Teaching Experiences of African American Educators in the Rural South

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A scarcity of research exists regarding the voices of African American teachers who taught in the rural South. In this study, we report the life experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of three female African American educators as they pertain to their experiences teaching before, during, and after desegregation. Three female African American educators who taught before, during, and after desegregation in the same school district in the rural South were interviewed extensively. Data analysis revealed themes that mirrored those themes found in resiliency research. By examining these resilience themes within the context of this study, a model of adult resilience in teaching emerged. Key Words: Resilience, African American, Teachers, and Desegregation

Introduction

Teachers are often viewed as role models or individuals who others seek to emulate (Berryman, 1998; Beswick, 1990; Webb, 1986). Resilient teachers or teachers who have endured adverse situations over time who remain positive about teaching may be able to impart a sense of optimism that children can emulate regardless of each student's situation (Jackson, 2001). That mimicking of behavior, or learned behavior (Bandura, 1977), can be critical for children to build role models. The nurturing and supportive environment that teachers provide can help students with not only academic needs, but also social and psychological needs (Jackson). Political, social, and economic systems can greatly affect children, especially children of color (Viadero, 2000). It seems that resilient educators have high expectations for all children regardless of color. The experiences of resilient teachers may better equip children to understand that the individual does not create the problems of poverty and social inequities, but that some situations are systemically imposed on the individual (Jackson; Jefferies, 2000). Questions may arise regarding what can be learned from those teachers who touch so many lives year after year in the classroom. Are their experiences similar or different? Can a model of adult resilience be gleaned from those teaching experiences?

In this study, we sought to examine the philosophical views of three female African American educator informants, as well as the life experiences that contributed to their resilience in education. Their lives were examined through a lens of resilience that provided important insights for educators, especially those educators working with minority children who continue to lag behind in many areas (Beauboef-Lafontant, 1999; Graybill, 1997; Minter, 1996; Sianjina, Cage, & Allen, 1996). This study provides a voice for African

American women who taught in public schools before, during, and after desegregation in the rural South. African American women were chosen for this study due to their unique role in American society and their contributions to their families, communities, and the work place (Williams, 2000).

For the purpose of this research, resilience refers to a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchietti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). The dynamic process is the longevity of teaching careers for each informant. Their adaptation to significant adversity is manifested through their experiences as African American female teachers before, during, and after desegregation in the rural South.

Over the past 20 years, since the 1983 A Nation at Risk report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), alternative pathways into teaching have grown (Huling, Resta, & Rainwater, 2001). The growth is inevitable as the well-documented teacher shortage in various regions grows incrementally. States increasingly seek alternative routes to providing more teachers to address an even larger student population. Examples are the states of Texas and California where the largest alternative-certification programs exist. Alternatively-certified teachers account for an average of five to 15% of teachers receiving certification in these states (SRI International, 2003).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is its giving of voice to African American female educators who taught in the rural South. These teachers were often silent about their joy, frustration, anxiety, and expertise with regard to educating children. We could not locate any published studies in which this topic was addressed as it pertains to teaching experiences of African American educators in the rural South. It is meaningful that their resolve and resilient nature helped them remain in education, often in spite of extremely harsh circumstances. By examining resilience themes, as well as developmental and ecological factors that contributed to their longevity in education, a model of adult resilience in teaching emerged.

Resilience as a Construct

The construct of resilience "…refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). This definition is crucial to an understanding of the theoretical framework that guides this body of research. Resilience is not seen as a set of traits that an adult possesses. On the contrary, resilience is seen as a multidimensional process which occurs over time. Other researchers have viewed resilience as multidimensional and systemic (Garmezy, 1993; Luthar et al.; Luthar & Ziglar, 1991). Rather than look at only the "why," this study sought the "how" related to individuals who continued careers in education despite subjugation to significant adversity. In so doing, a model of adult resilience was provided as a template for mechanisms that defeat hardship. Also discussed are mechanisms which assist those persons who strive to change the system, or in this case, the public school system that is sometimes at odds with the people it is supposed to serve.

Theoretical framework of resilience

> Luthar and colleagues (2000) emphatically stated that,
>
> Resilience researchers must present their studies within a clearly delineated theoretical framework in which hypotheses about salient vulnerability and protective processes are considered, vis-à-vis the specific adversity under study. Investigators should also elucidate theoretical postulates that derive from their own findings. (p. 555)

It is with the recommendation of Luthar and colleagues (2000) that a clearly delineated theoretical framework is provided. Seven specific themes from research on the construct of resilience utilizing an ecological and developmental perspective provided the theoretical framework of this study. Each theme was viewed in an ecological and developmental perspective, which according to Walsh (1998) gave more of a systemic look at resiliency rather than the usual trait assessment of resilience. Although much of resilience research is focused on children and adolescents, the guided premise of this framework is that adults develop resilience over a lifetime through their relationships, which is referred to as the developmental perspective. Another guiding premise about the way adults develop resiliency is how people adapt to external processes, such as their environment and the social mores of the time, otherwise termed the ecological perspective.

Resilience theme

The first resilience theme is the importance of religion. Researchers have documented that individuals who have overcome great odds often expressed spiritual sources of encouragement (Dugan & Coles, 1989; Franklin, 1995). The sources of encouragement often stem from a deeply held belief in God and/or a strong sense of moral obligation to others. This belief has often been deeply rooted since childhood.

The second resilience theme is flexible locus of control. Rotter (1964) developed the concept of locus of control. A person with an internal locus of control may attribute an unpleasant life event to his or her own inability or lack of skill. In contrast, a person with an external locus of control would attribute an unpleasant life event to the system that keeps him or her from succeeding or to some other external explanation. Flexible use of each locus of control seems to be beneficial for resilient people (Walsh, 1998). There are certainly times when adverse situations are beyond one's control. For example, it would be counterproductive to blame one's self for deaths that occurred due to a hurricane. Similarly, many situations can be affected by one's own influence. For example, if an exam is failed, blaming the instructor instead of studying more for the next exam would not be beneficial.

The third resilience theme examined an individual's ability to view adverse situations positively. Seligman (1990) termed this phenomenon as "optimistic bias." Individuals who have the capacity to reframe problematic situations into something more uplifting tend to be more resilient (Seligman; Walsh). This phenomenon assists with what appears to be positive decision-making skills. Over time, these individuals have learned what works best in stressful or problematic situations. This developmental aspect of optimistic bias appears to be rooted in the individual modeling the behavior of specific people with whom they have a significant

relationship. For many these relationships may be a family member or teacher who modeled a positive attitude or perspective when things went wrong.

Autonomy is the fourth resilience theme that was examined. Individuals who feel that they can control and/or influence events also seem to be more resilient over time (Franklin, 1995; Kobasa, 1982; Rutter, 1987; Walsh, 1998; Werner & Smith, 2001). Individuals with a strong sense of autonomy seem to have an ability to self govern their own actions in spite of hardships.

Commitment is the fifth theme that was noted in the resilience literature (Dugan & Coles, 1989; Franklin, 1995; Kobasa, 1982; Walsh, 1998). Resilient individuals tend to be deeply committed to their activities and their relationships. Franklin studied at-risk African American adolescents who were performing at exemplary levels in school in spite of their circumstances. One of the themes that he identified was the students' deep commitment to family and to extracurricular activities, as well as to their studies.

Change is the sixth resilience theme that seems to propel resilient individuals forward despite extreme adversity (Kobasa, 1982). This is a critical theme for this study as the events leading up to and after desegregation brought about great change in the lives of the three informants. The ability to view change as positive and exciting seems to assist with building resilience over time.

Finally, the seventh theme of positive relationships is also apparent in the lives of resilient people. Over time, resilient individuals tend to seek out and observe positive role models even if those positive role models are not present in the home or immediate family (Walsh, 1998). These mentors can be parents, other family, friends, teachers, clergy, and/or spouses (Dugan & Coles, 1989; Franklin, 1995; Higgins, 1994; Luthar et al., 2000; Simeonsson, 1994; Walsh; Werner & Smith, 2001).

Based on these research findings, a theoretical framework was developed for this study that consists of seven themes viewed in terms of an ecological and developmental perspective. Figure 1 represents an original model that graphically conceptualizes the theoretical framework that undergirds this investigation. This model was generated exclusively for this investigation.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the study:

(1) What were the teaching experiences for each educator before, during, and after desegregation in the South?
(2) What themes does each educator exhibit that contributed to her longevity in education?
(3) What, if any, resilience themes emerge from the interviews of each educator?
(4) To what extent do the experiences of these three educators inform the development of an emerging adult resilience theory?
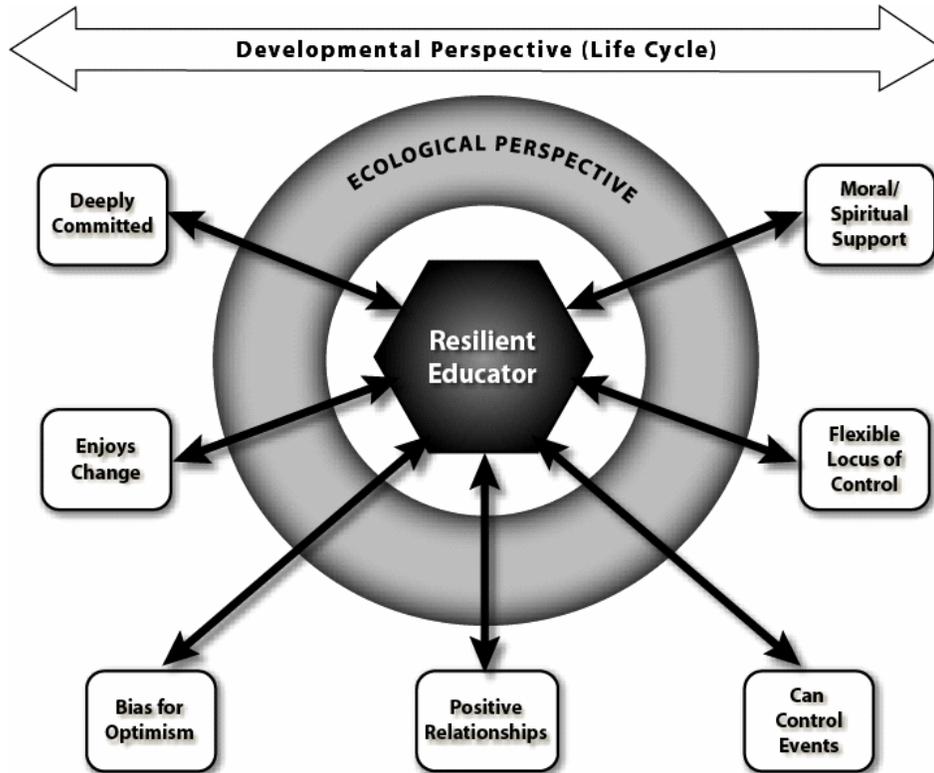
Figure 1. *Graphic Conceptualization of Resilience in Education Theoretical Framework.*

Figure 1: Graphic Presentation of Resilience in Education Theoretical Framework

Authors' Perspective and Context

When conducting qualitative research, personal bias is a factor that should be acknowledged and addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is important that the primary author's background and motivation be discussed so that readers can reach their own conclusions regarding the research. The primary author's experiences as an African American woman who attended desegregated schools and who has a Black feminist and critical race theory perspective greatly influenced the way the data were interpreted. Understanding the perspective in which the authors view the world is also critical. Operating from a Black feminist, critical race theory paradigm, the authors used narrative life histories of three African American women who gave an account of their voices and their visions. The primary author's background as a student who attended all integrated schools, both public and private, influenced the way this research was constructed. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Sam Houston State University regarding the protection of human subjects.

Method

The purpose of this research was to explore the teaching experiences of female African American teachers who taught before, during, and after desegregation in the South. Through narrative inquiry, the theoretical framework of resilience found in the literature guided the exploration. Questions were developed to serve as a guide for inquiry. Each educator was interviewed using a guided open-ended questioning approach. This narrative inquiry drove the data of this research. The questions, modified from a previous study conducted by the senior researcher, were honed down to address specifically the construct of resilience and the themes found in the literature, as well as contributing ecological and developmental factors. Five professors of education reviewed and approved the questions. The questions were asked in a conversational style to put the respondents at ease who were then free to answer the questions at any length or not to answer at all. Periodically, the answers may have led to an additional question. Questions were formulated to address the theoretical framework of resilience. Those themes included moral and spiritual sources of courage (Dugan & Coles, 1989; Franklin, 1995), an internal locus of control (Bandura, 1977; Higgins, 1994; Rotter, 1964; Walsh, 1998), a bias for optimism (Seligman, 1990; Taylor, 1989; Walsh), a belief that one can control or influence events (Kobasa, 1982; Rutter, 1987; Walsh; Werner & Smith, 2001), commitment (Franklin; Kobasa; Walsh), enjoyment of change (Kobasa), and the ability to form lasting relationships (Franklin; Walsh).

The historical biography method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was selected to give an in-depth account of the perceptions and activities of each informant. A descriptive report using the actual words of each informant gave considerable authenticity to the reporting, while leaving room for outside interpretation. This research, however, used pre-selected themes to answer the research questions. The themes were derived from the literature concerning adult resiliency and were utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. Using these themes, the researchers analyzed the data guided by the theoretical framework of resilience and offered a possible emergent model of adult resilience in teaching.

Informants

The sample was limited to three informants. It was not the intent of the inquiry that these data be generalized to all teaching experiences before, during, and after desegregation. A purposive sample was selected, as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (1993), to yield the best understanding of the research. The logic of purposive sampling included the concept that informants were chosen not for their representativeness but for their relevance to the research questions, theoretical framework, and explanation or account being developed in research (Schwandt, 2001). Initially, the first informant was the participant in a previous study conducted by the senior researcher for a qualitative research methods course. She acted as the individual who gave us credibility to interview others of her culture. The other two informants were identified by asking the informant from the initial study if she knew of more female African American educators who taught during the same time.

Informant identification

Initially, one informant introduced the other two informants after the senior researcher inquired about other possible informants for this research. This method of purposeful sampling, also known as "snowball strategy" (Mertens, 1998, p. 112), was used to identify the informants. Louise Brown was the initial informant interviewed, and she suggested the names of the other informants. Additionally, these informants were chosen because of their longevity in education, as well as their unique and extraordinary positive dispositions about life, teaching, and learning. Each educator informant, Alice Jones, Mary Smith and Louise Brown, chose the time and place of her interview. Each interview took place in the informants' home with an initial interview time of 2½ hours. The ages of the informants range from 89 to 96 years old and they each had 40 or more years of teaching experience in public schools.

The setting

The setting consisted of a time period between 1913 to 2002 with a special emphasis on the time period in which the informants taught, between 1930 and 1976. A critical time was the school year 1969-1970, which was the year of total integration in the school district in which these teachers taught. Two of the informants were transferred to predominantly White student schools, while one informant remained at what was considered the Black school. The early dates gave a rich historical context of the informants' lives growing up in a Jim Crow South, which often viewed and treated them as second class citizens. All informants were reared in a rural, southern environment in the state of Texas, which had a long history of separating people by race. Finally, the inquiry examined an educational, political and social setting with changing politics as the last vestiges of separate but equal schools vanished and full integration was realized. The informants' experiences, thoughts, and perceptions about teaching during that time period were also investigated.

Instrumentation

The senior researcher was the primary instrument for this research. As stated by Mertens (1998) "in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument. The qualitative researcher decides which questions to ask and in what order, what to observe, and what to write down" (p. 175). A secondary instrument was a guided questionnaire that served as a general guide for interviewing each participant. Questions, developed by the senior researcher, the senior researcher's dissertation committee, and three members of a doctoral cohort who also used qualitative methodology in their dissertations, were used to guide the informants into a discussion about their experiences as educators before, during, and after desegregation. So that the informants could feel free to give their own account without any prompting from their interviewer, questions were formulated as open-ended questions. The interview questions were designed to address the research questions specifically within the backdrop of the lives of the informants and the construct of resilience (Dexter, 1970). The questions were designed for unstructured responses, given in the same order, so that full advantage of the generative power of the informants' language could be taken. This process allowed full attention to be given to each informant's testimony.

Data collection

Qualitative researchers generally use three main methods for collecting data: participant observation, interviews, and document and records review (Mertens, 1998). To increase validity of the data several methods were utilized for data collection. Guided interviews were conducted with each informant, member checking was an integral part of clarifying meaning in each interview, and verbatim transcription of each interview was used for interpretation. The coding for each resilience domain was utilized to find or refute the presence in each verbatim transcript. The literature review helped to establish the parameters of the research and allowed us to formulate the resilience themes. Audio and video tapes of each interview clarified the verbatim transcripts, and second readers further verified interpretations of whether or not a particular theme was present and if the coding was accurate. Historical documents such as photos corroborated the informants' testimony. Field notes helped to manage non-verbal cues of each informant during her interview, and triangulation of all data was utilized for data collection and analysis. To pass Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness model of truth values, applicability, and consistency, a set of specific questions was asked of all educators, rather than the general question, "Tell me about your life." Because there were three educators being interviewed, a detailed description of each case and noted themes were provided (Creswell, 1998). Additionally, all resilience factors that emerged in the triangulated interviews were coded and quantified.

Each informant was asked the same questions in a guided interview that was video and audio taped. Due to the number of questions asked of each informant, it was necessary to categorize the questions for ease of understanding. Instead of answering and reporting the answers to all 34 questions for each informant, questions were collapsed into similar categories. The questions were examined for similarities and grouped accordingly; the categories were reviewed with two dissertation committee members to ensure that additional categories were not omitted. We agreed to collapse the questions into four categories to be able to report the findings for question one. The categories included: (a) General Information and Demographics (Questions 1-6); (b) Teaching and Desegregation (Questions 7-14, 25-28); (c) Perceptual Influences (Questions 15-24, 29); and, (d) Creating a Legacy (Questions 30-34).

Coding was used as a procedure to disaggregate the data, break it down into manageable segments, and identify those segments (Schwandt, 2001). Each verbatim interview transcript of each informant was then submitted to second readers who were experienced in qualitative research. The second readers further corroborated the codes that were found. Color codes were utilized to identify each resilient theme, and the bold and italicize keys were used to identify ecological or developmental perspective. If at any time there was a discrepancy in what was interpreted versus what the second reader interpreted, then those items were negotiated until consensus was reached. Any themes which occurred that seemed to be completely different from the hypothesized themes were identified as possible emergent themes. Once the data from the transcript were reviewed, a third analysis was performed to make any changes, additions, or deletions to hypothesized or emergent themes. The most dominant categories were considered themes as analysis was completed.

Historical data

To authenticate the research further, court documents and laws of the time period as well as district policy were explored. Many records were not kept prior to 1993, when the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) in Texas was established. This occurrence impeded a thorough analysis of information such as teacher salaries. Because this research occurred in the state of Texas, the Texas Education Agency was instrumental in providing historical demographic data and policy change data; however, many records such as the number of Black teachers who were given unequal pay were not available.

Data analysis

The data from informant interviews and corroborating research were triangulated. Content analysis of historical documents and examination of photographs were also conducted. An example was the class photo of one of the educators before and after desegregation, and the history of this particular school district.. These added sources helped to validate the testimonies of the informants, as well as provided credibility of the historical, social, and political climate of their teaching experiences.

Domain analysis, as suggested by Spradley (1979), was utilized to pinpoint suggested themes and uncover emergent themes. Domain analysis involved a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge, called domains or themes. In doing this kind of analysis, there was a search for cultural symbols which are included in larger categories (themes) by virtue of some similarity. These symbolic categories include other categories. For example, the symbolic category of bias for optimism was a hypothesized theme of adult resilience based on the literature. Any terms that suggested a positive attitude in an otherwise negative situation were seen as a symbol of the larger theme of bias for optimism. An excerpt from the interview with Mary Smith is presented below as an example. The dialogue conveyed the optimism for all children to learn without regard for race at a time when race was very much a part of the learning environment.

I would say that I believe the White teachers did not know what to do with them [Black children]. They [White teachers] would ask me so often what I would do with such and such a person that would be giving them a time. I said well, I do the same thing I do with them as I do with White. To me, they were just children, they weren't Black and they weren't White. They were just children.

The following were specific methods for data analysis that were applied for each research question. Research question one was answered by the transcribed interviews of each informant. Question one gives the powerful recognitions, beliefs, perceptions and experiences of each informant regarding her teaching. Verisimilitude was created by using multiple excerpts from each interview to help draw the reader into the experiences of each informant. This question did not produce interpretation as it was left to the reader to make his/her own interpretation.

Research question 1: What were the teaching experiences for each educator before, during, and after desegregation in the South?

    Examples from the transcribed interviews of each informant's teaching experiences before, during, and after desegregation in the South are provided. These data served as an open window into the teaching experiences of these educators before, during, and after desegregation. This type of inquiry most closely resembled what Spradley (1979) called ethnographic field work in which the researcher makes cultural inferences based on three sources: "(a) from what people say; (b) from the way people act; and (c) from the artifacts people use" (p. 8).

Research question 2: What resilience themes does each educator exhibit that contributed to her longevity in education?

    Audio tapes of each informant interview were given to a professional transcriptionist to type as a full text transcription of the interview. The interview transcript, audiotaped, videotaped, transcribed, and saved on a computer, was given to each informant to ensure that her thoughts were clearly articulated. The informant, given a folder with the completed transcript in print and a red ink pen, was asked in written and verbal form to make any corrections, changes, or deletions. All corrections were then made using the changes given by each participant and saved as an electronic file. Domain analysis of interview transcripts was necessary to determine themes in experiences. Extensive and continuous member checking was conducted. This strategy was recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to validate further the meaning of the informant's testimony. Deliberate feedback from the informant was obtained continuously to establish whether or not the researchers articulated the data in a manner that accurately reflected the informant's meaning and experiences (Lincoln & Guba). As the transcribed data were analyzed, if any question was raised about what the informant meant, the informant was contacted and clarification sought. The video and audio tapes were also used to ensure the words were accurately transcribed. This method helped to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba) and ensure that the data which were further analyzed were accurate.

    Hypothesized and emergent themes were then looked for with several readings of the transcript. A color coding system was developed to show the hypothesized resilience themes. Ecological and developmental perspectives that were identified were given a bold or italicized font. The emergent themes were recorded and displayed with a two letter code. Once the analysis of the transcript was completed, it was given to second readers who were skilled in qualitative research to corroborate or refute the themes found. The second readers were given the coded transcribed interview, the list of hypothesized and emergent themes and codes for each, the complete meaning of the hypothesized themes from the literature, and a disk with the coded transcribed interview. They were also given verbal instructions to comb through the coded interview to determine consensus or rebuttal of our assessment. The second readers were able to utilize the computer disk or the hard copy for changes.

    Research questions two through four were answered using the theoretical framework of the resilience themes. Domain analysis was utilized to interpret and compare and contrast the data derived from the transcribed interviews. This form of grounded theory methodology

provided the foundation of the substantive theory of social phenomena that this study interpreted as resilience in education.

Research question 3: What resilience themes emerge from the interviews of each educator?

Resilience themes from the triangulated transcriptions of all participants were coded and analyzed by color coding. All emergent themes were given a two-letter code. The same process for research question two was conducted for research question three. Once the codes were corroborated, refuted, or changed by the second reader, the final emergent themes were revealed. If there were any similarities, the themes were collapsed into a larger domain.

Research question 4: How can the experiences of these three educators inform the development of an emerging adult resilience theory?

The coded and analyzed themes and any other emergent themes derived from the triangulation of the data of all three informants provided evidence of an emerging model of resiliency. Those themes were compared to the initial hypothesized theory of resilience that was taken from the literature.

Qualitative Validity and Reliability

Credibility as validity

The interpretive/constructivists' parallel to validity is credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Mertens (1998) suggested several strategies which were used to establish validity for this study. Those research strategies are prolonged and substantial engagement (the interviews took place over a period of six months), persistent observation (the senior researcher was able to interview the informants in their home and subsequently got to know each informant over a period of three years during the research process). The senior researcher was often invited to their homes for lunch or dinner, attended worship service, and conversed about the research for member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Descriptions of the life experiences of the informants were taken from their own verbal accounts and therefore passed the test of credibility offered by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993). It was assumed that the informants would be honest with their answers.
     The reporting style was consistent with validity checks for qualitative research because multiple excerpts from each interview were utilized. The senior author's experience as an African American female who was raised in the South further enhanced the validity of the information collected. The Black feminist perspective helped the understanding of the reality of the political structures that each informant experienced as educators in the public school system. Although the senior researcher had not personally experienced the blatant racism that each informant experienced as educators, she was knowledgeable about the subtle micro-aggressions or small encounters with racism that often go unnoticed by members of the majority race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Unlike studies in which the person is deceased, participants were spoken with directly. The guided interview was purposeful and more of a dialogue as described by Dexter (1970). The informants attempted to convey their own individual experiences regarding teaching during a critical time in American history.

Additionally, the triangulated data from each interview were utilized to identify recurring themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Those themes were further triangulated using literature, historical documents, and archived pictures to strengthen the qualitative rigor of this study.

Some characteristics of the perspectives and the experience of these informants may be common to the experiences and perspectives of teachers today. To that extent, this study has relevance to the understanding of factors affecting resiliency of current and future educators.

Transferability as validity

Transferability was established because the rich descriptions provided had relevance to other contexts (Erlandson et al., 1993). "Transferability can occur because of shared characteristics" (Erlandson et al., p. 32). The descriptions of separate but unequal facilities for education might also have relevance for other occupational areas for Blacks who lived in the segregated south. Those descriptions may also be applicable to schools in northern states as well.

Confirmability as validity

Finally, confirmability, like dependability, was established through an audit trail (Erlandson et al., 1993). "An audit trail should be left to enable auditors or external reviewers of the study the ability to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to the sources of inquiry" (Erlandson et al., p. 35). All transcribed data as well as documents and audio and video tape recordings were maintained by us for review. The validity of the information derived from the questionnaire is contingent upon the honesty of the informants. Corroborating their testimonies with photos and court cases also helped to enhance the validity of their testimonies.

Dependabilty as reliability

Dependability is provided when an inquiry can be given with the same or similar respondents in the same context; in other words, the findings could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, in our study each informant was asked the same series of questions so that the inquiry was consistent. The study was not designed to generalize to the large population, but rather to maximize substantive theory development based on the experiences of the three informants. Finally, the immense time span and common knowledge of the harsh realities of American society before, during, and after desegregation provided a rich contextual backdrop that further confirmed and clarified the data gathered.

Results

Research question 1: What were the teaching experiences for each educator before, during, and after desegregation in the South?

Sixteen questions from the complete interview were specifically designed to address this research question. The questions all dealt with the perceptions and teaching experiences

of the informants before, during, and after desegregation in the rural South. These 16 questions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Interview Questions Specific to Research Question 1

_____
(1)   How did you decide to become a teacher?
(2)   Can you describe teaching before desegregation?
(3)   Can you describe how you felt when you learned that the schools would be segregated?
(4)   Can you describe the differences in teaching after desegregation?
(5)   Can you describe the similarities in teaching after desegregation?
(6)   How do you describe the stereotypical Black teacher before desegregation?
(7)   How did you differ from that model?
(8)   After desegregation, how did administrators from other races and cultures react to your presence in the classroom?
(9)   After desegregation, how did teachers from other races and cultures react to your presence in the classroom?
(10)   After desegregation, how did parents from other races and cultures react to your presence in the classroom?
(11)   After desegregation, how did students from other races and cultures react to your presence in the classroom?
(12)   Do you feel desegregation benefited Black children?
(13)   Do you feel desegregation benefited White children?
(14)   Do you feel desegregation benefited Black teachers?
(15)   Do you feel desegregation benefited White teachers?
(16)   Did you ever feel that you were in danger because you taught in a predominantly White school?
_____

Each educator taught in rural schools. Their teaching experiences were similar as they recalled segregated one room schools with little or no resources, various age groups, and multiple tasks of teaching, cooking, and managing a school. All taught during the Depression when supplies were meager for all schools. The Depression was a difficult time for all United States citizens, but it may have had even more of an impact on Black citizens who were often treated as second class citizens in the Jim Crow South. All informants seemed to take the social and physical inequities in stride. At least one informant intimated that it [social mores] was just the way it was. This intimation seemed to mean that hope was not lost, but perhaps individuals simply learned to work within the social and political structure.

> Well, when I started teaching in Huntington, there was a difference than when I was teaching in Conroe. In Huntington, it was just a four teacher school. That was during the Depression and we had a program where you had to fix meals for kids at school. The teachers would help. We were not directly responsible, but we would help. (Louise Brown)

It was just a way of life for Blacks. We accepted things as they were. While attending Conroe College where I finished high school, I was impressed at the relationship of teachers and students. They did a lot of improvising that is using whatever one has on hand. Since I wanted to be a teacher I used their method. You did not have supplies. You took on what you had to and did the very best with it. During the Depression they started furnishing supplies to prepare lunches. In the other schools, they had a kitchen, and storage for the supplies. In the school where I taught, they had one little pantry and one big pot. I would go down in the morning and start the lunch before I started class. During the 1930s when the Great Depression was at its worst, the Federal government in order to eradicate the nutritional ills of deprived areas began to furnish the school with government commodities. I had a five gallon pot. I would put the pinto beans with large pieces of ham on the heater to cook slowly all morning. The PTA [parent teacher association] would bake the bread. We knew what other schools had because many of the Black mothers of our community were the cooks. In fact, it was no secret. You knew what was going on. (Alice Jones)

Initial feelings regarding desegregation

Each informant described how she felt when she learned that the schools would desegregate. The range of response was that of neutrality to insecurities about being a competent teacher. Mary Smith admitted to adjusting to pronouncing new last names with which she was unfamiliar. Louise Brown reflected on the perception of others and how they viewed her as a teacher, and finally Alice Jones recalled her initial insecurities that eventually dissipated once she settled into her own classroom and the daily duties of teaching. Those insecurities seemed to have been exacerbated by an unsupportive administration that had to be won over.

I did not have any feeling about it. I really didn't. But when we did get together, my biggest problem was learning their names. Because I heard some names that I had never heard before. Black children's names were common, Smith, Brown, Jones. All like that, but they [White students] had names [I couldn't pronounce]. (Mary Smith)

When I learned that the school would desegregate we had a problem with that. Some naturally wanted desegregation, some did not. The Black people were happy about it. They wanted their children to go to school with the White children. So, some of them, when they heard about it, they sent their children. I think there were more Whites that did not want it, than Blacks. Well, they were not used to our culture. The Whites thought that they [children of both races] would not get along together. (Louise Brown)

There was tenseness. Because I thought that the White teachers with their superior educational advantages might have had something I did not have. I

thought that I was a successful teacher but I did not know how I would fit. (Alice Jones)

Teaching after desegregation

Although there was considerable change socially and politically during the integration of public school in the south, the informants maintained that those external influences did not deter their teaching. Each informant seemed to focus on the fact that teaching was teaching regardless of the race of the child. An example is a statement from Mary Smith followed by a quote from Louise Brown, "I certainly didn't (teach any different). I gave them the same teaching style as I did for the Black children. I just tried to get them to really learn."

> To tell you the truth, I really did not see any difference as far as my teaching was concerned. I had the same procedure. I had the same rules as I had before [de]segregation. My style and my discipline, so forth, was the same. I had the same rules that you had to do this, you had to do that. According to their lessons, same discipline. That is just how I felt. You are dealing with children, that was the best thing for them. (Louise Brown)

Administrative reactions to desegregated classrooms

Each informant described administrators who were supportive of them as individual teachers; however, they did feel that some White administrators and staff did not agree with the court orders to desegregate. It appeared to be a strained cordiality between the races.

One informant attributed her lack of problems to her own personality and experiences. Another informant really felt she earned respect due to her expertise in her subject area. An example is from Alice Jones, "The two years that I taught after integration the administrator was very supportive. I discovered that if a teacher knows her subjects and works hard she will be respected."   Overall, the responsiveness or non-responsiveness of administrators did not appear to have been a problem for any of the informants.

> One of the first superintendents that I worked for did not care for Blacks. You could tell that. They [Black children] all went up to the high school and they sent them back home saying that they were not ready yet. We will let you know when. He made the remarks, "when I die, no Blacks are coming up here." [similar to, "over my dead body"] They just weren't ready for it at the time. But after that, they did accept them. I did not find any differences as far as I was concerned. (Mary Smith)

> I had no problems whatsoever. I think a lot of it depends on your personality. I did not have any fear. I was used to White people. I had been reared up with Whites. I did not have any fear. I laughed and talked to them, they laughed and talked to me. I can't say all teachers [were accepting], but when I came into contact with them [White teachers], we would talk and that sort of thing. As we would go to meetings I would express how I felt. I really felt comfortable. I really did. To tell you the truth, they acted like they were

happier than the Black children. They were not used to that [Black teacher]. I was somebody different. Ha! They drew pictures of me, they would hug me. We just had a lot of fun. (Louise Brown)

Benefits of desegregation for Black children

The perceptions of each informant pertaining to desegregation and the benefits to Black children seemed to convey that overall Black children did not greatly benefit. It also appeared that in regard to extracurricular activities, desegregation was most unfavorable. The schools became larger, making it more difficult to participate in many activities.

The informants also made reference to the possibility that White teachers really were ill-equipped to understand Black student needs, while on the other hand Black teachers understood all children. It seemed as if Black teachers had more insight into the culture of White students, perhaps due to the fact that Blacks were often a part of the dominant culture, but White teachers did not have the same opportunity to be a part of Black culture.

To a point, some of them benefited. Some of them, no. I find that, in integration, many of the activities that they had in the schools that were segregated, many Black children would not get a chance to participate in those activities. They need to be encouraged to believe in themselves. I don't think they [White teachers] pushed our children much, like we did. (Louise Brown)

Yes, I do feel that desegregation benefited Black children in some areas. There were advantages and disadvantages. The teacher/student relationship was absent in the integrated school. The Black teachers understood and could relate to the Black students. We Black teachers encouraged and demanded the student do his/her work. The Black teacher saw each child as a person. She did not think of the race. The Black teacher seemed to express more warmth. She would almost force those students to live up to their ability. But as far, as integration, after we got into the integration, I could see it was a bad thing. The Blacks were not doing what they really could do because of the White teacher. They were really not pulling it out of them. We as Black teachers had to make some of them do it. They weren't going to get down and do it unless you stayed on them about it. Because, it really crippled us. That's what I said it did for us as Black people. Because here is a big school and you have 30 children in the room, you got two Blacks in that group all down the line. You know when it was just a Black school, we had bands, we had choirs. We had all of it. But when it went all together, the Whites just outnumbered them. They [Black children] looked like they said just let them [White children] have it and go on. No, I just felt like it was a down fall for Black children. (Mary Smith)

Benefits of desegregation for White children

According to the informants, forging better race relations and understanding seemed to benefit White children during desegregation. For many of the White children this was their

first intimate experience with Blacks as teachers and classmates. Alice Jones felt that this helped race relations and sometimes merged cultures. She states, "I think it did in a way. The White children learned more about the Black culture and often tried to emulate it."

> Yes. I would say that, well, in a way it did. For those that did not want to do anything, White or Black, they did not do anything. You see, being at a different school did not help them any. That's what I say about it. I had one little boy [White student], he told me one day, his brother teased him about coming to the Black school. He told his brother that this was the best school he had attended. He had been to three in the district. He thought that the Black school was so nice and clean and everything. The seats are not written on and cut on and everything. (Mary Smith)

> To a point. They got a chance to interchange. They got a chance to learn each other, to know about each others cultures. They feel like oh, this is a person and not an animal. Same things about the Blacks. They learn from the Blacks and the Blacks learn from them [parents]. (Louise Brown)

Benefits of desegregation for Black teachers

The benefit of desegregation for Black teachers was not an easy question to address for the informants. Responses were mixed with a neutral answer and an emphatic "yes" and "no." All remembered the pay inequities between Black and White teachers. Integration brought about a change for Black teachers' salaries, and at least one informant saw that as a benefit.

Another informant dwelled upon the social aspect of integration and how she got to know other teachers better and eventually became friends. The final informant did not feel that desegregation benefited Black teachers because they were always relegated to the lowest paid positions with little chance of advancement regardless of education and experience.

> Yes. I am speaking for myself. I learned that people are people. The White teachers had some skills that I did not have. I kept an open mind. The Black teacher worked better with the White kids than the White teacher worked with the Black kids. That is my thought. To me it just seemed like the Black teacher could adjust. The role that the White teacher had. I don't know how to explain it. It just seemed like the Black teacher could adjust teaching the White child better than the White teaches the Black child. (Alice Jones)

> No. To my idea, I believe it didn't. One teacher [Black teacher] went to Sam [Sam Houston State University] and studied library science. When she came back and the regular librarian left that same year, they hired another one [instead of hiring the Black English teacher who went back to school for library science]. She could have moved right into that place. They paid her [Black teacher] to teach the woman [White teacher] that was coming for a month. They paid her extra to do that. The teacher went ahead and accepted it. I would not have accepted it. (Mary Smith)

Benefits of desegregation for White teachers

All informants were in agreement that White teachers benefited from the desegregation of public schools. They were divided on how the teachers benefited. Two informants focused on the relational aspect of benefits to White teachers. They felt that desegregation helped White teachers better understand Black culture and more importantly, those same teachers began to treat all children, regardless of race, as people.

One informant seemed to imply that the White teachers also learned teaching techniques and strategies that were unique to Black teachers that also helped them in the classroom. Opportunities for advancement were seen as a benefit to White teachers as well. One informant believed that White teachers had more opportunities given to them, while the Black teachers were often excluded. Mary Smith explained, "Yes. They were moved up quicker [more opportunity for advancement]. That is what I said about integration. If segregation would have remained and we would have been given what the Whites had, it would have been better for our kids." Alice Jones agreed but for a different reason. She stated, "I think it did. They seemed to have as time went by, understood that children are children despite the race. There's an old saying… children are ambassadors of relationships." Louise Brown seemed to convey a mixture of the previous two sentiments. The benefits of preferential treatment and learning more about African American culture were the benefits she recognized for White teachers.

> The only thing I feel that it benefited White teachers is that they learned more about our culture. They were already given salaries above ours, at one time. I will say that at my school, I don't know about other schools, there were many other teachers who would come to me and ask me for advice about children. If it was something I felt like they could do that would help the child, I would tell them. (Louise Brown)

Summary of results for research question one

Indeed, given the first person narratives of each informant, it appeared that their resilience was multi-dimensional. The ecological and developmental factors influencing their lives seemed to shape the core themes that were interpreted in their testimony. Multiple realities were concluded for each informant based on the social mores of the time. The acceptance of social etiquette that often relegated the informants to second class citizens, such as White parents sitting in their classrooms the entire day, seemed to be more of a coping mechanism rather than acquiescence. Each informant fully understood that she was sometimes treated unfairly. Each seemed to look toward the greater good of eventual acceptance on the part of both races. All three informants presented a guarded hopefulness about the future of education for all children. Their concerns seemed to stem from their belief that there is sometimes a lack of understanding and an unwillingness to find out more about the children we teach. The informants passed on advice to all new and current teachers to simply teach the children regardless of race, creed, or color.

Research question 2: What resilient themes does each educator exhibit that contributed to her longevity in education?

Each informant's interview was interpreted individually to identify any of the seven resilience themes. The following is a representation of each informant's interview with an example of each theme found.

All hypothesized themes were interpreted in the interview with the informants; however, three were dominant. The most dominant themes were deeply committed, bias for optimism, and belief in control. The following represent verbatim examples from the coded transcript of what the readers and we interpreted as a specific theme. All themes were present in each informant's interview. To provide an account of how the verbatim transcript was interpreted, an example from each theme is provided.

Moral and spiritual sources of encouragement

> Both of my mothers were very devout Christians. My real mother would be praying, and I would hear her calling my name and I would not know what it was about, and I would say to my sister, you know, Mama is talking about all of us. She would say, she is praying for us. She would call out all of our names in prayer. She taught me how to pray. It was just a carry over to my foster parents. My foster parents were the same way. I learned the importance of prayer. There were many things that happened in my life and I had to pray; if I didn't, then I had no way to solve the problems that had to be solved. But it started as a child. (Louise Brown)

The passage above was interpreted as representing strong ecological and developmental factors contributing to Louise Brown's dependence upon spiritual sources for encouragement. She explained that spiritual sources of encouragement were first realized by her as a child watching her parents practice Christianity. The value of spirituality was further reinforced by her guardians and her school. These ecological and developmental factors seemed to greatly influence Louise Brown's dependence upon spiritual sources of encouragement. She attributed prayer to helping her solve life's problems. It was further interpreted that she attributed the ability to depend upon spiritual influences for problem solving to childhood experiences.

Belief in personal control and flexible locus of control

In this one statement, Mary Smith conveyed her thoughts about her own teaching philosophy. "As for myself, I tried to stay with making the child, to encourage the child and trying to get them to really learn. I like to see progress with my children. If I don't see progress, then I felt like I needed to be out of the way." She was specifically asked if she differed from what may have been a stereotypical Black teacher during her teaching experiences. The statement of "I tried to stay with making the child, to encourage the child and trying to get them to really learn. I like to see progress with my children" was interpreted within the theme *belief that one can control events*. Her need to "help the child learn" seemed to drive her commitment and her need to ensure that the students indeed learned. She

did not seem to need outside critiques of her abilities as a teacher. Perhaps, because of the racial climate, some Black teachers may have been unfairly critiqued and therefore the critique of others was not as important as their own self assessment. She seemed adamant that if she felt she was not able to help students learn then she would not teach anymore. She stated, "If I don't see progress, then I feel like I need to be out of the way." This statement was interpreted as a positive and flexible locus of control that was reflective of her own self assessment in regard to the progress of her students.

Optimistic bias

Bias for optimism indicates that the person's world view seems to be positive. Individuals who have a bias toward optimism seem to view the glass half full rather than half empty. Each informant demonstrated this theme throughout her interview. An example of this bias can be seen in the following excerpt from the transcript of Louise Brown.

Oh, I think it was just accidental that it burned down. But the dormitory burned and everything we had was lost. Everything was lost. But, I did not worry too much about it. I guess because I did not have sense enough. But, anyway, the people were just so nice to us. They opened up their stores, they came to our rescue, they brought us clothes. I got more clothes and shoes than when I came. You name it, I had it.

After a dormitory fire that left Louise Brown and several of her classmates with no belongings, she described a time of happiness and sharing that she chose to remember rather than the devastation of losing everything. The ecological factors of a small town community coming to the aid of the victims of the fire despite race seemed to also shape Louise Brown's world view over time as this experience with Whites was positive. This passage was interpreted to contain ecological factors as well as a bias for optimism. Arguably, developmental factors may also be interpreted as the incident happened while she was an adolescent.

Deep commitment

The theme of deeply committed was interpreted in each informant's interview. The following is an example of a passage from Alice Jones's interview. An interpretation of the data indicated her commitment as a teacher to her students. She explained her efforts to ensure all students learn regardless of their learning style.

I would not say I was too different, but as I said previously I think I was born to teach. I put everything I had into it. I taught by demonstrations. I stayed up practically all night. I knew at the time if they could see something, not just hear it. I made a lot of pictures. Many times I would work most of the night preparing audiovisuals. I studied my students for talents and had them use their talent for learning. Even though he/she might have been academically slow.

Enjoys change

Upon retiring from teaching, Louise Brown embarked upon another vocation of helping others. The passage below is an example of her ability to make positive changes, but it was interpreted that she utilized other themes to assist with welcoming the change. She

used the themes of spiritual source of encouragement, optimistic bias, deep commitment, as well as the change in her life after retirement. She worked as an administrator of a senior citizen community center for over 14 years.

> It was really interesting [retirement]. I started getting calls for a position at the Friendship Center. The Friendship Center is a center for senior citizens. The lady called me and told me that I had been recommended for a job. I told her I just quit working, I don't want a job. We talked. I told her no. Then I got another call from somebody else. It was president of the board. I said no, I don't want to work. The next time, they called, something spoke to me, and said – maybe this is a way the Lord wants to get you out of the house. I went up for an interview with them. They asked me to write a resume and I got the job of activity director. I worked there 14 ½ years. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun working with senior citizens. (Louise Brown)

Strong positive relationships

Parents, friends, and teachers provided strong positive relationships for each of the informants. Each informant attributed her values and beliefs to the modeling of her parents. The informants all appeared to have positive role modeling from their family, friends and teachers and informants recalled witnessing how their parents handled adversity, how their teachers dealt with students and the closeness of their family.

The following is an account from Louise Brown as she described the close relationships she formed at school. Close bonds appeared to be formed with teachers and older students who were often mentors to the younger students.

> Many times, I would need help, not with books or something like that, but there were other problems that would come up, and I would go talk to the teachers. They would tell me how to handle that problem. I think that might have been some of it too. My friend was not a teacher, but she was my superior. She was in the upper grades. I was in the lower grades. I would go to her a whole lot of times.

Research question 3: Do resilience themes emerge from the interviews of each educator?

All hypothesized themes were found in each informant's interview. Both ecological and developmental factors were an integral part of each theme. As interpretation was refined, five subcategories and one emergent theme were discovered. The theme of bias toward optimism yielded a subcategory of sense of humor. On many occasions the informants used humor while discussing difficult situations, sometimes even laughing out loud at the thought of some of their experiences.

The second theme that yielded a subcategory was belief that one can control events. This theme yielded four subcategories: (a) sense of civic duty, (b) seeks models, (c) community awareness, and (d) sense of politics. These subcategories seemed to define the kind of events that were most important to the informants. The ecological factors of the outside community seemed to reveal the importance of community and knowing the

community needs and the political ramifications of understanding and doing something about those needs. Each informant was still very active in her respective community. It seemed to be a way of life that was demonstrated through models that they sought, to make life better for all.

The theme of deeply committed yielded the interpreted subcategory of humility. Each informant attributed her ability to commit to teaching as well as to life as a calling or something outside of herself. They each seemed to recognize that they have been helped by outside factors. Those factors included family members, other teachers, friends and associates. They seemed to not only value humility in themselves but also in others.

The fourth theme considered was enjoys change. Subcategories interpreted were acceptance and open-mindedness. Again, change was one of the themes that seemed to have the least significance as it was not interpreted as often as other themes. However, the importance of the acceptance of change should not be taken for granted. It appeared that the informants viewed change as a normal part of life. Instead of bracing for change they tended to embrace change with an open-mindedness that allowed them to see many sides to an issue and a great ability to accept things as they were and work through any problems that may have come their way. Each informant seemed to be able to see both the views of White and Black parents, teachers, students and administrators. This ability also tied in with their keen sense of community awareness and their ability to gauge the political climate.

Finally, the fifth theme to yield a subcategory was that of strong positive relationships. Strong relationships seemed to be more focused on family for each respondent. The subcategory of strong family bond was found in the interpreted data of each respondent. They all credited their parents with instilling in them the desire to give back to the community, their spirituality, their commitment, their ability to trust their own judgment, and their decision to teach.

One new emergent theme was discovered. The theme of education viewed as important may at first seem obvious, as this study is about resilience in teaching; however, this theme was not apparent for resilient adults. Because this study was specifically about educators, it was compelling to see this theme so prominently interpreted in all informant interviews. Education viewed as important is more than a person thinking education is a good thing and one should pursue it. Rather, these informants viewed education as a way of life. The ecological and developmental factors that contributed to each informant's perception were astounding. They each discussed the importance of education to their families, parents and friends. They each were still involved through community activities in learning or teaching. Education for each seemed to go beyond the superficial need to advance or make money but is instead a state of being. The themes of moral and spiritual sources of encouragement, internal locus of control, and education viewed as important did not yield any subcategories in this study.

Research question 4: Do the experiences of these three educators inform the development of an emerging adult resilience theory?

The graphic presentation in Figure 1 displays the resilience themes. It further depicts the ecological perspective that surrounds the individual which encompasses a life span or the developmental perspective. Figure 1 was the original resilience in education theoretical framework that was developed based on the literature. The second representation, Figure 2

includes the theme of "education viewed as important," which was discovered in this inquiry. This graphic presentation depicts the results of our theory of adult resilience in education. The informants of this study informed the theory of adult resilience in education as each theme as well as the ecological and developmental perspectives was found in each interview. Each informant portrayed resilience as occurring over time with significant influence from external sources such as family, teachers and individuals from their communities. Each exhibited hypothesized and emergent themes consistent with the adult resilience literature.

Figure 2. *Graphic Presentation of Theory of Adult Resilience in Education*
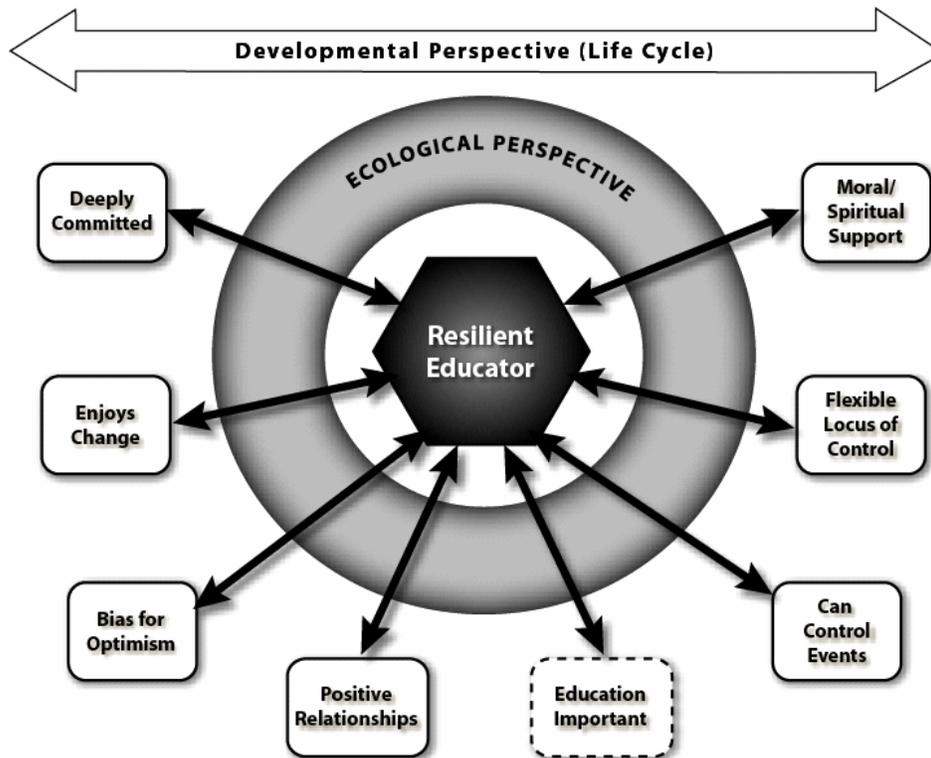
Discussion

The intent of our research was to explore the teaching experiences of African American female educators before, during, and after desegregation. Specifically, we looked at those experiences that mirrored the theoretical framework of resilience and any emerging themes undiscovered in the literature. A database search of doctoral research revealed that no studies have examined resilience and African American educators as coinciding phenomena. We undertook this study to provide an emergent theoretical model of resilience in education by utilizing the underrepresented and unique voices of African American female educators.

An inquiry of three informants provided the in-depth experiences of educators who taught before, during, and after desegregation in the rural south. They each provided their own unique experiences and perception. Those experiences and perceptions were collected, analyzed, and triangulated and a theoretical model of resilience in education was formed. The

model revealed seven themes from the literature and one theme that emerged through naturalistic inquiry. The themes were (a) deeply committed, (b) enjoys change, (c) bias for optimism, (d) flexible locus of control, (e) ability to control events, (f) moral and spiritual support, (g) positive relationships, and (h) education viewed as important. How can these themes inform the education community? Each theme was addressed with implications for administrators, teachers, parents and students; suggestions for further research are also provided.

The theoretical model of resilience in education

The documented and analyzed data of each informant utilizing a resilience framework provided the Theoretical Model of Resilience in Education. Eight themes are represented in the model. Seven themes were dominant in resilience research that pertained to adults. The eighth theme, education viewed as important, emerged through the use of domain analysis that revealed an additional dominant theme as it pertains to resilience in education. A discussion of the implications of the Theoretical Model of Resilience in Education is viewed through the needs of the learning community which includes administrators, teachers, parents and students.

Administrators

Administrators play a key and pivotal role in educating students. The methods of recruitment and retention greatly affect student outcomes. When administrators seek positive role models who exhibit much of the theoretical model of resilience in education, they may find that their students experience more success both academically and socially. The school begins in effect to educate the whole child.

Modeling the behaviors of resilient educators may also have a domino effect in successful schools. The resilient administrator will model that behavior to teachers who in turn will model that behavior with students. The synergy of the give and take of ecological factors over time helps to develop positive educated and resilient citizens.

Teachers

Teachers are said to be the backbone of our schools. If they are ill-prepared to deal with the academic and social needs of many of our students, this impacts a vast part of our society. Now more than ever, teachers have to have adequate training to meet the ever changing needs of our society. It appears that the same attributes of resilient educators need to be a part of the development of resilient students. Teachers can be educated to look for and nurture these types of skills in all students regardless of the students' background. This concept would include special needs children as well as students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Parental support is essential to the academic success of most students (Viadero, 2000). If a high functioning student is in your class, the chances of finding a very supportive family system is highly likely, especially for low income families (Viadero). It has been suggested that our education system be overhauled to give parents more responsibility for their child's learning (Blanchard, 1999). This notion may be critical as the teacher can only

do so much in a day. Usually parents reinforce the values of the school and vice versa. If what is happening at the home is incongruent with what is happening at school, then the student gets mixed messages about education. The earlier this process occurs, the more damaging it may be for a child.

The media may blame two income families and parents in general for not spending the time necessary with students to ensure success in academic work. However, as indicated by at least one informant, it was not uncommon for Black families to have both parents working outside of the home. The community and extended family often helped to make sure that the child was taken care of and that his/her needs were met. More responsibility for students' educational needs should be assigned to their parents or guardians, as suggested by Blanchard (1999). This process can occur with reinforcing laws that help children stay in school, such as truancy laws. Punishment should not always be monetary, and could include community service and parenting classes. This should occur long before the student is involved in a social service or criminal justice system. Parents and guardians should be held accountable for the education of their children in the same way, if not more so, than the teacher.

Although we focused on the experiences and perspectives of African American female teachers, the positive results of their teaching can be applied to all students regardless of race. In spite of academic level, socioeconomic level, or family status, it is arguable that all students could benefit from the modeling of the theoretical model of resilience. Teachers can actively seek to not only develop those attributes included in the model but can model those attributes to help develop them in the students that they serve. Teachers must listen to parents, especially parents of different backgrounds, to ensure adequate communication to help diminish any mistrust of teachers due to perceived differences (Akiba, 2000; Bojko, 2000).

Implications

The Theoretical Model of Resilience in Education has implications for all learning communities. The following is a discussion of each theme with suggestions for its use. The eight themes include (a) deeply committed, (b) enjoys change, (c) bias for optimism, (d) flexible locus of control, (e) ability to control events, (f) moral and spiritual support, (g) positive relationships, and (h) education viewed as important.

Deeply committed

The theme of deeply committed is more than a person's ability to get up in the morning and go to work. These individuals truly care about the work they do. The implication for administrators is to seek out individuals who truly enjoy teaching. When possible, principals should hire individuals who, like the informants of this study, express that they always wanted to teach. This theme can be found in individuals completing an undergraduate degree in any field, as well as the retired banker or other professional who later decides he would like to work in the school system.

Teachers can provide excellent modeling of commitment to their students. Teachers can help students develop an intrinsic reward system of their own and a stick- to-it attitude by demanding that students complete assignments even after the due date is over, without a

grade improvement. Service learning opportunities within curriculum can also help to foster commitment. Teachers can require learning opportunities that allow their students to engage and give back to their community.

Parents can foster deep commitment in their own children by providing opportunities for them to be involved in school and various activities. They too can become more involved in helping their child reach their full potential of commitment by insisting on complete work to the best of their child's ability. Parents can work with the school and community to provide meaningful opportunities for civic engagement that benefit the students and the community. The informants of this study understood that commitment was necessary to help children of color who they felt needed the most attention, especially after desegregation. The informants described a great loss for African American students after desegregation. The loss of community, extracurricular activities, camaraderie, and mentor teachers were all mentioned as casualties of desegregation.

Enjoys change

The informants of this study all expressed positive responses to change. They each experienced change as the school system changed form a segregated system to a desegregated system. Their positive adaptation may have been more of a coping mechanism for accepting things that they could not change, but nevertheless they each seemed to embrace change and make every effort to stay abreast of changes needed for their students and the community. The various needs of our society dictate that schools keep up with changes that are increasing incrementally. Much of this change may be attributed to technology and a more transient society. School administrators must develop clear communication skills and devices so that parents, teachers, and students are kept abreast of rapid changes. This type of modeling will help put all parties at ease as students learn that change is normal and they respond positively and can make adjustments without undue stress. Each of the informants for this study indicated that change was a normal part of life, and they each seemed to embrace change as new opportunities and as fresh starts. The implications for poor children are great. A lack of resources such as computers in the home can make learning new technology difficult for children with limited resources. The "digital divide" (Black, 1999) or the differences between students with computers and those students without computers may continue to leave some children further behind.

Bias for optimism

The theme of bias for optimism does not imply merely a happy go lucky individual. These individuals, like the informants of this study, view the world positively. They seem to always find the good in the worst situations. School leaders can model this kind of behavior to teachers and students by the way they handle problems that arise in schools. A suggestion may be more civic opportunities for students who break school rules. Rather than sit in detention where they may or may not do their homework, perhaps a weekend street clean-up or delivery of meals to the elderly may be more needed to help students focus outside of themselves and learn how to give to others. It may be difficult to model this kind of behavior in some of the homes of students, but all students should at least see it modeled in the schools.

Flexible locus of control

        The key word in the resilience theme flexible locus of control is *flexible*. The informants of my study seemed to adjust their locus given the situation, always striving for the most positive solution. They each seemed to have an ownership of the students they taught. They felt that learning needed to occur; when they were not able to help students anymore, then they would leave the teaching profession. They seemed to model a sense of purpose for educators. Administrators, teachers and parents can model appropriate responsibility so that students do not blame others for their problems. Some may even look to spiritual sources of encouragement when they find themselves in problem situation in which they do not feel they have any control. The informants in this study seemed to adapt their locus of control given any situation to create a more positive outcome. Thus, these individuals have a bias for optimism.

        The theme of flexible locus of control, or belief in one's ability to control events, is pivotal for students to foster a sense of autonomy. Students need to feel that they can effect change. Schools provide many opportunities for this through school activities and organizations. It is important for school administrators to partner with teachers and parents to identify those students who never participate. Although these students can not be forced to participate, it is essential that the learning community get involved in helping students become involved in something of interest to be able to work on their own skills of autonomy. Classrooms can be small democracies where students are engaged and help to plan and implement projects. Parents can also involve their children in age appropriate decision making as well as help foster a sense of autonomy that gives the child the initiative to control events in their [children's] lives.

        Appropriate modeling can help students with special needs develop a sense that they too can control many aspects of their environment. It may be difficult for children in poverty or children with special learning needs to felt that they can control anything because of their unique circumstances. It is imperative that these students develop decision making skills early at whatever level to assist them later in life.

Moral and spiritual support

        The theme of moral and spiritual support appears to stem from the home environment. In public schools, supporting moral and spiritual beliefs can be problematic. What may be moral in one religion or culture may not be in another. This is why supporting individual needs is so crucial. All three informants had deep religious beliefs that dictated their own morality. Many children, teachers, and administrators may also have strong religious beliefs. Fifty years ago, those religious beliefs may have been more homogenous, and therefore it was easier to discern right from wrong. Today, many public school classrooms may have a more diverse student population with many different beliefs. That diversity is why it is important to have community-supported rules for the school. This set of rules can occur at individual schools so that a consensus is drawn for that schools particular population rather than mandates and directives given by the school district. This process would allow schools to be flexible and address the needs of their own community which may include a very diverse population. It is important that no one's beliefs are demeaned while the school maintains a sense of order for all. This situation can be problematic for school

leaders, but with an understanding of their community and the individual needs of students, many issues can be dealt with before coming problematic.

Positive relationships

Long-term positive relationships were the types of relationships each informant enjoyed. They each seemed to truly enjoy people and were not afraid to be involved in the lives of others. This is the kind of individual a school administrator should look for when pursuing new teachers. It may be that these teachers are not afraid to engage students and find out their individual needs. Teachers can also assist students who struggle with relationships by modeling positive relationships with parents, other teachers, and the community.

Education viewed as important

Most people, if asked, might say that education is important. However, for the individuals in this study it was a way of life. They seemed to take every opportunity to teach or be taught. Their parents viewed education as important and a way to succeed. Teachers can reinforce the importance of education by being professional with parents and students, making sure they say positive things about teaching, and facilitating life-long learning. These types of messages can be conveyed by the strategic implementation of curriculum and a conscious effort of teachers to stress the importance of education.

Summary

Each of the informants of this study was considered to be resilient in her teaching due to her longevity and positive attitude toward teaching during a tumultuous time in history. The construct of resilience "refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). Resilience was viewed as a multidimensional process that occurred over time (Walsh, 1998). Each informant taught before, during, and after desegregation in the rural South. Their unique experiences and perceptions were analyzed using grounded theory methodology to form a Model of Adult Resiliency in Education. Using a theoretical framework of resilience, eight themes emerged from the triangulated data from ethnographic interviews of each informant as well as historical documents and pictures. A brief overview of the historical social mores of the time was also chronicled to reveal the harsh realities of a segregated society that all three informants endured.

The data from the interviews of each informant revealed the presence of all seven hypothesized themes and one additional emergent theme. Those themes included (a) deeply committed, (b) enjoys change, (c) bias for optimism, (d) flexible locus of control, (e) ability to control events, (f) moral and spiritual support, (g) positive relationships and (h) education viewed as important. Qualitative theory development was established through the gathering and analyzing of transcribed data to look for resilience themes. The continuous interplay between analysis and the data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) helped to develop the theory of resilience in education.

Our findings may be interpreted to mean that a Model of Resilience in Education can assist learning communities with recruitment and support for teachers, as well as provide modeling opportunities for parents and teachers so that students begin to emulate those resilience themes to help them develop positive life coping strategies. The informants of this study provided a voice concerning their experiences in teaching before, during, and after desegregation. Those voices informed the study and identified hypothesized and emergent themes of resilience. Once those themes were compared and contrasted across all informant reports, an emergent model of resilience in education was formed.

Further research in the area of adult resilience in education is suggested to support learning communities engaged in positive education experiences for all. Challenges to the system include integrated students with disabilities as well as students with low socio-economic backgrounds. We propose that resilience researchers "elucidate theoretical postulates that derive from their own findings and present their studies within a clearly delineated theoretical framework" (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 555). This method is contrary to what feminist researchers regard as true because this study utilized a theoretical framework. It was the senior researcher's choice as a Black feminist researcher to use a framework to "establish an interpretive dialogue between myself and the informants to legitimize subjugated knowledge, make visible their experiences and develop analyses that interpret and contextualize their experiences" (Status of Women Canada, 2003, p. 2). Several areas are recommended for further research; these recommendations appear in Table 2.

Table 2

Recommendations for Further Research

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(1) Conduct replications of this study using informants in other rural southern areas to validate the findings.
(2) Conduct replications of this study in other regions to verify differences and similarities across the nation.
(3) Continue to expand research concerning the construct of resilience and each theme and sub category as it pertains to education and adults.
(4) Construct and validate a more succinct survey instrument to be utilized with retired teachers or current teachers using the questions derived from the theoretical model of resilience in education.
(5) Conduct quantitative research using the survey instrument to validate findings and provide a basis for general applications.
(6) Derive an assessment tool for resilient teachers from the research and analysis of the nationwide survey instrument to assist administrators with finding and developing teachers who are best suited for the classroom and who will remain over time.

We also suggest that school administrators, teachers and community leaders involved in education become aware of the resilience themes to assist with recruiting, mentoring, and maintaining quality teachers in the classroom. The awareness of the resilience themes coupled with further research with males and other regions, and further development of the Model of Resilience in Education can assist with the multiple layers of developing and maintaining quality teachers. Furthermore, this development can inform future curriculum

that equips students with resilience strategies for life, regardless of their social, racial or special needs background. Universities and institutions that prepare teachers can utilize the Model for training and development of future teachers who understand the importance of resilience in the classroom for themselves and the students they serve.

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