COMMUNITY, COMMITMENT, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE JACKSON SCHOOL OF SMITH COUNTY, TEXAS, 1925–1954

by
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This essay presents a narrative about the Jackson School in Smith County, Texas, utilizing the voices of former teachers and students who experienced its origin and evolution between 1925 and 1954. It covers the significant events in the story of the school as remembered by African American community members who participated in the day-to-day life of the school. The community members of Jackson Heights, Texas faced overwhelming odds in the struggle to provide quality schooling for the community's children. Their stories of self-sacrifice and effort provide encouragement for today's educators and add to the understanding of the history of African American education. The stories of these people, from a retired tenant farmer to a retired administrator, give depth and understanding to how a community was able to develop the resources and commitment to provide excellent education in spite of outside political pressures, unequal distribution of funds, and inequitable treatment within the wider community. Although this essay only addresses the period of time before desegregation, Jackson School continues to be supported by the Jackson Heights community. Community members continue to refer to "our school," although the Jackson School currently serves as a primary school for the entire district. Men and women from Jackson Heights drop by the school on a regular basis to have lunch in the cafeteria with the children and share memories of their school. While few written records exist to document the evolution of this school, the personal memories are rich and vivid and provide evidence of the individual and collective efforts to develop social and human capital for the community.

Former teachers and students of Jackson School describe a highly successful school with strong community ties, and extensive parent participation. As Peter Coleman reported in studies about school and community, "The most important task facing the school in the immediate future is collaboration with parents in building active communities of learners."[1] Michael Fullan indicates that schools and community ideally would function as a unitary whole.[2] That ideal notwithstanding, Coleman found that most schools today exist in constricted worlds where parents and the wider community are outsiders, seldom engaged in reciprocal relationships with the school.

Today's educational and community leaders seek ways to develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships, but succeed infrequently.[3] Former teachers of Jackson

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School tell of the essential contribution of resources by the Jackson Heights community that encouraged the development and maintenance of these mutually beneficial relationships. This cultural capital contributed by the community allowed the teachers to fulfill their personal and professional commitments to the children, the school, and the community. It was the material and spiritual support from the African American community that sustained the teachers and allowed them to meet their individual and collective goals.

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND EDUCATION

In examining Jackson School, two recent studies provide understanding of the system of education in place throughout the South during this time period and tell of the interactions of African American culture, community, and education. Vanessa Siddle Walker studied the history of an African American school community in a small town in North Carolina from 1933 to 1969, the period of legal school segregation.[4] While acknowledging the gross inequalities present in the segregated school systems of the South, she chose to study the "successes of the school within the framework of its challenges." Using historical ethnography and drawing on state and local documents and interviews with former students and teachers, Siddle Walker explored parent involvement with and advocacy for Caswell County Training School, and the ethic of caring demonstrated by the teachers and principals of Caswell County Training School. She focused on the period from 1933 to 1969 in an effort to provide an understanding of the history of African American communities and their schools in order to address some of today's problems.

Carter Savage examined four segregated African American schools in Franklin, Tennessee, between 1890 and 1967. Intrigued by the apparent contradiction between the quality and characteristics of the segregated schools described by parents and the commonly shared narrative of an inferior segregated system, he examined the African American schools in the segregated system. Successfully using oral history, he found community leadership and the centrality of the school as two significant elements in the perceived high quality of the former segregated system. Savage concluded that small, closed communities allow a greater interest and participation from the community, but suggested it may not be possible to replicate this interest in contemporary school settings.[5]

The story of Jackson School adds to this body of scholarship about African American education in the South prior to desegregation. While Siddle Walker and Savage explored schools supported by established towns, Jackson School is an example of an African American school in rural East Texas that drew upon the cultural capital in the community to build an outstanding educational facility recognized throughout the state.[6] Examination of the history of Jackson School provides the opportunity to see how a group of people successfully created a sense of community around the school through a collective effort to support and maintain that school as an investment in social capital for the community.[7]

This narrative of collective community commitment was constructed using the voices of those constituents of Jackson School who experienced the struggles of establishing a school for African American children in a rural area in which African Americans had little political or economic power. The participants in the study were selected from those who identified themselves as present or past members of Jackson School's community. Each participant was selected because of his or her ability to articulate a richly varied

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description of the experience of "community" in relation to Jackson School.[8] A purposeful sampling technique was employed with each participant being asked to identify additional participants. Information was gathered from former administrators, teachers, parents, and students, as well as from those persons currently associated with the school. In addition, historical documents, photographs, school board proceedings, and school and community records provided contextual information.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Because the story of Jackson School is embedded in the larger narrative of African American education in the South, in Texas, and in Smith County, we must first look at the context in which this school began. Until the 1870's, there was no system of public education for African American or white children in Texas. In 1871 Texas organized a statewide public school system of thirty-five school districts (later reduced to twelve). At the time, this was hailed as an amazing opportunity for all children to be educated. From the beginning, schools for African American children were seriously overcrowded and local churches either opened their buildings to use as classrooms or built new buildings with church funds.[9]

The possibilities of equal educational opportunity offered by a free public education for all were gradually worn away for most African American children in Texas over the next thirty years as a system of segregation was put in place and sanctioned by legal authority. With legal sanction for "separate but equal" policies established by the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, the Texas public school system was reorganized in 1900.[10] Under the 1900 plan of reorganization, previously independent schools for African American students were placed under the control and supervision of all-white school boards. With this reorganization, the system of dual education that would exist in Texas for the next seventy years was established as part of the social fabric of the state.

In 1926, the State Department of Education, as reflected in its bulletin *Negro Education in Texas: Special Activities and Industrial Aid*, supported the establishment of "county training schools" and the erection of model schoolhouses through financial assistance provided by the Rosenwald Fund. County training schools were not accredited high schools but instead, focused on the study of vocational agriculture and home economics. As envisioned by the state officials, the entire community would benefit from a county training school because the school provided both student and adult education.[11]

Smith County and Jackson School

Education for African Americans was officially sanctioned in Smith County during the Reconstruction period under the Freedman's Bureau. In 1886, the first public school for African Americans in the county opened in Tyler, the county seat. By 1900, there were seventy-two schools for African Americans in Smith County, including both publicly and privately supported institutions. The state's reorganization of schools in 1900 resulted in all black-controlled districts being brought under the supervision of local all-white school boards, either within independent school districts or in the common school district.[12] Whereas before 1900, African Americans in Smith County had controlled their own

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schools, under this reorganization plan African Americans were relegated to the status of ex-officio board members. In 1921 there were 63 common school districts in Smith County for white children and 53 common school districts for African American children. All of these common school districts had an all-white Board of Trustees and were under the direction of the county superintendent, Robert Spurgeon Bolton. Jackson Common School District (CSD) #27 had only a handful of white students attending the Browning School and over 200 African American students attending Piney Grove School and Chapel Hill School. Browning had a nine-month term while both Piney Grove and Chapel Hill operated for only six-month terms. Realizing the need for a comprehensive high school for African American children in the county, Bolton approached the local board about establishing a high school for African American children. In 1922 all the white students in CSD #27 were transferred to Holts School in an adjoining district creating an all–African American school district. The white members of the school board of CSD #27 resigned because "they could not serve under such condition" (12).[13] With these resignations the door was open for the creation of an all-black school board to lead the building of Jackson School, the county training school for Smith County.

Jackson Heights, chosen as the location for the new school, was about halfway between the two existing black schools. Founded in 1925 with the help of the Rosenwald Fund, the new school cost $5,500 of which only $1,100 was contributed from Rosenwald. Residents of Jackson CSD #27 contributed the remaining $4,400.[14] This poor, rural community voted a $1.00 school tax to fund a $3,000 bond issue. One dollar was the maximum school tax allowed under state law. Jackson was the only school in the county, for blacks or whites, to levy the maximum school tax. In addition to the bond issue, the community held picnics, staged plays, and took up church offerings to raise additional money. The need to raise additional funds within the community stands in stark contrast to the reality for white school districts. State aid to schools for white children was generally sufficient to provide adequate facilities, teacher salaries, and necessary supplies and materials.[15]

The original school was a "four-teacher model" built on twenty acres of land using the Rosenwald-prescribed building plans. Later a three-room shop, a library, and a teacherage were added. To finance these additional buildings, the community again sought aid from the Rosenwald Fund and raised additional funds through picnics, talent shows, and various community fundraising events. The school expanded to serve the eastern portion of Smith County where the population was almost exclusively African American.

This area of Smith County was at one time the home of large plantations. The land was rich and fertile with significant virgin timber available. Over the years most of the land was inherited by descendants of the plantation owners who no longer lived in Smith County. By the 1920s the land was generally farmed through a system of sharecropping. Only a few African American owned land in the area.[16]

By 1935 Jackson School had 63 students in grades eight through eleven with a total school enrollment of 273 (grades one through eleven). Three full time secondary teachers provided all instruction to the high school, and five teachers were employed for grades one through seven. The secondary curriculum included classes in vocational education, home economics, and trade and industry.[17]

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In the 1950s, Jackson School consolidated with the all-white Chapel Hill Independent School district (ISD). The school had expanded and consisted of separate buildings for the elementary and high school, and later buildings were added for vocational training and a separate gymnasium. Although with consolidation, the direction and control of the school passed to Chapel Hill ISD, Jackson Heights community continued to be closely tied to Jackson School because it served as the only school for African Americans within the consolidated district. In the 1970s, the district was desegregated and has since gone through several reconfigurations as new schools have been built to meet the changing needs of the growing district. Jackson School served as a junior high school, and an elementary school. Jackson School is currently one of two primary level campuses in the district with classes from pre-kindergarten through second grade. In addition to the predominantly black Jackson Heights community, the school's attendance zone includes white and Hispanic neighborhoods. Jackson Primary School's student body is representative of the district and is approximately one-third white, one-third Hispanic, and one-third African American. Throughout the demographic changes and reconfigurations, the school has continued to have strong ties to the Jackson Heights community.

The African American Community and the Jackson School

This brief historical overview of Jackson School does not tell the larger story of Jackson School as experienced by the members of the local black community. The story of the community's commitment to Jackson School is a powerful one. It is a narrative of personal testimonies about the importance of cultural capital in establishing and maintaining quality education for African Americans in this rural area. It is a conversation begun over seventy-five years ago that continues today. The voices in the conversation are those of people with varying degrees of education, different levels of wealth, and diverse connections to Jackson School and the Jackson Heights neighborhood. While many people contributed stories about Jackson School, this essay will focus on Mrs. Lila McAllister, Mrs. Sarah Ryder, John and Mary Mosley, Mrs. Lillian Kissam, and Mrs. Espanola Davis.[18]

Lila McAllister is a retired teacher and school administrator. Born in 1907, she grew up in the area around Jackson Heights, and although she currently lives about thirty miles away, she still owns her family's farm and has numerous relatives in the community. She attended Cole Hill School, one of the schools that voted to consolidate with Jackson School. Her younger brothers and sisters attended Jackson School and her younger brother taught math at Jackson School for over thirty years.

Sarah Ryder was born and reared in the area of Jackson Heights. She and her husband farmed in the community until his death. As a ninety-year-old great-grandmother, she continues to provide support and direction for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Her story begins in 1925 as a student at Jackson School. She is currently a member of an area church and participates regularly in activities at the local community center.

John and Mary Mosley are in their late seventies and have lived in Jackson Heights all their lives. They attended Jackson School during their academic careers and they raised twelve children who also attended the school. Now retired from farming, they regularly attend church in the community and attend school activities for their grandchildren. Ten of

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their twelve children still live in the community. They currently live down the street from Jackson School.

Lillian Kissam and her husband, William Kissam, were education and community activists who worked as a team of vocational teachers joining the Jackson School faculty in 1941. Educated at Prairie View A & M College, the Kissams were determined to promote community growth and to involve others with them to make things happen. Since William Kissam's death, Lillian Kissam lives alone across the street from the Jackson School. She continues to be involved in her community and frequently attends school events.

Espanola Davis has been a member of the Jackson School community for over fifty years. She and her husband, N. L. Davis, came to Jackson Heights during the 1940s as teachers. He was a vocational agriculture teacher trained at Prairie View A & M College. Trained at Jarvis College and Texas College, Espanola taught both elementary and high school. A gifted educator, she used her musical talents and playwriting ability to encourage and support the children in the district. For some years she taught at Douglas School, a nearby community school that later consolidated with Jackson. She also taught at Jackson School and after desegregation in other schools in the Chapel Hill ISD. Her teaching career in the district spanned thirty-eight years. She continues to be active in the community.

Each of these narrators gives a unique picture of the community and the school. In examining their stories told about Jackson School, the concepts of place, relationships, and meaning emerge as essential constructs in explaining the commitment of a community's cultural capital to the development of social capital and human capital. John Dewey suggested that meaning is intimately tied to one's experience and that meaning is judged by its benefit to a society.[19] The community of Jackson Heights, with apparently limited cultural capital compared to more affluent and less oppressed communities, valued the education of the students in their community (place) enough to build on strong personal ties (relationships) with a shared goal of enhancing and redefining the reality of their community (meaning).

Jackson School: Cultural Capital within a Community of Place

A common location has been a traditional focus in the study of community. The Jackson School is both a specific location that engenders a sense of community in terms of place and the symbolic representation of that community of place. Nell Noddings in her study of community in contemporary schools points out the importance of people acquiring a sense of belonging to a community. Sharing a common place establishes a common identity and fosters a sense of belonging.[20] Cultural capital is developed when the members of a particular ethnic or cultural group, in this case African Americans, utilize their material and spiritual resources to support economic activities that benefit the entire group, such as schools and other social and cultural institutions.[21] Sarah Ryder, a member of the first ninth-grade class (1926) told of the importance of Jackson School for the African American community. She explained that three men, Laney Mosley, Tommy Redwine, and Lot Allen, were leaders in securing the school for the area. Ryder related, "It was important to have the school in your district because your community has an identity. A school was more than just a place to learn. It meant you had teachers living in your community. Teachers were important people. They were your leaders."

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The community's pride in the new school was symbolized by the formal ceremonies held at each of the elementary schools that would close and consolidate to form Jackson School. Ryder recalled that the first day that Jackson School opened, students gathered at their former schools and lined up by grades with the oldest children in the front. "We were really proud. Jackson was the first real high school we had. We walked in a line all the way. Students came walking in from all the little schools. We stood outside while the new principal talked, and then we came in and marched to our rooms."

This first day of school was a celebration of the community's commitment to establishing their school. Before Jackson School was built, children attended small schools in space provided by area churches. Mose Chapel, Lane Chapel and Chapel Hill were the names of the area schools. These schools generally had one teacher who provided instruction for grades one through eight. As Lila McAllister pointed out, if a student's family wanted their child to continue past eighth grade, the family arranged for the child to stay with relatives in Tyler and paid tuition for their child to attend either Emmett Scott, the public high school in Tyler, or Texas College, a small parochial college with a secondary curriculum. Very few families in the area could afford this expense so most children did not attend school past eighth grade. The benefit to the community of having a high school cannot be overemphasized. Although it was a sacrifice to send any child to school since most families relied on their children to farm, having the high school within the community increased the likelihood of a child's remaining in school to graduation.

While the small elementary schools that consolidated to form Jackson School were poorly funded, they were important to the individual families whose children attended them. In an example of the initial community commitment to Jackson School, these schools voted to close and consolidate with Jackson School when it opened in 1926. Losing the small schools was significant, as Sarah Ryder pointed out, because the school gave a community its identity. Lila McAllister recalled that the parents voted to close the Cole Hill School because the new school brought additional benefits to the children.

> When Jackson School opened, the parents at Cole Hill voted to send their children there. They knew they needed to get more education. It meant a long walk for some of the kids, but it was important. The church and the school were the only things in Cole Hill, but they voted to give up the school. You might say they gave up part of who they were so their children could go to a better school.

This sense of place represented by Jackson School was demonstrated through the interdependence of people in the community and reinforced by the images and the language of the community. John and Mary Mosley, students at Jackson School during the 1940s and 1950s, referred to the students' shared responsibility in insuring the day-to-day functioning of the school. This was their school and it was their responsibility to see that wood was provided for heat, and water was provided for the younger children. John Mosley remembered,

> We had a big wood stove. A group of the older boys had to cut the wood. They'd go out, get the brush and the kindling, and break the big limbs up. All the boys wanted to get the wood. It was a privilege. You had to have all your work done, and you couldn't be

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> in any trouble. After school, you would get the wood so it would be ready the next day. You'd come early, while it was still dark outside and start the fire.

During the winter when a great deal of wood was needed to heat the school, men in the community would cut wood and bring it to the school. Although most people had little money to share with the school, many people volunteered their services. John Mosley recalled that during the early days of the school, basketball was the only team sport available to the students. Football was too expensive with the need for uniforms and equipment, but basketball only required the purchase of a ball. Men from the community cleared a dirt court beside the school and erected metal hoops at each end of the court. Games were arranged with other schools in the afternoon. A local farmer took off work and piled the basketball team in the back of his wooden-sided truck and drove them to the games. Without this support, the teachers could not have added this dimension to the school.

The benefits to the community of having a county training school extended beyond the educational opportunities given to the children. The Kissams and the Davises, teaching couples who taught at Jackson School from the 1940s until the 1970s, worked to improve the general appearance of the community, knowing as Mrs. Kissam said, "Neatness was catching and improvement rubbed off." Improvement of their "place" was important. Mrs. Kissam explained her role in improving the entire community.

> The State Department sent us up here. We came as community activists. We came to build this community. The state paid our salary. We were both certified vocational teachers from Prairie View College. Most of the community didn't have anything when we moved here, but we showed the people how to go and ask for what they needed. Everybody in the community used to have a water well. My husband organized the community to develop and build a water system for Jackson Heights.

Jackson School: Cultural Capital within a Community of Relationships

Cultural capital developed through the personal relationships in the Jackson Heights neighborhood. In this community defined by its relationships, individual circumstances counted, relationships were cooperative, and students were encouraged, accepted and loved. Images suggested by the words family, obligation, responsibility, pride, respect, and love were often found in the stories about Jackson School. The most common expression was that of love. Mrs. Kissam and Mrs. Davis used very similar words to define the foundation for relationships within the school. Each told how love was the very foundation of their classroom practice.

A community may be defined by the norms, expectations, and trust created in the relationships among people.[22] Mrs. Kissam described a faculty that intuitively recognized the importance of building and maintaining strong, loving relationships. Mrs. Kissam identified love as a fundamental construct in Jackson School and its community. She remembered, "We taught the love and they taught the love to their children. The love just keeps on going."

The relationships recalled by Kissam and Davis are similar to Mary Rousseau's description of the altruistic love that is the essence of community.[23] Sociologist Amaiti Etzoni suggested that this love or ethic of care created the "web of social bonds" that

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carried both rights and responsibilities. Within these social bonds developed a shared responsibility for the success of each child. Teachers accepted this shared responsibility for the success of each child even when economic distress resulted in poor attendance for some children. Although Jackson School offered a nine-month term, many children were only able to attend seven months or less. Families from Jackson Heights left East Texas in August to go "out West" to pick cotton. Families went as far west as Arizona and many children did not enter school until November or December. John Mosley described how the teachers expressed their love and shared responsibility. "The teachers knew I'd be coming in late. They held a packet of work for me. I had to do it, and I had to do it right. They'd help me with it, but I had to catch up." Children were not blamed for their lack of attendance or lack of progress, but were included in the school as full and contributing members. No student was sent to a special program or excluded from classroom activities.

Even the provision of a basic requirement such as lunch was seen as a community responsibility. Mrs. Ryder was raised by her grandparents after her mother died when she was eight. Her grandparents insisted she go to school, but did not have enough money to provide her with shoes to wear or basic school supplies. Not having shoes or school supplies was not an unusual occurrence among these students, but in Mrs. Ryder's family there was not even enough food to give her a lunch to carry. The "web of social bonds" that was modeled by teachers and community members extended to the young people within the school. Mrs. Ryder recalled, "At lunchtime the other kids would share with me. We'd sit on that big log and they'd give me some of theirs. I always had something to eat." Within a few years after initial construction, Jackson School added a lean-to kitchen to cook hot lunches. Mrs. Kissam recalled, "The government subsidies just weren't enough. The community had to give food." Families donated vegetables from their gardens to provide adequate lunches for the children.

Eventually more state funding was provided to help with the school lunch program, but each student was required to pay a small amount for lunch. For many students in the community, even a small amount was more than the family could afford on a daily basis. Teachers, as leaders of the community commitment, joined together to insure that each child received something to eat each day. Lila McAllister remembered how the teachers insured that all children were fed, "They charged a little for the lunches. At that time, even 25 cents was hard to come by. I knew some of the teachers, and they'd always be sure children had something to eat. They'd give any child the four cents for milk. Nobody went hungry."

The community's commitment to the children of Jackson School to encourage the development of social and human capital is exemplified in Lillian Kissam's recollection of a student trip to North Carolina. Mrs. Kissam taught music and led a quartet of four boys. This quartet won local and state competitions and was eligible to participate in a national competition in North Carolina. Kissam and her husband had a Model T Ford to drive the boys to North Carolina, but needed help with the entry fees, the cost of gasoline, and other expenses associated with the trip. The community began fund-raising activities, and raised the money needed to send the quartet to the competition. Kissam remembered, "We had to take those boys to that competition. There were white boys and black boys singing there. We had to let the boys know that everywhere was not (segregated) like here. Everybody pulled together so we could go."

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Jackson School: Cultural Capital within a Community of Shared Meaning

These informants described the evolution of shared values, assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge. These shared meanings and experiences became common possessions and part of the community's cultural capital.[24] In many of these shared experiences the community contributed time and services as part of their commitment to the school. Mr. Mosley told of the importance of these shared community activities in his discussion of "School Closing." "School Closing" was held the last week of every school year. Each evening a group of children would perform a play, recite verses, and celebrate the conclusion of a successful school year. The final night a graduation ceremony was held for the graduating seniors. A few weeks before the event, men in the community would build an outdoor stage and put up tall posts to hold lanterns. As Mr. Mosley remembered, "Everybody would have a part in the program. Everybody's family would come. That program is the thing I remember most." This school program was a shared activity that involved most of the community either in writing the plays, building the stage, sewing the dresses or providing the refreshments. Community members shared their talents to provide a successful experience for the school children.

Community leaders reinforced these shared meaning by bringing the people together for various activities. From the early days of the canning kitchens, through the style shows and school plays, and athletic events, community members shared in the ongoing development of collective and individual memories. William and Espanola Davis moved to the community in the 1940s. Their work exemplifies the returns available to the community from the collective commitment to building a quality program. In having the only county training school, it insured that talented and committed teachers would be drawn to the area. These teachers provided the necessary knowledge to strengthen the local student's skills. Espanola Davis noted one important change that came with the new teachers.

> This was a strictly Black community and they were poor country people. They didn't even have screens on their windows and doors. After we got there, the high school boys went around and made screens and put on the windows. They made screen doors for the people too. My husband taught them how to weld, and many of those boys ended up making their living as welders.

As a vocational education teacher, W. L. Davis was hired to work with both the students in the school and the adults in the community. Espanola Davis recalled that he set up programs for the boys in Jackson School and for the men in the community. Under the guidance of W. L. Davis, men from the community built a log cabin on one side of the school campus to use as a canning kitchen. People would bring their vegetables and work together to can them. It was both a practical chore and a social event for the community. Davis also mentioned that her husband taught the young boys to salt and smoke hams and held night classes to instruct the adult farmers in the latest agricultural practices.

The parents, faculty, and students of Jackson School created a complex social tapestry that bound and supported their sense of community. It was a sense of community that helped them to cope with economic hardship, establish traditions and ceremonies, and face challenges. In most ways, this sustaining of community appeared to be a natural and integral part of the daily activities at Jackson School. The story of community commitment

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in relation to Jackson School is one in which members functioned as a unitary whole as envisioned by Michael Fullan.[25] Regardless of the identified need, the members of the community stepped forth to meet that need. Community members contributed money, time, and resources such as food and materials to advance their children and themselves. Although white schools in the county received money for supplies, black schools did not. Pencils, paper, crayons and chalk had to be purchased by the faculty. Espanola Davis recalled asking students to have their mothers make box lunches to sell to raise money for school supplies. Teachers frequently bought supplies for the children, but with salaries almost half that of white teachers, little extra money was available. Teachers relied on the support of the community to help provide the necessary supplies for the children

Interconnectedness existed throughout the community with school, work, and church serving as aggregating and stabilizing factors. Beginning at a time of social and economic oppression, individual differences and needs were tolerated with the understanding that personal, family, or financial pressures might take precedence over needed schooling. Leaders of the school and community responded with an ethic of care. Children were viewed as the responsibility and reflection of the community so that each child's behavior and success was important. Education was not limited to academic subjects, but included social and cultural education. Musical and theatrical presentations also provided opportunities for the entire community to gather in shared and valued activities. In addition, the educational programs at Jackson School was not limited to children six to eighteen years old, but included adult education classes that encouraged life-long learning. Community members worked with the school faculty to realize the community's shared vision.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of a community's commitment of cultural capital to Jackson School unfolded as former teachers and students reflected upon their experiences at the school and in the community. These recollections provide rich historical, personal and cultural information. Community commitment of cultural capital was defined by the informants in terms of place, relationships, and shared meaning. Sharing a common location with strong ties among people and a common understanding of the importance of education to the community created a clear vision that reinforced community dedication to establishing and maintaining an outstanding school. While these recollections add to the body of scholarship on African American education, they also provide important information for contemporary educational leaders who face challenges in today's schools. Teachers and community members of Jackson School did not rely on achievement tests or college entrance exam scores to measure the success of the school. Success was determined in terms of individual student participation and achievement, parent participation in and support of the school, student employability, and benefits provided to the community. Like the church, the school was a community social agency that served the entire family. Learning opportunities for adults and children benefited the larger community. The teachers encouraged the development of social capital and human capital for the community. Skills needed within the community were identified and courses designed to develop these skills. Today's educational leaders might consider the important relationship between a

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community and the school. While there are areas of high achievement that are essential to all schools, each community brings a unique identity and cultural background that must be considered and incorporated within the school to expand the definitions of success to meet the growing needs of a diverse society. Members of a community will work to provide cultural capital in the form of money, time, and services to assure a school's success when that school is seen as important to the improvement of the entire community.

NOTES

[1]Peter Coleman, *Parent, Student, and Teacher Collaboration: The Power of Three* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1998), 43.

[2]Michael Fullan, *Change Forces: The Sequel* (New York, 1999).

[3]Coleman, *Parent, Student and Teacher Collaboration*, 43–45.

[4]Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996).

[5]Carter Julian Savage, *From Claiborne's Institute to Natchez High School: The History of African American Education in Williamson County, Tennessee, 1890–1967* (Ed.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1998).

[6]Texas State Historical Association, *The Handbook of Texas* (Austin: www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/index, 1999).

[7]For additional stories about African American education in the segregated South, see T. Sowell, "Black Excellence: The Case of Dunbar High School," *Public Interest* 35(1974): 1–21. and James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988).

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[19]Lila McAllister, interview with the author, Jacksonville, TX, August 13, 15, 27, 2000; Sarah Ryder, interview with the author, Jackson Heights, TX, May 15, 2000; John and Mary Mosley, interview with the author, Jackson Heights, TX, September 13 & 15, 2000; Lillian Kissam, interview with the author, Jackson Heights, TX, August 3 & 21, 2000; Espanola Davis, interview with the author, Jackson Heights, TX, May 25, August 6 & 12, 2000.

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