have went to the extent of kicking them out of day school and putting them in night school.

Gale reported that she did everything to avoid night school, but it was inevitable. She entered night school with unresolved anger. The source of her anger was her parents' divorce. According to Gale the new family structure was considered stereotypical of African American family life. However, duration of her parents' marriage was a positive influence for her.

I went into night school the first couple days; I kind of went in with an attitude because I felt like I did everything to stay in day school. I even had a job at night when I was still in day school. It kind of reversed my life. I had a baby to raise. I'm still trying to go to school. I am still trying to work and I bumped into an African American teacher when I got to night school. One night she said your attitude is not for me. I couldn't really say anything.

At that time I was angry at my parents because I felt like it was more that they could have done to keep me out of night school. I never felt a bond with my mother. That made me angry a lot. I knew that she loved me, but I was never told. She just told me she loved me until about a year ago. She just started telling me, I love you. I know for a fact that it was kind of channeling my anger. As soon as I had the baby, my parents had went through a divorce. He was four months old my mom was divorcing my dad. That made me angry too. I felt like now I was like all of the other kids in the school. Oh, living with a single mom or a single dad. I was always able to say I still have my mom and my dad. I am a Black female and I still have both of my parents. That took a toll on me when they got a divorce. Because it was mostly poor single parents and if there were siblings involved, nine times out of ten they had different fathers and that was a stereotype basically and now I am like them. See my brother and I had the same last name and both of my parents were there with us. I saw that as a positive thing having both my parents under the same roof. And you know they did stay together for 17 years. So, they were able to teach me that about staying together and to this day I strive for that so they were able to be teachers at the same time. They were my first African American educators in a sense because I am looking at them in a different light than I have ever, ever looked at it in my life.

While in night school, according to Gale she continued to juggle motherhood, work, and school. The multiple roles took a toll on her; therefore she left night school.

I quit night school in 2003. I started missing days. I kept the night job. Sometimes they would let me work days. I worked two days a week. I started looking for more money because my mom was hard. She was like okay, she made the decision when I had

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the baby; if I wanted to keep the baby-that I would raise the baby. She literally meant that I was going to raise the baby. My mom kept a roof over our heads and our needs were met, but I had to take care that baby. I worked at McDonald and Arby's little fast food restaurants.

Now, I am so thankful that she did that back then I wasn't. I couldn't stand it. I almost hated her for it, but now I am so happy that she did that. Now at 25, I am able to raise my kids. I thank God that DYFS (Division of Youth and Family Services) didn't have to take them for any reason. All of that came from my mom being so hard on me when I was 15 with a baby. Now I know how to take care of my kids. There are people my age that don't know how to raise their kids. They can't even spend a whole 24 hours with their kids so in that sense I am glad that she did that.

Gale left night school before attaining her high school diploma; however, she did earned her GED. She expressed her pride in earning at the same time should would have completed high. Gale this was also a time when she became distracted.

In 2005, I went for my GED. I got it the same year I was suppose to graduate. Actually, I got it before then I got it June 2, 2005. They graduated June 14. It was good feeling; I was proud that I was able to get and get it on time. I got my first apartment and I was caught up in that. I was working a local department store. I had my second baby. Just trying to maintain and take care of my two children. As far as making goals in life, I was just living. I really didn't think about the future and what I needed to do to make it better. I didn't have that processed yet. Then I started not being focused. I wanted to go clubbing and I got with the wrong crowd and stuff like that.

I caught a charge in 2005. I was charged with receiving stolen property. It was a car. I didn't take it, but I took a plea for the charge in 2006 or 2007. I am a minority. Being a minority at the bottom of the how do they say it at the bottom of the food chain. I didn't know what else to do. I could not afford my own attorney that I had there was no way that I could have fought it especially not having the knowledge to go ahead and seek out the necessary resources I needed or even to prove my case. Like now if I had the knowledge that I have now, I probably could have went and what is called without a public defender and just represented myself because I did not do it!

According to Gale, her early educational years at time was challenged with racism, the multiple roles of a teenage mother, student, and employee. She also focused on the fact that she caring parents and educators. She never gave up and moved towards postsecondary education.

Community college experience. So, I was going through court proceedings for about year and I didn't want to keep messing up. I was tired of going through. I always wanted to go to college. I had a goal to be in college by 20, graduate by 21, and I didn't want to wait. I wanted to start my bachelor's and graduate by the time I am 25. That was a goal that I made when I was 15, so I knew that I wasn't going to get it the way that I was moving. I wouldn't be able to do that. I just prepared for another look on life. In 2007, I decided to go to Miles Community College. It was accessible; that was the only thing that I knew. I had two kids. I didn't feel like I had other options.

Gale expressed that college had always been a dream for her. She was exhausted with the turn her life was taking. She decided to fulfill her dream. She expressed her delight when she talked about entering community college.

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That was a really good experience for me. First like coming to campus was so relaxing. It was my time to get away from everything else. I had my own place, my two kids, and I had that charge, so that just prepared me for another out look on life. It prepared me to get ready for a change and knowing that I needed a change. I kind of looked at it finally as a way out. I was really devoted. I knew what I wanted and I came in here with the attitude that once I started to get it I enjoyed. It meaning my studies like the psychology. I loved the knowledge that I received from being at the community college and now here. I took a lot of notes. I never used recordings. I just took a lot of notes. I learned that I am a visual learner. We took a test in freshman seminar. I am not sure what it was called, but I learned that I am visual learner. I like stuff like that it let's me know not who I am, but just things like that to show us different things. I did have had remedial reading, but I was able to go right into regular college math.

The professors, I felt like they didn't care what race. I am not going to say all of them, most of the professors cared about their students. I felt like the Black professors and White professors cared. I think they dealt more on a psychological level more than physical or racism. I think that it was more on a it was more about us learning it was more about getting into our minds and trying to make us strive for what it is that is ahead of us. I am sure that they had prejudices, but I don't think that they expressed it if they did.

Ultimately, Gale's community college experience was an enlightening time in her life. She expressed her joy of being in school and the racism was not made visible. After completing her associate's degree, Gale decided to transfer to a four-year college. She described the events that facilitated her transferring to Branch.

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Transition experiences. They have a transfer day and different colleges come and we get our transcripts and we fill out applications and we get talk to them and I attended that. I got my acceptance letter from Stockton saying that I was accepted into their program. I also received one from Branch. I wanted to go to Stockton because I heard that they had a really good social work program and it was a real accredited school. So I really wanted to go to State. But I chose Branch. It was right here and cost less and I knew that I could get here to this campus. I just didn't know what might happen my car might break down or something. I wouldn't be able to get a way to State so I decided to attend here (Branch).

After transferring Gale noted the academic differences between MCC and Branch. She described several factors that had an adverse affect on her transition experience, such as her health and inadequate technology and writing skills.

I feel like the advisors at community college are on your every move. They let you know when the deadlines come. They let you know what needs to be in. They like baby you. They take your hand and walk you through every step. I don't think that is a good thing coming into a four-year college because they don't do that. I felt lost. I still feel lost, but I know now I just got to research and I have to go out and seek what I need to find out about. I think it is a good thing.

I went from A's and B's at community college to two to three semesters of straight F's. They expected different things from what was expect at community college. I'll just narrow it down to writing. For example, my English professor which was my last college level English, she didn't expect APA format. We were still doing MLA format which we shouldn't. We should have been doing APA format. I came into Branch

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University and APA format was expected for every paper. I had trouble with a lot of it my first semester.

I did the paper I turned it in on time, but it was an F because of my APA was not correct. I did that for a whole seven weeks or I turned the paper in the wrong format. I needed to use rich text format. I would use word and the professor was like I couldn't open, that's an F. I didn't know how to submit certain papers in certain formats. I didn't know that it was a different format. I just thought if I can type it you then you can read it. They make you take an entrance basically about how Blackboard works, but still it is not nothing about format-that's needed and stuff like that.

Another thing it was all face-to-face contact at community college. When I came to here (Branch), I started online. I had never done online classes it was really, really hard for me. I am a visual learner that might have affected me. I need to see the board and the professor you know things like that. Plus I was pregnant, had gestational diabetes, and in and out of the hospital all of the time. In that sense, it was better for me to do it online, but it was hard. Even so when I was in the hospital, I was able to use the computer add to my discussion boards. But that is how or why I was placed on academic probation. All of my classes were online. I struggled.

According to Gale, her transition continued to be influenced by a myriad of challenges. She was challenged by public speaking and writing skills. She associates her transition with lack of academic preparation from high school, inconsistency of professors, and inadequate advising. However, Gale found solace in one academic advisor that seemed to understand he plight.

I am still struggling. Today, I am four classes from my bachelor's and I still struggle with English. I am far beyond my English core classes. I am thinking about taking another English class if Branch offers it. As far as speaking and as far as my writing goes, I still struggle with what that they call MUGS. The misuse of grammar and spelling errors, and in that sense I don't think that I was academically ready for Branch. Also, I think that getting my GED and going on to MCC, I thought I was academically prepared, but I wasn't. I felt like that because of the scores that I received on my GED. I could have missed that one on one contact; the interactions that I needed as a visual learner. I think I missed that. It takes me back to how I struggled with the reading in elementary school. I feel like I missed something. I don't where I missed it. I feel like I should have had that (reading).

And lot of the professors they give out the syllabus the first day of class and they follow the syllabus; whereas, there some professors did, but not all of them. I even have a professor here that never gave me a syllabus that is kind of like a problem that I look at. I just feel like it kind of needs to be more consistent because we need to be prepared once we get here. We need to be prepared and it is important it kind of keeps us on the right track everybody should be on the same page.

I kind of felt lost my first couple of semesters. I kind of felt lost. The advisors were not a lot of help. There is only one advisor that you can talk to and that gets stuff done that is Miss A., an African American. Everybody else in there to me they are useless because they really don't do nothing but screw stuff up. I took a class that one of them picked for me that I don't even need. One that I had to pay $2300 for and they picked it. It is just like they don't seem like they have time. I don't feel like I can share some things

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with them. I can go to Miss Alice and say Miss Alice I am going through. I feel like I can go to her. Anybody else in there, I don't feel like I would be comfortable in sharing that. She builds a rapport with the all students. She makes adjustments for all of the students not just with African Americans.

Gale reflected upon her life, she poignantly acknowledges that the interlocking of race, class, and gender played a significant role in her circumstances.

I have been thinking about exactly what I have been saying. And I feel like I dealt more with (pause) I felt like my focus was more on race; race meaning the ethic part like the difference between Whites and Blacks. However, I started thinking more that it's broader than that. I feel like its prejudice between women and men. When I was growing up, it was prejudice between the poor and middle class. I think that it's just deeper than that. I don't think it's just between Black and White. I don't think it was like that. It's more. I think it was because I was female. It could've been that you know the certain things that I went through in high school could've been that. It could've been the class structure that I am in. It could be like lower class. I felt like that had a lot of affect because all three: race, class, and gender. My race is African American; my gender is female; and my class is lower class. They are all how you say it at the bottom of the barrel basically, so I felt like that's kind of why it's so hard because all of those areas. I fell in the minority and the majority. I feel like it…I don't know how to explain it. I just felt like I fell in the minority that's why I was more affected by everything, in school and in life period. I tend to take everything that I'm learning at school and apply to my life.

Gale believed that an incident in class accelerated her academic suspension from Branch University. She felt that she was treated unfairly. Therefore, she sought advice and challenged the suspension.

I'll give you an example. The teacher I had during my second-semester at Branch; it was a male. He was a psychologist or therapist. He would give us a test as soon as we got in class; and give us a three-hour lecture on the chapters he just tested us on. The student body in the classroom had a problem with it. We discussed it. Everybody was scared to speak up. One day before class I did speak up and told him a lot of us agree that we need to be going over what we were going to be tested on next; instead of what we were tested on. Basically, you don't even have our attention anymore because we were just tested on it. He didn't agree with it. So, from that little discussion I felt like he felt disrespected when I was just trying to voice the opinion of the class.

His attitude towards me was different in class. One time I couldn't make it to class and I called him and he never returned my call. It was mid-semester; I tried to contact him by email and asked him if I could meet with him to discuss my grades and how I could improve. He basically said to me he didn't have the time to meet with me face to face. If I needed to contact him it would be best by email. I felt like (pause) I knew he still had that class. I was in his class and he just could not take two to five minutes to meet with me after class or before class. Then it made me feel uncomfortable to be in his class especially after I got the F at the end of the semester. This was a class that I struggled with; however, this was my fourth time taking the class by then I knew that I had the material. This F put me on academic suspension from the college. I felt like he did this on purpose because I spoke up. So, I wanted to do something about it.

I went the Miss Alice and she told me what to do. She said to first contact the professor to see and try to get things cleared up. That was the first step and if that didn't work then go to the chair or dean. He didn't answer any of my emails. I wrote the chairperson of Behavior Science and asked her to review my grades. The way he broke it down justified him failing me. He was taking points for me being tardy. He told us that the started class at 5:30 P.M. The class was suppose to start at 5:00 P.M., but he worked, so the class started at 5:30 P.M. When I tried to get other students in the class to kind of back me up with it nobody was willing because they had passed the class. They felt like their grades would probably be affected it, so they didn't. I just felt like I knew it was because I basically spoke out about.

I had all of my quizzes and I added them up and at that point it appeared that I would pass. However, major papers like the second week a paper was due, I did not receive that paper back until the last day of class. I should have been like where is my paper. It was worth a hundred points and that was a big part of my grade. I got all of the points for that paper, but he took points from my participation and attendance. I participated. That was the area that he messed with me and I really couldn't prove it. The test was in black and white and he knew that I had them all. He was smart enough to think that she does have them all. He couldn't say she failed a test. I really didn't fail a test. One of them he didn't give back. The chairperson made him bring it to her and then she gave it back to me. I got a 7 out of 15 or something like that which was the one we were able to drop. That's the one that I dropped, so it should not have affected my quiz points.

After challenging the academic suspension, Gale was left with a sense of helplessness and defeat. She associated these feelings with her race, class, or gender; lack of education; and inability to effectively articulate her thoughts. Although Gale stated that she loves herself, the negative views associated with assertive African American women caused her to become disengaged.

I don't think they (committee) were too much concerned. I didn't feel like they really wanted to help me. They did everything through email. Except the time I went to her class to pick up my quiz and she had a class. There was no face-to-face meeting. I really don't think a face-to-face meeting would have changed things. It all comes back to me even though I wanted to fight, I wasn't confident in fighting. I felt like she and the professor felt that I wasn't confident on that note. I don't feel like continuing to fight would have affected it either. I don't know why. I didn't know whether it was because I was female or because I was African American or lower class, but I know it was one or all three of them. It just affected me that was my only professor since I've been at Branch. I saw him the other day when I was standing out there talking to you. He just kind of walked by and didn't acknowledge me. He really has an issue with me; it could have been that I spoke out.

I feel inferior in a sense. I am young African American woman. I still have a lot of education to get. I still have a lot of issues and those issues in a sense when I am trying to relay a message it is not going to come out the way I want it to come out. It could be a lot behind what I am saying, but I just don't know how to say it. So, in that in sense it is just like I don't feel like they took me serious or it's just like –it is so hard to explain. Because I am insecure about the way I communicate. I feel like I still am viewed as

uneducated because I can't articulate my thoughts correctly. I love who I am. I feel like if I can't just go ahead on with my actions when I feel like fighting against certain stuff. I just feel like it is still viewed in a negative manner tied to our culture when African American women speak up for themselves. They think that we are being loud and aggressive.

Gale realized that sometimes you have to be persistent. According to Gale the lack of persistence lead to retaking the class, which affected her financially. She also lost sight of her goal for awhile. Nevertheless, Gale realized that she had to stand up for herself.

I learned from that experience that I have to sometime in certain situations have more energy to fight for what I think is right. That's what I really learned from it. I probably would have gained something from it. I took the class over and passed it the very next block. That proves me to that I knew the material. I passed it without even opening a book. You know this will probably put me $1,000 or $1500 in debt kind of because it was my student loans. That is money that I am going to have to pay back. After that, I thought about giving up. I thought about just stopping. It changed my mindset in that it took my focus off of where finishing school needed to be my primary focus. I tried to go to a cosmetology school, so I could get my cosmetology licenses. I almost gave up. I had it in my mind that I would stop for a year and then I'll go back and finish my four classes. But I didn't I decided that I needed to finish no matter what. At the same time it showed me that I needed to fight.

According to Gale she learned a lot more from the academic suspension. She expressed the desire to learn effective communication techniques and meaning and effects of oppression.

I need to learn more- meaning that basically what I said learn about the different aspect of the workplace and school; how I was suppose to conduct myself in a better manner. I needed to learn more about oppression-even now I want to start looking into the cultures I want to look more into the just different cultures and different classes. I just want to do a lot more research on that and oppression. Like, exactly how we're affected and probably even look for some whys.

Gale had a vivid understanding of oppression. According to her, oppression has different meanings, one for White Americans another for African Americans.

I know oppression looks like people with power. I can express it like weighing down the people down here and that can be from many different aspect them weighing down just weighing down on us. I know a different race has the power and not us. It's hard to say Whites because you see a lot of Whites that are living in poverty. It could be similar to my situation. For example, a Caucasian female with children and single and trying to go to school and in that sense it will be similar. It may be different because of that stereotype or that prejudice that has existed beyond time. I feel like when we go for the same job, because prejudice exists. I feel like it plays a part in who may get that job. It won't be me even if I had more qualifications than her. I feel like it just still plays a part.

Even in school too, but it depends on the situation and who is making the decision if it's an African American or Caucasian. If it is African American female the empathy

will go to me. She is a Black female and she can relate more to my struggles. Because nine times out of ten they have been through the same struggle or a similar struggle. If she is at a different class status she probably started at my status or knows someone in her family that is like me. If it is a Caucasian person making the decision what will happen most likely the empathy will go to her. Maybe I can't say that for all of them. One of my professors that I have now I feel that she doesn't stereotype or judge whether it is gender class or race, I think that she tries to give all of her students a chance. When I say stereotype she doesn't have a pre-judgment; rather than looking at me and saying she must be a single mom and low class. I don't think she does that I don't think that matters where we are. That's the feeling that I get from her.

Although Gale oftentimes described her journey through life and education as problematic, she believes her life experiences and education can serve as a platform to assist troubled teenagers.

I want to open a residential home for troubled teens. I am at a point in my life where now I am about to start focusing on what it is that I want and start the necessary actions to get it. I will start doing more research that is where I am in my life right now. I feel like I was a troubled teen. I feel like if someone would have intervened earlier, I probably wouldn't have had to go through a lot of what I went through. If I could have had somebody that could have just told me that about things. I didn't want someone to be over me like my parents. I didn't need someone to be so soft with me. I needed someone in the middle a little bit more direct more stern.

My education can help me to be able to understand them more on a psychological level of the troubled teens. Also learning where people come from whether it's a different

ethnicity because there are courses that teach us about ethnicity. I can become more familiar with where they come from and the ethnic background that they have. I can try and understand them better. I would like to steer them on the right path. If I only get one that takes something that I've tried to give and do better with it. I'd be happy with that. I will get them to try and open their mind and do research for themselves. Find out exactly how they were affected in their current situation. They may be holding on to the past and that may affect their future. I feel like I am the best person because I have been through a lot. I have learned that I can't have sympathy. I have to have empathy for these people because I have learned that. It has helped me to get over a lot of things that I have gone through.

Gale is reflective about her life and the impact of race, class and gender. She is ever aware of the benefits of postsecondary education. This awareness afforded her the opportunity to offer advice that is undergirded with compassion and honesty.

Advice to others. I would tell them that it could be a good experience. I would tell them to go in with open minds and to make sure that they are in control. Even though the professors give out the grades, make sure that they are in control of their destiny. Make sure that they are not taking the advice whether it is the advisor or the professors because we all are human and we all have opinions and sometimes we tend to speak an opinion as factual information. I would just tell them to try to seek out their own understanding their own knowledge even when it comes down to the textbook. If there is something in the textbooks that they don't understand or they just want more information, I would tell them to take that time and seek that information. If I had to give a phrase for my transfer experience it would be *change.* For me it means that how I say it apply it and I didn't. So

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I say I apply not just on the surface level. All of this time I have been thinking that I am applying it. I'm really not applying it and in that sense change.

Gale's advice to move from first order to second order change is evident in how she perceives the benefits of education. Education has positively affected her critical thinking and parenting skills. Gale has deep desire for knowledge.

Education, it has given me a lot-just studying. It gives me a lot of different ways to think about things that I didn't know before. Like the simple things that affect my children, me being in certain relationships; teaching them different things; understanding how we are affected by our past; and my family issues that I know about have affected me. I am starting to really look at different aspects of my life. It is making me want to know more about how and why more so many of us (African Americans) as a group are affected by whatever we are affected by. I want to know how this study is going exactly affect me as an African American single educated mother?

Juanita

Juanita is a 33 year-old single mother of two daughters, ages 17 and 12. She is an Army veteran. At the time of this study she was not working and a fulltime student. Juanita has an associate degree in Business Management. She is currently working towards dual bachelor degrees in Behavioral Science and Business Management. Juanita was very confident. As she shared her transition experiences, they were filled with laughter and honesty. She was straightforward. Her story is lengthy; she had so much to share.

Early educational experience. Academically, I can say my IQ is very high. I really don't run into any of that as far as you know being thought of as smart. So far I

don't really run into a lot of problems as far as being able to do my work and getting the classes that I want. I think that sometimes people think that African American women are not as smart as other people. I think that they think that all African Americans are not as smart as any other race. And that's not the case. I just think that stereotype is something that people keep saying. I really would like to know where that came from because I feel like I can do the same work that anyone else can do if I'm given the opportunity.

In high school, I had a run in with a teacher. Growing up in an all Black town Owntown (alias) is predominately African American. My parents were very strict on knowing African American culture and knowing my history. One day I think it was 10th grade. The honors English teacher and I had a run in. She said something that I did not quite agree with. I'll be honest it was (laughter). It was February. We only get 28 days and it was Black History month. The teacher said that it was not Black History month. It was multicultural month. I was immediately livid. It was an honors English class there were maybe four Black people in the class. And everybody else was White. So it was 25 kids in the class. I want to say that we were all Black females. At the time, oh Lord! (laughter) She had us write down on notecards our race and our heritage. She made me mad, so I put down Black, White, whatever, I can't believe I said this. I put down Black, White and whatever my great-great-great grandmother was at the time. She was offended by what I had written down on my notecard. I was already offended by her saying that it was not Black History month, but multicultural month. She took the notecards and categorized us. She put the Italian kids in the Italian group and all the kids, the Polish kids and Irish kids in their groups.

Our assignment was to look in the back of our book and find flags based upon our nationality and she asked us to make the flags. She told us, the four Black kids; to do Native American, that is how she insulted us. And the other three kids in the class started looking through the book. I immediately was pissed. And I jumped up to her and said, I can't believe you are making us do this. And the three other kids are in the back of the book trying to find this Native American flag. I said you are not going to sit her and insult me like this. I know better. And maybe they don't know better. And nobody else in this classroom may know better. We were in the back of the classroom screaming. I was pregnant at the time. She said something smart to me. And I told her I wanted her to remember one thing from now on. I am never going to do anymore work in your class and you are going to pass me based upon the simple fact that you know; I know what you are doing is wrong. And she kicked me out of her classroom and sent me to my principal office.

At the time I had a Black principal, Ms. L. I told Ms. L. what happened and she was like what. And I was like yes. And the other three fools are in the back of the book trying to look for this flag that does not exist. I was so mad after that I never went back to her class. They calmed me down because I was pregnant. They had the nurse in there. They were saying you are just going to have to calm down. I was like I don't believe this. We only get 28 days. I'm not asking for a lot. I can understand if it was another month, but we only get 28 days. And if you don't like African Americans that's fine, but you don't insult me in the month and then tell me were not African Americans we are Native Americans. And we are going to look for a flag that does not exist and make it and draw it. I'm not doing that, so that was my first academic challenge. She gave me a B or a B+

at the time, but I don't recall doing any more work in her class after that. I just know that everybody get their own month. The Italians get their month. The Mexicans get their month. Being Black, I want to get my month too and to take it away from us is not right.

Juanita's parents grounded her in African American history. Her high school English teacher attempted to disguise African American History Month as multicultural month she was able address her concerns. The tenacity presented during her early educational experience was demonstrated in her community college experience.

Community college experience. When I decided to go back to school, I decided to go to school for nursing. Went to Community College's nursing program their LPN program. One of the things that I found was they to me like from my point of view was I felt like they were not geared towards learning. It was more of if I liked you then I will pass you. And the African Americans were considered standoffish. I had a teacher tell me you were standoffish. I told her, I don't know how you gathered that I'm here and ya'll don't even talk to me. Nobody speaks to me if I don't personally come to you and say I have a problem you won't come back to me and see if I am doing anything.

I would be in clinical and they would say things to me like, oh okay I'm sorry that I didn't get to you today. I'll get to you next time in clinical. They only have clinical once a week, so if you didn't get to me today and it's only ten of us in a group when are you going to get to me again? It was always that they would critique me and say well you were standoffish. You know you seemed like you didn't need my help. I said well if you are helping someone else and I've done CNA (certified nursing aide) work before that part I get, but the other stuff I may not get.

The other people in the class have never done the CNA work, so the things that they are asking you to help them with I already know how to do. So I don't need you to show me how to change a bedpan. I should know how to change a bedpan if I was a certified nurse's aide. You know those types of things. I know how to make a bed. I've been in the military. I can make a bed and make a quarter drop on it. I don't need your to help as far as that. So, I felt like that experience- was they were more concerned about being friends then educating as a nursing program. They only graduate so many Black nurses to begin with.

According to Juanita was the nursing program was not as she expected. She described as standoffish by an instructor. When asked to describe the experience further, Juanita said that she felt invisible. She reported that she is outspoken and used this ability to deal with African American health stereotypes presented by the professors.

I felt invisible. I felt that they were very uncomfortable speaking with me about anything. They over looked me for a lot of things. I just-I could never-me and a girlfriend would sit and there and talk about it all the time. Are you experiencing the same thing that I am experiencing? Because I feel like if I say anything, I am outspoken. Where she is not outspoken. By me being outspoken and by me calling them on certain things, I think that to them it was like, well you think you are better than us. It's not that; I felt that if you are going to say something, say it correctly. Don't just make assumptions.

They would make a lot of stereotypes. Like in the nursing, the African Americans don't do this they don't do that, as far as our diet, medical treatment, and different things. I just felt like it was very inaccurate. If you are going to say those things about us, I felt that in medicine we were missing in that research. I don't know who sat down and did

that research. Like did they go to those African American homes or did they just pick a selected group of people and did that. I felt like it wasn't a clear representation of my culture. And sometimes I would say, that is not entirely true.

I told them that they don't give us the same options that they give you guys. I know that. You know they would say, most African Americans have diabetes. This is why they have diabetes; they eat the wrong kind of food and don't exercise. I would say to them I am African American. I know some people in my family that have diabetes and I know from going through with my aunts and my uncles they don't offer them the same type of treatment that they off somebody else. I have to go in and advocate for my aunt and my uncle. I tell them that you are not going to do this. They have this available for them, but I don't think they always offer that. I feel that the teachers at that time would say, well you are just saying that or I am challenging what you are saying. I'm like well maybe you just don't know because you haven't been in that situation.

Juanita's frustration with the events that took place during her involvement in the nursing program was obvious during the session. She was redirected. Juanita was asked to explain her reasons for selecting community college.

A four-year school was not an option. I feel that being a single mother. I can't take my kid to stay on the dorms. I had to work I had to provide for my child so working and going to a four year school was not really an option. I was happy it I felt like it would get me back on track; that is what I needed. I did not want to invest in a four-year college and not knowing exactly how I would feel about it-especially like being a single mom and having to work. So if I worked and I committed to a four-year college I did not know how things would work out. I knew that at the community college it was flexible and they

offered a lot of different classes and different things like that-whereas the four-year

colleges at the time that I was starting they didn't offer a lot of evening and online

classes. And they were too far away. Community colleges already had night classes they

were geared towards working parents and mine was close.

At the two-year college like I said, I wanted to start college, but I felt like

sometimes the remedial classes hold you back. I didn't feel the need for remedial classes,

but I felt if the test said that I needed the remedial classes I must have needed them at the

time. And after I had taken the remedial classes I didn't really need them .I knew most of

everything that was there at the time. I hadn't taken a test in years, so I felt that the

remedial classes at the community colleges kind of hold people back. I understand them,

but I feel like a lot of people go through there and get caught up in them and they can't

advance because they have to take these remedial classes.

Juanita finished her associate's degree in 2003. She explains why she did not

continue to a four-year institution.

A lot of things happened, in 2003. My father died that was kind of hard. I wasn't

quite ready for that. I was, but I wasn't quite ready for that. My dad was the kind of

person he would be the person to watch my daughter and did a lot of that childcare that I

needed. And then when my father died on my youngest daughter's birthday. That was

kind of hard for me. She was a year old when he died in 2003. I said that I was going to

go back to work. I had taken some time off at that time to help with my father he had a

tracheostomy and I would be the person; I was like his 24 hour nurse then (pause).

I said I was going back to work. Got a job in a bank in Delaware and was

successful at it, but didn't like that commute. It was a 45-minute ride there and a 45-

minute ride back. We worked nine hours a day and you don't get paid for your lunch break. That was a long time and having two small children; it was hard. Like I said my youngest was a year old and my oldest they are like 8 years apart so she's like 9. They are still small and my dad being my daycare provider. I didn't have those options. I call them the luxury options I had before when he was living that I didn't have them anymore. I didn't have to pay for daycare before; now I'm having to pay for daycare. Now I'm having to find somebody to pick the kids up and do all this type of stuff. I wasn't prepared for that. So in 2004, I quit my job at the bank to kind of rearrange my life. That was an experience.

Juanita laughed after the explanation. She continued to explain the reasons for her delay. However, she had a watershed moment; and realized that an education would yield more money.

Then in 2005, a girlfriend of mine had convinced me to go to dialysis school. I was like dialysis school. Go back to nursing. I don't want to go back to nursing. She was like its different it's not the same type of nursing where you are cleaning poop all the time. I did the CNA thing. I don't want to do that anymore. I didn't enjoy it the way most people do some people they get into nursing and they are like you know I like helping people and something like that. I just wanted to help in a different way. She was like it's different. It's totally different. Dialysis is something new it's technical. I said I'll try it out. In March of 2005, I went to a dialysis school, did very well in that.

By the end of November, I was a dialysis technician. I started work doing dialysis, liked dialysis. I actually loved dialysis. I loved dialysis because it is technical. It's personal, but it's not so personable where I get to see the same patients every other

day, but at the same time it's not to me like the CNA work. It's kind of degrading. I didn't want to do that whereas dialysis required more skill, you had to go to school you had to get certified you have to do all of this and things like that. I had to go and look for work and went back to Delaware again because in NJ they won't hire you without experience. I had just finished school and I am like how am I going to get experience if you don't hire me? So, I had to go back to Delaware again. Worked over there for about four or five months and then left and got hired back here in NJ as a dialysis technician.

So, I decided that I needed more money. Making more money as a dialysis technician there was no way. I can never be a lead technician or supervising technician. I am in the dialysis field there is either techs or nurses and after going and realizing that the nursing field was not for me. I still wanted to make more money. We make like $20 an hour, but still I felt like I could make more money. I didn't want to be a dialysis technician for the next 30 or 40 years. That wasn't where I see myself. So, I decided to go back to school.

After making the decision to reenter college, Juanita completed the necessary steps to enroll in Branch University. The transfer process was not complicated.

Transition experience. The transfer process was relatively easy. I was just walk to the campus from one end to the other end. I was at MCC. I was actually going to take some classes there. The counselor at the time said I think you should go to Branch University. You have a lot of credits that can be transferred. You are a lot closer to a bachelor's degree than you think. So, I decided. He gave me the name of the representative at University.

I went over and met with her. She sat down and immediately registered me for classes. They took all of my 75 credits. All of my financial aid information was already done. I am a pro at this. I know that if I want to go to school I have to have my financial aid done early. Most of that was already in the computer. It was just as simple as changing one school code to another. I was really that easy. *And* I like the simple fact that it was online the seven-week classes. I have a really short attention span, so the simple fact that we do classes in that seven-week block. I really enjoy that part of it. And it's cheap compared to a lot of different universities. It's offered MCC location.

Juanita reported that the transfer process was easy. The transition from a two-year to a four-year was somewhat challenging. Juanita reported that she received a C in a class because she was outspoken.

Well, in my first semester I got 5 As and one C. I got the C, well the professor gave me the C. I am still thinking about retaking that class. I was very outspoken in his class. I didn't appreciate the way he taught the class. He was not clear on anything that he said. It was very…it was a mess. We had a syllabus that wasn't done properly. He didn't know exactly when papers were due. We would come to class and your paper would be due. He had no consideration for the students that were taking multiple classes. One of his comments were it took me six years to get my bachelor's and you shouldn't be trying to get your bachelors in 11 months. I just looked at him and told him. Well, I don't know it why it took you six years to get a bachelor's degree, that's your personal business. I never would have told anybody that. I am here because I want to learn and your class just needs to have a little more structure. It wasn't structured at all.

I say he gave me a C in that class. It was in the fall. The teacher was very – he didn't let you have a lot of input into his class. Most of the classes revolve around a lot of conversation, so the group began to create these discussions among themselves. The teacher asks a question and another student answers we kind of; you know one person plays off of another person and you get discussion building. Whereas this particular teacher didn't let us discuss like that, whereas it was more like his way. This is the way he thought it was and that is the way we should all take it. I did not respond well to him. Yeah, he didn't like that at all. Cause I just like – if he wanted to say something-his opinion was noted. I felt like some of us had some things we wanted to say. I wanted to say something I had to say. I am paying for this class you gonna let me say something.

So he viewed culture-he viewed African Americans one way because he grew up. I think he grew up in Philadelphia somewhere. His views on African Americans were based upon the fact that he taught at a school in a particular area. And that's the way that – you know his experiences were. He would say some things like, I remember one of them. His thing was, most African Americans you know they don't believe in getting married. I was like where did you hear that at? I'm like it maybe the case now, but I wouldn't say that people don't believe in getting married. I just think that in all cultures especially in American culture. Marriage has taken a step down. More people are not getting married. Not just African Americans solely are not looking to get married.

I remember telling him. I remember growing up where I lived there were about 30 houses and everybody out there had moms and dads everybody was married. If they weren't married, I didn't know they weren't married because as far as I know that was Mr. and Mrs. so and so. And they had kids and that's the way it was to me and if they

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weren't married nobody really didn't know and that was the perception in African American homes. My point of view a man and a woman were suppose to get married and have children and that was the norm. So to make the comment that was not the norm, I was just curious about how many African Americans did you interview to make that assumption because that's not the case with me. He said, you know, you are just saying that. I said I live in an all Black town. Everybody I went to school had a mom and a dad and everyone I know was married. If they weren't married we did not know.

This was a marriage and family class (laughter). To make those comments everything was based upon like I say his experience. But at the same time I think that you have to watch what you say because when you are teaching you have to be careful of your surroundings. I just can't say something about Latinos or Blacks-something about another culture if I really don't know and the room is full of that culture. Like of course somebody is going to speak up and say something other than that. I know that I will never take another one of his classes.

Just the way I felt in his class. The comments, Black women weren't expected to get married and all of that. I am a Black woman and I didn't get that memo. Black parents don't come to meetings. I have kids and I go to parent-teacher conferences. Are you saying that because that's the way you expect Black people to be? He could never define that. (laughter) Yeah, in class people that I take the class with, every time he would say things the wrong way, their eyes would come back there. They know that I am going to say something. I would tell him I don't agree with that and I just felt like he didn't care whether I agreed or not. I just had to let him know that I didn't agree.

After completing this description, Juanita gave a hearty laugh. I asked her why the laughter. She explained that with another description.

Just people's behavior-I am in the behavior science and just people's behavior their personalities and the way people think-just makes me laugh-just the way that people view other people with these stereotypes and things like that. This woman was making a comment. We were in class. We were talking about shopping and people being racist. I was telling her I have to dress and wear certain things when I go through the stores. That lets them know that I have money and I came here to spend my money. I have to make sure that I have my $500 bag. And she said to me, you mean you are telling me that you are walking around with a $500 bag? I was like my Coach bag you see is a $500 bag. And she was like you mean to tell me that you are walking around her with a $500 bag and we are going to college together. I told her hold up. She said, you mean to tell me you can take your money and buy a $500 bag? And I got two pair of jeans. I told her I can't help the fact that you only have two pair of jeans.

I said as far as you thinking I am getting a free ride no. But yes maybe I do get a free ride. When you raise your right hand and you swear to serve and protect this country like I have sworn to protect this country, I think the United States government owes me the right to an education and that is what they do. But as far getting a free ride so to speak, I guess you are saying that I am on welfare and the welfare system is paying for me. No, the welfare system is not paying for my education. Uncle Sam is paying for my education because I swore to serve and protect you and everybody in this classroom.

She said, I'm just telling you that you are walking around here with a bag like that. I just think that's wrong that you can walk around here with a $500 bag. I said

whatever you want to spend you money on is your business. What I chose to spend mine on is my $500 bag. And I said you know what the crazy thing about it is the entire time that we are having this conversation you never one time asked me what I did. We never had the conversation about, my job. Yes, I am unemployed. You automatically assumed that I was unemployed that I was on welfare. No, I am unemployed because I got fired from dialysis job where I was making $20 an hour. If I make $20 an hour, I think I can afford a $500 bag if I paid all of my bills this month. (Laughter) The teacher dismissed the class. The teacher said, I thought you guys were really going to get at it and start an argument. It wasn't that.

You can't tell me that racism is not here I experience it. I am here walking through the stores you are at mall walking through the stores and being followed. And I just want to be able to buy a bag like everybody else and go shopping like everybody else. I can't go out in my sneakers and my sweat suit. Automatically, they are going to say she got on jeans or a sweat suit they are saying she is out here so she must be getting ready to steal. I don't steal you know. I think she thought that I was only in school because the welfare system is paying for me to go to school. Like I could not have wanted to go to school myself; I am capable of going to school as a matter of fact I get better grades than she does. My GPA is just as high as the next person. As a matter of fact, my GPA is higher I just don't tell everybody it is 3.8. When it comes down to my grades, I am just as serious as the next person, but you can't tell me that there is no racism not when I am experiencing or I can't go shopping because they are going to follow me through the stores and those types of things.

She was a mess. When I tell you she was a mess. She was a mess. (laughter) And

we had three classes together. It was always something with her. Her justification was she

had Black friends. Because she had Black friends and the world decided that when she

got some Black friends that racism just disappeared. That it was okay if it went away. She

said that, My girlfriend, she is Black and we have been friends for 30 years and I'm her

kids' godparent. So you mean to tell me because you are her kids' godparent that there is

no racism and that's what I would say to her. You can't tell me that. In every class, she

began to sit on one end of the class and I sat on the other end. Every time she would say

something like that, that just struck a little nerve. And when I was talking to her, I wanted

her to understand that just because she was the godmother to her Black friend's children

that doesn't mean anything. Don't you think she experience racism? Don't you think that

even sometimes that you may even say something that may be a little racist, but she

doesn't say anything to you because she is your friend? I was I was hoping that when I

was asking her a question that she was listening and not just responding.

After Juanita provided an in-depth description of a conversation about racism

with a classmate she began to laugh. I concluded that her laughter was an indication that

she had something else to share. Juanita offered her view of how African American

women may interpret some racially charged terms.

(Laughter) Some of my Whites girl friends that I have now that go to Branch.

University. One of them made a derogatory comment. I understand that we are cool and

that we are friends, but you can't talk to me that way. I noticed that a lot of White

girlfriends they have a tendency to call each other bitches and that something that they

do. I know it because I am have hung with their culture. I know they will call each other

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that like, hey bitch how you doing? She hadn't seen me for a while, so she said, Hey you

know what I love you. You my main bitch or something like that. The other Black girl

that was sitting in front of me and a couple of others surrounding me were Black. Their

eyes just lit up. (laughter) I had tell them that it's okay. She doesn't know, so what I am

going to do I am going to tell her. So I told her, you can not say that I going to let you

slide today. I am letting you slide because I never told you now that I am telling you. You

just can't say that to me. I don't care how many other friends you call a bitch you just

can't say that to me. I had to tell her and I had to pull her to the side. I told her you can't

say that. She said I wasn't trying to be offensive. I said, I know but you can't say that.

First of all, I don't like it. Second of all, I know that you didn't mean no harm by

it, but this is what ya'll do, but it means something different to me and you can't say that.

I told her you can't call a Black woman a bitch. It means something different so you can't

say that. I had to tell her. Hey, I understand that we're friends and what you do with your

White girlfriends is different, but when you are with me you have to understand you can't

say that. It means the same thing, but it's not a friendly term. Black women take the

word, as not a friendly saying. It has always been negative either you are being

aggressive or nasty. When they say it has never been in a positive manner.

They get one Black friend and they think that it is okay. I think they get a relaxed

feeling you know like okay she is nice I am comfortable with her. I know it is a comfort

level with them because they are able to talk with me. I understand certain things that

they may be going through. We may have similar situations going on, but at the same

time I have to chin check them from time to get them back in line. I'm like whoa you

know we are comfortable we are cool. You can't say that I don't care if you listen to the

lyrics and they say the word nigger. You just can't say that in front of me in no shape or

form. I am going to let you that do that it means something. (Laughter)

Juanita appeared to very straightforward with her professors and peers;

therefore, when asked to describe her peers' perception of her she offered this

description.

I think my peers expect me to be the first person to make a comment. Sometimes

when we are in class I am very outspoken. I am going to tell you exactly what I mean and

mean exactly what I say. You see in the class because I have a tendency to sit in the back

of the class. The ones that have had me in class before begin to look around like I know

she's going to make a comment. It's almost like I have to tell them don't look at me

today. I'm not commenting, but as far as confidence, I have no problem stating my

feelings at all.

But I'm okay with it. I am the oldest child and as the older child you are

automatically your siblings look for you go out first and they will come behind you. So

I'm okay with that. I joke with them in class about it all the time. I'll tell them; today you

all will have to participate. Don't look for me to say something. And if I say something

they want to play off of it. Sometimes, I will say something just to get the conversation

started. It's not necessarily my position. I'll just say something to see if we can get the

conversation rolling. I play devil's advocate. Sometimes I have been in positions where

they will ask a question and they are only asking it because they feel like you speak for

every Black person, Black man or woman. Whatever, it depends on the mood I'm in.

Sometimes I'll answer the question. You know, very what's the word-with an open mind

and depending on the question. I may have a position on it.

After the previous statement, Juanita paused and looked directly at me and began this description.

Education means a lot. I try to make sure that I put forth the best effort because I have daughters. I want them to see that Mommy's going to college and that I can do it. I think that a lot of women don't have that role model. It means a lot to me. I want to keep going just because I want to show my daughters you can do anything that you put your mind to It shouldn't be that I Black I can only do this or I'm a woman and I can only do this. No, you should be able to do everything.

I see myself as a role model for everybody. I tell young women all of the time, I was 16 I had a baby at 16 I know what it is like to struggle through going to school and having that child. My parents did make good money but at the same time you know it doesn't make a difference. We are not going to do for you we are going to do for your daughter, but now you have to earn everything you want from us. It's achievable at 33. I graduated high school on time joined the military, have an associate's degree went back to school for dialysis and going back and getting my bachelor's degree and still raising two children I feel like. I tell my daughters all the time you have enough in front of you to see that you can do anything. I make sure that they know that because I tell them that all the time. And I try and show them.

I mean the way that I think is very far and between. A lot of people don't think that. You know just talking to different people they think that they (African American women) can't go to college. The comments that are coming are oh, I can't do it the way you did it. I just tell them that you can if you. As a matter of fact, I just had this conversation with a lady. She and I took one or two classes at MCC. I transferred and

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she's looking to go into a four-year program. I was just telling her you know you should go ahead and do it. She had a whole list of excuses before she even started. I said you are going in with a negative attitude. You are going in like you are not going to be able to do well in the class. You are going in, you know expecting things to be hard. I'm not saying that they are not going to be a little hard, but you can't go in with the battle already being fought and you lost. You have to go in wanting to graduate.

I told her I don't think you should take classes until you are ready. You are not ready if you have 20 excuses before you get there. She said, 'Oh, I'm not going to have anybody to watch my kids.' Or she'll make the comment and say it's not like your situation. Well what is my situation? You know I deal with the same things that everybody else do. I'm a single mom. I have two kids. I have a 17 year old and a 9 year old. I have a 17 year old. (Laughter) I can't leave her home for more than 2 hours. She made another comment, 'Oh, I'm not working. I said I'm not working either. She said, 'Well I don't get welfare.' I said I don't get welfare either. I'm not on the system. I'm telling you that sometimes you got to step out on faith; if this is something that you really want to do. You, you got to go in with the mindset that this is a goal. For me it was a goal. I just wasn't taking classes. I had a goal. My goal was to graduate. I wanted to graduate at a certain time. This is what I needed to get done so.

Juanita broached the topic of stereotypes and their relationship to her demanding course load. In addition, she explained her standpoint on being an African American female in college.

Sometimes, I think that some people think oh because you are able to take the number of classes outside of the norm that somebody else is paying for your education or

you are getting a free ride. Or you are here just because welfare sent you here. That's not the case for me. Everybody is not going through the same thing. I am here because of a rehabilitation program. My program is something totally different. So, I'm not saying that I am not capable of working. This is just the opportunity that came through the door for me and I just decided to take advantage of it. I was in the military. I got out on a medical discharge. VA has a program where they will send you back to school for a career that is in demand so that you can be rehabilitated and work in a particular field. It is something that a lot of people don't know. I don't always say it. I just let them say stuff and then I say I was in the military too. They turn around and say oh you were in the military? I say yeah I got ya'll covered on all ends.

As far as race is concern race, I think I kind of accept it a little bit. I understand that there are not a lot of Blacks in the class. I kind of understand. I go in knowing that the gender being a female. Well I kind of know that there is a possibility there may only be two or three Black people in the classroom. I'm okay with that. Because from my experience there will be more Whites in the class than Blacks. I have heard people say, oh I'm not going to take that class. I am going to take that class even if there are 20 White people in the class and one Black person in the class. I am not afraid to take those classes if I'm just the only Black person in the class. I know that there is that expectation there is only a few of you all in here, so maybe the rest of them can't learn. I do know that if I go into a class and it's predominately White and I am the only Black. I have to make sure that my papers are twice as well written. I should say-whatever I am going to do at that time I have to make sure it is better than the normal.

Because I just feel that Blacks don't get that you know that opportunity to relax. I just feel that I am going to have to work twice as hard because they're not going to be lenient on me. If I walk through the door I know that I am always going to have to be on time. I know that because there are stereotypes out there. You know you are Black and you re expected to be late. There is a lot of stereotyping. You are only going to get a C because Blacks can't write. I know that. I don't want them to have any reason for them not to give me the A.

Juanita offered this advice for future African American women transfer students as they transition from a community college to a four-year college.

Advice for others. Come in with the mindset knowing that this is what you really want to do. I had a Black female, every time we were in class together. She never did the assignments. She never printed out the rubric or looked at her syllabus So she was always under the gun. She never prepared herself. I would say prepare yourself. Go in look at the syllabus. Know what the teacher asking you to do. Begin to ask for clarity on the first day. I think women, Black women wait to ask questions. Don't wait to ask questions, if you know that you are going to have a problem or you see something say something then. Don't be afraid to say something to the teacher at that moment. Come in prepared know that you are going to have to look at your syllabus more than once. Know that you are going to have to work twice as hard because you are a Black woman. You are going to have to write those papers and make time for that.

The previous thought led me to ask Juanita to describe her thoughts on the reasons Black women don't ask questions. She surmised that African American women

do not want to be perceived as loud. Juanita credited her parents for teaching her to stand up for herself and issues that concern her.

I think that they don't want to come off as outspoken or challenging someone in authority. They don't want to not be seen. I think a lot of them feel like, Oh, I have to not be loud mouth or can't say too much. I have heard women say 'Oh, I don't say much I don't want to be a loud mouth. I don't want to be labeled as ghetto. I don't do this because I don't want to be labeled as that ghetto chick. I say it's not about being ghetto. I speak when I am spoken to, but I am also going to let you know that I am going to speak when I feel like you are saying something that is not accurate. It's not about always having your voice being heard and being labeled as being ghetto.

I am not going to sit by and let you say something because that's not what was expected of me growing up. My father and my mother were both outspoken people. It was just something I learned. I was taught to ask for that clarity. I think that if I let you say something that is not right, I have to say something. I think that you will think it is okay to be able to say it to every other person. I am not going to let you say that, so if you say it today and I tell you that it's wrong. The next time it is not going to be nice. I feel like if I say we can have a little debate about it. I understand that a person maybe in a position of authority. I also feel like you can't keep saying that because that's racist. I am going to correct you and let you know that's what you are saying. If you continue say it again, then we will have to go and see someone else about it. That's what I learned when I was growing up.

Juanita transitioned into providing a view of her parents and the affect her father had on her.

Both of my parents graduated from high school. My dad was an operation engineer back then you didn't have to sit and take test to become one. My mom was very strong on the things she did. My dad, his thing was – one of the comments that just came to my head. My dad use to say to me, learn your craft. If that's something you want to do learn, your craft. I just remember him saying when started at Local 123 (alias); he was the only Black on the job. They only wanted him to work certain machines at that job. He said Juanita, they never taught me how to work the machines, but I read the manuals. I learned to work the machines and when the opportunity came I got on the machine and I worked the machine.

He used to tell me the reason he was able to work the way that he worked and provided for us. He took the initiative because they were never going to teach him how to work all 20 of the machines in the yard. He said, 'I took the time out to learn the 20 machines in the yard, so when they called-they use to call in the mornings once my dad was laid off. They would ask him if he knew how to work a certain machine. He could say that he knew how to work the machine. That's what they called him to see if he could get the job.

He never would have gotten the job if he didn't know how to work the machine. Because they wanted to know can you work the crane? Can you work the roller? Can you work such and such a thing? His thing was I didn't want them to call me and not be able to give me a job. I wanted the job. I wanted to work, so my thing was if I need to learn how to work all 20 machines that was something that I had to do. My dad, that was his

thing, he knew how to work 20 machines. He stayed there for 35 years and always had a job because when they called him in the morning he knew how to work the machine. That's what he used to say to me.

Juanita was the most outspoken of the African American women in this study. She provided insight into the stereotypes many African American women may encounter during their transition. Juanita elected to address each barrier during her transition with laughter and dialogue.

Asha

Asha is a 48 year-old single mother of three adult daughters and a 17-year-old son. She was working fulltime as an activity coordinator at a local senior citizen's center and a fulltime student. Asha finished high school in 1982. There was a two-year delay between high school and her initial college enrollment. She is currently working on a degree in bachelor degree in Behavioral Science. At times was reluctant to reveal her description of her transition experience. In addition to the semi-structure interviews she completed a journal and I had to the pleasure to visit home. After those two experiences, I was able to gain more insight into her transition experience.

Asha recalls that early on the impact of race was evident in her educational experiences. She describes her feelings about math and reading. Although her mother was unable to provide academic assistance, the emotional support was evident.

Early school experience. There are two experiences that I have. I was in first grade there were these twins that went to school with me. Twins are use to being home together. Well, this one year they weren't together, so this teacher. I'm not going to mention her name. I remember this teacher grabbing me she was White, moved me. Here

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is my desk and the classroom across the hall you could see right in the classroom. I'm sitting here if the other twin were sitting here she could see her twin. She grabbed me and moved me very roughly and said she is going to sit here. Is that necessary for you to be angry at me because this twin needs to see her twin and I happen to be Black and they are White is that any reason to be mean to me? I remember her taking me into the bathroom and shaking me and telling me to shut up. I believe that it was because of my race.

I hated math I never could really grasp it. I remember coming home and asking my mother to help me. She would get upset and come and stand over me and just be there. I was in tears and I just couldn't get it. I realized later that one of the reasons that she was upset; she didn't know how to tell me how to do it. I don't remember feeling that I got help when I was in school with math either. It could be that I shut down, but when it came to reading, whew my hand was up. I remember one teacher Mrs. Brown. in third grade. I always wanted to read and she let me. I loved reading, but just couldn't grasp the math. I got really good grades, but the math was low. But I don't dwell on that. When I think about education, I think about the clubs that I joined because in those clubs I got an education in how to deal with people. I was in the French club. We had sales and I would sale candy. I loved sales. I loved being able to convince someone they needed to buy the candy, those taffies.

In addition to describing the racial incident and love of reading, Asha provided insight into her high school experience.

I remember I was vocally loud. If you tell a joke I am laughing out loud. I was outgoing. One of the teachers in my homeroom class (chuckle); me and my girlfriend, my first cousin, our fathers are brothers. She said something to me and I was just laughing

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out loud I was hysterical. I wasn't trying to be disrespectful, but it was funny and I just

laughed. So my teacher said something to me and I said something back not smart. I don't

remember what the response was. She said obviously. She was an older lady with a bun

on the top of her head a Caucasian lady with the glasses on top of her head. But I learned

to love her.

I believe there were times in my life when I was younger and I laughed like that

because I couldn't stand the silence because I was insecure. I had to make some noise I

had to do something. I remember that year being insecure and it was too quiet. I had to do

something. I was very insecure. I had no self-esteem. I didn't feel good about myself. At

some point I didn't like being Black. I used to get made fun of. You know what the sad

thing is? I didn't get made fun of by White people. I got made fun of by my own race.

Other people treated me differently because I was Black. Let me tell you I can tell the

difference. When I am talking to someone, I can tell if they give a darn or not. I can tell.

Let's say I go for a job interview and the person happens to be White. I can tell if you

really don't want me there. I know the signs. I can tell the way they look at me. Because I

am Black they don't want me there.

The goal was to learn as much about Asha's school experience; therefore, I asked

her to tell me more about school. She began with the most encouraging person.

I want to say that the person that guided me the most was my art teacher. She

asked me to clean her house because I think she saw potential in me. I was very good at it

(cleaning). I use to clean at home. My mom would reward me for cleaning the house. I

cleaned her house and store. I ended up cleaning for her for years. It didn't bother me.

She was very polite. She paid me, fed me and educated me. She said that she had a room

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for me if I ever wanted to come and do my math. I never did. I don't know if I was ashamed. I really don't know what my thoughts were. I think I was a procrastinator. So I never took her up on that. But she was an encourager for me. She encouraged me about college. I told her that I wanted to be a nurse, she didn't tell me how to do it, but she told me that I was capable. She just encouraged me.

Asha described her challenges and triumphs. These factors seemed to have propelled her into community college. She began postsecondary year in 1984.

Community college experience. Well, I started in 1984. On and off I went for 20 years before I finished. I did two years, but I went on and off but I didn't finish my associates until 2004. Through deaths in my family having babies just being a single parent. Just life not knowing what I wanted to do, losing my mom at a young age, just going back and forth in life, but not giving up. I actually started college when I was 21and I graduated with my associates at 40, so really just through life events.

Even though all that was going on when I decided to go. I was excited. Excited because in the last maybe six to ten years I have discovered my potential and that nothing can stop me. And when I went to community college, that community college could be 20 miles away but if I knew that it was my only option I'd go-because I had more options. In terms of community college, just my excitement, just learning who I've become. That I can do anything and I don't know whether that is more about me or is it about community college and just having a classroom setting. I can actually put my hands on something. I can get involve. That's my excitement knowing that I am going to class and getting involved. That's my excitement. Even if I don't always agree with what the professor says that's my excitement.

Actually, when I started at MCC the first, it was for nursing, but I could not pass physical science. I discovered that I wanted to work with people. I remember I was about four years old. My grandmother came to live with us. She was young, very young and she had arthritis. I watched my parents welcome her. My mom was dealing with a alcoholic husband and even though they had their problems they took on the care of someone else. That's where I learned it (caring for others). So I went from nursing and not being able to pass physical science. I asked myself, What can I do? I can't let physical science stop me. I can't even tell you when the light went on and I said what about social work? When I read and saw the courses, and knew I really wanted to work with people and that was for me.

While Asha was excited about attending community college, she reported that she was challenged by racism.

I remember when I was I college probably 1999 or 2000. The professor was doing the attendance and he was calling everybody's name out, he had already called out my full name, I don't remember the other girl's first name. She had red hair; White girl with freckles. He called her first and last name. Our last names were the same Smith (alias). She yells out that we're not related. I was like wow! Really! Out loud? What does that mean? Is it because you're White and I'm Black and there is the chance that we might be related? You're not even trying to hear that. I knew what that meant. It was obvious to me. It meant because you are Black and we have the same last names we are not related. There is no way. It was obvious to me. I think that if that had been a Black person that would not have happened. It just would not have happened. We share the same last name but we are not of the same race. *But* for me these kind of things have not always been

with the students; it has been with the professors and I believe it is because it's like parent and child relationship. The professor knows better you are just a student. I actually had a professor say to me I run this. I'm like wow! I'm not trying to run this.

According to Asha, while she experienced racism from students, she was also taken aback by a phrase from a professor, "I run this."

At the time my kids were young they were in daycare. It didn't happen often, as a matter of fact it was the only time, but I let him know. If I'm late, it's only me. I have to make sure that I have my kids in and out of daycare at a certain because I am charged an extra fee. He said to me. I run this. This is my show. I thinking, I'm not trying to run this, I'm just trying to explain what my circumstances are. I have to leave early so I can get my children. *So* I can only guess what he meant by I run this. I mean, I think a lot times people like the control. They don't want people telling them what they are going to do. In a situation like that, I wasn't trying to tell you what to do. I was telling him what I needed to do in order to keep my children in daycare so I can be here. I actually, I ended up just standing up and saying look this is the way it is. Later, in class I found out that he used this method as a tool. It was a good tool, but I didn't know what it was that he was trying to say to me or trying to pull out of me and why. I just know I think he learned to respect me after that.

Even though Asha felt that the professor respected her after she spoke up, it appeared that she was still concern about the phrase. She further explained the handling of the situation.

But still just the way he said that term, I run this. Why would you think that I'm trying to run anything? It was just an explanation. Now I would be disrespectful if I just

like left and not say anything. That's disrespectful to the class. I appreciate how the relationship developed because he saw that I was just as strong, but I wanted to be respectful. If I had allowed him, he could have pulled me out of my character. But I didn't allow that because I was there for one thing and one thing only to do better. I have young children. Even if I didn't tell them that they should to go to college. I wanted them to see me go to college and succeed without having to you know get smart with people or raise my voice. It doesn't take that.

Asha was asked to describe being "pulled out of character." She provided the following explanation.

You know like talking loud and arguing with him and being disrespectful. It is important to me not to be pulled out of character because I was raised that way and I learned that people deserved respect and you should even give it even if they don't deserve it. I just don't believe in treating people bad. I think you get more respect out of being calm and allowing people to see what they are doing; if in fact they are doing something. Besides my mom and dad taught me respect. I teach my children respect and it's just not right to disrespect people. You don't get have to get loud. There are other ways and other avenues to get things across. I always tell my son if you feel you are right and if you are in school. Don't get loud; talk to the teacher, pull the teacher aside if time warrants it. If they can't see your point take it to the next level. If they can't see it then I'll come in. As he has gotten older, I have tried to teach him to handle stuff and not me jumping in all the time. You don't have to get smart with people to get what you need. Just talk calmly. Be respectful sometimes they're going to be disrespectful, but you don't have to. It is just doing the right thing.

After a slight pause, Asha began to talk about her mother.

Now that I think about how I was raised and how I raised my children…I had a very loving mother, hardworking as far as education no rewards were given that's okay. My reward from my mom was when she took us out in the back of the old Pantry Pride parking lot and played baseball with us. So she took time out, so that never bothered me that we didn't get rewarded for doing good in school. My mom never talked about it. She wasn't a talker she showed us how she felt about us. She didn't say much she laughed a lot and joked a lot that was really my reward whether that comes under education. That was my reward; not a lot of words were exchanged. We knew she loved us. We knew that she wanted better for us.

Asha expressed that although her mother did not provide tangible rewards for academic achievement, she provided the support needed to continue to strive toward a baccalaureate degree.

Transition experience. When I knew that I wanted to go back to school. I looked at the colleges that built the partnerships, so I started to look at what they offered. Branch University is close and I liked that because I am not a traveler. I liked the block scheduling and the choice of classes. They offered evening classes. I am an evening person and it gives me time to spend with my son. So I just went in to talk to the counselors. There was one counselor there she was White who just wanted to tell me what to take. I said no not this time. That is the mistake that I made when I first came college. She told me what the degree required. That's okay. I need to know why I have to take those classes. Don't just give them to me. I use to accept things like that long ago,

but that's not me today. I want to know why I'm doing certain things. When do I finish? Do I really have to take these two together? I am better if I take statistics without some other math.

You know, I feel that White people think that we don't know anything and that we (African Americans) can't make our own decisions. Well, this is not 90 years ago. We can. We have always been capable, but for some reason because of the power they have, they have the upper hand. They think we couldn't make decisions for ourselves, but I refuse to have anybody tell me that I can't make my own decisions. The minute you tell me that I can't. It propels me even more, so I could tell while sitting with her that she wanted to dictate to me. If she felt like she needed to dictate then she had to tell me why I need to be dictated to. How I am going to benefit? And then even after you tell me I am going to question why. I cannot operate like that. But there was another Caucasian. She was different. She took the time, I needed to know why and she explained why.

Throughout the interviews, Asha would to introduce race, so I asked her how race has impacted her transition experience. She responded with the following description.

I was asked a question about race or the class was asked a question about race. We were asked if we would we date outside of our race. Someone that is Caucasian or somebody that is Italian. Let me take it back. First of all, where we grew up, I never thought about it. When I was a child the whole neighborhood was Black. I never thought about that then, but I think about it now. My mom never talked to me about race. She never talked to me about color. As a matter of fact, when my dad decided to go outside the marriage he dated someone white, so I think that is why I don't have a problem with

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race. He was showing me that it was okay to love someone outside of your race. Let me share this with you.

We had a conversation in class and one of the questions was what do you think about you? I've never been asked that question. My explanation was this. When I was growing up in my neighborhood all of the people were Black and I didn't know I was Black. The girl asked what did I mean and what was I trying to say. I said nobody ever sat down and said this is what African Americans have been through. No one in my home said that and this is what we had to face as African Americans. They never said I want you to know that you are somebody. That never took place. Again you just go through life and you're a female. You go through life having a period, just the general stuff. We never talked about that kind of stuff.

I shared with them that I didn't really see White people until I went to school. And my mom and dad just taught me to love people. We never talked about that, so I don't think about being Black. That's who I am. If someone confronts me and says something; I am challenged then I'll have something to say. Then there may be times that I don't have anything to say. Or I may not have an answer. So what this study has done for me is to make me think about that, "Who are you?" You weren't born like this for no reason, so I think it is a good thing for me to be observant more of my culture.

Asha stated that her participation in this study provided her with the opportunity to critically self reflect.

Just the recent class that I had the professor gave a test online. I really didn't like his attitude. Of course he's White. I explained to him. I know that college is changing. I know you have a choice of to do a face-to-face class or online. I didn't choose to do an

online class. I know that everything is technical now, but I am not always technical. I can't always use those methods. I need to have things in front of me. I need to be able to look at it, so I had a problem with being told that I had to take this test on line. I was failing. I can't do testing on line. The test was 20 questions and he gave us 15 minutes. The minute that I know that I am being timed I get nervous. I need to take the time to process. It takes me longer to process that's just who I am. That's one of my struggles and people don't understand. I don't know if it's because I am African American. I don't know what it is, but it just takes me time to process. I sent him an email to request more time. I didn't hear from him. I asked him again. I told him that I needed to take my time.

He upped it to 30 minutes. I showed him my IEP to show that I had a learning disability. I said that I needed to be accommodated. I need to be able to take my time. I felt like he got smart. I felt like he didn't handle it professionally. I said, 'Look, I just going to talk to someone one in the office because things gotta change.' It wasn't until I said that I was going to seek somebody else's help. Then he said okay; I'll give you more time. The way he snapped at me signaled to me that it had something to do with me being Black. I just got his gestures; I just felt it. You know, the way he responded to me. There are some times I just say I'm gonna stick it out and sometimes I say forget it. I normally don't give up but there are days when you don't feel like fighting. So I decided that I'm just going to pass the class. And that's what I did I got a D. I could've done better.

At the end of this description, Asha looked downhearted. I asked her to describe the impact that her education has had on her life. She reported that her education made her want to learn more about African American history. She came to the self-realization

that to be Black is beautiful. She also reported that while her education was important, the life experiences are what made her who she is today.

I can answer it this way. I will be 49 next Monday and it wasn't until lately I began to learn about Black history. You know years ago I chose not to have cable. A lot of people teased me about it. They would say some things like, you don't have cable? I would say I wanted to be able to choose what my kids saw, you know the positive things not just some trash upon the TV. I'm here (library) everyday taking out movies, but lately you know what I've been doing? Taking out movies about slavery. Taking out things about you know, about the Underground Railroad and thinking how awesome, but I never thought about that before. So now I'm like, wow! As an African American woman that makes me proud. I look at my skin. I look at my lips. I look at my nose. I use to be real self conscious about my nose. It was a joke among my family. I get my nose from my dad and he gets it from his mom, so they call me big nose. So, like later on I said that's not funny and I had a real complex about that. So sometimes it starts in your family as a joke and you take it serious, but now you're joking but outside they are really making a big deal out of it.

Let me tell you life experience had a lot to do with 99.9% of who I am and education is just the icing. It is teaching me about people. When I talking to them I am thinking about how they may perceive what I am saying. They may not perceive it the way I'm saying it, so I am learning body language. I am learning just diversity. I am learning about other cultures. It has just opened a lot of windows for me. I'll have more opportunities. I will a stronger chance of getting that job that they want now that I'm educated.

According to Asha, education provided her with confidence and the desire to learn more about her heritage. She asserts that college was not discussed; however, learning to survive was impressed upon her. Those skills transformed into persistence.

Here I am 49, and there is still so much more for me to learn. I learn something new all the time. I wasn't taught to go to college with my family it was always survival. Survival means when there was no food. A bottle of soy sauce and a sub roll was lunch. Although we didn't have steak didn't have cheese, it was still something to eat. You are still surviving. My mom worked 6 days a week, but it seemed like she was always struggling being a parent, her husband left her and having to raise four children. You know just having very little and still survive and making it work.

Let's just say that some asked me a question about economy, I could not answer it. Even though I was an individual I could have sought an education myself, but I didn't feel motivated. Because it wasn't taught by my mom to go to school take a trade. I believe those influences came from outside, but it was never taught. Not that I wasn't educated because I was. It might not have been books, but it was just the way my mom would make a bill work. I going to pay this, I not going to pay this and I'll come back to this. So I was learning to choose what was a priority and what was not.

She may not have use a book, but she showed me and I watched her even if she wasn't trying to show me. I was watching, so in terms of college she never said you should go to college. So we didn't talk about Black history. We didn't talk about you know things on the news. Although my dad would always say me, I don't care whatever it is read it. We just didn't, so now in my 40s I am learning that news is important. I am finding out current events are important; economics are important. I have been given the

opportunity to go to college to get an education. If someone were to stop me from getting an education, I'll get it somehow. I don't care if we are 20 years down the road, there is always going to be somebody that is prejudice, but that won't stop me.

If someone tells me no not so much no, if someone tells me I can't. Oh, you messed up when you told me I can't. Caused when I am told that I can't because I have been put down so much and called ugly and you can't do this and you can't do that. You know you are ugly. My self-esteem was very, very, low, so as I got older and I realized what I was capable of. If someone told me I can't. So it makes me want to do it even more and not even to prove it to them but to prove it to myself that I can do it. The self esteem that I didn't have before, now I have gained it. I'm a Christian. I'm on the choir and one of the things-like a sales person you have to convince someone to buy your product-and it takes energy-it takes time and it takes attitude.

Asha's advice to future African American women was in all about the need to survive.

Advice to others. My favorite saying to myself and to my three daughters and my son is, I don't care what it is. If someone tells you no find out why they are telling you no and allow that to propel you. Someone one may come long and say you can't do this or you can't do that. You don't have enough of this. You are not the right color whether they said it or not maybe it's a nonverbal. I don't know, but there is always going to be somebody that are going to tell us that we can't but it may not be verbal. It could be a gesture that makes you feel less than. It can be a shake of the head-people are not stupid. If someone gives you a gesture you know what that means. Gestures have been around a long time a finger or you know it can be anything body language you know I'm Black

and I sit next to somebody White they may change their seat-that's a gesture right there that's body language- that's a gesture right there – you have to understand that.

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of four African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. Consistent with the research on African American women (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2000), this chapter provided a platform for the participants to verbally share their perspectives. Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha's narratives provided insight into the connection between their, early educational, community college, and transition experiences. Additionally, the rich data gained provided the basis for an in-depth analysis of the transition experience, while supporting phenomenology research and the Black Feminist thought paradigm.

Chapter V

Data Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of African American women transferring from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is to implement the data analysis procedure outlined in Chapter III and discuss the findings. The literature revealed that in general when students transition from one environment to the other, they experience academic, social, and psychological barriers (Glass & Harrington, 2002). However, research from the African American women's transition perspective is absent. In order to provide a holistic view of the transition experience from the standpoint of African American women, Black Feminist Thought was the theoretical lens. Black feminist thought maintains that society's controlling images and interlocking oppressions, race, class, and gender adversely affect African American women's lives (Collins, 2000). They oftentimes address and deflect these negative constructs by replacing the images with positive ones or embrace and use them to their advantage. For those reasons, African American women perceive their position in many situations as the outsider-within and maintain a unique stance on their experiences (Collins; Higginbotham, 1992; Hooks, 1984).

In order to address the unique standpoint of African American women Few et al. (2003), Johnson-Bailey (1999), and Tillman (2002) recommend a culturally sensitive methodological approach is paramount. Thus, descriptive phenomenology was implemented in this study. As described in Chapter III, phenomenology seeks to uncover and describe the essence of the lived experience in the first person and gain as many

meanings as possible (Giorgi, 2009; Keen, 1975). Explorations of the factors relevant to the African American women's lived transition experiences provided rich data for this study and are presented in this chapter.

During two semi-structured interviews, the women were asked to describe their experiences in three life-worlds, early educational, community college, and transition experiences. As the women described their experiences, themes unfolded. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) suggest that themes are implicit topics that organize a group of repeating ideas. In order to arrive at the themes for this study, I followed Colaizzi (1978) Giorgi's (1997) procedure for data analysis as outlined in Chapter III. I extracted units of meaning relevant to the posed research questions. Next, I clustered the units of relevant meanings and determined the themes. For each life-world, significant themes emerged. The themes that evolved in their early educational experience were acquisition of racial socialization and social capital for promoting academic excellence. The community college experiences of the participants revealed the following themes: reasons for reentry African American women and utilizing racial socialization to address racism. Analysis of the transition experience revealed the following themes: the interlocking of race, class, and/or gender, self-validation and self-definition as a means to negate negative stereotypes, and advice to others to help provide a seamless transition.

As also mentioned in Chapter III, the participants took part in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to triangulate the data from the semi-structured interviews, identify additional factors that may have affected their transition experience, and provide opportunity for the women to meet. The transcript from the focus group was analyzed using Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi (1997) method of data analysis for

phenomenological research. Each line of the transcript was numbered using a feature of

Microsoft Word. The transcript was read and reread to extract verbatim clusters of

relevant meanings, which lead to two additional themes, racial socialization of children

and self-validation and self-definition as a means of support among the African American

women.

Racial socialization, self-validation, and self-definition were evident in both the

semi-structured interviews and focus group, but with a different focus. Racial

socialization in the semi-structured interviews addressed the participants' acquisition of

the skills needed to address racial disparities. They used these skills to navigate their way

through the community college and transition to the four-year university. On the other

hand, the focus group data showed the participants' felt it was imperative to provide these

skills to buffer the discrimination their children would eventually face.

Self-validation and self-definition also had a different focus. During the semi-

structured interviews the participants were self-validating and self-defining individually.

As the participants were sharing their lived experiences in the focus group, they used it as

an opportunity to promote self-validation and self-definition in the company of each

other. As a result of the overlapping of themes in the semi-structure and focus group the

data were integrated and presented under the perspective themes.

Early Educational Experiences

The participants were asked to describe their early educational experiences. These

experiences provided scaffolding for the African American women's lived transition

experience. Two themes emerged acquisition of racial socialization and social capital to

nurture academic excellence. Racial socialization is the inferred messages or open

discussions African American parents have with their children about the "social meaning of race" and race related incidents (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006; Scott, 2003). Racial socialization acts as a form of protection, which may potentially "buffer" young African Americans from negative effects of racial discrimination (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007). Hughes and Chen and Hughes et al. further assert that as African American parents engage in conversations about race they include cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust. Cultural socialization is ensuring that their children are aware of their history, cultural heritage, and values.

In preparation for bias, African American parents provide their children with verbal descriptions and nonverbal cues that enable them recognize and understand the issues that accompany their "minority status," such as discrimination and stereotypes (Hughes & Chen, 1997, p. 200). While preparing African American children, parents provide them with coping strategies, such as telling them that they have to work harder than their White students. Promotion of mistrust is oftentimes in the form of precautionary practices concerning children from other races.

Understanding the African American women's racial socialization intelligence was critical in understanding the findings of the transition experience. It enabled me report the findings and their ability to address what they described as racial discrimination and stereotypes that were embedded in their lived transition experiences.

Acquisition of racial socialization. Acquisition of racial socialization demonstrated characteristics that provided indirect and direct forms of racial socialization during the participants' early educational years. Indirect and direct forms of racial

socialization included cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust. Parents, family members, and teachers provided a direct racial socialization. Indirect racial socialization was acquired through encounters with covert and overt forms of discrimination. The learning of racial socialization in their early educational experiences enabled them to recognize and address the discrimination and prejudices. For example, Juanita shared that her parents were adamant about her understanding and having an appreciation for all aspect of African American history.

> My parents were very strict on knowing my African American culture, knowing my history and things like that. One day, I think I was in 10th grade. The teacher said that it was not Black History month. It was multicultural month…I was immediately pissed. I jumped up to her and said that I can't believe you are making us do this…I said that you are not going to sit here and insult me like that. I know better. And they maybe they don't know better. Being Black, I want to get my month too and to take it away is not right.

As a result of Juanita being knowledgeable about Black History Month and her pride in being African American, she found it disconcerting when her English teacher attempted to deny her an opportunity to celebrate by renaming it multicultural month. Juanita looked forward to celebrating Black History Month. Her unwavering passion for her history and being denied the option to honor her history also reflects knowledge of preparation of bias and promotion of mistrust.

Whereas Juanita's parents were transparent about her heritage, Brenda's mother promoted racial pride by discouraging the use of offensive racial language to describe African Americans. Thereby, preparing her for understanding and recognition of racial bias. Brenda's describes an incident that happened when she was in seventh grade that left her feeling downhearted and unresponsive. This is reflected in the quote below.

> When I was in seventh grade at a track meet, one of the other coaches did not like the fact that we had a Black runner running with all of the White runners. He said,

'Why is that nigger running with my runners pretty much…It made me feel bad. I was never exposed to that. My mom she doesn't used those words. She never talked like that around my sisters and me.

In a situation like that I didn't know how to respond…I looked at my coach like-what are you going to do?

Asha, on the other hand, reported that her parents never discussed race with her as a child. Research indicates that parents usually began to discuss the topic of race with their children based on the child's readiness (Hughes & Chen, 1997). However, an incident in first grade proved that she was aware of the racial differences and the discrimination. Asha reported that she lived in a predominately African American community; thus, she may have been made aware through interaction with community members. She shared,

My mom never talked to me about race. She never talked to me about color…Nobody ever sat down and said that and this is what African Americans have been through. We didn't talk about Black History.

I was in first grade. There were these twins that went to school with me. Here is my desk and the classroom across the hall. You could see right in the classroom. I am sitting here if the other twin was sitting here. She could see her twin. She grabbed me I remember this teacher grabbing me. She was White and moved me roughly and said she is going to sit here. Is that necessary for you to be angry at me because this twin needs to see her twin? And I happen to be Black and they are White. Is that any reason to be mean to me?

Every so often, someone other than a family, such as a teacher, supplies cultural socialization, which promotes a sense of pride. This was the case with Gale's fourth grade teacher. She shared, "He let me express it (attitude) by doing the Rosa Parks scene, the back of the bus for Black History month."

While a fourth grade teacher provided Gale cultural socialization, which fostered a sense of self-pride, the high school personnel promoted a sense of mistrust as well as prepared her for racial bias. As a teen parent, Gale experienced the emotional and

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psychological impact of the interlocking oppressions of race, class, and gender (Collins, 2000). Gale expressed race and class disparities in the schools' policies and procedures in reference to African American students. Her opinions are reflected in the quotes below.

> In high school I really saw it…I had my first child and he was 2…They would just nick pick with me. If I was late, my homeroom teacher would say come in. A white security guard would come walking in and say no you have to go to the office. They did that so many times. There were times when I had to take the baby to the doctor or something. They always had a problem with something. They kicked me out of day school and put me in night school. I just felt like it was…that it was racist.

> I say such as perfect attendance; whereas it just goes deeper into…Black families where a lot of them struggle. Maybe our parents or the single parent had to be somewhere and they wouldn't be back in time to pick us up, so we had to miss school. So now just because we missed that day; no matter if we explained it or not we wouldn't get that perfect attendance award.

As research suggest, these participants received some form of racial socialization by means of cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust from parents, educators, and community members (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). This socialization was transmitted both implicitly and explicitly. Hughes and Chen (1997) posit that many parents discuss the topic of race when they feel that the child is ready. What is not evident is in all responses is at what age were they received the tactics to address racial biases.

All in all the acquisition of racial socialization provided the participants the skills necessary to address encounters with race or racism. Not only that, they felt it was their parental responsibility to inform their children about race and racism. The focus group provided additional data on the participants' thoughts on racial socialization. Three participants revealed that informing their children about race was crucial to their well being and academic success.

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As discussed in her semi-structured interview, Asha reported the absence racial socialization from her parents. She reported that she understood that she was Black, did not see the significance of sharing; however, she said that she was confident. Modeling the behavior of her parents, Asha revealed that she did not discuss race with her children.

> Race that was a topic being discussed in one of my classes. As an African American when I was growing up the population of homes were black owned and we were one of them. But did my parents go around saying you are Black and you shouldn't do that? Today they say don't let them do that to you because you are Black. We didn't talk about this. It's not that I didn't think that I wasn't Black, I knew who I was. I didn't have to parade it because I was confident in who I was, so that was challenging. I don't like that when that's challenged. I am comfortable in who I was I don't feel like I have to fight for certain things because I am comfortable. I'm not saying that's wrong to fight for what history has done. What Harriet Tubman has done, there is nothing wrong with that. It depends on where you are. Did I know that Blacks owned homes in my neighborhood? But Mom didn't say you are Black you should do this. You are Black you shouldn't do that.

Alice, the academic counselor, was perplexed by her response and asked the following question. Do you believe that is a message that your children should know? That you are Black and you should do this because you are Black and you shouldn't do that?

Asha continued along the same vein; however, she did say that race was discussed on a need to know basis. In the following dialogue, Asha prepares her son for racial bias and mistrust.

> No, I teach my children to be confident in who they are as a person. If the topic comes up we will discuss it. As a matter of fact when they go to school, they come back and teach me things about African American history. I have never said you are expected to act a certain way. I have shared with them, but it is not a Black thing anybody and act that way using in terms of stealing wearing their pants down.

> He had an incident in school. The White kids were teasing him saying you are Black. I told him did you tell them that you are Jamaican too? Go back and tell them that; just to let them know that you are proud of who you are. They are trying to make you feel like you shouldn't like yourself because you are African

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American. Do I have the normal talk? No, I just let them be who they are and if the topic comes up then I teach them how to deal with it.

Gale on the other hand, reported that she thought is was important for her sons to understand the racial disparities that many African Americans males experience. She thought that it was imperative for her sons to understand their history. Gale acknowledged that they were young. After watching the video, "Roots" her oldest son asked about slavery. Gale felt it was important to let them know that the correctional facilities were a form of slavery for African American males. She echoes Alexander (2010) theory that the vast number of African Americans is in prison or on parole and this represents a new form of "racial social control" (p. 22).

> I do. I try to explain that it is not only now. I let them know that for their safety. You know don't be on the streets after dark; that sort of thing. I told you I got the Roots video. We watched it. I had to explain it to them they are young. I tried to explain to them. They asked me if slavery is still around. I tried to explain it to them that slavery is still here. But now African American males are in jails and that we all are affected by it. I did have that talk with them.

As her parents did with her, Juanita continues the conversation of race and racial disparities with her daughters. She also made her daughters aware of other cultures. Hughes and Chen (1997) assert that many African American parents to make them aware of the origins of stereotypes while introducing to a myriad of experiences. These experiences contribute to their cultural capital and promote academic success (Bourdire & Passeron, 1997). Juanita shared,

> My thing is we talked about this in my paper (Holds up transcripts from her interviews). Saying I am Black? Yes. Do I tell my kids that they are Black? Yes, there are cases in my house and we will have a discussion. My daughter is 17 and getting ready to go to college. I tell her you are Black. That is something you have to be aware of; the reason that I say that is because my kids go to a predominately white school. My daughter listens to the white music. We listen to country music. My daughter is fair skinned, blonde hair, and light brown eyes. You know the hazel eyes. I tell her, you don't get confused. You are what you are. Being Black

you have to know that is what they are going to call you. That you have to know that there is an expectation that they assumed that your mom doesn't work. Ya'll were on welfare that is a big thing.

As research suggests, African American parents provide cultural stimulation during their children's early childhood. Brenda's daughter is two years old. She provides positive images to her daughter by way of cultural socialization. Brenda shared. My daughter is young, but I read to her. I tried to find children's books about Black people. I buy her dolls that are Black.

All in all, as documented in research, these African American women's experienced explicit and implicit forms of racial socialization. They were prepared for racial bias and mistrust, cultural socialization, and pluralism (learning about diverse cultures). Additionally, they deemed that as African American parents it was important to racial socialize their children as preparation of racism as well as successful academic achievement.

Another theme that surfaced during the interviews was acquisition of social capital for academic success. Coleman (1988) posits that a child's social capital is relative to the parents' human capital and their ability to transmit this human capital to their children to foster academic achievement. Wells (2008) extends social capital to include the interpersonal relationships and the person's ability to use the relationships for assistance and personal gain. Coleman further asserts that although parents have a high amount human capital yet low interaction with their children they have minimum opportunities to provide human capital than those families that have a high interaction with their children. These skills are oftentimes developed and nurtured in home and

school. The ability to use social capital is important to the persistence towards baccalaureate attainment (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Acquisition of social capital in the form of parental involvement. As documented in the research, all of the participants reported receiving some form of social capital from family, community members, and educators. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is the time that parents, educators, and community members spend communicating ideas about education. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the data were analyzed using Coleman's theory. Social capital as described by the participants included encouraging words, importance of education, and early academic skills from family, community, and educators. They were able to convert to academic capital and use during their transition experience. The excerpts from the participants' narratives provide reflections on their acquisition of social capital to enable them to convert it to social resources to spend when needed. It was described as emotional support, preparation for college, survival skills, or a phrase that they remember and continue to use.

Asha reported that instead of discussing postsecondary education, her parents deemed it necessary to teach her day-to-day survival skills (making do with minimum resources). Ladner (1971) asserts that African American girls are compelled to take on adult responsibilities at young ages. Parents thought it necessary to provide survival skills to protect and demonstrate how to meet the demands of life as an African American. According to Pascarella et al. (2004), students whose parents that do not discuss postsecondary education more than likely are inadequately prepared about the basics knowledge, such as application process. Nevertheless, Asha credits her desire to attend

college to her art teacher; however, her parents' care of her grandmother influenced her

degree choice and provided skills to cope with financial constraints. Her story revealed,

> I wasn't taught to go to college. With my family, it was always survival. You know just having very little and still survive and making it work. Because it wasn't taught by my mom to go to school and learn a trade. I believe those influences came from outside. But it was never taught. Not that I wasn't educated because I was. It might not have been books. But it was the way my mom could make a bill work.

> I want to say that the person that guided me the most was my art teacher. She asked me to clean her house. I think she saw potential in me. I was very good at it. I use clean at home. She encouraged me about college. I told her that I wanted to be a nurse. She didn't tell me how to do it, but she told me that I was capable. She just encouraged me.

> I remember when I was about four; my grandmother came to live with us. She had arthritis. I watched my parents welcome her. Even though they had problems, they took on the care of someone else. That's where I learned it (caring for others).

As in racial socialization, Gale's her acquisition of social capital came from her

parents and teachers. Her first grade teacher used every available resource to enable her

to succeed academically. Gale reported,

> I had trouble with my vowels sounds a lot. She really tried to help me. I had speech therapy. Sometimes she would get in touch with my mom and she would keep me after school. She tried to get me into a lot of programs with different people, friends that she thought might could help me. She would send for my aunt that was in fourth grade to come down and help me.

Even though Gale saw the benefits of a caring first grade teacher, she understood

that her family had limited academic capital. This, limitation affected her academically

once she entered seventh grade. According to Kozol (1991), middle school is the time in

which many students see and understand the academic disparities in their parents'

educational abilities. These inequities eventually affect the students baccalaureate

attainment (Zamani, 2000).

My dad he went to the eighth grade. By the time I was in the seventh grade, none of that work he was able to help me with. My mom was at work by the time I got home. That left me to have to wait for my older brother to get home from school. So I didn't have the necessary resources to help me at that time. Some of my struggle came from that my parents just didn't have it. My extended family couldn't help me because they are illiterate.
She describes some capital.

Gale viewed social capital as a means of racial socialization, which provided a

preparation of bias by preparing her academically and socially.

I thought you were so mean, but now I see why you were like that. I just see that you wanted us to be stronger. You wanted us to make it basically. I probably would have played around and talked, but I didn't do that with you because you didn't play that. You are African American and a female and at that time you probably knew that whereas us students didn't know what was needed for us to be successful and to be able to overcome a lot of obstacles that we would probably face. Some of the obstacles could have been learning obedience from a teacher, so that we could get an education.

Asha and Gale expressed receiving implicit and explicit forms of social capital

from their parents and community, whereas Brenda and Juanita acknowledged their

parents' direct involvement in their academic success. Brenda also connected her high

school preparation to the reason she was accepted to two Historically Black colleges. She

reported,

I did well in school. I actually got accepted to two historically Black colleges. I had to take a placement test to see where I was in math reading. They sent home what was going to be on the test. When they did that my mom went to the bookstore and got all of this stuff to help me study.

Juanita's parents prepared her to get an education in a restrictive environment.

Her father's experience with on the job racism lead him to instruct her on ways to

negotiate the obstacles. Juanita shared.

Both of my parents graduated high school. My dad was an operation engineer. My dad use to say to me, learn your craft. If it's something that you want to do, learn your craft. He was the only Black on the job. They only wanted him to work certain machines at that job. He said, 'Juanita they never taught me how to work

the machines, but I read the manuals. I learned to work the machines and when the opportunity came. I got on the machine and worked the machine. He use to tell me, that the reason I was able to work the way that I worked and provide for my family, I took the initiative. They were never going to teach me how to work all 20 machines in the yard. I took the time out to learned the 20 machines in the yard.

In describing their early educational experiences, these women revealed how family, educators, and circumstances were contributors to their acquisition of racial socialization and social capital. As research suggests acquisition of social capital in early years is paramount to their success in postsecondary education.

Community College Experiences

Community colleges are economical, nonrestrictive in their admission policy, and considered the gateway to higher education for many students (Cohen & Brawer, 1987). Community colleges also offer a plethora of licenses, certificates and terminal degrees, and the route to baccalaureate attainment. Community colleges are recognized for its diverse population. A large percentage of women contribute to the diversity at community colleges. Some of these women use community colleges as a point of reentry to a baccalaureate degree. These women are returning to complete a degree, fulfill a dream, advance a career, or improve financial status. As women are returning research found that they delayed entry to postsecondary education to maintain jobs, families, and other commitments use them as the pathway to baccalaureate degree.

The findings from this study support the theories on reentry women. An analysis of the Data uncovered two themes, reasons for reentry to community college and utilizing racial socialization intelligence as social capital to navigate their way through MCC.

Reasons for reentering to postsecondary education. The findings revealed that

three of the participants did not attend college immediately after high school; the fourth

did, but stopped out and reentered at two different community colleges. Their reasons for

returning to community support the literature on reentry on reentry. For instance,

initially, Brenda attended a Historical Black college right after high school. She was

placed on academic probation after her freshman year; and chose not return. Instead,

Brenda transferred to a community college and stopped out again. After the birth of her

daughter, she had a watershed moment; thus, returned school to increase her earning

power school in order to make better provisions for she and her daughter. Brenda said,

> After that second semester, I ended up getting pregnant. I took a couple of
> semesters off. I went back to school and took a couple of classes at a time, but I
> really wasn't interested. After I had my daughter, I kind of distanced myself from
> the people I was hanging out with. I realized that I couldn't make the life for her
> that I wanted being around them, so I needed to go to school and make something
> better for myself.

> Gale, on the other hand was a teen parent, quit high school, but earned her GED.

She became preoccupied with her job, children, and was unable to maintain her focused.

Eventually, Gale became entangled in a legal conflict, which resulted in her pleading

guilty to a crime that she said she did not commit. According to Gale, attending college

was a lifelong dream; therefore, she used her situation as a catalyst to return to school for

a better life.

> I got my GED (Graduate Equivalent Diploma). I was proud that I was able to get
> it on time. I got my first apartment. I was caught up in that. I was working at a
> local department store. I had my second baby. Just trying to maintain and take
> care of my two children. Then I started not being focus. I wanted to go clubbing. I
> got with the wrong crowd. I caught a charge in 2005. I was charged with
> receiving stolen property. It was a car. I didn't take it, but I took a plea for the
> charge in 2006 or 2007.

I was going through court proceedings for about a year and I didn't want to keep messing up. I was tired of going through. I always wanted to go to college. I had a goal to be in college by 20, graduate by 25 and I didn't want to wait. I knew that I wasn't going to get it the way that I was moving. I wouldn't be able to do that. I just prepared for another look on life.

Juanita became pregnant in high school and chose not to enter college after completing high school. She joined the military instead attending a postsecondary institution. After her tour of duty in the armed forces, Juanita entered MCC. Juanita also viewed her community college reentry as a means to refocus her life while being able to maintain her family and job.

I wasn't quite ready for college yet. I had just had a baby. I was an honor student. I kind of backed away from going to college. Actually my dream was to become a stockbroker. I still wanted to do something. I joined the military. I had to work. I had to provide for my child, so working and going to a four year school was really not an option for me.

I was happy about going to community college. I felt like it would get me back on track; that is what I needed. I did not want to invest in a four-year college and not knowing exactly how I would feel about it especially being a sing mom and having to work…I knew that a community college it was flexible and they offered a lot of different classes and different things like that.

Asha finished high school in 1982 and enrolled in MCC in 1984, but stopped out. According to Asha, for 20 years she continued to attend and stop out. Eventually, she was able to persist towards an associate's degree. Asha said this about her reentry experience,

Off and on I went for 20 years before I finished. I did two years. Through deaths in my family, having babies just being a single parent and just life not knowing what I wanted to do…so really through life events…I was excited because in the last six to ten years I have discovered my potential.

All in all as noted in the research on reentry women, these African American women reentered community college with intent to change their situation. They wanted to reorganize their lives, improve their financial situation, and make a better life for their families. One participant encapsulated the reason for choosing community college as the

She said that community colleges are flexible in course scheduling, offers a myriad of academic choices, and economical. As these four African American women began their journey through MCC, utilizing their racial socialization undergirded their persistence.

   Utilizing racial socialization as social capital. During the descriptions of their early educational years the participants reported receiving some form of racialization. Hughes and Chen (1997) found that adults use their racial socialization skills gained from their parents, community to address racial encounters in any environment. Three of the participants described situations undergirded by race.

   As in her early educational experiences, Brenda was an observer of acts of racism. Although she was an observer, Brenda felt the sting of racism during a discussion about slavery in her history class. Brenda said,

> It was never anything directed towards me…If they we were talking about talking about slavery. Someone might say, If they weren't so lazy that is the sort of thing they would say. A student would say if they would do what they are supposed to do they would not have gotten beaten or attacked or something like that.

   Brenda further adds that she is well aware of the issues of slavery and has a personal connection. As Coker (2003) suggests many African American women understand and acknowledge the challenges, such as the historical affects of slavery. They are not deterred by them and continue to thrive. Brenda shared,

> I understand slavery and its affect. I am thinking they shouldn't be slaves; they are human beings. My great-great grandmother was a couple years shy of slavery. So I know it is like right here in my family, but I still kind of not thinking about myself being that or being there. It doesn't necessarily bother me. Being a descendent of that, but I kind of separate myself from history. I know it I acknowledge it. I don't want to say I let it affect what I am doing, but I don't let it hinder what I am doing.

   In her early educational experiences Juanita reported that her English teacher attempted disguise Black History Month as multicultural. Oftentimes an incident such as

this produces feelings on invisibility and isolation (Collins, 1999; Hooks, 1981). Not only

that, it heightens a level of awareness when a similar incident occurs to a person

(Thomas, 2004). Juanita used her racial socialization intelligence to address her

displeasure when she was described as standoffish and health relative stereotypes

concerning African Americans. She shared,

> African Americans were considered standoffish. I had a teacher tell me you were
> stand-offish. I told her, I don't know how you gathered that. I am here. Nobody
> speaks to me. If don't personally come to you and say I have a problem you won't
> come back to me and see if I am doing anything. I felt invisible. I felt that they
> were uncomfortable speaking with me about anything. They overlooked me for a
> lot of things.

> They would make stereotypes…The African Americans don't do this. They don't
> do that as far as our diet, medical treatment, and different things. I felt like it was
> inaccurate. I felt like they could have used a variety of kinds of races to compare
> and not just single out African Americans. If you are going to say those things
> about us, I felt like we were missing in that research. I just felt like it wasn't a
> clear representation of my culture and I would say that is not entirely true. I said
> that they don't give us the options that they give you guys.

The affects of early racial socialization are noted in Asha's recollection of an

incident in a class that involved another student that happened to share her last name. She

was taken aback by the student's response. Asha said.

> I remember when I was I college probably 1999 or 2000. The professor was doing
> the attendance and he was calling everybody's name out, he had already called out
> my full name, I don't remember the other girl's first name. He called her first and
> last name. Our last names were the same Smith (alias). She yells out that we're not
> related. I was like wow! Really! Out loud? What does that mean? Is it because
> you're White and I'm Black and there is the chance that we might be related?
> You're not even trying to hear that. I knew what that meant. It was obvious to me.
> It meant because you are Black and we have the same last names we are not
> related. There is no way. It was obvious to me. We share the same last name but
> we are not of the same race.

Asha continued her description of her community college lived experience. She

recalled an incident with a professor while describing the responsibility of managing the

role of a single parent and student. Asha assumed that the professor my have thought that she as attempting to usurp his power. This is reflected in the quote below.

> I actually had a professor say to me I run this. I'm like wow! I'm not trying to run this. At the time my kids were young they were in daycare. It didn't happen often, as a matter of fact it was the only time, but I let him know. If I'm late, it's only me. I have to make sure that I have my kids in daycare and out at a certain because I am charged an extra fee. He said to me. I run this. This is my show. I thinking, I'm not trying to run this, I'm just trying to explain what my circumstances are. I have to leave early so I can get my children.

> I think a lot times people like the control. They don't want people telling them what they are going to do. In a situation like that, I wasn't trying to tell you what to do. I was telling him what I needed to do in order to keep my children in daycare so I can be here. I actually, I ended up just standing up and saying look this is the way it is. Later, in class I found out that he used this method as a tool. It was a good tool, but I didn't know what it was that he was trying to say to me or trying to pull out of me and why. I think he learned to respect me after that.

As she continued, Asha emphasized the importance of modeling appropriate behavior for her children. As noted by Fordham (1993) and Morris (2007), African American girls are taught to restrain from being loud and aggressive. Therefore, they shift their behavior to refrain from those descriptions (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Asha expressed her concerned by stating that she did not want to be pulled out of her character.

> Just the way he said that term, I run this. Why would you think that I'm trying to run anything? It was just an explanation. Now, I would be disrespectful if I just like left and not say anything. That's disrespectful to the class. I appreciate how the relationship developed because he saw that I was just as strong, but I wanted to be respectful. If I had allowed him, he could have pulled me out of my character. But I didn't allow that because I was there for one thing and one thing only to do better. I have young children. Even if I didn't tell them that they should to go to college. I wanted them to see me go to college and succeed without having to you know get smart with people or raise my voice. It doesn't take that.

Whereas Gale's, high school experience was impacted by negativity racial discrimination and economic disparity, she reported that her community college

experiences as euphoric. She reported that it was a very good experience for her she

enjoyed the professors and learned something knew about herself. She felt that race was

not her primary concern.

> That was a really good experience for me. It prepared me to get ready for a change and knowing that I needed a change. I kind of looked at it as my way out. I was really devoted. I knew what I wanted and I came in with that attitude. I loved the knowledge that I received. I took a lot of notes. I learned that I am a visual learner. I like stuff like that. I had remedial reading.

> The professors I felt like they didn't care what race I was. I am not going to say all of them, most of the professors cared about their students. I felt like the Black professors and White professors cared. I think they dealt more on a psychological level more than physical or racism.

In summary, Brenda, Juanita, Gale and Asha described their use of racial

socialization skills learned in their formative years. As research demonstrated, the

participants were confronted with stereotypes, overt and covert forms of racism. These

incidents left two of the participants defensive as well as a sense of isolation and

visibility. All in all the participants' racial socialization intelligence skills allowed them

to navigate and address disparities and enjoy their community college experience.

Transition Experience

For many students, the transfer function of the community college continues to

play a major role in baccalaureate attainment (Cuseo, 1998; Handel, 2013). Studies on the

experience the post transfer experiences tend to focus on the transfer shock phenomenon,

academic performance after transferring (Ceja, 1997; Hills, 1965). Studies also show that

days of long ago transfer students were loosing credits after transferring. With those

thoughts in mind, two-year and four-year colleges established articulation agreements

and partnerships to assist in transferring of credits hoping to provide a seamless transfer

experience. However, recent research revealed that students' transition after transfer

encompass social and psychological factors. They found that students experience isolation and long for activities that facilitate a sense of belonging.

Although the studies drew attention to the two-year and four-year college transition, they are limited to students as a whole, not only that they provide the experience from students that physically commute a distance from a community college to a four-year university. To extend the limitations of the study even farther, they do not provide the experiences of African American women's transition experiences from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus.

The participants were asked to describe their transition experience from MCC to Branch University. The themes that emerged from were academic transition, interlocking of race, class, and/or gender, self-definition and self-validation to address stereotypes, and advice to others.

The reasons for selection of Branch University. According to Handel (2013) many students transfer from a two-year to a four-year for myriad of reasons. Students are seeking opportunities to live on campus, the course of study, acceptance of transfer credits, and larger environment. As Dr. Hardee (2012) suggested that the reasons students transfer from MCC to Branch that they do not have to commute, economical, and the familiarity of the campus. The participants in this study reported the following reasons: the proximity to their home, on the campus of the Miles Community College, online courses, seven week block, complete associate and bachelor degrees simultaneously, economical, accepted credits, and program of study.

The academic transition experience. As documented in research, the partnership between MCC and Branch University facilitated a seamless transfer process. The students selected their course of study and all credits transferred. As stated previously, the participants acknowledged the convenience and flexibility of the online classes offered at Branch University. Two of the participants reported that the academic transition was uneventful. On the other hand, Gale and Brenda's academic transition was adversely affected by their participation in online classes. Both women reported transfer shock, a decline grade point average (GPA) during the first semester (Hills, 1965; Laanan, 1997).

Although Gale successfully completed MCC, she described distinctive differences in the academic expectations for writing and submitting assignments online. Gale states:

> I went from A's and B's at community college to two to three semesters of straight F's. They expected different things from what was expect at community college. I'll just narrow it down to writing. For example, the English paragraphs and paper…the English professor which was my last college level English she didn't expect APA format. We were still doing MLA format, which we shouldn't have. We should have been doing APA format. That is not what she expected and I came into Branch and APA format was expected for every paper. I had trouble with a lot of it my first semester. I did the paper I turned it in on time, but it was an F because of my APA was not correct. I did that for a whole 7 weeks; or turn it in in the wrong format. I needed to use rich text format. I would use word and the professor was like I couldn't open that's an F. I didn't know how to submit certain papers in certain formats. I didn't know that it was a different format. I just thought if I can type it you can read it. They make you take an entrance basically about how Blackboard works, but still it is not nothing about format-that's needed and stuff like that.

This was Gale's first experience with online classes. She recognized the convenience; however, according to Gale her inexperience with online classes, health challenges and learning style were the source of her transfer shock. Gale shared,

> It was all face-to-face contact at community college. When I came to University, I started online. I never had done online classes it was really, really hard for me. I am a visual learner that right there was affected. Plus I was pregnant, had gestational diabetes, and in and out of the hospital all of the time. In that sense, it

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was better for me to do it online. Even when I was in the hospital, I was able to use their computer put in my discussion boards – it really wasn't like I missed a class; whereas, if I was to going class I would have missed a lot of the face to face classes. I did classes online when I was placed on academic probation. All of my classes were online. I struggled.

Gale intuitive thinking led her to conclude the inability to adjust academically may have been exacerbated by learning difficulties she experienced in elementary school. Not only that, Gale dropped out of high school, but earned a GED she contributes this to her lack of success at Branch. Most of all, it appears that Gale had difficulty redirecting her challenges to be benefit her academically.

Today, I am four classes from my bachelor's and I still struggle with English. I am far beyond my English core classes. I am thinking about taking another English class if University offers it. As far as speaking and as far as my writing goes, I still struggle with what that they call MUGS. The misuse of grammar and spelling errors, and in that sense I don't think that I was academically ready for Branch.

I think that getting my GED and going on to Miles-I thought I was academically prepared. I felt like that because of the scores that I received. I missed maybe the one on one. The interactions that I needed as a visual learner-I think I missed that. I think that I missed–it takes me back to how I struggled with the reading. It takes me back to when I- I feel like I missed-I don't where I missed it. But I felt like– maybe in elementary school. I feel like I should have had that. I kind of felt lost my first couple of semesters.

Brenda also transferred from MCC to Branch University with ease. She expressed excitement about the seven courses that Branch University offered. However, Brenda found that managing her job and school was taxing. Her mother was still a source of human capital (Coleman, 1988). Brenda bought a planner and her mother taught her how to use it to organize her time.

But I loved the seven-week courses. I struggled with it in the beginning. I was use to the full 13 or 14-week semesters to finish everything and then cramming everything into seven weeks. I wasn't there yet. I was good at it the first block. The second block I struggled. I was busy at work and taking two courses at

Branch and one at MCC. I struggled horribly. My grades dropped. I am going to have to retake the class.

I am taking it as a learning experience. So, I think I struggled with time management. I got a planner. I am still figuring out how to use it because I never had to. I went as far as asking my mom how to use it. I was desperate. I need something physical that I can see. Other than my time management I don't think I struggled with transitioning over.

In summary, all of the participants reported that the partnership between MCC and Branch University facilitated a seamless transfer. Two of the participants expressed that the academic transition was successful, no decline in their GPA. The academic transition proved to be challenging for Gale and Brenda; they experienced a decline in their GPA. Gale barriers included: difficulty adjusting to the online courses, issues with her health, and lack of academic preparation. Brenda described time management as the barrier to a successful academic transition; however, she reached out to her mother for assistance. The four participants reported ecstasy and transfer shock during their academic transition. As the women described their lived experience, additional factors emerged during their transition from MCC to Branch University.

Interlocking of race, class, and/or gender. The interlocking of race, class, and gender was an additional theme that became apparent in the course of the participants' transition. According to Collins (2000) and Harris-Perry (2011), many times the lived experiences of African American women are undergirded by intersection of these constructs. They work simultaneously as an obstacle in many areas of African American women's lived experiences (Thomas, 2007). Therefore to understand the impact of interlocking of race, class and gender during their transition from MCC to Branch University Black Feminist thought was used as the theoretical lens. The interlocking of race, class and gender were implicit and explicit as the women reported their stories.

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For example, Gale provided a poignant personal description of the interlocking of race, class, and gender and the affect that it has had on her life as well as many other African American women (Lourde, 1984).

> I think it was because…I was female. It could've been that. Certain things that I went through could've been that. It could've been the class structure that I am in. It could be like lower class. I felt like that had a lot of affect because all three: race, class, and gender. My race being African American; my gender being female –my class, lower class. They are all how you say it at the bottom of the barrel basically, so I felt like that's kind of why it's so hard in all of those areas. I fell in the minority and the majority. I feel like it was just-I don't know how to explain it. I just felt like I fell in the minority that's why I was more affected by everything, in school and in life period.

During her transition from MCC to Branch University, Gale experienced a drop in her GPA. She concluded that her inability to adjust to online classes, health challenges, and lack of academic preparation were the sources of her academic suspension. Gale surmised that in addition to those environmental factors, the interlocking of race, class, and gender affected her academic suspension. Additionally, her attempt to exercise her leadership skills to address the professor's classroom structure might have also affected her academic standing. Prior to taking this class, Gale's academic standing was in jeopardy, not passing it resulted in her academic suspension. Therefore, she attempted to advocate for herself and concluded that voicing her opinion lead to failing the class. She describes the experience,

> I would say coming in-I'd give you an example, the teacher that I had in my second semester at Branch. It was a male. He was a psychology therapist. He would give us a test as soon as we got in class; and give us a three-hour lecture on the chapters he just tested us on. The student body in the classroom had a problem with it. We discussed it. One day before class, but kind of everybody was scared to speak up. I did speak up and told him a lot of us agree that we need to be going over what we were going to be tested on next instead of what we were tested on. Basically, you don't even have our attention anymore because we were just tested on it. He didn't agree with it. So, from that little discussion I felt like he felt

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disrespected when I was just trying to voice the opinion of the class. His attitude towards me was different in class.

I took it to the review committee-I wrote the chairperson of Behavior Science and asked her to review my grades. I had all of my quizzes and added them up and it appeared that I would pass. The way he broke it down justified him failing me. He was taking points for me being tardy. He told us that the started class at 5:30 P.M. The class was suppose to start at 5:00 P.M., but he worked, so the class started at 5:30 P.M. When I tried to get other students in the class to kind of back me up with it nobody was willing because they had passed the class, so they felt like their grades will probably be affected it, so they didn't. I just felt like I knew it was because I basically spoke out.

Gale continued to grapple with the reasons for her lack of success in her

Behavioral Science class and the treatment by the professor after the incident. She

reasoned that the interplay of the interlocking of race, class, and gender played a role in

her academic suspension and invisibility when she saw him. However, she reverted back

to vocalizing her opinion of the professor's structuring of the class. According to Collins

(1986) many African American women are impacted by the interlocking oppressions;

however, they shift (Shorter-Gooden & Jones, 2003) to a plausible cause for racial, class

and gender discrimination.

I didn't know whether it was because I was female or because I was African American or lower class, but I know it was one or all of them three-and it just affected me that was my only professor since I've been at Branch. I saw him the other day when I was standing out there talking to you –he just kind of walked by and didn't acknowledge me. He really has an issue with me. It could have been that I spoke out.

In Brenda's early educational and community college experiences she reported

indirect encounters with racism, which left her uncomfortable. During her transition from

MCC to Branch University Brenda reported a direct encounter with subtle forms of

racism, which Pierce (1970) describes as racial microaggressions. According to Brenda

these thoughts were generated by the registrar's tone of voice, close scrutiny, condescending attitude, and differential treatment. Brenda disclosed,

> With the registrar staff, I just feel like the couple times that I have been there-especially the one time I came in there and I had my daughter with me and the way she looked at me-because I had my daughter with me I was sitting there trying to fill the paper work out. My daughter wasn't crying. She wasn't screaming. She was just standing there and looking around. That wasn't the first time she looked at me like that. I didn't really think about it as being something racial or her discriminating against me. I just thought she was having a bad week. So, I left it alone. I brushed it off. The second time it was a bit more obvious maybe because I had my daughter with me. It wasn't just me.

> I have noticed her looking at a couple of other African Americans like that. Just starring. The next couple of times I went in there, she was still doing it and the way that she down talked me. I needed to get approval to take three courses in one semester during the summer. She asked me why I wanted to do that. And she said, don't you know that it is going to be hard to do. I told her, Yes, I do; I got approval. I just need you to sign the paper. She was very rude and disrespectful towards me. It kind of made me uncomfortable to be in her presence. The way she was talking to me in front of other people. There was another student there and she was there with her mom that she was talking to them and she was pleasant.

Along that same line, Brenda surmised that the interlocking of her race, class and gender precipitated her treatment by the registrar. Brenda explained,

> I was thinking maybe it is because I had my child with me and she assumed that I got pregnant as a teenager. I don't know. I think her assumptions of my class played in there and race. I had on sweat pants and a t-shirt I had my daughter with me she assumed that I was lower class.

According to Collins (2000, 2002) African American women oftentimes use their experience as a criterion of meaning and ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) to recognize the subtle forms of racial encounters. For example, Asha was enrolled in a face-to-face class and had an encounter with her professor. She said,

> The professor said, I'll give you more time. The way he snapped at me that it had something to do with being black. I got his gestures. I just felt it. The way he responded to me.

Researchers reported that the societal negative stereotypes used to subjugate African American women are embedded within the interlocking of race, class and gender (Harris-Perry, 2011; Hooks, 1984). To avoid the stereotypes African American women shift, change behavior to negotiate her environment (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Juanita explains her shifting technique when shopping while addressing the welfare recipient stereotype. She shared:

> We were talking about shopping and people being racist. I was telling her I have to dress and wear certain things when I go through the stores. That lets them know that I have money and I came here to spend my money. I have to make sure that I have my $500 bag. And she said to me, you mean you are telling me that you are walking around with a $500 bag? I was like my Coach bag you see is a $500 dollar bag. And she was like you mean to tell me that you are walking around here with a $500 bag and we are going to college together. I told her hold up.
>
> I said as far as you thinking I am getting a free ride no. I guess you are saying that I am on welfare and the welfare system is paying for me. No, the welfare system is not paying for my education. Uncle Sam is paying for my education because I swore to serve and protect you and everybody in this classroom.
> And I said you know what the crazy thing about it is the entire time that we are having this conversation you never one time asked me what I did. We never had the conversation about, my job.

The participants reported the interlocking of race, class, and gender and ways of knowing. Additionally, two participants acknowledged the impact of double jeopardy (African American and female) on their transition experience. To escape the intelligence, race and gender stereotype, Brenda and Juanita reported that they felt that they had to work twice as hard not only for themselves, for all African American females. Both participants described incidents in which that they felt that the academic standards were different for African American women. Brenda described her situation as the double whammy. She said,

> I guess when I was in high school. I fell in love with business. I always had teachers telling me that it was good for African American females to be involved

in business because we could go far because it's not just that part of it, but businesses want to see females. They want to see African American females, so I have the double whammy. But it can be very good or it can be very bad…

I see the double whammy in my business classes. I am the only Black female, so it is either I am going to prove that I can do really well or I'm not going to do really well. A lot of times I feel that I have to do really well because I am the only Black female in there. Sometimes I do that to myself…Especially when I am in a class verses online, so while I am in the classroom; I see that I am the only Black female in that classroom. I feel I have to prove myself and do really, really well. It's hard not to when you know that there are so many negative opinions of us. I feel like if I can show this one teacher, who may have a bad view that I can do well and succeed…I may change their view of African American females in the business world and in academics.

Juanita reported,

I go in knowing that the gender-being female. Well I kind of know that there is a possibility there may only be two or three Black people in the classroom. I am okay with that…I think there is an expectation there is only a few of you all in here, so maybe the rest can't learn. I do know that if I go into a class and it's predominately White and I am the only Black. I have to make sure that my papers are twice as well written. I should say, whatever I am going to do at the time. I have to make sure it is better than the normal.

I just feel that Blacks don't get that. I just feel that I am going to have to work twice as hard. They're not going to be lenient on me. If I walk through the door, I know that I am always going to have to be on time. I know that because there are stereotypes out there. You know you are Black and you are expected to be late. You are only going to get a C because Blacks can't write. I know that. I don't want them to have any reason not to give me an A.

Brenda also reported that when the business classroom has a diverse population of

males the interlocking of race, class, and gender was not the dominant discriminating

factor. Brenda perceived that gender was the mitigating element. She shared:

I have gotten more of that treat-treated more different because I am female than African American. Like when we have group projects; it is you do the research. If we have to present, you do the research and we do the talking type thing.

As described by the participants in this study, the interlocking of race, class, and

gender, double jeopardy, and gender influenced their transition from MCC to Branch

University. To effectively manage their transition Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha chose to self-define and self-validate in many situations. Not only that, the participants used the focus group as a platform to encourage each other to self-define and self-validate.

   Self-defining and self-validating. According to Abdullah (1998), Collins (1986, 2000), Harris-Perry (2011), and King (1988) African American women have had to contend historical and contemporary negative stereotypical images used to define African American womanhood. These negative images, such as Mammy, Sapphire, and Matriarch were created to externally define and control African American women. In order to inhibit the effects of these external images; African American women should write their own definition of themselves. By writing their own definition, they reject the negative images altogether (Collins, 2000). Self-validation addresses the meaning of the images (mouthy, head of house, unemployed, and loyal). Collins (1986) posits that African American women should embrace the qualities of the meanings to survive and rise above the environments that seem to contribute to their oppression. The participants reported using this theme, self-defining and self-validating, to protect, motivate, and educate themselves and others. As an example, Juanita provided an incident in which she deemed it necessary to self-define and refused to embrace the ghetto (Sapphire) image and self-validated by viewing loudness as assertiveness to advocate for herself. Juanita shared:

> I think that they don't want to come off as outspoken or challenging someone in authority. They don't want to be seen. I think a lot of them feel like, oh I have to not be a loud mouth or can't say much. I heard (Black) women say I don't want to be a loud mouth. I don't want to be labeled as ghetto. I don't do this because I don't want to be labeled as that ghetto chick. I speak when I am spoken to, but I am also going to let you know that I am going to speak when I feel like you are saying something that is not accurate. It's not about always having your voice heard and being labeled as being ghetto.

Collins (1986) posits that African American women self-define and self-validate by providing insight racism and African American women's uniqueness and culture. During a conversation with a White female student, Juanita attempted to provide insight into the African American women's unique standpoint. She said,

> It was always something with her. Her justification was she had Black friends. Because she had Black friends and the world decided that when she got some Black friends that racism just disappeared. That it was okay if it went away. She said that, my girlfriend, she is Black and we have been friends for 30 years and I'm her kids' godparent. So you mean to tell me because you are her kids' godparent that there is no racism and that's what I would say to her. You can't tell me that. Every time she would say something like that, that just struck a little nerve.

> When I was talking to her, I wanted her to understand that just because she was the godmother to her Black friend's children doesn't mean anything. Don't you think she experience racism? Don't you think that even sometimes that you may even say something that may be a little racist, but she doesn't say anything to you because she is your friend? I was I was hoping that when I was asking her a question that she was listening and not just responding.

Juanita continued with an example of her refusal to embrace the negative images that appear to subjugate African American women. She described an encounter with a peer who used objectionable language to greet her during class. Juanita reported:

> First of all, I don't like it. Second of all, I know that you didn't mean no harm by it, but this is what ya'll do, but it means something different to me and you can't say that. I told her you can't call a Black woman a bitch. It means something different so you can't say that. I had to tell her. Hey, I understand that we're friends and what you do with your White girlfriends is different, but when you are with me you have to understand you can't say that. It means the same thing, but it's not a friendly term. Black women take the word, as not a friendly saying. It has always been negative either you are being aggressive or nasty. When they say it has never been in a positive manner.

> They get one Black friend and they think that it is okay. I think they get a relaxed feeling you know like okay she is nice I am comfortable with her. I know it is a comfort level with them because they are able to talk with me. I understand certain things that they may be going through. We may have similar situations going on, but at the same time I have to chin check them from time to get them back in line. I'm like whoa you know we are comfortable we are cool. You can't

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say that I don't care if you listen to the lyrics and they say the word nigger. You just can't say that in front of me in no shape or form. I am going to let you that do that it means something.

Self-defining and self-validating is also used to a reflective tool and strategy to disregard racial encounters (Collins, 2000, 2002). Brenda participated in the aforementioned practices during her visit to the registrar's office. Furthermore, she viewed the incident as a learning experience. Brenda remarked:

> I thought about some more. But I think, I think after I leave a situation, I will think about it for a minute. I try not to think about it anymore. I really try to. I'll think about it for a minute about the things that I could have done differently; things that I didn't like about the situation. Then I just put it to rest. I feel like I have too much going on now to dwell on things like that. I don't let it bother me. I won't let be a barrier to me. I won't let it affect me for 10 or 20 days, not even 10 years or an thing like that. I am going to let them have their five minutes and be done with it. I look at it as a learning experience and I can deal with it better.

Collins (2000) asserts that African American women self-define and self-validate by addressing their personal barriers that limit their success. After filing the grievance to appeal her academic suspension, Gale reported that her difficulty in articulating her unfair treatment resulted in her discontinuing to the grievance. However, she realized that in order to overcome this issue getting an education was the solution. Gale reported,

> I am young African American woman. I still have a lot of education to get. I still have a lot of issues and those issues in a sense in when I am trying to-even when I am trying to relay a message it is not going to come out the way I want it to come out. It could be a lot behind what I am saying, but I just don't know how to say it.
>
> So in that sense it is just like I don't feel like they took me serious or it's just like-it is so hard to explain. Because I am insecure about the way I communicate. I feel like I am still viewed as uneducated because I can't articulate my thoughts correctly. I love who I am. I feel like if I can just go ahead with my actions when I feel like fighting against certain stuff. But I don't, it (fighting) is viewed in a negative manner tied to our culture.

Hooks (2003) asserts that some African American women embrace society's negative messages about their hair and physical features. These messages adversely affect

their self-esteem. However, Davis (1984) and Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) posit

when African American women develop an appreciation for their history and physical

beauty, they will self-define and self-validate. For instance, Asha internalized the

negative messages about her nose, hair, and lips; however, to self-define and self-validate

she discovered the historical contributions of African Americans. Asha said,

> I'm here (library) everyday taking out movies, but lately you know what I have
> been doing? Taking out movies about slavery. Taking out things about you know,
> the Underground Railroad and thinking how awesome. But I never thought about
> that before. So now I am like wow! As an African American woman that makes
> me proud. I look at my skin. I look at my lips. I look at my nose. I use to be self-
> conscious about my nose. It was a joke among my family. I got my nose from my
> dad and he gets it from his mom, so they call me big nose. I have been put down
> so much called ugly and you can't do this and you can't do that. You know are
> ugly. My self-esteem was very low so as I got older and I realized what I was
> capable of doing.

Self-definition and self-validation served as navigational tools during the

participants' transition experience. Throughout the focus group, the participants used

self-definition and self-validation to share ideas, provide support, and validate their

experiences. For instance, Asha was contemplating whether to take a face-to-face or

online statistics class. She asked, "Have you ever taken a statistic course online? Is that a

good idea?"

Juanita offered an overview of the online statistics course while emphasizing the

importance of putting forth effort and commitment (Astin, 1985; Pace, 1985).

> The software teaches you all the lessons. The teacher was really, really flexible
> like you have to do a test. You have four tests each lesson. You have to go in and
> get certified. One of the things that I realized is that you don't have to get certified
> at every part of it. Because one lesson, I just couldn't get it. So I just moved on.
> The last one chapter we had, I waited to the last minute. At that point I was like
> whatever and I just didn't do it. I didn't certify the whole chapter. I didn't certify
> at all and I still walked away with an A. So he was really good as long as you put
> forth the effort, the commitment and do it. And then early on like the easier
> chapters –like your first test you get two chances to take the test.

Brenda revealed that she experienced horizontal racism (racism between members of the same racial group) from an African American female professor. It was assumed that exceptions were to made because they were both African American women. In addition to horizontal racial, described the effects of role strain and motherhood. Brenda said,

> I had a Black professor and I didn't like her. I was in her class my daughter was sick the last couple of weeks she wasn't sympathetic to that. I didn't print out something that she wanted printed out. Nobody did. I said to her. I didn't go to work that day. I didn't have access to a printer. She said, 'Well you are here on campus now.' I said, 'I just got here and it is hard for me to be tough enough to leave and tell someone that I have to go to class for 5 hours. Now you want me to come early to go across campus to print something out that you have in front of you?' She had an issue with me saying that to her when five other people in the class didn't have it printed out. I think she thought that because we were both Black, I expected something from her.

To provide insight into the perception of the African American professor's opinion of other African American women Alice (pseudonym), the academic counselor, offered the following:

> This is how she reasons. I think that when she has African Americans in her class she makes the final decision. She will make a conclusion. This one is one of those she is coming in seeing me as an African American woman and think that I am just going to hand it to her because we are sisters.

Alice also validated Brenda's perception of horizontal racism and special treatment. She said:

> I have had two African American professors out of those two, I wanted them to know that I am capable of doing what you have achieved. I know that you are going to think that I am going to expect that I am going to get good grades because we are women and Black.

Juanita validated the horizontal racism and expectation of preferential treatment.

She also added,

> I think that that is something that we don't really think because I believe that any African American professor that I have had. I have to work twice as hard. I really believe that they think that well because you are Black you think that you will be able to hand in any old thing to me and be able to get an A. I think that that is not the case. I always coming no matter what class it is I always have to do my best.

> But I think sometimes based on that my name, I believed they (African American professors) think so she must be ghetto-like that whole thing. You know, I talk loud. I feel–know that when you are looking at my paper you are thinking I can't stand her. I already know that. When I turn in my paper, I am prepared so that when you look at my paper and you critique my paper trust me in the back of my mind I know what you are thinking.

Likewise, I validated horizontal racism and the expectation of differential treatment by female African American professors. Additionally, I felt the need to validate the historical components of who we are as African American women (Collins, 1986; Hooks, 1984; Lourde, 1984). I said,

> It may not be that I expect something like grades because we are African American women. I don't expect that it is going to be an easy class. I do look at you and I want to know and understand that you understand my struggle or our struggle. Some of them don't acknowledge that. I don't want anything from you I want to understand that you understand my struggle. Don't act like you don't know because we all have been there at one time or another. And we definitely know someone that has been discriminated against. Just a nod or a wink will do. Maybe it is fear that stops many of us from that acknowledgement.

> Gale added,

> Sometimes I want to say, yes I need a lot of help. Tell me how to do it because I don't know. I did not learn how to go about getting what I needed. I am just trying to get what you have, so that I can help my boys.

In the course of the participants' lived transition experiences, they encountered circumstances that promoted them to self-define and self-validate individually. The focus group was a means to self-define and self-validate as a unit.

Advice to others. In order to facilitate a successful post transfer experiences

transfer experts provided recommendations for the two-year and four-year colleges, such

as university partnerships and articulation agreements. They also included the transfer

orientation, which provided the transfer student with an overview of the receiving

institution. The final theme that emerged from the interview responses was the

importance of helping others make a successful transition from MCC to Branch

University. Brenda advised,

> Don't wait to ask questions, look at your syllabus, make time for that.
> Do not take on more than you can handle. – you know yourself academically
> because you have gotten this far. You know your personal life. You have a life
> outside of school you most likely work-have a husband-have kids-all of those
> things.

> Know if you can do online classes or not if you do well in them then you may be
> okay with them-to know that online is not the same. Blackboard is set up is the
> same; the way that they put in their assignments or posts or things like that are not
> the same so you may miss stuff. Recognize your due dates and stay on top of
> that. Take one or two courses in the summer; just to get yourself prepared for the
> fulltime schedule. Stay on top of things when it comes to school and don't accept
> the first opinion. Always get second third and fourth opinion. Always ask them
> more than once. Sit in the front.

> Gale said,

> I would tell them to go in with open minds and make sure that they are in control.
> Even though the professors give out grades, make sure that they are in control of
> their destiny. Make sure that they are not taking the advice whether it is the
> advisor or the professors. We all are human and we all have opinions and
> sometimes we tend to speak an opinion as factual information. If I had to give a
> phrase for my transfer experience it would be, change. For me it means…apply it.
> I didn't. So I say apply it not just on the surface level.

> Juanita said,

> Come with a mindset knowing that this is what you really want to do. I say
> prepare yourself. Go in look at the syllabus. Know what the teacher is asking you
> to do. Begin to ask for clarity the first day. Don't wait to ask questions. If you
> know that you are going to have a problem…say something then. You are going
> to have to write those papers make time for that.

Asha said,

> My favorite thing to say to my daughters and son is I don't care what it is. If someone tells you no, find out why they are telling you no and allow that to propel you.

Summary of Findings

Figure 5.1 is a visual presentation of findings from the African American women's transition experience from MCC to Branch University. The gray circle, Black feminist thought, shows that controlling images, interlocking of race, class, and gender, self-definition and self-validation are embedded in African American women transition experiences which also affects early education, community college and transition to a four-year university experiences. Black Feminist provides a window through which the African American women view their lived experiences. Early education is the starting point for social and academic skills. The acquisition of these skills lays the foundation for their future educational experiences. The next circle, community college is anchored in early education. The third, circle, transition to four-year college, shows that the experiences are influenced by early education and community college.
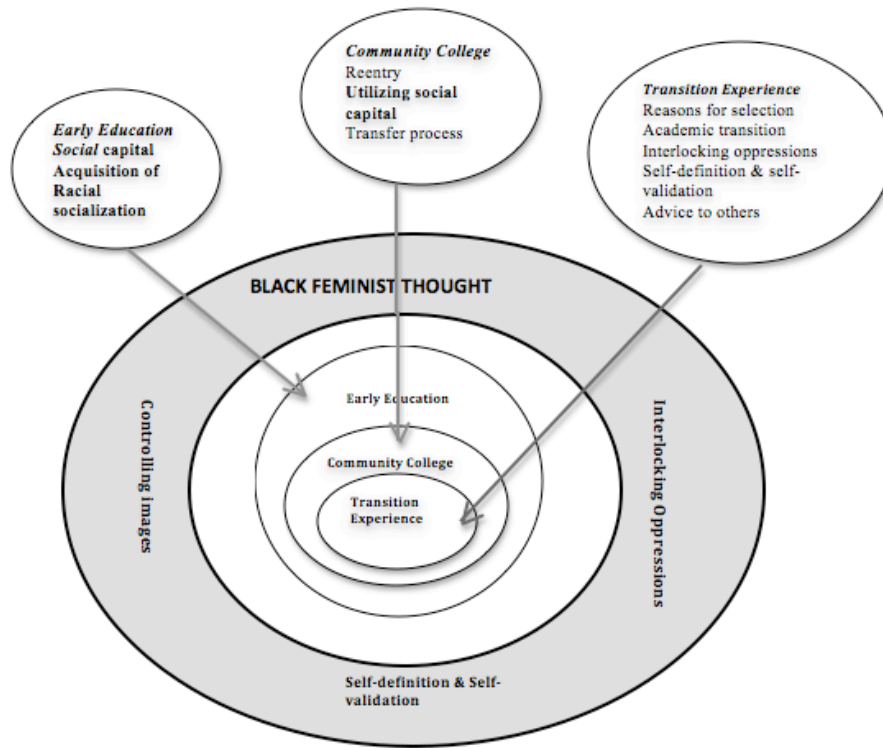
Figure 5.1. Summary of findings of African American women's transition experience

Early educational experiences. As suspected, the findings revealed that during

the participants' early educational experiences they received explicit and implicit forms

of social capital to promote academic success. The findings also revealed that racial

socialization was acquired implicitly and explicitly at this stage in their lives. The

participants received the following strategies: preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust,

and cultural socialization. The participants also revealed that they thought it was

imperative for them to prepare their children for racial bias and mistrust, cultural

socialization, and pluralism (learning about different cultural).

Community college experiences. The findings from the community college

experiences supported the research. It was concluded that women returned for several

reasons, such as to reorganize their lives, make a better financial future the them and their

children, and for the joy of learning. This juncture in their postsecondary education also revealed the use of their racial socialization received in their early lives. The participants found the need for preparation bias, promotion of mistrust and cultural socialization. One participant reported that the community college promoted a sense of inclusiveness and was free of racial discrimination.

   Transition from MCC to Branch University. The findings showed that the participants selected a four-year college that share a community college's campus for the following reasons: it was economical, accepted the transfer credits for their course of study, located on MCC's campus, offered online classes, the seven-week block, and classes could be taken at MCC and Branch University simultaneously. The participants reported that the transfer process was seamless. The students decided upon their course of study applied and accepted.

   However, the academic transition for two of the participants was difficult. The participants cited the online classes as contributors to the drop in their GPA after transferring. This was Brenda's was first experience with online courses. She was unable to manage the fast pace of the seven-week courses. Gale reported that in addition to the online courses, she reported health problems and inadequate academic preparation. The findings also revealed that the interlocking of race, class, and gender complicated transition for the African American women. Within interlocking oppressions, it was revealed that the participants had to contend with racial microaggressions, controlling images and double jeopardy. It was also found that the women self-defined and self-validated to confront the racism. To help ensure that a seamless transition the participants

provided advice for African American considering transferring for a two-year to a four-college.

In summary, the findings indicate that transition experience of these women was influenced by early educational experiences, the interlocking of race, class, and gender and social capital.

Discussion of the findings

Using a descriptive phenomenological approach and Black Feminist Thought as a theoretical framework, this study examined how African American women who transition from a community college to a four-year college that share a campus describe their lived transition experience. A descriptive phenomenological approach allowed access to the essences of transition experiences through the voices of four African American women; and is a culturally sensitive research approach (Moustakas, 1994; Tillman, 2002). Black Feminist Thought integrates, validates, and centers African American women's uniqueness, perceptions and lived experiences (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the African American women describe their early educational experiences?

2. How did African American women describe their community college experience?

3. How did African American women describe their lived transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus

4. What additional factors may affected the transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus?

Research question 1: How did the African American women describe their early

educational experience?

The participants identified two factors in their early educational experiences that

impacted their transition experience from a two-year to a four-year college, social capital

and racial socialization. Social capital was in the form of parental or community

involvement. It was exhibited through academic expectations, preparation for college,

and life coping skills. This supports the research of Coleman (1988) that a child receives

social capital from family and community. The child uses it as a resource and withdraws

from it as needed to adapt and succeed in an environment. Consistent with the research,

the participants' were given a myriad of tools to enable them to use a resource. The

participants reported receiving emotional and academic support, racial socialization,

lessons on persistence, and encouragement. These results were also similar to the parental

involvement research on African American and Hispanic parents (Perna & Titus, 2005)

that these types of resources aid in college enrollment. Taylor, Hinton and Wilson (1995)

Yan (1999) in earlier studies also found that although some African American may have

low socioeconomic, human, and cultural capital, parental involvement played a major

role in the students' academic success.

The participants described their early educational experiences as a time in which

they acquired explicit and implicit forms of racial socialization from discussions with

parents, educators, and direct contact with racial discrimination. These findings support

Hugh and Chen (1997) and Hughes et al. (2006) research on formal and informal

conversations parents have with their children about race begin between the ages of six

and nine. Hugh and Chen reported that many parents teach cultural socialization (history

and heritage), preparation for bias (racial discrimination and stereotypes), promotion of mistrust (maintaining a safe distance from Whites), and cultural pluralism (learning of different cultures). The results were also similar to Tatum's (1997) research on race. Tatum found that many adolescents began to the search for cognitive, emotional, religious, sexual orientation, and ethnic identity. However, as found in this study, many African American adolescents are profoundly impacted by racial discrimination; therefore, participating in racial socialization supersedes the exploration the previously mentioned areas.

The study by Harris-Britt et al. (2007) found that by middle school African American students had experienced at least one racial discriminatory incident, such as name-calling and incorrect punishment. The participants of this study had direct and indirect encounters with subtle and blatant forms of racism. Finally, the research also suggests that during their early childhood African American girls are taught their *place* (Grant 1984). The challenges described and implied in the findings, supports the research that parents directly and indirectly introduce the race-gender constructs (Damico & Scott, 1987; Grant) and schools reinforce the behaviors (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Research question #2: How did African American women describe their community college experience?

The two themes that emerged in the findings were reasons for reentry to postsecondary education and utilizing racial socialization as social capital. As the research suggests, the participants described their community college experience as a point of reentry to postsecondary education with the intent to earn a bachelor's degree (AACC, 2011; Alfonso, 2008; Bryant, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Crosby, 2002;

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Townsend, 2001). Also consistent with the research, the participants selected the

community college because of the courses of study, able to work and proximity to home.

Another participant inferred referenced the open access policy. The participants stated

decisions to reenter are aligned with the research on reentry women. The women chose

reenter to make a change (Spannard, 1990), improve financial position, and become more

marketable (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Kim, Sax, Lee, &

Hagedorn, 2010).

     The participants also described circumstances in which they utilized racial

socialization to identify and address situations that they perceived to have racial

overtones (Hughes & Chen, 1997) as well as affirming their place in an academic

environment (Grant, 1994). A participant reported feeling invisible. She stated:

> African Americans were considered stand-offish. I had a teacher tell me you were
> stand-offish. I told her, I don't know how you gathered that. I am here. Nobody
> speaks to me. If don't personally come to you and say I have a problem you won't
> come back to me and see if I am doing anything. I felt invisible. I felt that they
> were uncomfortable speaking with me about anything. They overlooked me for a
> lot of things.

     This is consistent with other researchers findings that many times African

American women feel ignored and invisible in some academic settings (Hughes-

Hamilton, 2003; Hooks, 1981; Hull et al., 1982; Howard-Vital, 1989; Johnson-Bailey,

2001). As research also suggests, the women in this study seized this opportunity to

capitalize the transfer mission as a means to baccalaureate attainment (Lee et al., 1993;

Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Townsend & Twombly, 2007).

     Research question #3: How did African American women describe their lived

transition experience from a community college to a four-year university sharing a

campus*?*

This question sought to understand and identify the important constructs, descriptions or issues that influenced Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha's lived transition experience. The findings revealed four themes: reasons for selecting Branch University; academic transition; interlocking of race, class, and gender; and self-defining and self-validating.

Reasons for transferring to Branch. Little is known about partnerships between two-year and four-year colleges that share a campus; however, the findings revealed are consistent with the research on partnerships. The women of this study chose Branch because it accepted the transfer credits for their particular course of study. The findings also revealed that they were attracted to the online learning component. These findings are consistent with research on female students and online learning. Sullivan (2001) found that many female students with children and other family responsibilities prefer online classes due to their flexibility. As cited by Hardee (2012) and validated by the participants they transferred to Branch University from MCC for the following reasons: location on MCC's campus, seven-week courses, classes can be taken simultaneously at MCC, and it was economical.

Academic transition. Researchers posit that as transfer students transition to a four-year from a two-year college some experience transfer ecstasy, no decline in GPA after GPA first semester (Nickens, 1975; Cejda & Kaylor, 1997) or transfer shock, drop in GPA after first semester (Hills, 1965; Townsend, 2001). Two participants revealed that the academic transition was seamless. On the other hand, two participants experienced transfer shock, a drop in grades after transferring (Bryant, 2001; Laanan, 2001). This was the case for Gale and Brenda. Both participants encountered difficulties with online

classes, such as managing time to complete coursework and technical problems, sending and receiving assignments. These results were similar with the research on online classes and tend to be the source of academic difficulty in online learning (Howland & Moore, 2002; Muilenburg & Berge, 2005; Mupinga, Nora, Yaw, 2006).

In addition to the online learning, the results indicated that Gale felt that she was inadequately prepared for the academic rigor at Branch. Her perception adds some credence to the Adelman's (1999) research African American students and insufficient preparation for college. Gale implied that she had minimum social capital, which may have attributed to her unsuccessful first semester Pascarella et al. (2004). On the other hand, three of participants implied that they were academically prepared to for Branch's curriculum. Some studies (Chambers, 2009; Irvin et al., 2010) indicated that social, cultural, and academic capital was a predictor of the success of those participants that felt academically prepared. On the other hand, according to Wood et al. (2010) their success is related to gender stereotyping, girls are expected to excel academically. All in all as the research indicated during the academic transition from a community college to a four-year university the students experienced transfer ecstasy and shock. Although Laanan (1996, 2001, 2007) acknowledged that transfer shock was inherent in many community college transfer students, she also found that transfer students exhibits social and psychological barriers. Laanan contributed it to student's involvement and quality effort on the transfer. She found that transfer students who become actively involvement tend to have a more successful transition after transferring. However, Moses (1989), Thomas (2001) Thomas et al. (2004) and the findings from this study the transition experience of African American women are not so transparent.

Interlocking of race, class, and gender. Two tenets of Black Feminist Thought

were used to understand the African American women's lived transition experience,

interlocking of race, class, and gender and self-definition and self-validation. According

to Collins (1986,1999, 2000) African American women lives are situated in the outsider-

within status. As an outsider-within African American have a unique standpoint. The

interlocking oppressions, race, class, and gender influence this standpoint. As outsiders-

within, Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha were able to define their own reality of the

transition experience from a two-year to a four-year college.

King (1988) and Mullings (2010) assert that a number of African American

women interpret and predict the circumstances of their reality through a race, class, and

gender paradigm. This was demonstrated as two participants described their lived

experiences after transfer. The women identified the impact and the interlocking

oppression of race, class, and gender. One participant attempted to find an explanation for

what she believed to be a discriminatory practice that triggered her GPA to fall below the

Branch's academic requirement. This resulted in her academic suspension for two blocks.

She deeply felt that the constructs of race, class, and gender undergirded her suspension.

She said, "…I think that it is just deeper than that. My race being African American; my

gender being female; my lower class; they are all at the bottom of the barrel basically."

On the other hand, this feeling of racial disparity as described by Bell (1992), is the

permanence of racism. This feeling of permanence leaves the African American woman

in the constant outside-within position (Collins, 1986, 2000; Hooks, 1984; Lourde, 1984).

Another participant felt her treatment at the registrar's office was a result of her

race, class, and gender. She reported, I was thinking maybe it is because I had my child

with me…I think her assumptions of my class played in there and my race." The interlocking of oppression among African American women were consistent with the literature (Collins, 1986; King, 1988; Walpole, 2009).

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) assert that African American women oftentimes suppress the gender issue while retelling their narrative about racism. This may have been the circumstance for one participant. She described race as the primary reason for her treatment by her professor and did not reference her gender. She reported, "The way he snapped at me that it had something with me being Black." On the other hand, one participant shared that in a class such as business, it is neither race nor class she was treated different because of her gender.

While the interlocking of race, class, and gender were expressed by some of the participants, two participants characterized theirs as race and gender specific when giving an account of the experiences with White professors. As research suggest, they felt compelled to defy the negative stereotypes about African American women intelligence. One participant described her circumstances in class as the "double whammy" African American and female. She chose to work hard not only for herself, instead for all African American women. Beale (1970) interprets the double whammy as double jeopardy, dual discrimination. Beal asserts that African American women shoulder the responsibilities of racial discrimination and prejudice as African Americans as well as coping with African American and Euro-American men. This participant's perspective of accepting the responsibility of for all African Americans is also compatible with Cooper's (1969) thoughts. Cooper declares, "Only the Black woman can say 'when and where I enter, in

the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole world Negro race enters with me" (p. 31).

Another participant internalized the double whammy concept to describe her learning disability. She said, "Sometimes it takes me longer to process…I don't know if it's because I am African American. I don't know what it is, but it takes me longer to process." According to Collins (2000), Dubois (1994), Hooks, (1992), Sealy-Ruiz (2012), and Thomas (2004) the participants' perception are congruent to their research. Society encourages African American women embrace the negative images as true rather than the positive ones.

Self-definition and self-validation. The participants identified factors that challenged the transition from a community college to a four-year university. However, consistent with the research on African American women, the participants viewed each one as an opportunity grow and share their experiences (Collins, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, 2000; Jones-Shorter & Gooden, 2003). Three women reported direct and indirect experiences with the societal controlling images from professors and students. These encounters affected their perception of themselves. They experienced the following images: Sapphire/ghetto and welfare recipient. Sapphire/ghetto is described as sassy, loud, and aggressive. The Sapphire/ghetto image is "used to dehumanize a Black woman's strength" (Nance, 1996, p. 555). Welfare recipient is defined as someone receiving financial support from the federal government (Sealy-Ruiz, 2010). The presence of the images affected how they navigated the policies and procedures, responded to situations, and perceived themselves as students and women (Collins, 1986).

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For instance, one participant decided not to continue to persevere when she felt like the professor's grading policy was unfair. She said, "I just feel like it is viewed in a negative image (Sapphire/ghetto) it is still tied to our culture." Another participant made reference to the negative image of Sapphire/ghetto. She said, "Don't get loud. You don't have to get smart with people to get what you need. Just talk calmly." The image of Sapphire is perceived as bossy, loud and difficult to deal with (Ladson-Billings, 2009). On the other hand, a participant saw the importance of embracing the image of Sapphire/ghetto and used it to challenge the status quo. She viewed it as an opportunity to self-define and self-validate. She said, "It's not about being labeled ghetto…it's about having your voice heard."

Another participant accepted the negative everyday images to define and describe physical features. She reported, "As an African American, your hair is ugly, your hair is too short. I didn't like myself as a Black woman or a Black girl… that's the thing about Black people our nose is too broad, our lips are too big." According to Collins (2000) and Hooks (1992) when the negative perceptions are internalized they potentially affect the self-image of African American women.

All of the women used various opportunities to self-define and self-validate. One participant chose not to internalize the encounter with the registrar. Another decided to embrace hair, lips and nose and understand the beauty. While another participant chose to use what happened as a learning experience. She resolved to learn from the experience and continue to fight. One participant acknowledged that she was self-conscious about her communication skills; therefore, she decided to continue her education.

After hearing negative comments on about the structure of African American families' from a professor, a participant felt compelled to offered counter stories about her family structure. Counter stories, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), are considered therapeutic to the storyteller. They provide opportunities to challenge, heal, and self-validate and self-define while providing an opportunity for the oppressor, the professor in this case to self-reflect (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Research question #4: While providing a description of the experiences, what additional factors may affect their transition from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus?

Consistent with the research, the participants used their experiences to prepare their children for the racial disparities and discrimination through racial socialization. The participants' early racial socialization training was integral in preparing their children for the potential racial encounters. The women provided their children with information about stereotypes and African American history. According to Scottham and Smalls (2009), this is not uncommon for African American female caregivers to provide what is termed as a "buffering defense" against racism. One participant reported that racial socialization was provided on an as needed basis. This type of preparation is considered as a reactive approach to racism (Scottham & Smalls). The participant chose to respond after her child's encounter with a racial incident. Whether the participants initiated a proactive or reactive approach to racism they all provided a form of racial socialization to their children. The child uses it as a resource and withdraws from it as needed to adapt and succeed in an environment (Coleman, 1988). Consistent with the research, the participants' were given a myriad of tools to enable them to use a resource.

As a result of their transition experience, these African American women provided a roadmap for other African American women desiring to undertake such an experience. There was a consensus about the importance of time management, being cognizant of your multiple roles, and asking questions. One participant recommended moving from first order to second order change (Evans, 1996). She said, "If I had a phrase for my transfer experience it would be change…so I say not just on the surface level. All the time I have been thinking that I am applying it. I'm not really applying it and in that sense change." Another participant recommended ignoring the negative stereotype and understanding that the as an African American female you will have to work twice and hard.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from four African American women's transitioning experiences from a community college to a four-year college that shared a campus. The participants were asked to describe their experiences in three different contexts, early educational, community college, and transition. Using Black Feminist thought as the theoretical framework, the findings revealed that their transition experiences were undergirded by the interlocking oppressions and societal controlling images. Although they were affected by the aforementioned constructs, these four African American women continually self-defined and self-validated. In doing so, that persisted towards their educational goals.

Table 5.3

Themes from Semi-structured Interviews

Clusters of relevant meanings	Central Theme
Early Educational Lived experiences	
1. My parents were strict on knowing African American history.	Acquisition of Racial
2. My mom never told me about race.	socialization
3. I felt like it was racist.	
4. Why is that nigger running with my runners?	
1. I did well in school	Acquisition of social capital
2. That's where I learned it (caring for others)	
3. My dad use to say to me, 'Learn your craft.'	
4. My parents couldn't help me.	
Community College Lived Experiences	
1. I realized that I couldn't make a life for her…	Reentering
2. I was tired of going through.	
3. I had to provide for my child.	
4. I have discovered my potential.	
1. They would make stereotypes.	Utilizing Racial Socialization
2. I run this.	
3. It was never anything directed towards me.	
4. The professors didn't care what race I was.	
Four-year Lived Experiences	
1. It was relativity easy.	Transition Experience
2. I had no problems.	
3. My grades dropped.	
4. From A's and B's …three semesters of straight F's.	
1. Because all three race, class, and gender.	Race, Class and/or Gender
2. I think her assumptions of my class placed in there and race.	
3. I see the double whammy in my business classes.	
4. The way he snapped at me had to do with being Black.	
1. It's not about being ghetto.	Self-validation and Self-
2. I am a Black woman and I didn't get that memo.	definition
3. I won't let it be a barrier to me.	
4. I refuse to have anybody tell me that I can't make my own decisions.	
1. If someone tells you no allow that to propel you	Advice to others
2. Come in prepared.	
3. Make sure that you are in control of your destiny.	
4. Don't bite off more than you can chew.	

Chapter VI

Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Historically, African American women have been apart of the higher education quilt (Evans, 2007). Yet, for many years researchers have been inattentive to their experiences or; they have been concealed under the headings of African Americans as a group and women (Ihle, 1986; Matthews-Armstead, 2002). Researchers such as, Johnson-Bailey (2000), Moses (1989), and Noble (1957) have continually vociferated the need for investigating the experiences of African American women. Current researchers such as, Bush, Chambers, and Walpole (2009) and Obakeng-Mabokela and Green (2001) have documented the African American women's undergraduate and graduate experiences in higher education. Although African American women's voices are beginning to be heard, there is still a paucity of research on their participation in postsecondary education. Not only that, a review of the literature finds a dearth of research on the college transfer-transition experience. This scarcity of African American women's presence in the transfer literature led me to this purpose: to describe the lived experiences of African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year university that share a campus.

Data analysis revealed that the participants of this study were reentry students, adults returning to school full or part time while maintaining jobs and families Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Mohney & Anderson, 1988). Additionally, during the transition experience the participants reported transfer shock, drop in GPA after first semester (Hills, 1965) and transfer ecstasy (Nickens, 1975). Results from this phenomenological study and Black Feminist thought also demonstrated the complexities of their transition

due to the interlocking oppressions and societal controlling images. The African American women in this study oftentimes self-defined and self validated to offset the racial discrimination, which they encountered. Finally, the study revealed that the transition experiences did not develop in a vacuum. Their early educational experiences acted as a scaffold of their postsecondary experiences.

Recommendations for Future Study

Ihle (1986) in her study on African American women in education recommended the following for further study. "Research needs to focus on Black girls and women's educational experiences to assess differences of sex and race and to make education experiences to make education more effective" (p. 12). I concur. The focus of this descriptive phenomenological study was to describe the lived transfer experiences of African American transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. Although a wealth of knowledge was garnered through these four women's lived experience, this research is only a crack in the door. The sample size was small; therefore, furthering research on this campus to include additional universities located on the community college campus would expand the knowledge base about African American women transferring to a four-year university that share a campus.

African American women have a unique standpoint. The standpoint is anchored in racism and oppression (Collins, 1986, 2000, 2002; Cooper, 1986; Davis, 1983; Noble, 1956; Slowe, 1933). Therefore, theoretical frameworks that delineate their experiences from African men and women as a group are crucial to their voices (Few et al., 2003; Steckel, 1996; Thomas, 2001; Tillman, 2002). Black Feminist Thought was the blueprint the study. It was established that the participants experienced interlocking oppressions

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and societal controlling images as they transitioned from one environment to another. Again, Black Feminist Thought should buttress future studies about African American women.

A study of the transition experiences from the perception of White, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific, and Native American women would add another dimension to the transition phenomenon research on women. This study found a very thin line between the use of social and culture capital as the participants relived their educational experiences. Additional studies on cultural capital could possibly clarify and distinguish a profound difference between the two capitals.

Implications for Future Practice

President Obama's goal is to increase the number of college graduates by the year, 2020 (Nelson, 2010). The community college transfer function continues to serve as an avenue for those seeking a baccalaureate degree (Handel, 2013); however, there is limited research on the transition experience (Laanan, 2007). In order to facilitate a seamless transfer, community and four-year colleges are entering into innovative academic partnerships. These partnerships consist of constructing university centers on the campus of community colleges (Ender, 2011; Hardee, 2011; Isekenegbe, 2011). Consequently, community college students are able to earn a bachelor's degree without leaving the campus of the community college. Nevertheless, the transition experiences of those transfer students are absent from research. Furthermore, African American women's participation in postsecondary education continues to rise; yet, their experiences are wedged between African American men and women as a group.

The focus of this study was to describe the lived experiences of African American women as they transitioned from a two-year college to a four-year college sharing a campus. The findings revealed that although the walk across campus eliminated the structural barriers, such as knowing where to park; the academic, social, and psychological challenges were present. These constructs revealed that the transition was not entirely seamless. As two-year and four-year colleges engage in these unique partnerships, students are taking advantage of this academic convenience. Both institutions could possibly establish programs that would enable the students to successfully adapt to their new environment. One participant suggested that new students be provided with a mentor to ease the transition process. Establishing a program such as a mentorship could possibly support the retention of students and increase the graduation rate (Thomas, Love, Roan-Bell, Brown, & Garriott (2009).

Another participant offered insight into academic transition. The American Psychological Association (APA) style format is required at Branch not at MCC. MCC encourages the use of Modern Language Association (MLA) style format. This proved to be a one of the challenges for a participant when writing papers. According to the site manager at Branch, after a student transfers to Branch from MCC, they are encouraged to take a creative writing course and a seminar on proper APA format. However, both courses are an additional cost to the student. The institutions share a campus; therefore to strengthen the partnership and promote success, it may be beneficial to all parties if a vertical APA and writing curriculum alignment was implemented. This small adjustment could potentially provide a "seamless flow of instruction" from one academic environment to another (Teacher 2Teacher, p. 1).

While the aforementioned factors might have been common to many students that transition from any college environment, the study focused on the lived experiences African American women. In order to understand and uncover their experiences, Black Feminist thought was used as the theoretical framework. According to Collins (2000), African American women lives and experiences are subjugated by interlocking oppressions and societal controlling images. Therefore, they occupy an outsider-within position, which produces a standpoint different from those of African American men and women as a group. This position in society impels them to self-define and self-validate continually to offset the negative treatment.

The study found that in addition to transfer shock, these African American women experienced additional factors that were rooted in racism. This form of racism materialized as interlocking oppressions and controlling images. These factors lead to the feelings invisibility, isolation, marginalized, and discontent. The African American women were able to discredit the negative treatment by self-defining and self-validating during their transition. In their own words, the participants revealed the need for effective academic and career counselors that are sensitive to the specific circumstances of African American women. One participant described a portion of her transfer shock experience that was undergirded by race, class, and gender, which eventually led to her academic suspension. This event necessitated the skills of a multidimensional counselor that was able to effectively address the standpoint of African American women and academic component. Constantine and Greer (2003) contend that many African American women have had constant experiences with racism and view White counselors

as agents of institutional racism or apart of the infrastructure that invalidates them and their experiences.

Additionally, the narratives in this study provided an in-depth lens through which African American women view and measure their world. Therefore, a more profound understanding of the African American women's transition experience could positively impact the ways in which African American women are researched, addressed, viewed and supported at educational institutions. By gaining an understanding of the African American women's perception, higher educational institutions can provide appropriate academic and social programs and counselors that attend to the their social and historical position in this society.

Leadership Reflection

As a leader and researcher, I acknowledge my standpoint of being an African American woman and my marginalized position. Intuitively, I chose a phenomenological approach understanding that African American women always have a deeper story to tell. No one had to tell me, I just knew from past experiences with my great-grand mother, grandmother, sisters, aunts, cousins, and friends. I was not disappointed. I selected Black Feminist thought as my theoretical framework because of my lived experiences with race, class and gender. However, I did not understand the depths of the three working simultaneously. I always viewed them as a dyad, and the veil has been lifted. As I delved deeper behind the premise of Black Feminist Thought, my past experiences with race, class, and gender have taken on a new understanding. For instance, I understand the reason for my attendance at 1997 Million Woman March in Philadelphia, PA, we needed to be seen and our voices to heard. Notwithstanding, addressing the invisibility of African

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American women. When I revisited books, such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* I recognized that it was about an African American woman's right to make choices and the value of friendship.

I also reflected on Hurston (1963) "They [African Americans] are most reluctant at times to reveal that which their soul lives by" (p. 2). Therefore, when I listened to the participations descriptions of their lived transition experiences, I did so with respect, empathy, and understanding. As I wrote their narratives I became protective their words and use of the language, which led me present their stories verbatim.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) suggested that a person should take a balcony perspective. That is to remove oneself from the dance floor to view and understand the dancers. On several occasions I found that I only wanted to dance with the dancers and share my story; however, I would remove myself from the data for a few days and journal my thoughts. This form of detachment allowed me to hear the words that were not being verbalized and understand their need to express their thoughts.

One of the participants wanted to know how she would benefit from this study of African American women transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. This request provided me the opportunity to think critically about my responsibility as a leader. I realized while sharing their stories, that they were well equipped with strategies needed to address any discrepancies by self-defining and self-validating. Hence, my role would be to prepare African American women for foreign environments that may have difficulty value their uniqueness.

Another participant said, "I am a leader." Goleman et al. (2002) recommend emotional intelligence for leaders. My responsibility is to instruct African American

women in effective ways to assess their surroundings, while embracing their uniqueness are forms of self-awareness and self-management. In other words, provide them with environmental cues that could affectively assist them in addressing and resolving issues. Finally, work diligently to make decisions void of emotions. Perchance, if they missed that lesson, be willing to make amends. My second leadership responsibility is to prepare the higher educational community for the multidimensional and multi-faceted lives of their students; the interlocking of, race, class, and gender inform how African American women view and interact with society.

Although the women were in an outside-within position in this postsecondary environment, they were able to view the interworking of power and adapt. Hooks (1984) concluded, "Living as we did-on the edge-we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the outside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as margin. We understood both" (xvii). From their descriptions, these four African American women were in the position to identify the strength of their position.

For the African American women in this study, their lived experiences provided me with a profound understanding of their lived transition experience race, class and gender and self-validating and self defining are constantly in overlapping in their lives. In Toni Morrison's (1987) *Beloved,* Denver, a character in the story was contemplating leaving her house to get medical help for mother. She was reluctant to leave; however, she reflected on her grandmother's last words.

> Denver stood on the porch in the sun and couldn't leave it…I never told you all that? Is that why you can't walk down the steps? My Jesus my. But you said there was no defense. There ain't. Then what do I do? Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on. (Morrison, 1987, p. 244).

Just like many African American women before them, Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha understood the challenges that they faced as they pursued their baccalaureate degree, yet they went out into the yard.

Conclusion

Fulghum (1986) wrote, "All I needed to know about how live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten" (p.2). Through narrative descriptions, Black feminist thought, and a phenomenological approach I learned that these four African American women really did learn all they needed to know about life, how to live, society, and their place during their formative years. The findings of this study indicate the importance of in-depth analysis of the African American woman's lived transition experience. The research on promoting a seamless transition from any two-year college to a four-year college must include their perceptions and knowledge of the women themselves. This knowledge will provide a more diverse view of the transition experience.

Through descriptive narratives, Brenda, Gale, Juanita, and Asha, have shared their experiences and perceptions as outsiders-within. This contribution to postsecondary education has the ability to increase our understanding of the meaning of transitioning from a community college to a four-year university sharing a campus. The participants' readiness to share their thoughts demonstrates a positive step and may help other African American women who feel the strain of the outside-within position. It is paramount that higher education becomes more mindful and sensitive to the historical position of African American women in order to provide a more inclusive and culturally rich environment.

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WILMINGTON COLLEGE
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE (HSRC)
PROTOCOL REVIEW

This section is to be completed by the HSRC

Principal Investigator: _____ LolaHAMes _____

Date submitted: _____ 4-3-12 _____

The protocol and attachments were reviewed:

___ The proposed research is approved as ___ Exempt _✓_ Expedited ___ Full Committee

___ The proposed research was approved pending the following changes:

   ___ see attached letter

   ___ resubmit changes to the HSRC chairman

___ The proposed research was disapproved. See attached letter for more information.

HSRC Co-Chair   *Linda H FRAZER*   Date: _5/21/12_
Or Representative   print name

      Linda H. Frye
        signature

HSRC Co-Chair   *MicHael S. Czarkowski*   Date: _5/21/2012_
Or Representative   print name

      Michael S. Czarkowski
        signature

Form approved by HSRC September 9, 2004

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form to Participate in Research

The Voices of African American Women's Transfer Experience
Investigator: Lola Ames

The purpose of this study is to describe the transfer experiences of African American female students. Your involvement in this study will offer insight into how African American women describe their transfer experience. Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary and you are free to change your mind at anytime; and your data will not be included in this study. However, if you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview and a possible follow-up interview to discuss your transfer experiences.

The interview (s) will be scheduled at your convenience. They will last one hour; and will take place in the conference center at the Shirlee and Bernard Brown University Center located on the campus of Cumberland Community College in Vineland, NJ. You will be given a $15.00 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation if you complete the entire study.

It is important that your identity be protected; therefore, your name will not be used in this study; however, you will be asked to give an alias that will provide a name to the voice in the story.

All interview data will be **taped using an audio recording device** and transcribed by me to ensure your confidentially. I will also take handwritten notes. Data collected during this research will be held in strict confidence for a period of three years after this study and then shredded by me. However, **data results may be presented in professional presentations on African American women's higher educational experiences**.
If you **have any questions or concerns**, please contact me: Lola Ames, 3555 East Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, NJ 08361, 856-563-1685, amesl93@students.rowan.edu or Dr. James Coaxum at Rowan University, Education Hall, Glassboro, NJ 856-256-4779, coaxum@rowan.edu.
I have read and understand the "Consent Form to Participate" and agree to participate in this study.
 If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact: The Associate Provost for Research at, Rowan University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ 08028. You may also call, 856-256-5150.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____
Investigator Signature:_____ Date: _____

First Interview Protocol Model

The Transfer Experience of African American Female Students

Date:_____   Time:_____

Place_____

Participant (alias):_____

       There is limited research on the realities of African American women in college. After an exhaustive search of the literature, the transfer experiences of African American women transferring to a four-institution that share a campus with a community college is unchartered territory. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to open up the dialogue, while providing much needed information on the transfer experience from the perception of African American women.

First Interview questions

1. Please tell me about your early educational experiences.

2. Please tell me about the time between high school and your enrollment in community college.

3. Please tell me about your community college experience.

4. Please tell me about your transfer experience.

Appendix C

Second Interview Protocol Model

The Transfer Experience of African American Female Students

Date:_____   Time:_____

Place_____

Participant (alias):_____

   The last time that we were together we discuss you early educational experiences. Is there anything that you thought about and wish to share? During this session we will continue to discuss you educational experiences; however, from the higher educational level.

Second Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about any thoughts or ideas that you wish to share from the first interview.
2. Please tell me about a classroom experience.
3. As an African American female student, do you think your educational experience was impacted by your race? Gender? Class? All? Both? If so, in what way?
4. Please tell me what it means to be an African American women in college?
5. Please explain how higher education has impacted your life thus far.
6. What advice will you provide for future African American women transfer students?
7. Tell me about your future plans?

Appendix D
Focus Group Protocol

The Transfer Experience of African American Female Students

Date:_____   Time:_____
Place_____

      First, this session is intended to introduce you to each other. As a group of African American women transfer students, I discovered through your stories that you share several commonalities. I thought that it would be nice for you to meet. A lot of times during you busy schedules and you wonder if there is anyone experiencing what I am or am I alone. Second, it would provide you with the opportunity to look at your transcripts and decide whether or not there are some things that you would like to leave out or discuss further. Finally, this session aims to clarify and elicit your thoughts about being an African American female transfer student.

      Before we began our session, I would like to set the group norms. Please speak one at a time and respect each other's opinion.

1. As an African American female student, do you think your educational experience was impacted by your race? Gender? Class? All? Both? If so, in what way?

2. Please explain how you coped with the race, class, and gender.

3. Is there any topic or incident from your transcript that you would like to further explore?

4. What policies and practices do you think both institutions should adopt to assist African American female transfer students with transitioning from one environment to another?

Appendix E

Demographic Information

To be completed by researcher

Participant (Alias): _____   Date_____

1. Age_____

2. Relationship status_____

3. Number of children_____

4. Employment status_____

5. Do you hold a high school diploma or GED? _____

6. Did you take any remedial courses while enrolled at Cumberland County College? If so, type of courses taken and how long were you enrolled in the courses?

   _____

7. How many years did it take you to earn a degree from Cumberland County College? _____

8. How many credits are you currently taking_____

9. What is your current major? _____

10. Academic year (example: junior, senior, masters, etc.)

    _____

11. How many degrees have you earned? Type?

    _____

12. Reasons for selecting Wilmington University

    _____

    _____