“UNRAVELED PIECES OF ME: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FORMER AFRICAN AMERICAN SLAVE WOMENS’ EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE IN ANTELBELLUM ARKANSAS”

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines former African American slave women's experience during American slavery. Using archival qualitative interviews from the 8th volume of *The American Slave* (1941), I use 35 interviews from former slave women who lived in 19th century Arkansas. I examine these women's perceptions of life under slavery, perceptions of life post slavery, and I identify what or whom the women derived social support. To ground my research, I incorporate feminist standpoint theory. Findings suggest that while under slavery, most interviewees vicariously experienced physical and emotional violence. Although most interviewees perceived life under slavery as privileged, most found post slavery life problematic. Interviewees' accounts posit shifts in gender expectations, gender roles and a decline in work ethic as particularly troubling in regards to the younger generation. Interviewees depicted life under slavery as more respectable in terms of community solidarity, work ethic, gender roles and expectations, and family dynamics. Interviewees characterize post slavery life as socially and economically unfruitful. Interviewees' accounts identify social support in terms of economic contributions and familial support from their mothers or mother figures, but mostly from slaveholders and their families. Finally, I discuss sociological contributions of this study as well as directions for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In exploring the vast sociological literature, there is limited scholarship on slave women's experiences during American slavery. American slavery played an integral role in establishing current race relations in the United States and also served a pivotal role in carving out gender roles and norms in the African American community. There also is not much research in the historical or race/ethnicity literature that specifically addresses slave women's lives on the plantation, in the slave quarters, or in the fields. While the historical literature provides much of what is known about African slave women's experiences, it is limited in that it tends to approach American slavery in an overly structural manner, thus, ignoring the more proximal and idiosyncratic experiences among slave women.

Women of color are often depicted as sexually exotic and solely existing to provide myriad utilitarian purposes to their superiors in the form of cheap labor in the fields and childcare and maid services in the home in most research literatures (Case 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Guiffrida 2005; Lerner 1972; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). I argue that a sociological approach would provide a way to examine individual experience in the context of slavery. In an effort to move the literature beyond overgeneralized findings, sex, and labor commodification, I attempt to locate the women sufficiently in the social hierarchy to portray them as multifaceted human beings with the

capacity to have many types of relationships and experiences. I used archival qualitative interviews of former Arkansas slave women to explore the slave women's perception of life during and post-slavery. I also examined the sources of social support these women received during slavery. I use feminist standpoint theory and elements of Black feminist thought to contextually inform my research. I do approach this research inductively and allow for emergent theory and female slave women's subjective experiences to tell their story.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

I incorporate standpoint theory into my research because it sets up the narrative and relational aspect, which is very central to the interviewees' stories. Standpoint theory helps to examine the authority generated by one's knowledge and the power that one's authority has to structure one's thoughts on a daily basis. Allen (1996), Collins (1986; 2009), Chafetz (1997), and Haraway (1988) note that standpoint theory's key contribution lies in how one's own perspectives are shaped by experiences relative to social location (Allen 1996; Collins 1986; Haraway 1988; Heckman 1997). Feminist standpoint theory (Allen 1996; Collins 1986; 2009; Chafetz1997; Haraway1988; Heckman 1988) focuses especially on gender perspectives to see how feminine viewpoints shape women's communication with themselves and others. Because one's standpoint is a place from which one views and sees the world, their standpoint determines what one's focus is in addition what is unnoticed.

Collins (2009) notes that individuals have an inimitable personal biography comprised of reified experiences thus no one shares an identical personal biography. Standpoint theory informs this study by informing my analysis of each interviewee's similarities and dissimilarities in their respective life experiences (Allen 1996; Chafetz 1997; Collins 1986; 2009; Haraway; 1988). Standpoint theory serves as a pivotal

component in examining how former slave women perceived life under slavery, perceived life since freedom and where they sought social support. I integrate Black feminist thought with standpoint theory. Black feminist thought depicts African American women as distinctive women that exist in a place located within social interactions where gender, race, and class operate on the same axes simultaneously to shape African American women's individual and collective consciousness, and actions (Allen 1996; Chafertz 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981). Together, Black feminist thought and standpoint theorists theorize women's identities as inter-reliant, numerous, and socially constructed places within a historical context which sufficiently situates this study.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arkansas's 19th Century Society

I draw from Donald McNeily's *The Old South Frontier* (2000). Arkansas's terrain was a major force in its development. Arkansas's terrain consisted of lowland areas and highland areas with very rich soil (McNeily 2000). Arkansas's soil patterns can be divided into three major areas. The bottomland terrace constitutes much of eastern Arkansas, the forested coastal plain area encompasses much of southern and southwestern Arkansas and the mountain highlands constitute north and northwestern Arkansas. The major topographic separation between highland and lowland nearly evenly divides Arkansas in half from Northeast to Southwest (McNeily 2000). The topographic regions separated culture and structure for Arkansas society. In the northern, more mountainous region of the state lived the hill folk who raised cattle and grew cotton and tobacco. Due to the richness of the soil, staple crops like soybeans, rice and cotton were grown in the lowland areas where slavery was not only encouraged, but attracted wealthy migrants who were also slaveholders in other southern states (McNeily 2000). McNeily (2000) notes that between the years of 1850 and 1860 Arkansas tended to fall behind the other frontier states in terms of population growth because of a lack of internal transportation and topography.

The majority of Arkansas household heads were born in original slaveholding states. McNeily (2000:34) notes that many of the Arkansas residents were migrants making their way west towards California. For those that resided in the highlands area of the state, life was not necessarily based on slavery; rather it was "a society with slaves" (McNeily 2000:44). 19th century Arkansas society was structured differently in the lowland areas and can be characterized as a slave based economy. Rich soil and the plantation lifestyle provided economic and social growth to permanent Arkansas residents.

Socialization to Plantation Work Roles

Up until the age of five, both male and female slave children did very little work around the plantation because they were not yet old enough to handle crucial responsibilities or supervise themselves. Their work was not sex-segregated. Duties included carrying buckets of water so that they could help the field hands or carrying laundry baskets to help the slave women (Jones 2010; Weiner 1998; White 1999). White (1999) notes that not only was this time of male and female slaves' work life non sex-segregated, it was a time period in which males were more likely to care for children with female slaves than work in the fields. White (1999) argues that clothing was a key characteristic in identifying sex-segregated and non sex-segregated aspects of slaves' work life course. As children, both sexes wore smock like shirts and slips. During adolescence female slaves wore skirts, dresses, stockings and males wore pants.

Clinton (1982), McMillen (1992), and Weiner (1998) note that the work lives of children became increasingly gendered at about age 7 for female slaves. Most males continued helping out around the plantation until about age 12. Male slaves were not

expected to do much work around the plantation due to levels of maturity and gender expectations (Weiner 1998). “Girls were supposed to care for younger children, which is a task not typically required of their brothers” (p. 8). However, White (1999) provides a contradictory argument that suggests male children did care for children along with younger females slaves.

Girls’ lives grew to be gendered from the perspective of age and a woman’s life course, as they survived and took on adult roles. The physical maturation of females was used as a criterion for slaveholders to enforce more sex-segregated work (Weiner 1998; White 1999). Between the ages of 8 and 16 young female slaves were incorporated into the domestic plantation economy by the plantation mistress (Clinton 1982; Weiner 1998). Slave women underwent a form of tutelage with the plantation mistress to ensure that all clothing, farming, and animal killing were completed for harvest (Clinton 1982; Weiner 1998).

Gender served as a primary organizing characteristic of labor in African society, so slaves encouraged gender differences when they arrived in the south (Clinton 1982; Weiner 1998). Gender became more complex in plantation communities due to varying conceptualizations of gender among slaves and slaveholders. Still, none of the gender definitions were mutually exclusive (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Whites and slaves unknowingly worked in tandem to create a gendered division of labor on the plantation that mirrored the ways gender guided each slave’s personal life.

Because the slave women’s work lives were inextricably linked to their home life, the work life often served as a bridge into womanhood for the slave women. The nature of the slave women’s work life consisted of more direct and critical care to many which

required a heightened sense of responsibility and internalization of one's place as a slave and a woman. Slave women were expected to cook, clean, sew for their own families in addition to the slaveholders' family at a young age. Young slave women tended to have a double burden in that the same levels of care they provided for the plantation family was also required of them in the slave quarters within their own families (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jameson and Armitage 1997; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Slave women who were too young and/or unable to work in the fields were expected to knit and sew bedding materials (Clinton 1982; Weiner 1998). The number of members in this group varied over time and heavily relied upon the ability for slaves to replenish the slave population (Weiner 1998). These young slave women often cared for White children who were not much younger than they were. Slave women were commodified and were often given to young White women as gifts for their 16th birthdays almost as a coming of age ritual.

Post-Slavery Life

Most slaves abhorred slavery as a system and its effects on their family and friends. Slavery disrupted the family structure and dehumanized people on a daily basis. Most slaves wished to be free and to be treated as a White person would be treated. Researchers (Ball 1998; Jacobs 2001; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998) note that although slaves wished to be free, some slaves doubted that freedom would come. Partially because slaves had no reason to trust the government or White people so many slaves scoffed at the idea of the government that supported slavery coming to their rescue (Ball 1998; Weiner 1998). Upon the end of the Civil War, most slaves received news that they were free. Researchers (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; Patterson

1998; Weiner 1998; White 1999) note that slaves celebrated by singing, dancing, praying, or abruptly dropping everything in hand and running off of the plantation. Ball (1998) and Weiner (1998) note that some slaves opted to move northward in search of a better life away from the south. Other slaves searched for family members and other slaves remained in the south.

Ball (1998) notes that for many slaves, this was the first time period in their life where they felt humanized. White (1999) notes that slaves identified direct eye contact with Whites and the idea of equal privileges as significant features of freedom. Ball (1998) and White (1999) highlight the fear that some slaves had about the cessation of slavery and the potential backlash they might receive from Whites. Some slaves seemed to fear the news of slavery's end as a trick and some were distrusting of the news. Researchers (Ball 1998; Jacobs 2001; White 2001; Weiner 1998) posit that money was another concern for the newly freed slaves. Remaining in the south for some slaves was attributed to ignorance and a lack of money. Other slaves remained in the south because it was a life and culture they were familiar with. So the end of slavery meant starting over in the only home many of them knew (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Weiner 1998; White 2001).

Life post-slavery for most slaves proved to be eerily similar to life under slavery. Although African Americans were nominally free, they were not free socially (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Patterson 1998;Weiner 1998). Newly freed slaves living in the north still endured racism in their daily lives as well as in the labor force. There were scant opportunities for newly freed slaves to earn money. As a result, many returned to the south only to engage in sharecropping and peonage with former slaveholders. Other

slaves returned to the south upon locating family members. Researchers (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Jones 2010; Weiner 1998) note that life post-slavery influenced gender expectations for African American families. Many former slave women were no longer adhering to previous gender expectations (mother, wife etc.) because African American men were unable to make enough money to care for their family. Many families relied upon both parents to work (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Collins 2009; Wiener 1998;White 2001). The extended family and neighborhood friends served as sources of childcare and support for emancipated families just as it did under slavery.

Sources of Social Support

Because slavery was a totalizing institution, it was paramount for slaves to develop and maintain social support to combat the realities of life under slavery. I identify social support as a social bond among slaves not limited to financial support. Benin and Keith (1995) note that many former slave women toiled on the plantation during the day only to return to the slave quarters and provide the same services to their biological family. Role strain experienced by slave women necessitated a sense of community and support (Benin and Keith 1995; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; McMillen 2002). McMillen (2002) notes that slave women benefited from a strong sense of community because more than half of all slaves lived on plantations with at least 20 – 50 other slaves (p. 7).

Communities as such afforded slave women opportunities to socialize with one another frequently thus creating an environment conducive to social bonds among women. Researchers (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Jones 2010; McMillen 2002; Weiner 1998) identify the family network as the most central form of social support among slave

women. Slave women in particular experienced a larger network of social support due to their extended family network. The extended family network provided constant motherly affection for children and provided the biological mother with free childcare. Such assistance alleviated role strain experienced by slave women (Ball 1998; McMillen 2002; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998).

Although social support from the immediate and extended family served as the cornerstone of their social support system, slave women received social support from slaveholders (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; McMillen 2002; Weiner 1998). Most slave women derived this social support from the plantation mistress who would sometimes offer material or emotional support for slave women (Clinton 1982; McMillen 2002). McMillen (2002) notes that the altruism among plantation mistresses was seen as a noteworthy activity and not always indicative of their level of affection for a slave.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature, I have developed three research questions that will further guide and build upon aspects of life for former slave women not previously addressed in the historical or race/ethnicity literatures. I ask 1) How did former slave women perceive life under slavery? 2) How did former slave women perceive life post-slavery? 3) From whom did the slave women seek/find social support?

CHAPTER V

METHODS

Data

I used the 8th volume of *The American Slave* (1941), which consists of in-depth interviews/slave narratives. The data were prepared by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration. The Federal Writers' Project materials in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division are part of a larger collection titled *The U.S. Work Projects Administration Federal Writers' Project and Historical Records Survey*. The holdings from Federal Writers' Project span the years 1889 – 1942 and constitute a wide variety of topics and various projects. The Federal Writers' holdings number approximately 300,000 items and consist of correspondence, memoranda, field reports, notes, graphs, charts, preliminary and corrected drafts of essays, oral testimony, folklore, miscellaneous administrative and other material. These narratives were collected in the state of Arkansas Narrative. This volume consists of composite autobiographies of slaves (men and women).

Sampling

I used purposive sampling and only used interviews of former female slaves in 1938. I used slave women interviews because I argue that my research questions can be answered best by having direct accounts of a slave woman's experience instead of vicarious experiences. I only wanted interviews of former slave women who were

currently residing in Arkansas, were at least 70 years old, and discussed their perceptions of slavery, freedom, and social support. 35 women transcripts/interviews met these criteria (See Appendix A). Interviewees ranged from 70 years of age to 107 at the time of the interview (born between 1831 and 1868) with the average interviewee being 73 years old. It is widely accepted that using 20 – 30 in-depth interviews typically yields meaningful research findings that capture most interviewees' experiences (Babbie 2004; Corbin and Strauss 1990; DePaulo 2000; Griffin and Hauser 1993; Marshall 1996; Sandelowski 1995). Since qualitative data can be daunting, having a large sample size can be impractical and time consuming, I must note that it is important that qualitative sample sizes are large enough to assure that the majority of interviewees' experiences relevant to the research questions (or not) are explored and uncovered (Babbie 2004; Marshall 1996 and Sandelewski 1995).

Analysis

I transcribed each interview into a Microsoft word document. Upon transcribing the interviews, I printed hard copies of each interview. I then used markers to color code each code that emerged from the data and codes that I sought to highlight in this research. I approached the analysis and developed the codes using an inductive approach by taking each woman's experiences under slavery and locating patterns within their accounts that could be further explored and used to generalize each woman's experience with other interviewees. Although my approach was inductive, I was open to any new material that might emerge from the data. This analytic strategy is more appropriate for qualitative research because it is conducive to open-ended interpretation and data (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Martin 1996).

I engaged in memoing by keeping record of any notes I had about the slave narratives and what I took from those interviews in addition to the initial interviewers' notes about an interviewee (Birks and Chapman 2008; Corbin and Strauss 1990). I coded line-by-line and divided the data into codes for my analysis. I engaged in this process until I segmented all of the data and completed the initial coding (Birks and Chapman 2008; Corbin and Strauss 1990; Martin 1996; Sandelewski 1995). I open-coded all interviews and created and maintained a master code list (See Appendix B). I identified codes by noting the major themes discussed by each interviewee to develop and discover trends among the women's accounts. I reapplied the codes to new segments of data each time I came across any appropriate segments. I wanted to examine the slave women's perception of life under slavery, their perception of life since freedom, and identify sources of social support and the ways interviewees discussed social support. Thus, the analytic themes specifically are: perception of slavery, perception of freedom, and social support.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS

Perceptions of Slavery

Most interviewees recounted their lives under slavery as a life of hardship riddled with vicious beatings, slave auctions, and broken families (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jones 2010; McMillen 1992; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Some interviewees presented ambiguous portrayals of violence under slavery. Rose Adway stated, "Chal you just don't know what I's been through." Many talked about witnessing the violence, rather than their direct experiences of violence Laura Abromsom stated:

> Pa say they stop 'em down at the carriage house and give 'em five hundred lashes. He say they have salt and black pepper mixed up in er old bucket and pour it all on flesh cut up with a rag tied on a stick (mop). Alex Rogers had a nigger to put it on the place they whooped. The Lord puts up wid such wrong doings and den he comes and rectifies it. He does that very way.

Lizzie Barnett noted:

> Many a time I've heard the bull whips a-flying, and heard the awful cries of the slaves. The flesh would be out in great gaps and the maggits would get in them and they would squirm in misery. I member when the bloodhounds used to run em and tree em up.Yes'm niggers used to run away in slavery times. Some of em was treated so mean they couldn't help it. …I been treated pretty well.

Many noted the ways that they were nothing more than objects while slavery's effects seemed benign to other interviewees (Ball 1998; Collins 1986; 2009; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). One major indicator of interviewees' awareness was their word usage, often referring to themselves in a non-humanistic manner. Eilen Brass stated,

"…They bought us like cattle and carried us from place to place." Others noted how young slave girls and boys were often given as gifts to their slaveholders' children:

> When a young girl was married her parents would always give her a slave. My master gave me, to his daughter... I was just five years old. She moved into a new home to my master telling him that I was too little and not enough help to her. So I went back … until I was over seven years old. My master made a bill of sale for me to his daughter, in order to keep account of all settlements.

Many illustrated the effects of slavery's disruption of family norms such as one's ability to nurse their biological children. Noteworthy is that it was common for women, regardless of racial or ethnic background, to lose many children (Clinton 1982; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Molly Brown described her mother's situation:

> My ma said she worked hard in the field like a black stepchild. My ma had nine chilluns and I was the oldest of the nine. She said her old miss wouldn't let her come to the house to nurse me, so she would slip up under the house and crawl through a hole in the floor. She took and pulled a plank up so she could slip through.

While Ms. Brown's mother was forbidden from caring for her, she used creative means to resist this oppressive control. Othermothering refers to one's care for children who are not biologically their own (Ball 1998; Case 1997; Clinton 1982; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Guiffrida 2005 Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010), occurred more frequently than mothering one's own children for slaves. Researchers (Ball 1998; Case 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Guiffrida 2005; Jones 2010) note that it was a privilege for slaveholders to grant permission to nurse one's young. Other slaves remembered their life under slavery as one of privilege. Auntie Adeline noted:

> I remember the days of slavery as happy ones. We always had an abundance of food… there was always plenty prepared for all the White folks as well as the colored folks. There was a long table at the end of the big kitchen for the colored folks.

Katy Arbery stated:

> He raised me up with his chillum and I never did call him master, just called him pappy, and Jim McCall, I called him brother Jim. Just raised us all up there in the yard. "Pappy used to play that on his fiddle and have us chillum tryin' to dance. Used to call us chillum and say, 'You little devils, come up here and dance' and have us marchin'. I can remember a heap a tings that happened, but 'bout slavery, I didn't know one day from another. They treated us so nice that when they said freedom come, I thought I was always free. As far as I can remember I have been treated nice everywhere I been. Ain't none of the White folks ever mistreated me. Lord, we had plenty to eat in slavery days and freedom days too.

These accounts are atypical because interviewees characterized their experiences as happy or at least comparable with that of White counterparts. It is important to note that there is a clear difference in power grounded in race and gender thus it is relatively difficult for interviewees to fully assess the nature of their relationships with Whites. Conversely, if this was their perception, then it must be accepted as *true* (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Patterson 1998). Many accounts suggested the desire to belong, so many interviewees believed themselves to be emotionally connected to their slaveholders.

Perceptions of Freedom and Future Generations

Interviewee's spoke of their perceptions of life post-slavery, more specifically, their perceptions of the younger generation of African Americans. From the analysis three reactions to freedom emerged: 1) Some slaves were excited about the idea of freedom and left to search for family members or to move north for more freedom; 2) Some slaves appeared to experience a mixture of excitement and anomie since their understanding of the world was intercepted by a new status (freedom). Likewise, a lack of financial and occupational opportunities resulted in many slaves remaining with their former slaveholders, and 3) some interviewees claimed to have experienced little to no

oppression under slavery, thus, interviewees who presented their life under slavery as *free* were unaffected by slavery and had no motivation to leave. Katy Arbery stated:

> After the war many soldiers came to my mistress, Mrs. Blakely, trying to make her free me. I told them I was free but I did not want to go anywhere that I wanted to stay in the only home that I had ever known. In a way that placed me in a wrong attitude. I was pointed out as different. Sometimes I was threatened for not leaving but I stayed on. I had always been well treated by master's folks.

Katy Arbery had always believed herself to be free because she had not known the hardships experienced by most slaves. Further, she did not want to leave her old missis because this was the only home she had even known. What is poignant is that she appeared to have developed an emotional affinity with her former slaveholders that she suggested was reciprocal. Eilen Brass, on the other hand, perceived freedom as a form of empowerment:

> According to my remembrance the Yankees come around and told the people they was free. I was in Alexandria, Louisiana. They told the colored folks they was free and to go and take what they wanted from the White folks. They had us all out in the yard dancing and playing. The White folks ain't got no reason to mistreat the colored people. They need us all the time. They don't want no food unless a nigger cooks it. They want niggers to do all their washing and ironing. They want niggers to do their sweeping and cleaning and everything around their houses. The niggers handle everything they wears and hands them everything they eat and drink. Ain't nobody can get closer to a White person than a colored person. If we'd a wanted to kill 'em, they'd a all done been dead.

Ms. Brass was aware of power relations between Whites and slaves, but also acknowledged it as a form of empowerment. She recognized that Whites were still unwilling to do much of the manual labor in their lives because they were also experiencing a change in epistemology (Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Her statement demonstrated an understanding of the slave's commodified labor. Many interviewees provided insight into the younger generation and life post-slavery. None perceived the younger generation to be hardworking or responsible. Many

did not see post-slavery times as positive in comparison to antebellum south. Josephine Ann Barnett stated:

> I don't know what to think of the young generation. They are on the road to ruin seems like. I speakin' of the real young folks. They do like they see the White girls and boys doin'. I don't know what to become of em. The women outer stay at home and let the men take care of em. The women seems like taking all the jobs. The colored folds cookin' and making the living for their men folks. It ain't right—to me. But I don't care how they do. Things ain't got fixed since that last war. [World War I].

Ms. Barnett disapproved of the current society for a few reasons. She disapproved of the younger generation holding attitudes and engaging in behaviors similar their White counterparts. It would appear that a fear of assimilation led to her disdain for the younger generation. She disagreed with the shift in gender expectations and norms of society versus those that existed under slavery. Carrie Bennett provided a similar argument stating, "A heap of dis young generation is triflin' as they can be. They don't half work. Some do work hard and no 'pendence to be put in some 'em. 'Course they steal 'fo' day work. I say some of 'em work." Incy Cotton stated:

> Yes, suh, there's a heap of difference in folks now 'an when I was a girl—especially among the young people. I think no woman, White or Black, has got any business wastin, time around the votin' polls. Their place is at home raisin' a family. I hear em sometimes slinging out their 'damns' and it sure don't soun' right to me.

Liddie Boechus noted:

> I don't know what to think about young folks. Every fellar is for his own self. This new generation ain't got no strength. I think it is because they set around so much. What would a heap of them do? A long day's work in the field would kill some of them. It would! Some folks don't work 'nough to be healthy. I don't know, but though, I really believes education and automobiles is the whole cause.

It is interesting that some participants highlighted the disparate conditions of post-slavery society while simultaneously suggesting a strong preference for norms in

antebellum days. It is also imperative to note that the slaves' understanding and experiences of the world drastically changed leaving many slaves stuck between a rock and a hard place. Many slaves lacked alternative resources and either remained with their previous slaveholders or went to search for lost family members. Laura Abromson stated:

> Mama and Papa spoke like they was mighty glad to get set free. Some believed they'd git freedom and others didn't. They had places they met and prayed for freedom. They stole out in some of their houses and turned a washpot down at the door. Another White man, not Alex Rogers, tole mama and papa and a heap others out in the field working. She say they quit and had a regular bawl in the field. They cried and laughed and hollered and danced. Lot of them run offen the place soon as the man tole 'em. My folks stayed that year and another year.

Rose Adway stated, "I think my folks went off after freedom and then come back. That was after they had done been sot free…my parents lived on the same place after freedom a long time. They said he was good to them." Carrie Bradley claimed, "Pa say he thought he stand a chance to find his folks and them to find him if he be called Bradley. He did find some of his brothers, and ma had some of her folks out in Mississippi. They come out here hunting places to do better." Something to note regardless of which pathway each interviewee's family member took is that the interviewees almost always came back to their former slave owners. Most interviewees attribute their decision to either remain in or return to Arkansas was based on their desire to be *home* or in a familiar setting operating under a system similar to slavery. Many interviewees noted remaining in Arkansas for extended periods of time without ever divulging the actual amount of time spent.

Mothering and Othermothering

The major source of social support for the women interviewed was from their families, chosen and biological. Most spoke of their mothers (or mother figure) with

pride and admiration, or recounted times where their mothers gave them words of encouragement. The role of fathers or other family members was negligible. Most interviewees ascertained social support from their slaveholders' family and felt as if they were family. Molly Brown noted:

> I had always been tol' by ma' from the time I was a small child that I was a Negro of African stock. That it was no disgrace to be a Negro and had it not been for the White folks who brought us over here from Africa as slaves, we would never have been here and would have been much better off.

Ms. Brown received great encouragement from her mother. Receiving this type of social support was imperative as the slaves had to rely on one another as buffers from the harsh realities of their lives. Some found social support among both slaveholders and their family. Aunt Liz stated:

> I shore did love Miss Fanny. "Did you have any brothers and sisters, Aunt Liz?" "Why, law yes, honey, my mammy and Miss Fanny raised dey chillun together. Three each, and we was jes' like brothers and sisters, all played in da same yard. Yes, siree, I was Miss Fanny's child. Why wouldn't I love her when I sucked titty from her breast when my mammy was working in the field? I shore did love Miss Fanny.

Miss Fanny and Aunt Liz's mother raised each other's children together and so each child's love of a mother was directed towards both women and each woman's child was to treat the others as siblings (Case 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Guiffrida 2005). The relationship, to Aunt Liz, was reciprocal since Miss Fanny breast-fed the slave's children. In another case, Maggie Bond noted how her missis provided both social and financial support by arranging her wedding. Ms. Bond received support from slave owners and slaves. She stated:

> I wanted to go home. She didn't want me to leave. I wouldn't tell her why. She said, 'I speck you going to get married.' She gave me a nice White silk dress. My owner, Miss Leila Nash, lend me one of her chemisette, a corset cover, and a dress had ruffles around the bottom. I borrowed my veil from a colored woman

> that had used it. Mr. Rollwage gave Scott a tie and White vest and lend him his watch and chain to be married in. They was friends, Miss Leila made my cake. She wanted my gold bond ring to go in it. I wouldn't let her have it for that. Not my ring! She put a dime in it. Miss Maggie Barrow and Mrs. Maggie Hatcher made two baskets full of maple biscuits for my wedding. They was the best cake. Made in big layers and cut and iced. Two laundry baskets full to the brim. She showed us a White cedar three-gallon churn, brass hoops hold the staves in place, fifty-seven years old and a castor with seven cruits patented December 27, 1859. It was a silver castor and was fixed to ring for the meal.

Maggie's ability to gain both social and financial support from slaves and slaveholders sheds light on the dynamics between slave and slaveholder by highlighting the capacity of slaveholders to have some level of compassion for their slaves. Maggie's account also sheds light into why some slaves remained with former slaveholders instead of leaving permanently. Since previous interviewee accounts demonstrated that financial and social support was accessible to them via slaveholders and their families, many former slaves might see remaining with slaveholders as an incentive.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

I examined interviewees' perceptions of life under slavery, their perceptions of freedom, and from where and from whom interviewees' derived social support. Many interviewees characterized life on the plantation as arduous, emotionally and physically taxing (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Collins 1986; 2009; Davis 1981; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). All interviewees were required to care for all on the plantation by cooking, cleaning, sewing or child rearing for the slaveholder's family or indirectly via the completion of their daily duties (Allen 1997; Clinton 1982; Collins 2009; Davis 1981;Weiner 1998). Some interviewees frequently characterized their experiences under slavery vividly by providing insight into physical violence that they either saw firsthand or heard about on the plantation. Other interviewees depicted their experiences under slavery as happy. The data analysis indicates that interviewees' lives under slavery corresponded with previous researchers' accounts of slave experiences (Ball 1998; Collins 1998; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998).

The analysis indicated that some interviewees highlighted how White power and violence impinged upon their work lives and negatively affected their family structure (Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jones 2010; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998). Many interviewees identify former slave women's duty to place the slaveholder's family above their own as impeding their ability to care for their families (Allen 1996; Case 1997;

Clinton 1982; Collins 1986; 2009; Guiffrida 2005). Interviewee Molly Brown's mother sneaked under the floorboards to breast-feed her own biological child. However, it must be noted that some interviewees claimed to have been treated well. This finding is concordant with Clinton (1982) and McMillen's (1992) research on the benevolence of the plantation mistress. Researchers (Clinton 1982; McMillen 1992) note that the plantation mistress's affection toward slaves was not necessarily because of a strong relationship with the slave, but because most social support and bonding was (regardless of race) found among women.

Interviewees perceived freedom as a negative aspect of post-slavery life. Most noted how gender expectations and norms post-slavery differed from those practiced by former slaves. This finding emphasizes gender socialization and generational conflict. Interviewees were socialized into a sex-segregated world where work was typified as either *woman's work or men's work* and women remained in a domestic sphere (Collins 2009; Davis 1981; White 1999; Weiner 1998). Interviewees noted that the younger generation deviated from traditional gender expectations because women were engaging in more self-determined activities such as voting, working, and learning instead of housewifery (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Jones 2010; Patterson 1998).

Interviewees noted that the younger generation's deviance contributed to them behaving like White people. Interviewees' acknowledged post-slavery life as chaotic and on the roads to ruin. Interviewees' perceptions suggest that acceptance of antebellum gender expectation was integral to the overall functioning of African American relationships and sense of community (Ball 1998; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; Patterson 1998). Interviewees noted that the ability to reunite broken families as the only positive

aspect of post-slavery life. Although most interviewees identified social support from their slaveholders, their desire to unify their biological family members was not forgotten. Interviewees did not characterize remaining in Arkansas or with slaveholders post-slavery as a trade-off (Ball 1998; Patterson 1998).

In examining sources of social support, most interviewees acknowledged that they received their social support from the slaveholders and the slaveholders' children especially since caring for the slaveholder's children encompassed a substantial portion of the interviewees' lives (Allen 1996; Case 1997; Collins 2009; Guiffrida 2005). Many interviewees claimed their slaveholder's family treated them well. A few interviewees even believed they were treated equally with Whites. Some noted how they received food, clothes and gifts from their slaveholders for their marriages. Maggie Bond noted how her slaveholder even cooked for her wedding. Although some interviewees acknowledged mothers or mother figures as sources of social support, they failed to account for their relationships with males.

Some interviewees did discuss their relationships with White males while only describing the physicality of their fathers. Many interviewees spoke well of their slaveholders. Although few interviewees spoke ill of slaveholders, they did discuss their distaste for the slaveholder's behaviors. However, this finding is partially supported by McMillen (1992) because women were most likely to associate with women and males seemed to operate and exist in a different world. Researchers (Ball 1998; Clinton 1982; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jacobs 2001; Jones 2010; McMillen 1992; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998) note how former slaves supported each other throughout slavery. My findings do not indicate this. Interviewees rarely directly referred to their fellow slaves as

a source of social support. Nor did interviewees discuss social support from spouses or romantic partners. Interviewees acknowledged their marital status and proceeded to discuss other topics. The lack of discussion about social support among fellow slaves posits two interesting questions. 1) How much information were interviewees willing to disclose about their relationships with other African Americans with White interviewers? 2) How willing or unwilling were interviewees to discuss the inner workings of the African American community (Collins 2009; Davis 1981; McMillen 1992)? Interviewees' experiences were illustrative of how slavery, race and gender interacted to systematically oppress these women and distinctively identify their experience under slavery (Case 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Patterson 1998).

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this research makes a few contributions to the race/ethnicity, sociological and historical literatures. First, because there is a lack of literature that addresses the individual narratives of the slave women, my research provides breadth to these foresaid literatures. Secondly, extant literature is limited in that it tends to approach American slavery structurally and ignores social interactions and and individual experiences among slave women. 3) I used feminist standpoint theory to enrich this area of research and serve as a platform that fosters individual interpretation of life under American slavery for slave women. My research addresses each interviewee's subjective experience and emphasizes the connections and diversity in these women's perceptions of their lives.

Concordant with prior research (Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jones 2010; McMillen 1992; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998), some of the women interviewed identified their lives under slavery as difficult and depicted with insurmountable life events such as constant physical abuse, anger and sorrow. Other interviewees characterized their lives under slavery as joyful and easy-going, and claim to have been treated as equal to their slaveholder's family. Feminist standpoint theory served as an excellent approach to detail the interviewees' accounts. Although all interviewees shared identities (such as mother, slave, wife etc.) that interacted in tandem and contributed to their overall oppression

(Allen 1996; Chafertz 1997; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Haraway 1988; Heckman 1997; McMillen 1992; Weiner 1998) each interviewees were distinct. Most interviewees explicitly stated that they derived their social support from their slaveholders and the slaveholder's families, which was rarely identified in the literature excluding Ball (1998) and Clinton (1982). Important to note is that most interviewees did not discuss social support from fellow slaves. This observation begs the question, how did these interviewees perceive their relationships with other former slaves as less meaningful or not meaningful at all?

Many interviewees perceived freedom and its effects as a negative influence on former slaves, but not on Whites' attitudes and behaviors towards them. Many interviewees lacked faith in the younger generation of African Americans based on the structure of society. Interviewees noted how the world they lived in was wicked and claimed the younger generation was lazy. Interviewees suggested that shifts in gender expectations, and African Americans' increased interest and access to education were to blame. Interviewees argued that these societal changes negatively influenced the ways African American women and men interacted in romantic relationships (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Patterson 1998). Interviewees' way of knowing the world was shattered by the end of slavery and many accounts demonstrated the variety of reactions of some slaves. Some slaves left the south to search for more opportunities and family, experienced anomie, or remained with in the south with slaveholders (Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998).

This study provides insight into slave women's' perception of post-slavery life and how the effects of life events restructured social dynamics among African

Americans. Although, researchers (Ball 1998; Collins 2009; Davis 1981; Jones 2010; McMillen 1992; Patterson 1998; Weiner 1998) acknowledge the importance of slaves' sense of community and social support, most interviewees only identified their relationships with their slaveholders as positive and supportive. I did not have access to any slaveholders' narratives. However, accessing slaveholders' narratives and researching their perceptions of the slaveholder-slave relationship would yield fruitful results and provide a greater understanding into this understudied area of research. Future research would be benefit from examining the Arkansas narratives and comparing the romantic relationships former slave women had with their spouses and the relationships of the younger African Americans to highlight generational effects. Although American slavery and the Civil War ended long ago, the journey for insight into such a tumultuous and influential time period still stands the test of time. Further research will only enrich our scholarly literatures and understanding of current dynamics within the African American community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Holly, Grove, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Laura Abromsom 74

2. Fayetteville, Arkansas Located in Washington County, AK Auntie Adeline, 89

3. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County. AK Rose Adway 76

4. Brinkley, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Diana Alexander 74

5. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK. Sarah Anderson 78

6. Holly, Grove, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Salie Anderson 78

7. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Katie Arbery 80

8. DeValls Bluff, Arkansas Located in Prairie County, AK Josephine Ann Barnett 75 or

9. 80 Conway, Arkansas Located in Faulkner County, AK Lizzie Barnett 100

10. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Matilda Bass 80

11. Forrest City, Arkansas Located in St. Francis County, AK Sophie D Belle 77

12. Helena, Arkansas Located in Phillips County, AK Carrie Bradley 79

13. Holly, Grove, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Alice Biggs 70

14. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Mandy Billings 84

15. Brinkley, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Jane Birch 74

16. Madison, Arkansas Located in St. Francis County, AK Liddie Boechus 73

17. Madison, Arkansas Located in St. Francis County, AK Maggie (Bunny) Bond 80

18. Russellville, Arkansas Located in Pope County, AK Caroline Bonds 70

19. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Rachel Bradley 107

20. Little Rock, Arkansas Located in Pulaski County, AK Eilen Brass 82

21. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Mary Ann Brooks 90

22. Clarksville, Arkansas Located in Johnson County, AK Mag Brown 83

23. Clarendon, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Mary Brown 78

24. Helena, Arkansas Located in Phillips County, AK Mattie Brown 75

25. Brinkley, Arkansas Located in Monroe County, AK Molly Brown 90

26. Forrest City, Arkansas Located in St. Francis County, AK Maggie Broyles 80

27. Marianna, Arkansas Located in Lee County, AK Belle Buntin 80

28. El Dorado, Arkansas Located in Union County, AK Fannie Clemons 78

29. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Betty Coleman 80

30. Russellville, Arkansas Located in Pope County, AK Incy Cotton

31. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Mary Crosby 76

32. El Dorado, Arkansas Located in Union County, AK Zenia Culp 80

33. Forrest City, Arkansas Located in St. Francis County, AK Mary Allen Darrow 74

34. Pine Bluff, Arkansas Located in Jefferson County, AK Mary Jane Drucilla Davis 73

35. DeValls Bluff, AK Located in Prairie County, AK Martha Ann Dixon 81

APPENDIX B

MASTER CODE LIST

Codes/Categories
Participant Responses

Slavery (Perception)
Pa say they stop ‘em down at the carriage house and give ‘em five hundred lashes. He say they have salt and black pepper mixed up in er old bucket and pour it all on flesh cut up with a rag tied on a stick (mop). Alex Rogers had a nigger to put it on the place they whooped. The Lord puts up wid such wrong doings and den he comes and rectifies it. He does that very way.

When a young girl was married her parents would always give her a slave. I was given by my master, to his daughter, Miss Elizabeth, who married Mr. Blakely. I was just five years old. She moved into a new home to my master telling him that I was too little and not enough help to her. So I went back to the Parks home and stayed until I was over seven years old. My master made a bill of sale for me to his daughter, in order to keep account of all settlements, so when he died and the estate settled each child would know how he stood.

“I been through so much I can’t git much in my remembrance, but I was here—that ain’t no joke—I been here. “My folks said their owners was all right. You know they was ‘cause they come back. I remember dat all right.

“I can remember the days of slavery as happy ones. We always had an abundance of food. Old Aunt Martha cooked and there was always plenty prepared for all the white folks as well as the colored folks. There was a long table at the end of the big kitchen for the colored folks. The vegetables were all prepared of an evening by Aunt Martha with someone to help her.

“My master was Madison Newsome and my missis was Sarah Newsome. Named after her? Must a done it. Me and her chillum was out wallowin’ in the dirt when the Yankees come by. Sometimes I stayed in the house with my white folds all night. “My mother and father say they was well treated. That’s what they say.

“I been livin’ a pretty good life. Seems like the white folds just didn’t want me to get away from their chillum.

“Paul McCall raised me up with his chillum and I never did call his master, just called him pappy, and Jim McCall, I called him brother Jim. Just raised us all up there in the yard. My grandmother was the cook. “Pappy used to play that on his fiddle and have us chillum tryin’ to dance. Used to call us chillum and say, ‘You little devils, come up here and dance’ and have us marchin’. “I can remember a heap a tings that happened, but ‘bout slavery, I didn’t know one day from another. They treated us so nice that when they said freedom come, I thought I was always free. “As far as I can remember I have been treated nice everywhere I been. Ain’t none of the white folks ever mistreated me. “Lord, we had plenty to eat in slavery days—and freedom days too.

No, we did not eat together. Dey sot us niggers out in da yard to eat, but many a nite I’se slept with Miss Fanny.

“I have seen hard times, Miss, I shore have.“In dem days when a man owned a plantation and had children they liked any of the little slave niggers, they were issued out to ‘em just like a horse or cow.

“Miss, you don’t know what a hard life we slaves had, cause you ain’t old enough to ‘member it. Many a time I’ve heard the bull whips a-flying, and heard the awful cries of the slaves. The flesh would be out in great gaps and the maggits (maggets) would get in them and they would squirm in misery.

He had a special cook, Aunt Mariah, to cook for the field hands. They eat like he did. Master Hicks would examine their buckets and a great big split basket. If they didn’t have enough to eat he would have her cook more and send to them. They had nice victuals to ear.

“I member when the bloodhounds used to run em and tree em up.“Yes’m niggers used to run away in slavery times. Some of em was treated so mean they couldn’t help it.“Yes ma’am, I’ve seen the Ku Klux. Seen em takin’ the niggers out and whip em and kick em around. I’m talkin’ bout Ku Klux. I know bout the patrollers too. Ku Klux come since freedom but the patrollers was in slavery times. Had to get a pass. I used to hear the niggers talkin’ bout when the patrollers got after em and they was close to old master’s field they’d jump over the fence and say, “I’m at home now, don’t you come in here.” “I been treated pretty well.

My father and mother were both slaves. They never did any slave work. “My father was free raised. The white folks raised him. I don’t know how he became free. All that I know is that he was raised right in the house with the white folks and was free. His mother and father were both slaves. I was quite small at the time and didn’t know much. They bought us like cattle and carried us from place to place.

Our owners was Master Johnson Buntin and Mistress Sue Buntin. They had two children-Bob and Fannie. He had a big plantation and four families of slaves. He had seven little colored boys and two little colored girls. I spent most of my time up at the house playing

with Bob and Fannie. When mistress whooped one she whooped all three. She would whoop us for stealing her riding horse out. We would bridle it and all three ride and ride. We got several whoopings about that. "That selling was awful and crowds came to see how they sell. They acted like it was a picnic. Some women was always there, come with their husbands. Some women sold slaves and some bought them.

Freedom (Perception)
"After the war many soldiers came to my mistress, Mrs. Blakely, trying to make her free me. I told them I was free but I did not want to go anywhere, that I wanted to stay in the only home that I had ever known. In a way that placed me in a wrong attitude. I was pointed out as different. Sometimes I was threatened for not leaving but I stayed on. "I had always been well treated by master's folks. While we lived at the old Kidd Place, there was a church a few miles from our home. My uncle George was coachman and drove my master's family in great splendor in a fine barouche to church. After the war, when he went to his own place, Mr. Parks gave him the old carriage and bought a new one for the family.

"I don't know what to think of this young race. That baby there knows more than I do now, nearly. Back there when I was born, I didn't know nothin'.

"Lawd you got me now. The times changed and got so fast. It all beyond me. I jes' listens. I don't know whut goner happen to this young generation."

"Chillun in dem days paid attention. People raised ch'llun in dem days. Folks just feeds 'em now and lets 'em grow up. "I looks at the young race now and they is as wise as rabbits.

"I don't know what to think of the young generation. They are on the road to ruin seems like. I speakin' of the real young folks. They do like they see the white girls and boys doin'. I don't know what to become of em. The women outer stay at home and let the men take care of em. The women seems like taking all the jobs. The colored folds cookin' and making the living for their men folks. It ain't right—to me. But I don't care how they do. Things ain't got fixed since that last war." [World War].

"A heap of dis young generation is triflin' as they can be. They don't half work. Some do work hard and no 'pendence to be put in some 'em. 'Course they steal 'fo' day work. I say some of 'em work. Times done got so fer 'head of me I never 'speck to ketch up. I never was scared of horses, I sure is dese automobiles. I ain't plannin' no rides on them airplanes. Sure you born I ain't. Folks ain't acting lack they used to. They say so I got all I can get you can do dout. It didn't used to be no sich way. Times is heap better but heap of folks is worse 'an aver folks been before."

"The present conditions is kind of strange. With us it is just up-and-down-hill times. I ain't had no dealins with the young generation. Course my son would tell you about em, but I can't. He goes out a heap more an I do.

“Black folds used to vote more than I believe they do now. The men used to feel big to vote. They voted but I don’t know how. No ma’am, reckon I don’t vote! “The times been changing since I was born and they going to keep changing. Time is improving. That is all right. “I think the young generation is coming down to destruction. You can’t believe a word they speak. I think they do get married some. They have a colored preacher and have jes’ a witness or so at home. Most of them marry at night. They fuss mongst theirselves and quit sometimes. I don’t know much about young folks. You can’t believe what they tell you. Some work and some don’t work. Some of them will steal.”

“I don’t know what to think about young folks. Every fellar is for his own self. Times is hard with old folks. I had a stroke they said. This new generation ain’t got no strength. I think it is because they set around so much. What would a heap of them do? A long day’s work in the field would kill some of them. It would! Some folks don’t work ‘nough to be healthy. I don’t know, but though, I really believes education and automobiles is the whole cause.”

Concerning the younger generation Rachel said: “I don’t know what goin’ come of ‘em. The most of ‘em is on the best” (trying to get all they can from others).

“According to my remembrance the Yankees come around and told the people they was free. I was in Alexandria, Louisiana. They told the colored folks they was free and to go and take what they wanted from the white folks. They had us all out in the yard dancing and playing. “The white folks ain’t got no reason to mistreat the colored people. They need us all the time. They don’t want no food unless a nigger cooks it. They want niggers to do all their washing and ironing. They want niggers to do their sweeping and cleaning and everything around their houses. The niggers handle everything they wears and hands them everything they eat and drink. Ain’t nobody can get closer to a white person than a colored person. If we’d a wanted to kill ‘em, they’d a all done been dead. They ain’t no reason for white people mistreating colored people.”

“Some of the young folds nowadays pretty rough. Some of em do right and some don’t. “Never did go to school. Coulda went but papa died and had to go to work. “I thinks over old times sometimes by myself. Didn’t know what freedom was till we was free and didn’t hardly know them.

“I don’t know anything about the present generation. I ain’t been able to git out for the last year or two. I think I broke my foot, for I had t go on crutches a long time.

“I just looks on in ‘masement at this young generation. They is happy all right. Times not hard for them glib and well as they seems. Times have changed a sight since I was born in this world and still changing. Sometimes it seems like they are all right. Ag’in times tough on old folks like me. This is all in the Bible—about the times and folds changing.”

I don’t know nothin’ bout freedom. I seen the soldiers. I seen both kinds. The white folks was good to us. We stayed on. “I told you I don’t bother young folks business. I thought I told you I don’t.

“Times—I don’t know what to think. My race is the under folds and I don’t never say nothing to harm ‘em. I’m one of ‘em. Times is hardest in my life. I have to sit. I can’t walk a step-creeping paralysis.”

“Yes, suh, there’s a heap of difference in folks now ‘an when I was a girl—especially among the young people. I think no woman, white or black, has got any business wastin, time around the votin’ polls. Their place is at home raisin’ a family. I hear em sometimes slinging out their ‘damns’ and it sure don’t soun’ right to me. “Good day, mistah. I wish you well—but the gov’ment ain’t gonna do nothing. It never has yit.”

“After the war some white folks would tell Grandma one thing and some others tell her something else. She kept me and cooked right on. I didn’t know what freedom was. Seemed like most of them I knowed didn’t know what to do. Most of the slaves left the white folks where I was raised. It took a long time to ever get fixed. Some of them died, some went to the cities, some up North, some come to new country.

The young folks is still hunting a better place and more freedom. Grandma learnt me to set down and be content. We have done better out here than we could done in North Carolina but I don’t believe in so much rambling.“We come on the passenger train and paid our own way to Arkansas. It was a wild and sickly country and has changed. Not like living in the same country. I try to live like the white folks and Grandma raised me.. I do like they done. I think is the reason we have saved and have good a living as we got. We do on as little as we can and save a little for the rainy day.”

Freedom (Externalized)
“Mama and Papa spoke like they was mighty glad to get set free. Some believed they’d git freedom and others didn’t. They had places they met and prayed for freedom. They stole out in some of their houses and turned a washpot down at the door. Another white man, not Alex Rogers, tole mama and papa and a heap others out in the field working. She say they quit and had a regular bawl in the field. They cried and laughed and hollered and danced. Lot of them run offen the place soon as the man tole ‘em. My folks stayed that year and another year.

“I think my folks want off after freedom and then come back. That was after they had done been sot free. I can remember dat all right.

My parents lived on the same place after freedom a long time. They said he was good to them

When freedom come on, I heard pa say he thought he stand a chance to find his folks and them to find him if he be called Bradley. He did find some of his brothers, and ma had some of her folks out in Mississippi. They come out here hunting places to do better.

They was willing to keep me but after the war they was so poor. The girls told me if I could come to town and find work I hed better do it. Two of them come nearly to town with me. They told me I was free to come to town and live with the
"Mistress told all Master Alex's slaves they had been freed. The men all left. My mother left and took me. I got mad and went back and lived there till I married. Master Alex came back after two weeks. My mother soon died after the surrender. She died at Batesville, Mississippi. Lots of the slaves died. Their change of living killed lots of 'em.

Social Support
We had a big family. I have eight sisters and one brother.

"I had always been told from the time I was a small child that I was a Negro of African stock. That it was no disgrace to be a Negro and had it not been for the white folks who brought us over here from Africa as slaves, we would never have been here and would have been much better off. We colored folks were not allowed to be taught to read or write. It was against the law. My master's folks always treated me well. I had good clothes. Sometimes I was whipped for things I should not have done just as the white children were.

Mama lived on the place and give me to em cause they could do better part by me than she could. I was six years old when she give me to em. They lernt me to sweep, knit, crochet, piece quilts. She lernt her children thater way sometimes. Miss Nancy Sprangle didn't treat me no different from her own girls.

I shore did love Miss Fanny. "Did you have any brothers and sisters, Aunt Liz.?" "Why, law yes, honey, my mammy and Miss Fanny raised dey chillun together. Three each, and we was jes' like brothers and sisters, all played in da same yard.

"Yes, siree, I was Miss Fanny's child. Why wouldn't I love her when I sucked titty from her breast when my mammy was working in the field? I shore did love Miss Fanny.

"I tried to get some aid when it first come 'bout but I quit. My children and my niece take keer er me. I ain't wantin' fer nothin' but good health. I never do feel good. I done wore out. I worked in the field all my life.

I wanted to go home. She didn't want me to leave. I wouldn't tell her why. She said, 'I speck you going to get married.' She gave me a nice white silk dress. Mrs. Drennand made it. My owner, Miss Leila Nash, lend me one of her chemisette, a corset cover, and a dress had ruffles around the bottom. It was wide. She never married. I borrowed my veil from a colored woman that had used it. Mr. Rollwage (dead now but was a lawyer at Forrest City) gave Scott a tie and white vest and lend him his watch and chain to be married in. They was friends, Miss Leila made my cake. She wanted my gold bond ring to go in it. I wouldn't let her have it for that. Not my ring! She put a dime in it. Miss Maggie Barrow and Mrs. Maggie Hatcher made two baskets full of maple biscuits for my wedding. They was the best cake. Made in big layers and cut and iced. Two laundry baskets full to the brim."

She showed us a white cedar three-gallon churn, brass hoops hold the staves in place, fifty-seven years old and a castor with seven cruits patented December 27, 1859. It was a silver castor and was fixed to ring for the meal.

"Master Alex was a legislator. He had to leave when the Yankees come through. They killed all the legislators. I loved him. He run a store and we three children went to the store to see him nearly every day. He took us all three on his knees at the same time. I loved him. When he was gone, I said, "Miss Sue, where is Master Alex?" She say, 'Maybe he be back pretty soon.' While he was gone they had a battle in a little skirt of woods close by.

Lack of Social Support

"My mom was named Eloise Rogers. She was born in Missouri. She was sold and brought to three or four miles from Brownsville, Tennessee. Alex Rogers bought her and my papa. She had been a house girl and well cared for. She never got in contact wid her folks no more after she was sold.

I come to dis place, wild, honey, it was! I come in 1901. Heap of changes since then, "Present times- not as much union 'mongst young black and white as the old black and white. They growing apart. Nobody got nothin' to give. No work. I used to could buy second-handed clothes to do my little children a year for a little or nothin'. Won't sell 'em now not give 'em 'way neither. They don't work hard as they used to. They say they don't git nothin' outen it. They don't want to work. Times harder in winter cause it cold and things to eat killed out. I cans meat. We dry beef. In town this Nickelodeon playing wild wid young colored folks- these sea bird music boxes. They play all kind things. Folks used to stay home Saturday nights. Too much running 'round, excitement wickedness in the world now. This generation is worst one. They trying to cut the Big Apple dance when we old folks used to be down singing and praying. 'Cause dis is a wicked age times is bad and hard."

My mother did not return to Arkansas but went on to Joplin, Missouri, and for more than fifty years, neither one of us knew where the other one was until one day a man from Fayetteville went into a restaurant in Joplin and ordered his breakfast, and my mother who was in there heard him he say he lived in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He lived just below the Hudgens home and when my mother enquired about the family he told her I was still alive and was with the family. While neither of us could read nor write we corresponded through different people. But I never saw her after I was eleven years old.

"And I'm about to go blind in my old age. I need help and I need it bad. Chillun ain't able to help me none 'cept give me a little bread and give me some medicine once in a while.

"I don't know 'sactly how old I am. Dey say I am 100. If Miss Fanny was livin' she could settle it. But I have had a hard life. Yes man. Here I is living in my shanty, 'pendin' on my good white neighbors to feed me and no income 'cept my Old Age Pension. Thank God for Mr. Roosevelt. I love my Southern white friends. All I has to do now is sit and

look forward to da day when I can meet my old mammy and Miss Fanny in the Glory Land. Thank God."

"I was born in Greenville, Mississippi. They took my parents and carried 'em to Texas to keep 'em from the Yankees. I think they stayed three years 'cause I didn't know 'em when they come back.

My stepmother had some children of her own, so papa hired me out by the year to nurse for my board and clothes. My stepmother didn't care for me right. White folds raised me.

"Just before I had this spell of sickness I dreamed my baby—he's dead—come and knocked and said, 'Mama.' And I said, 'Yes, darlin', God bless your heart, you done been here three times and this time mama's comin'.' I really thought I was goin' to die. I got up and looked in the glass. You know you can see death in the eyes, but I didn't see any sign of death and I haven't gone yet."last Saturday I was prayin' to God not to let me get out of the heart of the people. You see, I have no kin people and I wanted people to come to my rescue. The next day was Sunday and more people com to see me and brought me more things.

Race /Color
"She was a dark woman. Papa was a ginger cake colored man."

"She attends to the renting of the apartment house, as caretaker, and is taken care of by members of the Blakely-Hudgens families. Aunt Adeline talks, "white folks language," as they say and seldom associates with the colored people of their town."

"I was born in Mississippi close to Bihalia. Our owner was Myers (?) Bogan. He had a wife and children. Mama was a field woman. Her mama was Sarah Bogan and papa's name was Hubbard Bogan.."Dr. Bogan in Forrest City, Arkansas always said I was his brother's child. He was dead years ago, so I didn't have no other way of knowing."

"Pa name Sam Adair. I can't tell you about him. I heard em say his pa was a white man. He was light skinned. Old folks didn't talk much foe children so I don't know well nough to tell you bout him."

"Mother was never sold. Mr. Hicks reared her. She was three-fourths Indian."

"I think Master Hicks and his family was French, but, though they were light-skin people. They had light hair too. I think.

"One day a Frenchman (white) that was a doctor come to call. My Aunt Jane said to me, 'He is your papa. That is your papa.' I saw him many times after that. I am considered eight-ninth white race. One little girl up at the courthouse asked me a question and I told her she was too young to know about such sin." (This girl was twenty-four years old and the case worker's stenographer.)

“My folds was black, black as I is.”

“Bill Otis was my last owner. You see, how come me sold my mother was my grandfather’s baby chile and his owner promised not to separate him nary time again. It was in the time of the Old War. Charles McLaughlin—that was my old master—he was my father and Bill Otis, he bought my mother, and she was sold on that account. Old Master Charles’ wife wouldn’t ‘low her to stay. I’m tellin’ it just like they told it to me.”

“Look like the hardest treatment I had was my grandfather’s, Jake Nabors. Look like he hated me cause I was white—and I couldn’t help it.”

“I am darky to the bone. Pa was black. All our family is black.”

“Maggie (Bunny) Bond is eight-ninth white.”

“Her long association with white pople shows in her speech which is quite plain with only a few typical Negro expressions, such as the following:

> “She died this last gone Sattiday and I hope (help) ahround her.”
> “when white lady find baby, I used to go hep draw the breas’.”
> “Heap a people,”
> “Bawn,”

“I passed her and looked back into her face. I saw she was a Negro, dark brown. Her face was small with unusually nice features for a woman of her race. “Remember grandpa. His daddy was a white man. His wife was a black woman. Mama was a brown woman like I is. Four years ago I went to South Carolina to see my auntie. Her name Julia. They all had more ‘n I had. She’d dead now. All of em dead bout it. She was a light woman-Julia. Her pa was a white man; her ma a light woman. Julia considered wealthy. My grandpa was a white man; mama’s pa.”

“Mother was sold on the block at public auction in St. Louis. Master Bob Young bought a boy and a girl. My father was a full-blood Irishman. His name was Lassiter. She didn’t have no more children by him. Mother worked with a white woman. Mother was full-blood Indian herself.”

“My great-grandma and grandpa was killed in Indian Nation (Alabama) by Sam and Will Allen. They was coming west long ‘fo’s the war form one of the Carolinas. I disremembers which they told me. Great-grandpa was a chief. They was shot and all the children run but they caught my Grandma Evaline and put her in the wagon and brought her to Monticello, Arkansas. They fixed her so she couldn’t get loose from them. She was a little full-blood Indian girl then. They got her for my great-grandpa a wife. He seen her and thought she was so pretty. “She was wild. She wouldn’t eat much else but meat and raw at that. She had a child ‘fo’s ever she’d eat bread. They tamed her. Grandpa’s pa that wanted the Indian wife was full-blood African. Mama was little lighter than ‘gingercake’

color.“My Indian grandma was mean. I was feard of ‘er. “My pa was a white man. Richard Allen was mama’s husband.”

Work
“I worked on the farm purty nigh all my life.”

“Aunt Adeline has been a slave and a servant in five generations of the Parks family.”

“I been farmin’ till I got disabled. After I married I went to farmin.”

“I been washing and ironing and still doing it. All my life I been doing that ‘ceptin’ when I worked in the field.”

“I been livin’ a pretty good life. Seems like the white folds just didn’t want me to get away from their chillum.
I was their house girl.”

“I married the second time at Wuskogee, Oklahoma. My husband lived out there. He was Indian-African. He was a Baptist minister. We never had any children. I never had a child. They tell me now if I had married dark men I would maybe had children. I married very light men both times.”

“I washed and ironed, cooked and kept house. I sewed for the public, black and white.”

“I used to be a midwife and got ten dollars a case. They won’t pay off now. I do a little of that work, but I don’t get nothing for it. They have a doctor or won’t pay.”

Fertility/Maternity
“What is I been doing? Ast me is I been doing? What ain’t been doing be more like it. I raised fifteen of my children. I got four living. I living wid one right here in dis house wid me now.”

“I birthed fourteen head of chillun by dat one man! Fourteen head by dat one man! Stayed at home and took care of ‘em till I got ‘em up some size, too. All dead but five out of the fourteen head.”

“I’m the mother of fourteen chillum—two pairs of twins. “All my chillum dead cept one son. He was a twin.”
Ma had seven children. They have bigger families then than they have now. I married and had one child.
My mother had two little girls but my sister died while small.”

“Mama was the mother of ten and I am the mother of eight. I got two living, one here and one in Memphis. I lives wid ‘em and one niece in Natchez I live with some.”

“How many chillum I have? Les see—count em up. Ida, Willie, Clara—had six

My ma said she worked hard in the field like a black stepchild. My ma had nine chilluns and I was the oldest of the nine. She said her old miss wouldn't let her come to the house to nurse me, so she would slip up under the house and crawl through a hole in the floor. She took and pulled a plank up so she could slip through."

Financial Support

"When the war was over, Mr. Parks was still in the South and gave to each one of his slaves who did not want to come back to Arkansas so much money. My uncle George came back with Mr. Parks and was given a good mountain farm of forty acres, which he put in cultivation and one of my uncle's descendants still lives on the place."

"I registered down here at the Welfare and I had to git my license from Mississippi and I didn't remember which courthouse I got my license, but I sent letters over there till I got it up. I got all my papers now, but I ain't never got no pension."Me and my daughter is paying on this house (a good house). I been making my own living—hard or easy. I don't get no relief aid. Never have. I 'plied for the old people's pension. Don't get it."

"I live wid my daughter. I get $8 from the Welfare."

"But I can't work like I used to. When I was young I could work right along with the man but I can't do it now. I wish I could 'cause they's a heap a things I'd like that my chillum and grandchillun can't get for me."

"Times is hard in a way. Prices so high. I never had a hard time in my life. I get $40 a month. It is cause my husband was a soldier here at Da Valls Bluff."

"When I came to Conway there were few houses to live in. No depot. I bought this place of land to build my shanty from Mr. Jim Harkrider for $25.00. I worked hard for white folds and saved my money and had this little two-room house built [mud chimney, and small porch and once small window]."

"Master Hicks had Uncle Patrick bury his silver and gold in the woods. It was in a trunk. The hair and hide was still on the trunk when the war ceased. He used his money to pay the slaves that worked on his place after freedom. "I get eight dollars from the Social Welfare."

"I don't get no pension. I never signed up. I gets long best I can."I got eight dollars, now I gets six dollars from the Welfare.

she was paid six dollars a month. She was not given any money by her former owners after being freed, but was paid for her work."

"The Welfare Department gives Rachel $8.00 a month. She pays $2.00 a month for two rooms with no drinking water. With the help of her white friends she manages to exist."

Then I asked if she drew an Old Age Pension. He said, “I think she does, but that is about .30 and it runs out before she gets another one. She begs a great deal.”

“I don’t get help from the government yet. We are having a hard time to scratch around and not go hungry.”

“How am I supported? I’m not much supported. My boy don’t have work much of the time. I don’t get the pension. I trusts in the Lord. I belong to New Bethel Baptist Church down here.”

“Me and my husband gets ten dollars from the Old Age Pension.”

“After the Civil War was times like now. Money scarce and prices high, and you had to start all over new. Pigs was hard to start, mules and horses was mighty scarce. Seed was scarce. Everything had to be started from the stump. Something to eat was mighty plain and scarce and one or two dresses a year had to do. Folks didn’t study about going so much.”