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Anthony Louis Molina Sr

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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"Spades players" and "senators": An ethnography of Black subcultures in a community college

Molina, Anthony Louis, Sr., Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1991

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"SAPDES PLAYERS" AND "SENATORS": AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF BLACK SUBCULTURES IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by:
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December 1991
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I acknowledge that almighty God made a way for me where there was no way; may I never cease to give Him praise and thanksgiving.

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study of Black community college students, in a predominantly white community college, took place over a three-year period and focused on two groups. One group, the spades players, neglected their studies in favor of the card game spades, which they made the central activity of their family-like collective in the student commons. The other group, Black senators in the Student Government Association, were academic achievers who performed service to the college. By immersion into both cultures, the researcher gained the confidence of individual students in both groups, interviewed them in various settings, and looked for reasons behind the academic failures and successes of the respective groups.

The spades players reproduced on campus a cultural activity learned at home that provided support, stimulation, and solidarity within the indifferent institutional environment. Their enthusiastic, often noisy, cultural expressions at the spades game contrasted with their reticence and poor performance in class. The senators, in contrast, expressed a commitment to their Black culture but acted in a manner acceptable to the white institution, foregoing exclusively Black associations on campus. While they promoted Black awareness activities, their campus associations were cross-cultural.

The spades players demonstrated that Black students will respond to institutional indifference with the creation of a subculture which they feel provides a strategy for survival, though it is ultimately detrimental to their academic
achievement. The senators demonstrated that Black students do not need to forfeit their racial solidarity and cultural expressions to achieve academically.

While most of the spades players dropped out of school virtually unnoticed by the institution, possibilities for retaining at-risk students emerged in this study. Community colleges should provide aggressive intervention for at-risk minority students, since the students are often unaware that they need help or are reluctant to seek it. Academic intervention and mentoring by caring Black professionals is needed in a friendly environment where the students' own Black cultural interests are addressed through curriculum and student life.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM, PURPOSE OF STUDY, SETTING, AND STUDENT GROUPINGS

The Problem

It is widely accepted that Black students experience a high rate of school failure. Mainstream education theorists and radical theorists disagree only on the causes of such failure. There are five main categories of cause-and-effect arguments advanced in literature that address the problem of Black students' failure: (1) Blacks are genetically inferior in intelligence; (2) Blacks are culturally deprived; (3) Blacks have deficient, indifferent, unstimulating, and immoral families, homes, and community environments; (4) Black students are served by schools and/or school systems that are inefficient, underfunded, and ineffective; and (5) the larger social order dictates through its value systems a racial/caste system that perpetuates itself through the schools (Sizemore, 1989).

While the first of these causes, espoused by Jensen (1969), has generally been discounted, the other causes have many advocates. The fourth cause—ineffective schools—demands our attention because the educational institution is responsible for addressing this problem and seeking a solution.

Josie Bain and John Herman, in Making Schools Work for Underachieving Minority Students (1990), say that nationally, people look to the schools for some kind of significant contribution to the persistent chronic problems brought about by the distinctive culture and the increasing isolation of the Black underclass along with the decline of the Black nuclear family brought about by structural conditions like Black males dropping out of the labor force (p. 44). What is
problematic about seeking solutions to these problems within the schools is that education theorists focus an inordinate amount of their attention on the causes of Black students' failure in schools instead of focusing on Black students' success. To begin to bring about a transformation within the schools to address the chronic problems facing Black students and academic achievement, there should be a search for a pattern of academic achievement among Black students. Though their numbers may be relatively small, the answer to the question of why some Black students, from the same community and sharing similar backgrounds, succeed academically while others do not deserves to be addressed.

Charles Payne, in an study entitled *Getting What We Ask For* (1984), acknowledges the need for such a balance:

"Why cannot children who are poor and dark learn as other children do?" It was a question worth asking, but in retrospect it was clearly not the most efficient way to promote positive change. A great deal of trouble could have been saved and innumerable children might have been helped had we spent somewhat less time investigating failure and more time trying to understand success, however statistically rare success might be. (p. 4)

Similarly, John Ogbu (1987) calls for the examination of successes as well as failures. He states that the study of how minority children fail may be related to the specific cultural domain considered, such as cognitive style, communication style, motivational style, interaction style, classroom social organization, and social relations. However, such considerations cannot provide a general explanation of the school success or failure of minority children, he argues, because they focus only on minority groups who do poorly in school:

They do not study other minority groups who do well in school although
they, too, possess different cognitive styles, communication styles, interaction styles, teaching and learning styles, and so on. Nor do microethnographies explore and explain intragroup variability—why, for instance, some Black, some Chicano, and some Indian or Native Hawaiian children do well in the same schools and classrooms where their ethnic peers do not, even though they, too, possess the same cognitive style, communication style, and learning style. (p. 313)

With regard to Black children, then, both Payne and Ogbu see the benefit of understanding the causes of successes as well as failures. However, since the problem of underachievement among minority students is not restricted to a specific age level or education level, Ogbu's and Payne's observations are applicable to the education of Black adults as well. This study will address the reasons for achievement and underachievement of Black students in the community college setting.

Among institutions of higher education, the community college is the most frequently chosen by Black students. Community colleges combine the traditional general education courses found in the first two years of college with vocational and technical career training. The American Council on Education (1988) reports that "Higher education enrollment trends between 1976 and 1984 show that minorities were enrolled in two-year institutions in higher proportions than their white counterparts. Forty-eight percent of all minority students in higher education attended community colleges" (p. 18). Moreover, the large proportion of Black students in community colleges has remained constant, although the total number of Blacks entering higher education has begun to decrease, particularly among Black males (p. 26).
Clearly, the community college is a logical choice for minority students who might be underprepared for the university. Community colleges were created because traditional institutions of higher education were unable to serve the growing numbers of nontraditional students who were attending college under open-door policies (Cross, 1971). In contrast to the recent increase in selective admissions policies among institutions of higher learning, community colleges are committed to open admissions.

The community college is more flexible than the university. Its comprehensive curriculum includes general, transfer, and occupational education components. In addition, the instructional delivery system of community colleges is community-based rather than campus-oriented, allowing for more time and options of instruction to accommodate multiple adult roles (Knoell & McIntyre, 1974). The faculty of the community college is dedicated to teaching rather than research. For this reason, community colleges historically receive a lower level of funding. They provide services for a more deprived, and often a larger population of students.

The various curricular functions of the comprehensive community college include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service. Community colleges have made it possible for universities everywhere to maintain selective admission requirements and enroll only the freshmen and sophomores they choose to take (Cohen & Brawer, 1982, p. 16). Community colleges thus offer opportunities for
minority students to pursue a post-secondary education by correcting educational deficiencies. They prepare students either for a career or for transfer to a four-year institution.

In 1982 Astin reported that minorities at two-year colleges were over-represented as opposed to those at four-year colleges. While only 33.2 percent of all white students were enrolled at two-year public institutions, the figure for Blacks was 39.3 percent, for Hispanics 53.3 percent, and for American Indians 53.0 percent (p. 131).

Withdrawal rates for minority students from community colleges have been significantly higher than for white students and most withdrawals are for nonacademic reasons. (Astin, 1982, p. 139). Consequently, completion rates of associate degrees have been low for minorities, despite their over-representation in community colleges. For example, while whites made up 75 percent of community college students in 1980, they attained 85 percent of the associate degrees. Blacks, at 13 percent, attained only 8 percent of the degrees, while Hispanics, at 6 percent, attained 4 percent of the degrees (de los Santos, Richardson, and Skinner, 1990).

More recent statistics are no more encouraging. According to the American Council on Education (1989) Minorities in Higher Education eighth annual status report, data indicate that while Blacks represent 9.2 percent of the 1986 undergraduate population, they earned only 5.7 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded in 1987. Moreover, while Blacks represent approximately one-
third of the total enrollment in community colleges, only 16 percent of associate degrees were awarded to Blacks in 1987.

In a study of Black students on white campuses, Walter R. Allen (1985) notes that little research has been done to compare successful and unsuccessful Black college students. Other researchers concur that few studies have examined differences between Black students (Bayer, 1972; Gurin and Epps, 1975; Fleming, 1981). "Within-race" comparisons offer possibilities for increased understanding of Black student outcomes on predominantly white campuses. As a supplement to "cross-race" comparisons, this approach allows for a sensitive examination of underlying factors that differentiate Black students into "successful" and "unsuccessful" groups (Allen, 1985 p. 135).

There have been relatively few studies focusing on the achievement of Black community college students. One such study is Between Two Worlds (1985) by Lois Weis, an ethnographic study of Black community college students at Urban Community College in the Northeast U.S.A. Focusing most of her attention on those students who were not succeeding academically, Weis concludes that only those few students who change their cultural orientation, who move away from the collective and develop a close relationship to faculty, will succeed. Yvonne Abatso (1985), in her study of Black community college students, finds that the differences between those Black students who achieve in a racially conscious society and those who do not is often associated with non-intellectual personality characteristics and coping behavior differences that are
both inherent and learned.

In neither the Weis study nor the Abatso study is there a distinct identification of collectives formed by Black community college students. There is little explication of the subcultures that collectives of Black students produce and express on campus. In either study, there is little discussion regarding the influence or lack of influence of Black students' race consciousness and their desire to group themselves with other Black students. Nonetheless, both researchers admit race is central to the lives of the Black students in their studies.

A third study of Black students, by Signithia Fordham (1988), examines race consciousness in the subjects and finds it to be detrimental to success. In her study group, those Black students who succeed are those who put aside their racial identity and adopt the characteristics of the dominant white culture. This conclusion would seem to suggest that Black students must make the difficult choice between their culture and academic success. The current study is intended to shed further light on this complex issue.

**Purpose of this Study**

To understand why the graduation rate of Blacks is low and to determine why so many Black students drop out of community colleges, it is important to look beyond the statistics to determine to what extent Black students are a monolithic group. As Payne and Ogbu suggest, a comparison of Black students who succeed with those who fail is needed. This study will explore the relationship
between achievers and non-achievers in light of the subcultures they produce on campus, to disclose similarities and differences. Specifically, this research will focus on the differences between and within two groups of Black community college students who come from similar economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Since the subjects being studied are Black students attending a community college that is mostly white, this study will explore the significance of their group solidarity experiences on and off campus and the relationship of these experiences with academic achievement. A major question for the study is this: In what ways can these students' behavior outside the classroom be said to foreshadow their eventual performance or lack of performance in the classroom?

A second major purpose of this study is to draw conclusions from the findings that will suggest strategies by means of which the community college might improve its educational effectiveness, especially with regard to minority students. By understanding why these students fail, we can develop methods for intervention to increase these students' prospects for academic success.

While it is hoped that the findings of this study will shed light on Black community college students everywhere, a more immediate purpose will be to find solutions that can be implemented in the particular community college being investigated. As an administrator at that institution, I will have the opportunity to recommend and help to implement such follow-up as the conclusions of this study suggest.
The Context of the Study: Deep South Community College

Deep South Community College is the only comprehensive community college in the Magnolia state. Other two-year colleges are extensions of universities. The primary mission of these institutions is, as with other junior colleges, the transfer of graduates to the university. Deep South, on the other hand, offers a full complement of applied technology degrees and certificate programs. Presumably, a graduate from Deep South has the option to go into the world of work with an associate degree that may be a terminal degree for that career area or to transfer credits earned toward a baccalaureate degree at a university.

Deep South is located in the largest city in the Magnolia state. The population of this city is over 500,000, with the metropolitan area having over a million residents. The city is predominantly Black (55 percent) and has a large poor population. The economy is based on tourism. As with other large urban areas, crime and unemployment are the major social problems. Politically, the city is governed by a Black mayor and predominantly Black city council. There are more Black elected officials from this city than anywhere else in the Magnolia state. This factor and the availability of historically Black colleges and universities may contribute to a rising number of Black middle-class families.

Nevertheless, class distinctions among Black residents of Deep South City have become more visible than ever before. A local Black free-lance writer (Quant, 1990) describes this phenomenon as follows: "The factor of class is a
major source of our confusion and frustration. Now, when we try to fight city hall, old obstacles may appear wearing new Black faces. Black officials who buy into the system may be just as unresponsive to minority needs as their white counterparts" (p. 3). Deep South Community College has a Black president. Most of the students and faculty members are white, and class distinctions among even the minority students are evident.

Deep South Community College is located in the center of the city, allowing easy access by public transportation. There are seven public and private universities located in the city, three of which are historically Black institutions. Obviously, many Black students feel more comfortable attending these Black universities than an integrated institution such as Deep South Community College.

Deep South began as a trade school for boys in 1921. It had a reputation for preparing students for vocational and technical jobs that were in demand at the time. In the 1940's the state established a system of neighborhood vocational and technical schools, which lessened Deep South's ability to attract individuals out of their neighborhoods. This also meant that there was at least one vocational school located in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

As its enrollment diminished, Deep South was transformed (1966) into an accredited junior college. This change was viewed by a significant number of members of the state's governing board as the first phase toward growing up to be a university. This misconception came about because two-thirds (six out of nine) of the state's regional universities began as a junior colleges. Deep South
is further unique in the Magnolia state because its final transformation (1980) involved becoming a comprehensive community college.

Not only does Deep South prepare students for technical jobs and careers, but it offers as well programs that parallel the first two years of a baccalaureate degree program. For many years Deep South fought a local identity crisis of being viewed as a trade school by most residents, while being considered by others in the state as an institution of higher education that would eventually become a university. The trade school image created a lack of confidence on the part of other colleges and universities regarding the quality of instruction, and consequently there was a reluctance to accept transfer credits from Deep South until an articulation agreement with the major public university in the city was negotiated in 1989.

This breakthrough occurred following a change in the administration of Deep South Community College. In the late 1980's, controversy surrounding the President of the institution had motivated the newly elected governor to threaten to close Deep South. That President resigned, and the governing board appointed an interim president, who brought about significant positive changes in the institution's academic programs, faculty, physical plant, and student body. Enrollment has increased 68 percent in three years, to a present enrollment of 12,600 students. The ethnic backgrounds of the student body project a well integrated student population, with 49 percent white, 38 percent Black, 6 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent other ethnic identities.
This portrait of Deep South Community College is in contrast to Urban College in Lois Weis' (1985) study, as well as the community college studied by Abatso (1985), in terms of geographic location, inception, and percentage of Black students. Weis' Urban College, located in the post-industrial Northeast, opened its doors in 1971 as a multi-campus public community college. By the spring of 1981, Urban College had a student headcount of 1552. The student body is over 70 percent Black, as opposed to that of Deep South, which is 38 percent Black. According to Weis, credits obtained at Urban College, even in ostensibly "terminal" programs, are transferred to state colleges and universities. Deep South's "terminal" programs generally do not transfer, except for individual courses. The community college studied by Abatso is similar to Urban Community College with respect to percentage of Black student population. Additionally, the Abatso study is a statistical rather than ethnographic study. It is described as a part of a "northern urban community college system which educates more than half of the minority status college students in Illinois" (p. 132). Thus both the setting and the focus of this study differ from those of Weis and Abatso.

**Groupings of Black Students at Deep South**

Evidence of different subcultures produced by Black students on the college campus indicates that Walter Allen (1985) is correct in suggesting that Black students--even within the same institution--are not monolithic. In fact,
groups of Black students at Deep South Community College were identified by the students themselves, with no a-priori knowledge of groupings or assumptions of groupings on my part. The only assumption, regarding groupings, with which I approached the study, was that Black students were not a homogeneous group.

In an attempt to determine whether there were distinct groups of Black students at Deep South Community College, and how these students might group themselves, I approached the Student Activities Director, a Black man, who identified two female students who he felt would know the Black student groups on campus. My goal in meeting with these students was to learn, from their perspective, whether such groups existed and, if so, what they were. They readily described several groups of Black students on campus and indicated where and when they "hang out," or in one informant's words, "Where they be all the time, where you can find them" (Memorandum, 11/4/88).

The two female informants reported that Black student groups can be found in the student commons, and they used descriptive names to distinguish the different groups as they saw them. These were not the names the groups attached to themselves. The first two groups were described by one of the women as follows:

The "spades players" play cards in the student commons all throughout the day. They leave to go to classes and return to play cards. They get "hyper" during the games, performing and exaggerating various "plays." Card players are men and women. Spades playing has become the most

---

1 Complete transcripts of formal interviews, fieldnotes, memoranda, and notes from informal interviews and classroom observations are available from the researcher upon request.
popular spectator sport in the student commons.

"Wanna be 's" are female students who hang together on the outskirts of the student commons. They are interested in fashion. They have "stacks" hairstyles, wear heavy makeup, and wear plenty jewelry. They want to be everything they are not. They want to be feminine and ladies, fragile and frail, but they can't tell the difference between when to be a lady and when not. (Memorandum, 11/4/88)

The other informant elaborated:

The girls who wear stacks are right out of high school. They are only interested in rings and dressing. But college students don't have time to dress like that. "All right people" hang out in the recreation room in Building II. They have a good time, but like to keep to themselves. They don't gossip about other people in the gameroom. They are a more refined group. The "basketball team" are Black members of the College's team that hang together in the rear of the student commons. The "strays" are students who do not belong to any group, but would like to. "Aircraft people" are students studying aircraft maintenance. (Memorandum, 11/4/88)

While the informants' perceptions would later prove to be partially inaccurate, they suggest not only the existence of distinct groupings on campus but also perceptions of such groupings among the students themselves. It is also significant to note that these collectives, except for the "basketball team" and "aircraft people," were apparently formed outside a relationship with the curriculum. Yet these groups probably would not have formed outside the institution. This means that though the formation of these groups was not encouraged by the institution (except for the "basketball team" and "aircraft people"), the institutional experience provided the setting or circumstance that brought them together.

There is an inconsistency in response of the institution to the groups. This
inconsistency demonstrates how the institution rewards those it considers a part of the acceptable mainstream and marginalizes those groups and individuals who are not. The "basketball team" is rewarded with recognition from the faculty, administration, and staff during basketball games as well as in class and outside of class. They are placed in specially chosen classes that are hand-picked by the coach. They do not have to wait in lines for their class schedules, and they are the only group to receive free lunch in the student commons. The "aircraft people" are acknowledged by the presence of a faculty member or two who usually join them for coffee breaks and for lunch. This is the only group with a designated recreation area (a volleyball net and volleyball) on campus. This is one of the few groups on campus who take classes together and socialize together. (Funeral services, engineering, and allied health students are similar.) These groups are sanctioned by the institution, as demonstrated by the assignment of faculty advisors and other support to students according to their academic discipline.

In contrast, "spades players" are viewed as "losers" who waste time. For example, a staff member remarked to me at one point, "Why are you spending your time with those losers? They want to waste their time playing cards instead of studying. They are all going to flunk out anyway" (Fieldnotes, 9/6/89). This sentiment has also been expressed through the action of an administrator who, visibly upset about the noise generated by the spades game in the commons, approached the players to admonish them that their behavior was inappropriate.
for the setting. In reality, there was no place at Deep South designated for such behavior, even though similar behavior is at least acceptable in certain designated locations on other college campuses. Therefore, the activity central to this group is viewed as something other than acceptable by the institution.

What all these groups (except the "all right people") did share in common was the location at which they spent their time together. From the beginning of the research in November 1988 until the present, the central location of Black student grouping at Deep South has been the student commons. The student commons is located in a large one-story building annexed to the rear of the main classroom building on the campus. It is easily accessed by students and faculty. There are two main entrances and exits: one on the east side to a main parking lot and one on the west side to the classroom building and campus quadrangle. The commons contains the only cafeteria and eating space with tables and chairs on the campus. Since it is centrally located, throughout the day hundreds of students pass through the area.

The noise that emanates from the commons drowns out the usual sounds associated with cafeterias. In fact, the Deep South student commons is the meeting place and eating place for students, faculty, and staff. Because the college's population is growing faster than the physical plant can accommodate, there is no other place to meet between classes.

The commons is fertile ground to observe student subcultures, for depending on the day of the week and the hour of the day the commons takes on
different sounds, silences, colors, and degrees of activity. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the commons is full to capacity, with every table occupied. During the lunch hour, the forward section of the commons nearest the serving line is filled with people eating. In this section nearest the serving line one will observe tables occupied by a cross section of the college's faculty, staff, and student body. There are tables with all whites, tables with all Blacks, tables with a mixture of Blacks and whites, males and females. In the rear of the commons, comprising about a third of the space, tables are occupied by Black students. Some of these students will be seen eating, some talking, others in their own worlds listening with headsets to their walkmen and "jamming" to sounds only they can hear. Others are listening to a boom box playing their favorite rap song.

As the women were describing where different groups of Black students can be found in the commons, I was making a map of the space to visualize spatial relationships. I showed them the diagram; they concurred that that was where they could be found (see Figure 1 below). The only group that the women could not locate in the diagram was the "wanna be 's." They also said that the best time to find these groups is between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I found out later that on Tuesdays and Thursdays there are fewer students in the commons because fewer students have classes on those days.
PLEASE NOTE

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tables are higher than the rectangular tables, and those who sit there get the sensation of being perched high above all others in the commons. This vantage point allows those sitting there to see more of the commons.

The spatial relationship between the location of whites and Blacks in the commons reproduces the societal phenomenon by which racism positions whites in the dominant front line of society while Blacks must content themselves in the rear of opportunities. Paradoxically, students locate themselves this way in the commons by their own choosing, at least on the surface. White and Black students position themselves where they feel most comfortable, but unconsciously they appear to be acting out power relationships to which they are accustomed in society. When asked about their selection of seating in the commons, Black students consistently responded that this was their "spot."

**Verification of Black Student Groupings**

While initial observations in the student commons revealed the spatial relations described above, subsequent observations and student contact assisted in confirming, modifying, expanding upon, and even eliminating various Black student groups as identified by the female informants. For example, there was an overwhelmingly negative reaction from students to the description of the female students identified as "wanna be's." Female respondents referred to these women with the "stacks" hair style as "gangsters," "hard women," and "dope addicts." On the other hand, males acknowledged noticing the women dressed
according to the description, but offered no such responses about them. There was no consistent opinion regarding where one could find the "wanna be's" congregating. Subsequent observations revealed that other than a common hair style, there was no other justification for identifying these women as a group.

The "all right people" and the "strays," as described by the informants, were not easily identifiable. Other Black students consulted had difficulty identifying and locating these students. The "basketball team" and the "aircraft people" were more easily recognizable, but these identities were not fashioned by the students themselves. I chose to focus attention on a group of Black students with varying curriculum interests, who had decided to group themselves for reasons other than those provided by the institution. Focusing on students with different curricula and career interests would demonstrate not only the diversity of interests among Black students but also the extent of attraction or commitment to that common activity bringing them together. By not choosing a group brought together through the influence of the institution or curriculum, I could tell these students' personal reason for deciding to be a part of the group.

When asked about the "spades players," every student encountered confirmed that these students were easily identifiable because they were always in the commons playing cards. It became evident to me that the "spades players" were the most recognizable group of Black students on whom to focus my study. I also chose this group because it was so visible yet so overlooked by faculty and staff. Also, this group was more consistent in its gatherings on campus. The
group could be found in the commons playing spades each day school was open.

As I learned the spades players' names, I investigated their grades. According to records from the College Registrar's office, the average grade point average among these students is below 2.0, which by the institution's definition places them on academic probation. The spades players therefore were an appropriate selection of a group for my study to determine any possible link between a self motivated grouping on campus and academic performance.

Before I had begun my anticipated search for an opposition group of Black students with whom to contrast the spades players, the "senators" emerged. While talking with a Black female student, who happened to be the Student Government Association President, about my difficulties in getting the spades players to sign participant consent forms, as required by the college's Human Subjects Review Committee, I learned about a group of Black students who saw themselves in opposition to the spades players. The SGA president remarked that the spades players were wasting their time playing cards and that they would soon find themselves in academic difficulty. Describing them as lazy and uncommitted to anything other than card playing, she said they would either drop out of school or stop playing cards. She said that she did not have much regard for them because she preferred positive people; they were not a positive group. When I asked her to define a positive group, she said, "A group that is about something. Black people don't have time to sit around playing cards. We have to uplift ourselves and uplift our people. We need to be involved in endeavors that will
inspire our brothers and sisters to be about improving themselves" (Interview, 2/10/89).

After she had expressed her strong views about the spades players, I asked whether there were any other students like herself that felt as she did. She said that the ten Black SGA "senators" (Student Government Association leaders) all felt the way she did, and she knew they would enjoy telling me about their feelings. She gave me the names of six Black senators and said she would arrange a meeting of all ten of them. As she walked out of her office she said, "Don't waste your time with those spades players. You need to do your study on Black SGA senators."

Subsequently I interviewed, individually, the six senators the SGA president had recommended, as well as the other four. Although their individual stories are different, I found that several commonalities influence the formation of the Black senators as a group. Most important for this study, SGA senators must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5 in order to participate; therefore, according to the institution's standard, they would be considered achievers.

The senators are legitimized and formally recognized by the institution, whereas spades players are viewed as outside the mainstream of campus life. This is so not only because of their academic status, but also because the spades players' time outside class is consistently spent in the commons playing cards. This is viewed by other students and staff as a "waste of time." This attitude of the college community serves to marginalize the spades players.
Senators are highly visible on campus. To distinguish themselves from other students, SGA senators wear (daily) a brass plated name plate identifying themselves as senators. On certain occasions, they wear sweat shirts with "SGA SENATOR" painted on the shirt. The two major duties of a senator are to help promote and work at all student activities and to meet once weekly to discuss organizational matters. The senators associate with other senators, Black and white, and are known by many faculty members and students on the campus. Sometimes their photographs appear in the school paper, and they take trips and have opportunities to be in the midst of visiting dignitaries.

Like the senators, the spades players are visible. In fact, they are perhaps the most visible group of students in the commons. Their games are so intense that the noise they generate often causes disturbances in the eating area. At the very least, their activity of choice creates much attention for them that they feel they do not seem to get otherwise, from the institution or from other students. This is evidenced by their lack of participation in any campus activity other than spades playing. The majority of the spades players are relatively new students, and were it not for their spades playing they would not know anyone, nor would they know whether they had something else in common with other students. Because of their lack of assertiveness in meeting other students on campus they feel left out. The spades game gives them an easy way not only to meet others, but also to stand out and be noticed by other students or the institution's faculty and staff. The majority of these students has not been approached to join in any
activity.

The different expressions of group solidarity and the different academic performance levels of the senators and spades players demonstrate the diversity of subcultures created by Black students at Deep South Community College. One goal of the present research is to determine whether there is a relationship between each group's subculture expression and level of academic achievement. This research will help determine whether a general relationship exists between how Black students group themselves and their academic performance. If such a relationship is found, implications may be drawn for how the institution should respond to Black students as well as how useful a community college education is for Black students.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories Regarding the Education of Black Students

Why should educational theory concern itself with race? Some would argue that it should not, on the grounds that attentiveness to racial differences risks racism. Others, including mainstream sociologists of education, reduce the complexities associated with race to a theoretical discussion of the educability of minorities. Their main concern has been to explain perceived differences between Black and white students as reflected in standardized test scores and drop-out rates. Mainstream theorists have tended to "blame the victims." Interventions and curriculum practices predicated on these approaches attempt to improve minority school performance through manipulation of specific school variables such as teacher behavior, methods of testing, and placement (Ogbu, 1987).

However, a number of theorists argue that cultural differences between white and Black Americans, traceable to European and African roots, render Black students disadvantaged in American schools, since these schools reflect a Eurocentric perspective. According to this theory, the Eurocentric perspective dominates the American school's culture as EuroAmericans dominate society through power and influence. As a result, Eurocentrism permeates all societal institutions, including schools. Consequently, schools reflect the dominant culture by setting performance standards based on Eurocentric perspectives. Several theorists agree that in order to perpetuate this social class stratification schools intentionally permit Blacks and other minorities to fail. Such a theorist is Janice
Hale-Benson (1986), who writes,

School systems and other educational institutions allow those individuals to succeed who accept the values generated by the dominant Euro-American culture and inculcated by the school. Thus, the high failure and drop out rate among black and other minority students is considered the intended consequence of school systems developed to reproduce the social class structure of twentieth century capitalist America. (p. 19)

Hale-Benson indicts school systems and other educational institutions based on the assumption that the inordinate focus on the majority culture in America marginalizes students from minority cultures. Their cultures, even their learning styles, become less important than the Eurocentric model and learning style.

Neo-Marxist sociologists of curriculum and education such as Berlowitz (1980) and Nkomo (1984) call for no less than the abandonment of capitalism. Locating the roots of racial domination within capitalism and its elaboration as a world system, these radical critics of schooling place the problem of racial inequality under the general rubric of working class oppression (McCarthy, 1988).

While Neo-Marxists express the extreme view, many theorists agree that the educational problem for African Americans is rooted in the difference between the Afrocentric and Eurocentric approaches to cognitive learning styles and behaviors. (Hale-Benson, 1986; Asante and Asante, 1990; Gibson, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975). This difference deserves closer attention.

Afrocentricity is said to make no sharp distinction between the ego and the world, subject and object. In the conflict between the self and the world, African culture makes the self the center of the world. Since the African world is centered on the self, every experience and reality itself is personal (Ruch &
Anayanwu, 1981). Cultural differences therefore are rooted in differing views of reality. An Afrocentric perspective is that everything is in relation to Africa, not Africa in mere geographic terms but Africa as vision and ideal (Asante, 1983).

In contrast to the Afrocentric view is the Eurocentric perspective. The difference between these two perspectives of reality can be made clear through Bradley's (1978) theory of European origin. Bradley's thesis is that the rise of Europeans occurred in the caves of Europe during the time of glaciers. Their use and worship of fire arose during the same period. Their desire to keep to themselves led to a fear of strangers and an aggressive protection of one's fire. According to Bradley, the Europeans' aggressiveness constitutes the single most important factor in their expansion throughout the world. It was not only spatial but intellectual. Geographically and intellectually, what they saw they attempted to fill, even though there were other people or ideas already in place. The aim of Eurocentric aggression is to dominate through the subjection of nature and people. Bradley (1978) concludes that ultimately, this quest for domination is a quest for salvation which Europeans find only in the acquisition of more and more.

In acknowledging fundamental cultural differences between these perspectives of reality, it then becomes problematic that schools protect, promote, and perpetuate only the perspective of the dominant European-American culture. One explanation for the difficulties Black children experience in school may be their participation in a culture that is very different from the culture which
designed the school (Hale-Benson, 1986).

African American culture is distinct from European American culture. The vast majority of distinguishing characteristics is traceable to elements of African culture retained by African slaves in America. For example, the African American concept of extended family is found in all Afrocentric communities especially in the Caribbean and West Africa today (Chimezie, 1983).

Why is interest in Black consciousness significant? Studies of Black consciousness have suggested the existence of a strong link between a variety of important African American behaviors and levels of Black or African self consciousness. Most findings in the area of Black consciousness research suggest a strong link between high levels of Black consciousness and positive or effective psychological functioning and behavior among Black people (Baldwin, Duncan & Bell, 1987; Gibson, 1984; Hilliard, 1972; Williams, 1981).

Since a positive attitude toward self among Black people is an outgrowth of racial pride, it would seem to follow that encouraging such an attitude would promote motivation toward academic success. In an article entitled "Correlates of Achievement Among Northern and Southern Negro Students," Edgar Epps (1969) cites the value of non-intellectual characteristics that relate directly to academic achievement of Black students:

A student's achievement behavior (performance) is a reflection of the interaction between social position, socialization experiences, and genetic endowments. We would expect family status to be positively related both to achievement behavior and to achievement related personality characteristics. However, it is the end product of socialization—manifest personality characteristics and attitudes—that is thought to be most directly
related to academic achievement. The aspect of personality that is most clearly related to academic achievement is motivation. (p. 57)

Since racial identity and self consciousness play such a crucial role in the educational achievement of Black students, traditional research methods, based on quantitative data, often prove inadequate. An example of research among Black Community College students that uses a questionnaire survey is a study by Yvonne Abatso (1985). Posing attitudinal questions, she elicited from the 120 respondents solid evidence of three factors that correlate with academic success among Black students: (1) confidence in one's own ability, (2) an internal locus of control, and (3) a positive perception of opportunity. Such personality traits are vital as a basis for the "coping" strategies that Black college students need to succeed in a race-conscious society.

As members of a negatively valued minority group, these young people must learn a sense of self-competence within a societal framework which views their ethnic group members as incompetent, dependent, and powerless. Realistically, they must always consider the possible effect of their minority status on their risk-taking, expectations, and decision making. It is likely for them that the two major socializing institutions in their life—family and school—will be overburdened with problems which complicate the implementation of their culturally assigned tasks. (p. 131)

While Abatso's conclusions demonstrate an understanding of Black students' problems, the actual findings of her research do not reveal much about the deeper influences of the students' lived culture, nor do they shed much light on the role of the institution, direct or subtle, on student achievement or failure. A more revealing research method for this purpose has been ethnography.
Ethnography and Schooling

Researchers interested in exploring the effects of cultural and racial conflicts on Black students' academic success often rely upon ethnography rather than quantitative techniques. Ethnography involves a detailed description of social subjects as they actively and creatively make sense of their social worlds. It permits the researcher to uncover theory inductively, based on data collected by entering into the lived culture of the research subjects. Faithfulness to a culture as it is found is one of the guiding principles of ethnography, and immersion in the culture under study is the general strategy towards this end (Woods, 1985). Since the early 1960's, ethnographic studies of student life in schools have helped to establish a process for inquiry in which the primary concern is given to subcultural differentiation and interaction in the schools (Cusick, 1973).

There are two approaches to ethnography, both of which are qualitative and descriptive rather than quantitative. The traditional or naturalistic ethnographer purports to avoid involvement and aspires to be an unobtrusive observer, who attempts to become immersed in the environment without affecting it. Anthropologist Harry Wolcott (1973) is such a researcher. The concern is with objective description rather than theory. The assumption is that one can be a "fly on the wall" and not be noticed, or in any way affect the environment (Roman, 1988, p. 130), and this assumption has often been challenged by materialist ethnographers, who prefer to assume the role of participant in the environment under study.
Naturalistic ethnography, as widely used by traditional anthropologists, serves the purpose of researchers who want to enter a subculture as foreigners. Their purpose is to explore the subculture in the context of their subjects' own natural settings and yet remain careful not to disturb the ecology of those settings by avoiding the acknowledgement of personal subjectivity, such as the influence of the researcher's own race, class, and gender.

Naturalistic ethnography creates a bifurcation between description and theory. Description is viewed as value neutral, while theory is viewed as value laden. According to Roman (1988), this is problematic because the researcher cannot separate himself from what he studies. In naturalistic ethnography the researcher constructs himself or herself as a neutral and unobtrusive observer in an attempt to describe apparent social reality, but does not analyze the social reality hidden behind the appearance (Roman 1988). It is just this notion that stimulates Hammersley and Atkinson's (1981) criticism of naturalistic ethnography for placing restrictions upon ethnographers to merely describe the social world under study rather than to theorize about the underlying structures and power relations producing such a social world, as the materialist does not hesitate to do.

Positivistic research, which influences naturalistic ethnography, is usually associated with quantitative research. Positivism purports to exclude or limit subjectivity by distancing the researcher and object of research. This research calls for a neutral collection, analysis, and reporting of data. As a convention of
positivism, the researcher enters the research field suspending any prior assumptions and theoretical commitments. Thereby, it is argued, the researcher can acquire a certain objectivity not available to the subjects themselves. Both positivism and naturalism assume that the researcher is a detached observer who "minimizes" the research subjects' reactivity to the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1981). Both positivism and naturalism claim that neutrality on the part of the researcher is attainable and desirable. They both require the researcher to be an objective observer.

The "historical materialist" method of investigation, on the other hand, provides an explanatory theory that situates the understandings of the research subjects and the researcher within the underlying social reality. Materialism makes an explicit commitment to understand and transform the various forms of subordination that exist in society (Roman, 1988). The researcher therefore is not only acknowledged in the research field, but is an active participant in what makes up the social reality. The materialist perspective will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, which will describe the methodology of this study.

Ethnographies of schooling deal with issues relative to educational institutions and the subcultures students create in these environments. In recent years ethnographic studies have extended earlier analyses of school experience by identifying the wide range of responses students can give to schooling that are socially constructed along both class and gender dimensions (Willis, 1977;

Paul Willis' classic ethnography of school, *Learning to Labor* (1977), focuses upon class concerns. Willis focuses on the working class cultural pattern of "failure" of non-academic disaffected males in England. The theory that emerges from Willis' ethnography is that the working class "lads' own culture, manifested as a counter-school culture, most effectively prepares the "lads" for working class jobs and at the same time limits them to those jobs. Willis refers to this process as self-damnation. This damnation according to Willis is experienced, paradoxically, as a form of resistance. Willis' study demonstrates how resistance in school can serve to reproduce rather than transform existing social relations (Aggleton, 1987). While the focus of Willis' study is the "lads" who set themselves up for failure, he contrasts them with a group that succeeds academically, whom he calls the "ear'oles." These students succeed because they do not feel compelled to resist the educational environment.

A study by Robert Everhart (1983), though influenced by Willis, is unusual in that it does not focus on failure. Everhart studies junior high students' counter-culture in a Midwestern, white Anglo-Saxon, Protestant community. The focus of the school is to prepare the working class and middle class students for the workforce. In this respect, the school limits students' productivity to what society dictates as the students' location within its structures. However, due to the homogeneity of class and race within that community, even those students who fail academically have a safety net to keep them in the mainstream of society.
Although Everhart's two groups oppose each other and resist the school's structure by behavior such as joking and making fun of girls, they succeed in the end. The school, orchestrated by societal, governmental, economic, and cultural forces, creates in the students a self-identity with the knowledge and cultural forms that serve to recreate what exists within its community.

Though class and gender constructs are inextricably related to race (McCarthy, 1988; Apple, 1983), there are fewer ethnographies that focus on the relationship of race to school failure than studies relating school failure to class and gender. Specifically, there is relatively little research on Black community college students (Allen, 1985).

In *Between Two Worlds* (1985), an ethnography of Black community college students, Lois Weis finds that Black students are positioned somewhere between the quest for an education and a good paying job, on the one hand, and demonstrating behavior common to the ghetto on the other hand. This behavior positions them outside what is deemed appropriate by the institution. In Weis' study students seek higher education as a way out of the ghetto, yet the culture they reproduce on campus, according to the researcher, results in their returning to the ghetto without the college degree they desired. These students want the anticipated results of academic labor, but they are unwilling or unable to produce the required work. Academic achievement is viewed as something foreign to these Black community college students.

Weis argues that Black students are not likely to experience success at a
community college because the culture they reproduce at the institution reflects the self-defeating aspects of the culture within the Black community. According to Weis, drug usage, lack of concern for punctuality and attendance, and abuse of financial aid for personal gain typify a subculture within the black community. It is important to note that Weis came to this conclusion without any evidence of field work or any other type of research within the Black community.

One of Weis' conclusions about elements of Black culture within Urban College is that Blacks create a culture that causes racial tensions among the races: "Elements of culture are created within Urban College, and it is these elements that help reproduce and maintain broader race and class antagonisms" (p. 56). The basic fallacy of this conclusion is that the blame or cause of oppression and racism toward Blacks is being shifted from the white oppressor to victimized Blacks. Weis justifies her conclusion by proposing that Blacks are really at fault for race and class antagonisms because Blacks make whites annoyed by their Black culture: "An important point here is that white students resent Black student culture primarily because they feel that it hurts their (whites') own personal chance of success within the institution and in the broader society" (p. 56). Weis even justifies the feelings of these white students by saying, "White students are not simply reacting to Black students on the basis of long-standing prejudice and stereotypes" (p. 56). Earlier, Weis says that her investigation of Urban College suggests that the community college serves fundamentally to reproduce structured social inequality. The way this occurs, she says, is tied in
contradictory ways to the culture students themselves produce within the institution—"culture that is rooted in but not 'determined' by the existing social structure" (p. 13).

It is problematic that Weis neglects to address cultural differences within the Black community that may have no association with drug use, lack of concern for time, and abuse of financial aid. By this omission, Weis portrays the culture of the Black community in a monolithic manner. This affects her cultural explanations. Subsequently, she overlooks any differences among Black students' culture reproduced on the campus.

In an attempt to consider black people's expressive responses to their historical status and experience in America, Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1986) investigated a group of academic achievers from a Black high school in Washington D.C. The authors report that in some segments of the Black community there is a kind of cultural orientation based on an historical fictive kinship that encourages a collective perspective by some Blacks regarding nearly all aspects of African American life. Fordham (1988) defines "fictive kinship" as a kinship-like connection between and among persons in society, not related by blood or marriage, who have maintained essential reciprocal social, economic and political relationships. The term conveys the idea of "brotherhood" and "sisterhood" of all Black Americans; thus a sense of peoplehood or collective social identity. (p. 56)

In their 1986 study, Fordham and Ogbu found that among their subjects, the common perception about academic learning in school was that to achieve academically was to "act white." Consequently, only those students who did not
fear being accused of "acting white" did better in school. "Acting white" accusations stem from a history wherein academic success was the prerogative of the white dominated society only.

The Black high school students in this study felt that they had to project a raceless persona in order to achieve academically. Such an attitude helps fuel the self contemptuous dualism of Blacks who want to be white. According to the authors, this self contempt leads to personality confusion, associated ambivalent identification, and weak ego structure. Knowing that they are viewed as subordinate, certain Black individuals struggle to regain their personhood by denying their color, by fantasizing social distance between themselves and their racial group, and by wishful thinking in which these individuals desire membership in the white group. Fordham and Ogbu address this issue as follows:

Subordinate minorities regard certain forms of behavior and certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings as not appropriate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans. At the same time they emphasize other forms of behavior and other events, symbols, and meanings as more appropriate for them because these are not a part of white Americans' way of life. (p. 26)

Whether the environment they create on campus is a representation of closeness and sharing, or a respite from the conflicts and turmoil of the home, the institution's lack of acceptance and receptivity to this culture sends the message that the institution does not value these students or their culture. This institutional response serves as another non-intellectual factor influencing these students' academic performance.

In an subsequent ethnographic study, Signithia Fordham (1988) studied two
groups of Black students in an integrated high school setting. The group that achieved academically were those who forfeited their strong allegiance to the Black community and their connections with their fictive kinship system.

Fordham finds, further, that the "racelessness" required for success is more frequently found in Black females than in Black males, and for this reason the female students more often experience academic success. Blaming both the society and the schools, Fordham cites the institutional response to the culture of Black students as a determining factor in their self concept and level of academic achievement:

Despite the growing acceptance of ethnicity and strong ethnic identification in the larger American society, school officials appear to disapprove of a strong ethnic identity among Black adolescents, and these contradictory messages produce conflict and ambivalence in the adolescents, both toward developing strong racial and ethnic identities and toward performing well in school. (p. 80)

The depiction of Black students in these ethnographies seems to suggest that Black students must reject their culture in order to succeed academically. This would help to explain why the success rate of Black students in predominantly Black institutions is much higher than in predominantly white institutions. White colleges enroll more Black students nationally than Black colleges, but Black colleges graduate more Blacks than do white colleges. Forty percent of Blacks receive their degrees from Black colleges. The factors influencing Black colleges' success at graduating students are 1) there are many role models for students; 2) teachers have high expectations and a caring attitude; 3) there is interaction between students and teachers, and 4) institutional racism
is not a barrier (Fleming, 1984).

Not only does the research suggest that Black students must choose between their culture and academic success, but many researchers find, as Willis did, that schools tend to limit students to society's dictates regarding class location. This idea of limitation regarding class location is significant not only to the Willis and Everhart studies but also to community colleges where vocational-technical curricula and programs reflect the working class jobs that are available in the community in which the college is located. Community colleges serve more as a class based tracking system than as avenues for upward social mobility, particularly since the mid-eighties when the trend towards career education became important (Brint & Karabel, 1989).

The community college is not a research institution; therefore, program offerings and curricular development reflect what jobs are required by the job market in the local area. This serves to limit training capacity to working class jobs and insures that the vast majority of individuals will not go beyond the social and economic class structure of the community. Bowles and Gintis (1976) conclude that schools' normal function is to produce knowledge according to societal demands for labor and power.

John Ogbu's ethnographic study, The Next Generation (1974), differs from the other studies cited. His thesis is that the high proportion of school failures among Blacks is both a reaction and an adaptation to the limited opportunity available to them to benefit from their education. The subculture
they manifest in school is not one of resistance, but it is more a "retreatest subculture" — a concept Ogbu borrows from Cloward and Ohlin's Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs (1960). This is an adaptation people develop when they see others like themselves who fail to reach their goal through the methods prescribed by society or by any other. Ogbu insists that those subordinate minorities who attain equal education (quantitatively and qualitatively) with members of the dominant group are forced to accept occupation and wages below those given to whites. Faced with this educational dilemma, many subordinate minorities apparently choose to stop working hard in school since they can neither expect more for their hard work nor force society to change its discriminatory practice. These minorities, therefore, justify their lack of serious competition in school by saying that it is useless trying to work as hard as whites in school when school success would not qualify them to succeed in society because they are Black.

Unlike Ogbu (1974), who places most of the blame for Black students' failure on society, Weis draws very different conclusions, faulting the students' unwillingness to accept the rules of the system. Yet, both Ogbu and Weis acknowledge the problem of the conflict of cultures and the negative results on the achievement of Black students. Though Weis does not refer to the subculture that Black students created on campus as a counter-school culture, the behavior they manifested, i.e., lack of attention to punctuality and attendance, drug abuse, and financial aid abuse, can be viewed as counter-school culture, as resistance.
The Black students in Weis' (1985) study, like the "lads" in Willis' study, were destined for academic failure. Unlike the "lads," however, who graduated into working class jobs, the students in the Weis study were destined to return to their ghetto way of life jobless. Such is the reality for many African Americans and a difference between the whites and Blacks in America. Weis then relates academic performance of Black students in her study to cultural production rather than intellectual ability.

In each of these studies there emerges a common theme regarding subcultures in schools that reflects a group being challenged or confronted because of race, class, or culture. In each situation there is some manifestation of resistance on the part of the students who do not do well academically to the extent that the school requires. Willis' "lads" and Everhart's "boys" express their resistance to the authority in school by "laffing" or "goofing off." yet in the final analysis, each of these groups accepts the path that has been determined by its class location and subculture produced at the institution. The Black students in Weis' study resist by reproducing their own culture on the campus which is in opposition to the white middle class culture of the school.

In each study there are other student groups who do not resist the school culture, but since these groups are generally not the primary group being studied the reader is not privileged to their stories. For example, we do not know how the "ear'oles," the achievers in Willis' (1977) study, managed to achieve academically and what motivated them to conform to the dominant school culture,
even though they were from similar class, race, and gender backgrounds as the lads. Likewise, Weis does not dwell on how the academic achievers in her study managed to succeed despite their cultural differences, except by saying that they altered their culture to accommodate the school's culture.

The current research aspires to provide a comparison and contrast of group solidarity in two distinct groups among Black students. Not only does this serve to refute the monolithic treatment of Black student groups, but it demonstrates the diversity in subculture production among Black students even within the same institution. In the current study, as in the Fordham and Ogbu study with high school youngsters "acting white," the Eurocentric perspective within which the school operates is certainly influential. Only Fordham--and to a lesser extent Ogbu--examines both the successful and the unsuccessful groups of minority students in some depth. Therefore, a goal of the current study is to compare the students at Deep South with those studied by Fordham, since that study also compares a group of failing students with a group that succeed.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

My approach to gathering data was as a participant observer. My selection of methodology was based on the desire to tell the story of the in-school experiences of Black community college students during a three-year period. I wanted to go beyond statistical data and instead portray a meaningful profile of these students that will aid in understanding why certain Black students fail and others succeed.

Naturalist Versus Materialist Approach

My decision to employ a materialist rather than a naturalist approach is partially based upon my position as an administrator in the institution and partly based upon a kinship with many of those who advocate this approach on theoretical grounds. One role of an administrator is to be observant of what happens at the institution that may impact instruction. Along with this function goes information gathering, analysis, reporting to a higher authority, and providing a recommended resolution. These actions require involvement. The naturalist approach to ethnography requires the researcher to be an objective observer. However, observations cannot be completely void of theory. The researcher cannot stand outside humanness. Data are created by questions selected and asked in an order determined by the researcher and are subject to the interpretation that the researcher brings to them. D. C. Phillips (1987) states, "Observation is always theory laden" (p. 11). Further, he acknowledges that
research should be free of gross defects, but argues that objectivity does not guarantee certainty. I agree.

Moreover, it is not practical for me to project myself as a stranger or foreigner to the social world in which my study takes place. Because of my high visibility as an administrator at the institution where the study is located, it is not realistic to conceive of my going "native" and not being noticed. An attempt to do this would be ludicrous and would have resulted in loss of credibility from my research subjects which would ultimately have jeopardized the effectiveness of the research.

**Materialist Perspective**

In addition to the practical advantages of the materialist approach for my study, there are strong theoretical and political advantages as well. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), the researcher is the key instrument in ethnographic research, utilizing insights for analysis. Critical ethnography employs contextual description of social subjects as they actively and creatively make sense of their social world.


Contemporary society consists of groups of individuals, defined simultaneously by age, sex, class, nationality and by racial and ethnic origin, and these groups differ markedly from each other, both physically and psychologically. Liberal political theory has tended to ignore or minimize all these differences. Marxist political theory has tended to recognize only differences of class. The political theory of radical feminism has tended to
recognize only differences of age and sex, to understand these in universal terms, and often to view them as determined biologically. By contrast, socialist feminism recognizes all these differences as constituent parts of contemporary human nature and seeks a way of understanding them that is not only materialist but also historical. (p. 43)

Thus, as Jagger explains, gender, age, class, and race simultaneously define who we are, and how we are alike and at the same time define us politically. The distinction between liberal, Marxist, and radical feminist political theories is primarily based on how one is defined according to class and gender. Race is conspicuously omitted from these three political perspectives. Only socialist feminism, according to Jaggar, considers race and age with equal respect to class, as significant components of what makes up human nature. The materialist perspective is identified as a means of understanding how these "constituent parts" relate.

The less than balanced treatment of race as a constituent part of human nature by mainstream political theorists reflects how race is marginalized in the Eurocentric tradition where everything is viewed from the white perspective. When phenomena are viewed from a Eurocentric perspective, the only race that counts is European. From this perspective racial problems belong to all those who are not of European ancestry (Asante & Asante, 1990; Karenga, 1989; Magubane, 1989).

Jaggar (1983) presents a conception of human nature investigation that is founded on the Marxist principle that class society creates broad social types of human beings. The nature of individuals is determined by the mode of
production that prevails in society and by their place within the class system of
that society. Marxists believe that in every class society there is a dialectical
relation between the dominant ideology and the mode of production, such that
each influences the other. Marx refers to praxis, consisting of physical labor
directed toward transforming the material world so it will satisfy human needs.
Jaggar (p. 60) says that only through praxis, or collective action to satisfy our
human needs, can there be a transformation of nature. Praxis is therefore
conscious and purposeful human activity.

This concept of praxis and transformation relates to research or
investigation of human nature and activity. Jaggar interprets Marxist theory about
human nature, based on Marx's argument that human nature is necessarily
historical and cannot be investigated by the method of abstracting from particular
circumstances. For human nature is precisely the particular circumstances which
pertain in any given society; if we abstract those circumstances, we abstract
precisely what is human. Instead, human nature must be investigated empirically
within specific historical contexts and in particular with regard to the prevailing
mode of organizing productive activity. This is what is meant by the "historical
materialist" method of investigation:

According to Marx, as we have seen, "All history is nothing but the
continuous transformation of human nature." The psychological and even
the biological constitution of human beings changes constantly with changes
in the mode of production. The one constant in human life is the necessity
for praxis, for conscious physical labor that transforms the material world
in the course of satisfying human needs and which, in transforming the
non-human world, transforms human nature itself. (Jaggar, 1983, p. 56)
Materialism makes an explicit commitment to understand and transform the various forms of subordination that exist in society. Understanding what influences academic achievement among Black community college students is important because of the potential such information has for transformation among those students who are not achievers but want to be. Such information may also provide a basis for transformation of the community college, its faculty and administration. One may argue that any research has the potential for eventual transformation, but in the concept of materialist ethnography political and social change is an interest of the researcher. "Materialism views knowledge as arising through practical social struggle to change the social world, a struggle that in turn changes the human subjects themselves" (Roman 1988, p. 58).

Critical ethnographers of the genre of materialists approach their research without the bifurcation of description and analysis as with naturalistic ethnography. The critical ethnographer believes that because the researcher cannot approach research void of humanness and all that that implies, the researcher cannot separate himself or herself from what is described. Choices made regarding what is described, and discrimination regarding how all this relates to the researcher and others, are within the realm of analysis. The critical ethnographer therefore places reactions to the data and the research subjects within the description.

Ethnographies of schooling, particularly those dealing with Black students (Weis, 1985; Ogbu, 1974; Fordham, 1988), handle school failure as a transmittable
disease that requires rubber gloves and a surgical mask to keep the "doctor" safe from catching the disorder. There is no indication of change on the part of the researcher or research subjects. Participant-observer research should be transformative in that the researcher acknowledges participation in the lived experiences of the subjects which may affect change in both the lives of the researcher and the subjects of the research. Unlike the naturalistic researcher who holds back, positioning himself as an actor in the lives of the research subjects by avoiding responding to subjects with opinions, advice, or admonishments, I was open to respond in a "transformative" manner. The end result of this attitude led to certain changes in my life and perhaps changes in the lives of my research subjects that will be identified later.

**Overall Plan of the Research**

Rather than use a survey questionnaire for collecting data, I have elected to employ a critical ethnographic research method that allows for relative immersion into the lived culture of the subjects of the research. I have collected data from formal and informal interviews with students, teachers, and parents, as well as field and observation notes written while in classrooms, around the school, in community settings, and at various student activities on and off campus. The main analytic task of this dissertation is to produce from this data bank an accurate account of the influence of group solidarity experiences and institutional responses on the academic performance of two groups of Black community
college students. To this end, everything I have seen, heard, and experienced with these students becomes meaningful data that will assist me in creating a richly descriptive account about their experiences with community college education.

The emergence of theory is said to be gradual and inductive. This method is called "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss 1967), whereby theory emerges from and is grounded in the data. Theory is discovered from data as data are gathered. Categories such as language usage, power relations, gender relations, classroom behavior, self confidence and others are identified from fieldnotes, transcriptions, memoranda of personal reflections, and official data. These materials are read, reread and coded according to the categories identified. The collection of transcripts of interviews, fieldnotes, and memoranda spanning a three-year period are available upon request from the researcher. An inventory of cited data appears in the Appendix.

In the present study, categories are coded as outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982, pp. 156-162) to provide a means of sorting the descriptive data collected according to topics. Families or kinds of codes employed in such a method can include the following: setting/context codes (description of the community college); definition of situation codes (how the subjects see themselves in relation to the college); subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects (how they use language, how they view others); process codes (periods in the lives of subjects that help order life history); activity codes (kinds of behavior of subjects); event codes (particular happenings in the lives of the subjects); strategy
codes (ways subjects accomplish things); relationship and social structure codes (patterns of behavior among people), and methods codes (materials pertinent to research procedures).

This process is accomplished by 1) constantly comparing incidents applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting the theory, and 4) writing the theory. This is known as the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 105).

A careful reading of the interview transcripts was made to compare behavior and language with my fieldnotes from observations to determine patterns of incidents, behavior, language usage, etc. Then I read other data to test and expand patterns that emerged in my first reading of transcripts and fieldnotes. Subsequent critical readings of these data helped to validate data from the first readings. I began to focus on producing a list of spatial relations, rituals, words and phrases, and ways of thinking. As a result of this exercise, themes began to emerge from the data.

Additional readings helped me to discover relationships among patterns that surfaced and repeated themselves. I made decisions and choices about data and codes that did or did not recur. Certain codes were abandoned due to lack of recurrence. The sub-themes, codes, and categories that remained were reshaped as emergent themes.

By constantly comparing the data, conceptualizing the problem in light of the data, contextualizing patterns and relationships, and reflecting on these
relationships, I discovered "generic themes" that led to the theory I anticipated would emerge. As Lofland (1974) describes this method, "The structure or process explicated is chosen and brought to a level of abstraction that makes it generally applicable rather than applicable only in a given institutional realm or ideological debate, or other localized concern" (p. 103). I do not claim these research findings to contain applicability to all Black students in community colleges; however, certainly these findings do provide a less monolithic portrayal of Black community college students than the Weis and Abatso research revealed. Subsequent research could help determine which research findings are more typical of Black community college students.

The subjects of my research share the common racial ancestry of Africans in the diaspora. They are all African Americans who possess other racial and ethnic ancestry that includes European and, in some cases, Native American bloodlines. Sometimes these other bloodlines are known through oral tradition from previous generations. Others know little about their ancestry except that they have melanin and are people of color with various hues within one family. What is significant is that all these students refer to themselves as Black, despite a difference in significance they may attach to this designation.

Most of these subjects also share socio-economic and class backgrounds. They come from a variety of neighborhoods in Magnolia City ranging from the low income housing projects, to all-Black neighborhoods away from the projects with varying degrees of delapidated rental housing, to home ownership in
integrated low-to moderate-income neighborhoods. Only a very small number of these students come from middle class or higher income families. Family education backgrounds range from college educated teachers to illiterate or barely literate school dropouts. Family work experiences range from domestic workers and laborers to school teachers.

This research will explore structural, interpersonal, and experiential factors that constitute a set of relationships and experiences that influence the actions of these community college students in school and out of school. In a similar study, Walter Allen (1985) conducted a study of the structural, interpersonal, and psychological correlates of success of Black students on white campuses in which he devised a matrix of twenty-one variables. I have borrowed from his matrix and enhanced his correlates based on my preliminary study of two groups of Black community college students. The correlates I will utilize to aid analysis of data from this study are as follows: student family background including class location, student high school experience, campus social interactions, classroom experiences, student's attitude about self, religion, race, achievement, outcomes related to academic success, expectations, and gender.

My Assumptions as a Researcher

Since I have worked for five years at the community college in this study, my position is similar to that described by Everhart in his preface to *Reading, Writing and Resistance* (1983). By his definition, in effect I actually entered the
field of research at that time (March, 1986). I began observing behavior patterns among students, faculty, and staff at that time, but without written observations. Since 1988 I have sharpened my observation skills and located myself within the field as a participant observer, thus allowing for continued social interaction between myself and those who would be selected as participants. I could not be a naturalistic observer attempting to blend into the environment without disturbing or interacting within the lived culture of my research subjects. On the contrary, my entrance to the field as ethnographer was complicated by the visibility of my position at the college.

At the time I began observations as a part of a pilot study for this research, I was an Assistant Dean and Director of the Night School. This position allowed me to participate as a campus administrator at official college and student government functions. For example, whenever there was a student function that went into the night, I was present and recognized as the college official representing the administration. This gave me recognition even when I did not want it. For example, quite often at dances beer was served, and I wanted to drink. However, I was on duty as the college official at the function and accepted that position as a part of the job. Also, at assemblies such as those sponsored by a specific student organization I was introduced to the audience as Assistant Dean. What this meant was that many students knew me from seeing me at various functions and activities on campus. I may not have had the occasion to meet a certain student, but that same student would talk to me because he or she
knew me from a distance. Even if a student had not learned who I was, the fact that I was always around and dressed with a tie and jacket distinguished me as staff or administration.

I felt my entrance to the field of research as peculiar since it meant my being in the same places I had been used to being, but now with a different purpose. Rather than being an actor, representative, or role model, I was an observer who wanted to blend in with students whom I had not really been a part of before. Suddenly I was expecting students to look at me differently than they had before, without any warning or preparation. I began to analyze my own assumptions.

First Assumption

From the beginning, I assumed that Deep South Community College, as a predominately white institution, was a hostile environment for Black students. This assumption was based on personal experiences at three predominantly white institutions of higher education. Throughout my six years of undergraduate and graduate studies I had only one Black teacher. I never saw a Black administrator at any of the institutions. I participated in Black student organizations that never seemed to have the attention of the administration, save a picketing experience when the news media were called. Since Black students were so few in number, we were viewed as a novelty rather than a threat or power with which to be reckoned. Whenever an issue or discussion involved something to do with Black people, since I was the resident Black person, I was asked to speak for my entire
race. I resented this and felt that I was being unfairly singled out and put on the spot.

Though nearly twenty years had gone by since my last student experience at a predominantly white institution, I nonetheless expected Deep South Black students to be victims of some of the same hostilities I had experienced.

**Second Assumption**

Another assumption with which I entered the field was that not all Black students do poorly academically. Some of them do succeed. Not only had I, as a Black student, done fairly well academically, but I had taught at a predominantly Black community college in the Northeast and was familiar with many Black students who had applied themselves to their work and had achieved success at the institution and after they departed. This community college had a Black president and a Black dean, and several Black staff members. However, Black faculty were few.

**Third Assumption**

My third assumption, confirmed early on, was that there was more complexity in the Black students' groupings than most researchers seem to recognize. The variety of Black cultural expressions, based on the multi-faceted nature of Black expression, generates different subcultural groups among Black students on the community college campus. For example, Weis sees the Black groupings as simply the ones who fail and the ones who succeed. Her omission of a discussion of subcultural groups within Black students at Urban College leaves a
void in her study. Not only does she focus on the students who fail, but she views them in a monolithic manner. Both my experience as a Black student and my acquaintance with Black students at Deep South convinced me that a number of groups existed. However, I entered the research with no \textit{a priori} assumptions concerning what those groupings were. My first task was to identify them.

\textbf{Fourth Assumption}

While my first three assumptions, all of which concerned the Black students, were to prove at least partially accurate, assumptions concerning my own role tended to be less so. My fourth assumption was that time for field work would be more available and less complicated to arrange than it would otherwise be because the research field was located where I was employed. There were certain benefits that included knowing the key people in the administration and on the staff who could facilitate my getting data on the students. There was also the benefit of being able to move about freely on campus without challenge from students or staff. There were, however, disadvantages.

On several occasions as I was walking on campus with the subjects of my research, one of my colleagues, a faculty or staff person, would ask me, "What are you doing, your research?" This was particularly sensitive in the early stages of rapport building with the spades players. At that time I was trying to be accepted into the group and did not want to call attention to myself. Though not one of the students remarked about this situation, it was another source of discomfort for me. Eventually, I realized that I could still be accepted or
acceptable to the group while simultaneously standing out for some of the various reasons as stated above. It is interesting that when similar situations occurred while I was with one or more senators, I felt no discomfort. To the contrary, on numerous occasions the senators remarked that they were impressed that I was doing my study on Black community college students and that they were happy to participate in this endeavor. Because of this attitude, it became increasingly easy to relate and spend time with the senators while my time spent with the spades players (during my entry into the field of research) was stressful.

Interruptions also proved to be a problem. Students who had worked in my office as work-study students (not spades players or senators) would see me sitting in the student commons with the spades players and call me Mr. Molina, as they were accustomed to do. This was, however, inconsistent with my request of the spades players that they call me by my first name. I felt that on such occasions my progress with rapport building with the spades players was retarded.

Suspicions of faculty members also arose from my research, especially when I asked them for permission to observe their classes. I sensed intimidation at times, stemming from my role as assistant dean. Despite a memorandum from the Vice President for Academic Affairs requesting their cooperation in my research, they had many questions about my research. These faculty members knew me as an administrator; it was clear they were suspicious as to why I had chosen their classes. After I had been in their classes for half a semester, the faculty members began to be more relaxed.
On at least three occasions while I was observing a card game, someone from my office came for me. This happened despite the fact that I was "on leave." I was annoyed that this happened, but that is the nature of my job. In itself the act of being called to my office is not important, but my being called away from the game once again made me conspicuous at a time I did not want to be.

Fifth Assumption

Another assumption I entered the research field with was that it would be easy for me to relate to Black students because I am Black. I thought that a natural bonding based on race would occur and enhance my acceptance within the student groups, making them more open to me. I did not consider the unequal power relations between the students and myself. This unequal power relation became evident to me as I entered the student commons to observe the spades players playing cards. While sitting at an adjacent table in order to observe the behavior of the players, I was continually engaged in conversations by faculty and staff and certain students who wanted to know what I was doing just sitting in the commons and not eating. Though the spades players did not express an interest in me one way or the other, I felt as if I were standing out like someone who was out of place. I sensed that this non-response from spades players was due to an unspoken desire to have me 1) finish what I was doing and go away, or 2) get disgusted and go away. In either case the lack of response from the students made me uneasy. Consequently, my entrance into the research field was filled
with discomfort. Few administrators eat in the student commons, so my sitting in
the commons near the noisy spades game was out of character for a person in my
position. No one ever told me this during the two years I spent in the student
commons, but for at least about the first three months I felt that way.

The unequal power relations between the students and faculty and staff
were also evident by the spades players\(^1\) referring to me as Mr. Molina, because
that is what other students call me.

As I reentered the commons about 1:15 pm. Keith, a former work study
student of mine, said, "How are you Mr. Molina?" Dana looked
surprised. "What did you call him?" Keith: "Mr. Molina, he's the night
dean." Dana: "I only know him as Tony." She looked over at me and I
said "That's right, Tony." (Fieldnotes, 12/13/89)

Later as our personal relationships developed several other students began to call
me by my first name, but the majority of them still call me Mr. Molina even
today. Despite my attempts to relate by being a part of the group, I was
constantly reminded of the unequal power relations between students and
administrators.

My positioning myself above my research subjects became evident to me
when I considered how class differences between the spades players and myself
affected the development of our relationship. Based on what I saw of these
individuals from a distance, I entered their culture on campus feeling
uncomfortable, uneasy and apprehensive. This along with what might be similar
feelings they had toward me led to the approximately six months it took to
establish a rapport and relationship.
Eventually, with both the parents of the spades players and the senators, I conducted a survey which I developed based on the Survey Research Center's Study of Job Characteristics and Social Attitudes (1980). Nearly all of the spades players come from working class families that are either unemployed, disabled, underemployed, or on some subsidy like social security or welfare. Of those spades players that work, all are being paid minimum wage. Several spades players do not work, and are dependent on their families. I concluded that racial identity with the spades players did not compensate for the barrier caused by class differences.

**Sixth Assumption**

Another false assumption concerning my role was that the age difference between the spades players and myself would not be a large problem. In fact, I hardly considered the problem at all. Yet I was over twice the age of nearly all of the spades players with whom I was attempting to develop a relationship. Here also, I do not have any evidence that my age made any difference to the students, but I was conscious of the difference. What was at the heart of my concern was what I call a generational difference that I experienced with the spades players particularly. This was made evident to me by my reactions to the students' choice of music and their behavior.

The music of choice of the spades players is rap music. Though I grew up in the rock and roll era (1960's) and have been accustomed to loud music with a driving beat, prior to spending time with spades players I had not been very
tolerant of rap music. Though I tried, I could not remember all the words to the songs as did the spades players (partially because I could not understand what they were saying), but I could remember the refrains. As evidenced by the pleasant facial expressions of the spades players as I uttered a familiar refrain such as "get it girl," they welcomed and accepted my involvement in this social activity.

In reference to behavior, I viewed college students as adults and anticipated that they and I could relate as adults. I was not expecting the level of immaturity, or what I felt was immature behavior, on the part of the spades players. Jumping up and shouting, knocking over chairs, loud laughter, and horseplay in the student commons made me uncomfortable and embarrassed. This type of behavior left me feeling that I did not belong with this group. The following fieldnotes capture such a moment:

As I entered the commons I saw K. sitting at a table with another Black woman. I went over to say "good morning." Just as I went over to K.'s table, the other woman used the word "fuck." When she saw me she put her hand over her mouth and grinned as though embarrassed. I said, "I've heard it before, I've said it before, and I do it too." Both K. and the other woman laughed. This broke the ice. I felt good, and I think so did the ladies. But it still shows how much I stand out from the group. (Fieldnotes, 12/6/89)

Although there is an obvious gender difference between these women and me, I believe their reaction to my overhearing them was based on unequal power relations. I conclude this because I have overheard similar expressions among the female and male spades players.

As I witnessed the spades players' behavior in the commons, I felt
embarrassed, because these were Black students, my people, whom I represent and who represent me. I did not like the idea that their behavior in the college's only eating place was annoying not only to me, but to others as well. As someone whose job involves representing order, I found it difficult to observe and participate in this type of behavior. Their behavior on many occasions caused me to say to myself that maybe I was not "cut out" to do this type of research. I was tempted to give up my research efforts at least once a day for the first five months of my entry into this research field. Although I attempted to enter the research field as early as the fall of 1988 it was not until the fall of 1989 that I felt comfortable enough to approach my subjects about an interview. None of the subjects objected to my recorded interview; however, there were times when there was too much noise in the commons to record, so I wrote my notes as quickly after the conversation as possible. The first five interviews with the tape recorder I monitored the volume and continually checked to see that the machine was working. This became a distraction, and I learned from these experiences to focus on the person and what is being said rather than the machine. Subsequent interviews were more relaxed, more lengthy and yielded much more data. Interviews were conducted from fall of 1989 to the summer of 1991.

Despite the differences between the spades players and me, there was only one student that appeared obviously uncomfortable with me. William is a 20-year-old, attractive Black male with a car. He rarely plays spades (I only observed him playing spades once in two years). William is popular with the
females and brags about being a "player of the ladies," meaning that he has many sexual partners. "William's name is Bad Influence. We call him the Bad Influence because he feels he's the player among women, right? And we feel he's the bad influence on the rest of us" (Interview, 1/6/90).

Kathy: William is a trip; he thinks he is too much.
T.M.: Does he play cards? I don't see him playing very much.
Kathy: He only plays to complete someone else's game. He's too busy hitting on women and taking rides in his car. (Fieldnotes, 11/29/89)

W. drove to school each day with Juan and Billy and had such influence over them that when he jingled the keys they moved out because that meant W. was ready to leave. When Juan and Billy decided to start a fraternity, they selected W. to be the leader or number one as they called him. For his part, W. relished all the attention heaped on him by both Juan and Billy and the female spades players and what I call "groupies." W. always seemed to resent my being with the spades players. He was the only student I was unable to interview extensively. Each time I approached him he had an excuse. One day he ran out of excuses and talked to me for about five minutes reluctantly. When I asked him why he did not want to talk to me, he smiled and shrugged his shoulders. I speculate that somehow W. saw me as a threat to his positioning of power and influence in the group. I also conjecture that he is accustomed to using people to his benefit, and that he therefore would not allow himself to be used for another's purpose, even research. At least this may have been why the age and class barriers could not be penetrated with W. as they were with the others.

All of these assumptions demonstrate that I entered the research field with
certain "baggage." Besides causing me anxiety, this baggage became factored into my initial analysis and theorizing about what I actually experienced as a part of the lived culture of my research subjects. As I spent more time in the environment of my research subjects, the reality of what I observed, heard, and participated in changed my initial assumptions.

I am convinced that during my initial difficulty in entering the field what kept me from giving up my research endeavor was the desire to bring about some change in the lives of these students. I continually had to convince myself that somehow what I was attempting to do would lead to their survival at the institution. My specific interest was not a change in their behavior during card playing, but a change that would positively affect their academic achievement. I am interested in helping them leave Deep South Community College with a degree that they can use to enter the world of work or transfer to a university for a bachelor's degree. I desire for them to retain their identity and at the same time make the most of an opportunity to acquire skills that will help them out of poverty and all that implies.

Reviewing my assumptions, I see that this research helped me understand not only my subjects but also myself. As a researcher who espouses a concern for transformation of the subjects of my research, it has been particularly enlightening to realize that the process may be beneficial for both the researcher and those researched. The evidence of such change involves the improved self image and confidence of the researcher and subjects.
Ultimately, through increased understanding of these students as they are rather than as I assumed them to be, I experienced growth. This change in me consisted of a different understanding of the complexities that are involved in the intersections of race, class, and gender. These elements are important in determining who we really are. Prior to this research I approached the notion of race (particularly the Black race) as the primary determinant of who one is. This is consistent with American society judging someone on the basis of the color of their skin, before considering class, gender, or anything else about them. This is also consistent with reports of Black professionals who have been treated as inferiors simply because of their race. The significance of this change in me is that I appreciate more fully diversity within and among Black students and the Black race in general.

Before spending time with the spades players, I had misjudged them from a distance. I saw them as wasting time and opportunity. As I became more familiar with them, I began to understand them, respect them, and enjoy being in their company. As an educator, I want them to achieve graduation and move on to a career; I now understand that this is something they must desire for themselves. My unanticipated personal growth occurred gradually over a period of the nearly three years I spent in the research field.

I learned to concur with McDermott in the article entitled, "The Explanation of Minority School Failure" (1987):

Doing ethnography inside one's own culture apparently commits a person to the study of phenomena which, upon analysis, seem to disappear. In the
ethnography of schooling, we must protect ourselves constantly against accepting our culture's own definition of its problem and study instead the problems of the people as those problems are organized within the context of their experiences with each other at the institution. To do this we must work against our culture in order to study it, and every study must be directed by a vision of change and renewal. Ethnography is radical activity. (p. 56)

Getting Started

Of course to conduct this research I needed the authorization of a Human Subjects Review Committee. According to the Vice President, such a committee would have a two-fold purpose: (1) convince the college that confidentiality and the right of privacy of the research subjects would be maintained and (2) assure that political sensitivity be maintained, especially in view of the fact that the faculty senate was in conflict with the college administration. Therefore, it was advisable to proceed with deliberate caution.

The Vice President agreed to appoint a committee of faculty, administrators, and students, along with the Registrar and a research consultant. For the protection of the students and researcher, I needed to secure the signature of my research participants on a consent form.

The following excerpt from a research memorandum (September/October, 1989) details complexities involved in getting my research started.

When I first approached the spades players about signing the consent form I was full of excitement that finally I could get academic information on the players. On Monday, October 23, 1989 at 12:30 pm, I went to the student commons with consent forms and summary statements regarding the purpose for my research. I had mixed emotions. I was excited about getting the consent forms signed. There was something semi-official about
the form that gave me a sense of credibility. I experienced some sense of pride that my research was being recognized by someone at the college. At the same time I was anxious about the possibility of being rejected by the spades players who, for some reason I could not fathom, would not want to sign the consent form.

As I entered the commons there was a spades game taking place in the rear of the commons where the spades players regularly play. Billy and K.T. (not real names) and two other players were in the game. I pulled up a chair to watch, with two file folders containing the consent form and the research statement. I sat patiently waiting for the opportune moment to talk about my project. After about four hands my patience weakened. Consequently, after one hand, as the dealer was still shuffling the cards, I said, "Excuse me, may I interrupt for one minute." I should have known by the looks I received from the players that that wasn't a good idea, but I felt I had come too far not to follow through.

As I stood up and began to open the file folders, I said, "As just about all of you know, I am doing research on Black community college students here at Deep South. To continue my research I must get these forms filled out. The first form is a description of the research and the other form is a consent form that the college administration is requiring me to have signed by anyone participating in the study. As you can see, I am promising not to use your real name in any part of the research." While the students were reading the two pages, there was silence that seemed to last at least a half hour, but in actuality was only a couple of minutes. Billy looked at me and said, "Let me think about it." Within seconds each of the other students said, "Let's think about it." They passed the sheets back to me and the card game resumed. I asked if anyone had any questions, but no one did. By this time the spades game was their only interest.

I forced myself to remain at the table for another three hands and finally left. This foray taught me several lessons. One such lesson is that I should never interrupt a game to talk about something that is only of interest to me. The other lesson (that I have been learning repeatedly) is that it is easier to get a response from the spades players on a one-to-one basis than in a group. The group can be easily swayed by strong personalities and groups are more powerful than any one individual. These students felt more powerful in a group.

The significance of ceasing an en rapport opportunity with the spades players outside the group was brought home to me on several subsequent
occasions. On one such occasion I was attending a class with K. The fifteen minutes we spent talking before the professor came into class were extremely valuable; I gained insights about her and other spades players I would never have gotten from group interaction.

I realize how these few minutes just prior to class were so precious to my getting a chance for quality time with one of my subjects. I can see now how it is important to be around. I can also see how important it is to be on a one-to-one basis with my subjects. The interaction is enhanced and both of us can open up. (Fieldnotes, 11/29/89)

Even though the group's response to my request had not been a definitive no, it was sufficient to cause in me a response commensurate to feeling rejected. Once again I questioned whether I wanted to pursue this type of research. Once again I questioned whether I had the patience and skill required to see this research to a conclusion. I wondered whether a quantitative study would be easier and less time consuming. Despite these thoughts of giving up, I moped around the campus for two days wondering how I could get the spades players to sign the consent form.

On Wednesday, October 25, 1989, I saw Rocky and asked him if he had given signing the consent form any more thought.

Rocky: Yes, but I decided not to do it.
T.M.: Why?
Rocky: Because I don't have time for that.
T.M.: I won't take much of your time. I just need to follow you around sometimes and ask you some questions now and again.
Rocky: I don't think so. (Memorandum, September/October, 1989).

That same day when I saw Billy and asked if he was going to sign the consent form, he said that he was still thinking about it. I felt as if the spades players had
discussed the consent forms and my research, and someone or ones had said no to the idea.

The next afternoon, I saw Natasha (SGA president). She asked me how my research was going. I told her my story, lamenting the lack of cooperation I suffered in persuading the spades players to sign the consent form.

Natasha: Don't they realize how important this research is?
T.M.: I just don't know how to reach them.
Natasha: You got a few minutes now? (It was 1:30 pm.)
T.M.: Sure.
Natasha: Well come with me to the commons. (Memorandum, September/October, 1989).

We entered the commons together. The spades players were in the rear of the commons. I felt a little awkward because I was unsure what Natasha was going to do. Natasha is a personality that could summon everyone's attention in the commons. I was worried that I would feel embarrassed. It might seem as if I had solicited Natasha's assistance, which would appear to be a sign of weakness on my part.

Natasha is a capable woman with great leadership ability. I have noticed her in a variety of settings and have witnessed how she is capable of communicating effectively with administrators, faculty, staff, and students from all racial, economic, and social levels. She does so, not just socially, but persuasively enough to get her goals accomplished in the process. She is highly respected by students and college personnel for her intelligence, though not well liked by all. This does not mean that she is unpopular. On the contrary, she has such a vivacious and enthusiastic style and manner of dealing with people that it is
difficult not to be responsive to her.

Despite my hesitancy, I followed Natasha's lead in this situation. We stood near the high tables in the rear of the commons; she asked me to point out the spades players. There was no card game at the time. "Gambler" was the first player to walk near the table. Natasha started talking to him by asking him if he knew who she was. He responded that he knew that she was the SGA president. They talked about the election specifically in terms of race. The election had occurred the previous May. Gambler was very conscious about voting for a Black for president.

Natasha proceeded to talk to Gambler about my research. Gambler acknowledged that he knew I was doing research (I recalled that I had had a conversation last semester with him and his mother who was a student in the Culinary Arts program). Natasha talked about the significance of research for Black community college students. She indicated that such research would have benefit for him and other Black students to follow. Her main point was that there was not much written about Black community college students, and this study, since it is being done by a Black person working in a community college, might have great impact.

At this point, I was impressed. Natasha had gone beyond anything I had told her about my research and its implications. She was articulate and assertive. Gambler listened attentively; he responded by saying he would participate in the study and sign the consent form. He did not sign then because he had to leave
for class. I was appreciative to Natasha that she had gotten my first positive response from a spades player. I was also struck by how successful she had been by appealing to this student in racial terms.

Natasha's decision to appeal to Gambler in racial terms and his subsequent response demonstrate the students' interest in solidarity and their sensitivity to race. This occurrence also demonstrates how the fictive kinship which exists among African Americans, as Fordham (1988) discusses, can be a positive influence for working toward a good for the whole race. While Natasha and I were still standing at the high tables, Juan and two other spades players were walking near us. Natasha stopped them to ask if they were going to participate in my study. They were on their way to class, but said they would. Natasha had to leave for class also, so we both left the commons at this time. I can say that Natasha salvaged my confidence in the research. She inspired me to reaffirm the worth of the project. She also helped me realize the significance of appealing to the spades players' racial solidarity. She made the study possible.

I saw Gambler later that day; he signed the consent form, but had little to say to me. He had somehow lost that excitement he had shown while talking to Natasha I speculate that he responded to her the way he did because she is a powerful personality at Deep South, and it pleased him to be seen talking to her in the commons.

Two days later on Friday, October 20, 1989, the Professional Black Caucus of the college, of which I am an officer, sponsored a reception for all African
American students. Just prior to the reception we worried that we would not have very good attendance. As chairman of the event, I decided to visit the student commons to encourage black students to attend. I moved throughout the commons, stopping at each table of black students to show them a flyer announcing the reception. I was greeted with, "Oh, is that today?" The fliers had been posted all over campus for two weeks prior. I made it a point to stop by the spades game to talk to all the players and spectators. All said they would come.

My assignment at the reception was to work at the receiving table, recording names and addresses of students as they entered and giving them a handout of the Professional Black Caucus: membership, location, and phone numbers. In the last hour of the reception six of the spades players, including Juan and Billy, came to the receiving table. As they signed I asked, "How about signing these consent forms while you are here?" (I had my briefcase containing the consent forms with me.) That day, Billy, Juan, and Hammer signed the consent forms. In addition, one other female student (not a spades player) asked if she could participate. I obtained her signature also.

I believe the ease with which these students signed the consent form during this function had to do with the fact that it was an activity for Black faculty, staff, and students; they felt comfortable signing something related to their Blackness. It was as if somehow they were making a contribution to the struggle of our people. Obtaining signatures of these students, who were the strong personalities
among the spades players, allowed me to procure the rest of the signatures by saying who had already signed.

After I had persuaded students to sign the consent form, I asked them to record their class schedules. If they did not remember their entire schedule, I consulted the college's horizontal course load print-out. Then I consulted the master schedule to determine who were the student's instructors. I wrote a note to the instructors requesting permission to attend that class in which my research subject was enrolled. At the time I did not know which class or classes I was going to attend, so I made a blanket request to all instructors for the entire semester. Additionally, I purposely did not identify my research subject because I did not want the instructor to act differently toward the research subject. I did not have a plan or schedule (at this time) as to the classes I was going to attend. My plan was to spend time with all research subjects and attend classes with the person I was with at the time. As a result, the classes I did attend were selected at random (Memorandum, September/October, 1989).

Materialist ethnography as a critical ethnographic method allows the researcher to interact with research subjects as a participant observer relatively immersed in the lived culture of research subjects. Since description is theory laden, the researcher cannot be divorced from analyzing and theorizing as the data dictates. Change in the researcher's perception of the research subjects during the progress of the study is likely. When the research subjects change as well, a new praxis with political and social implications can be formulated.
Despite the discomfort during the entrance to the research field and the erroneous and unsubstantiated assumptions of the researcher, change did happen in the research first, then ultimately in the research subjects themselves. Through the efforts of the SGA president spades players responded positively to the project by signing the consent forms and beginning to accept the researcher and the research in a serious manner.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPADES PLAYERS

Identification of Spades Players

The spades players are a group of approximately forty Black male and female Deep South Community College students who played the card game spades with varying degrees of frequency as they attended school from the fall of 1988 to the fall of 1991. (During this time only one white person, a male, played consistently for one semester.) These students spent the vast majority of their time outside class, and occasionally in class, with other spades players.

The group was formed around spades playing as the central activity. A side effect of being a part of this group is the recognition of the players:

It's basically the crowd that hangs together. It's more the "in" crowd than people outside, cause everybody that plays spades with us, everybody in the school know them, everybody. You know like when I had my party, people was asking for invitations that I didn't even know, and I went to Loretta's party with people speaking to me, "That's that girl that play the spades." (Interview, Joan., 4/6/90).

These students prided themselves on their ability to play spades for the challenge it offered them; they welcomed anyone into a game to test levels of ability. The spades players had a high regard for their playing ability; they thought of themselves as professionals:

Well, there are people that we play with, that you might say are professionals in spades and when you play with professionals that know how to play spades it's a lot of fun. And when you see us all together we're a bunch of professionals. . . .If people want to join, we're willing to let them.  (Interview, Kevin, 4/24/90)

Some of them might know how to play, but they not of our caliber. With us playing every day, it's just that we done got good at it.  (Interview, Juan, 2/11/89).
Spades is usually played with four people. All the cards are dealt out. Each player, beginning with the player seated to the left of the dealer, makes a bid based on the number of tricks he or she can make. Winning a trick occurs when a player serves the highest card in the suit called for. Spades are always trump, which means if another suit is served and someone plays a spade, the spade card wins. When spades are served up, the highest spade wins the trick.

Players sitting opposite each other are partners. Their bids are added together, and as a team they must make the number of tricks they bid. If they make the number, the points they earn are 10 times the number of books. If they exceed the number they bid, every trick over is considered as one additional point. If the number bidded is not met, the number times ten is deducted from the total. The first team to earn 350 points wins the game. Rules of play are similar to those of the card game whist.

Membership in the spades players' collective was as simple as claiming for "winners," -- that is, asking for an opportunity to play the winning team from a game that was currently being played. An individual without a partner would be paired with another who may have called winners. As in a sports activity, a newcomer to the game was acceptable according to his or her ability to play the game, or willingness to suffer ridicule and "ribbing" about inability to play. Victory itself was the object of the game, since no money was gambled.

The majority of these card players, twenty-eight out of forty surveyed, had been Deep South students for three semesters or less, or had been part-time
students on and off for two years or less. None of them would be considered upper classmen (sophomore level) nearing graduation. The twenty-eight spades players chosen for this study were selected because of their frequency of play. Others played spades but not regularly. Several knew how to play but preferred to be spectators rather than players.

The group did not have organized leadership, but three male members with dominant personalities, Hammer, Juan and William did influence others. These leaders had spades-playing ability; they loudly boasted about beating others. These dominant members demonstrated certain traits. They made the most "noise" during the game, which included demeaning their opponents through jokes, ridicule about mistakes, and personal attacks about the opponent's lack of intelligence, appearance, association with others, family, or any other vulnerability the dominant personality felt would "psych-out" (distract to the point of causing errors) opponents. These dominant personalities laughed and spoke loudly, attracting people's attention across the playing table or on the other side of the commons; their behavior was more dramatic than that of other players, enabling them to attract the attention of the players and spectators and also to distract the opponent. The leaders' physical appearance was distinctive either in hairstyle, dress, physical attractiveness, or unattractiveness; each of the three dominant personalities among the spades players had an entourage of "fans" that were either players or spectators. These were the "straight" men or women for their jokes and antics, occasionally providing refreshments, and always serving to boost
their egos through adulation.

I could not escape noticing the spades players in the student commons. I was curious to understand more about them, to determine why there was only this one group of Black students who played cards, and why this game? Initially, I was embarrassed by these students because as a Black educator I wanted to see Black students take advantage of an educational opportunity. I did not understand but wanted to understand why these students spent so much time and energy on such a "useless" activity. I felt that I could make a contribution toward understanding Blacks' experiences of school by telling their story.

As I observed these students from a distance initially, then later close, I experienced a variety of emotions. At first I was uncomfortable with those dominating personalities; they appeared to be out of control. Then a closer investigation revealed that they were very much in control of themselves and the atmosphere around the spades game which reflected the characteristics and traits of the dominant personalities. Later I even began to appreciate their potential as leaders. I envisioned potential business people who possess levels of interpersonal skills and powers of persuasion that would help make them successful in sales, for example. I observed manipulative skills, shrewdness and cunning that would serve one in the field of politics. I saw a desire for competition and challenge that if channeled or transferred into another environment, like the classroom, would serve them well and help them succeed. This observation saddened me because at a time when the Black male is considered an "endangered species," these
young Black men were lost in an apparently a superfluous activity that in the final analysis would not allow them to make a meaningful contribution to themselves or their communities.

Similarly, the only two female players also possessed skills and abilities beyond their spades playing ability (which was considerable). For example, Kathy was a work-study student for one of the college’s administrators. The administrator related to me that Kathy had excellent word processing skills, talent for organization, and ability to manage an office. However, Kathy missed many days, had an uncooperative attitude, and associated with office personnel who were confirmed trouble makers. In addition, although Kathy’s intellectual capacity was never questioned, she consistently failed to maintain minimum requirements for good academic standing. At the spades table, however, Kathy, singularly and especially in combination with Joan., was a consistently masterful adversary.

The other players of the game possessed skills in playing spades, but most of them did not possess the level of expertise of the dominant players. Besides recreation, it appeared that a major goal in playing spades for these players was the brief moment of victory when they could be somebody, a winner. A closer look at these individuals revealed that they also possess characteristics such as loyalty and consistency that if transferred to another setting and circumstance could be beneficial to them. Like the dominant players, however, these players spent the majority of their time on campus and outside of class playing spades.
The spectators were composed of players, those curious about the game, would-be players, those who were not necessarily interested in playing cards but enjoyed the excitement and camaraderie that surrounds the spades game, and followers looking for someone to admire. These were like the "groupies" who follow musicians and provide entertainment for the entertainers. Their involvement was peripheral to the game, for even without spectators, the level of competition and challenge was intense. However, the spectators did provide the stimulation of an audience, which appeared to heighten the level of excitement while winning and likewise intensified the discomfort of losing.

Within the student commons, where groups of students congregated, spades players and their spectators were prominent. On occasion as many as four games were played simultaneously, with spectators at each table. At these times the noise created by shouting and loud laughter, accompanied by knocked over chairs and "slamming" cards on the table, was considerable. Other persons in the commons would be drawn to look in the direction of the spades game; often it was not possible to know if a sudden loud shriek, groan or movement of furniture meant that perhaps someone was in trouble. Since such behavior seemed inappropriate for an eating place, the students who participated in this behavior were viewed as disruptive.

The spades players on whom I will focus this study are five men and two women who were continual players, were serious about the game, and appeared to enjoy the activity and the camaraderie. These players represented a cross section
of personalities among the spades players and roughly represented the other spades players with respect to percentage of males and females, age, class background, and length of time at Deep South Community College. While these included both domineering and docile personalities, all of them not only played spades every day they were at school, but also initiated games by soliciting the required four players.

During the three-year period of this study I met all forty spades players and observed them at various times. By comparing and contrasting personalities, I detected the dominant and docile personalities. Those players selected for focus were responsive, accessible, and continual players who were more intense in their card playing and spent more time playing cards than others.

**The Game of Spades**

Spades is a card game similar to whist in which four people play (two opposing teams). As in whist, the players must bid to win the leading play. The difference is that in whist the winning bidder names the suit for trump. In spades, the trump is always spades.

The origin of spades is not certain, but current connotations of the word "spades" suggest that the name may have surfaced in association with Black people. Whether such an association was initiated in the white or Black community is uncertain; however, the term is used as a slang expression referring to Black people. According to one Deep South student, who does not play spades
but comes from a spades playing family for three generations, white people play hearts, while Black people play spades. Both games have the same rules and principles, the only difference being in the color of the cards that are trump. Other connotations suggest that the name of the card game may have precipitated the racial slur of calling Black people "spades."

In conversations and daily usage the word "spades" is used differently by different groups to refer to Black people. "Spades" has been used derogatorially by racists. The word "spades" is also a favorite in racial jokes. Those accustomed to telling racist jokes in groups consider "spades" to be less offensive than say "nigger." In Black communities in the South it is not uncommon to hear Black people refer to themselves as "spades." In this setting the term is not seen as derogatory, but familiar. At Deep South spades players refer to the card game with pride because it refers to an activity where they can excel by demonstrating their skills and ability. On the other hand "spades" (as in spades players) is used with a vocal inflection downward to point out disdain, and by staff people with a vocal tone that expresses shame or disappointment.

The card game spades is not referenced in the 71st edition of the *Official Rules of Card Games* (1990) and would therefore be considered an unofficial card game. It may be more than coincidental that despite the fact that the rules for spades are nearly identical to the rules of Whist, the Black students at Deep South elected to engage in a ritualized game that has been learned in their homes
Regardless its origin, spades players at Deep South take the game seriously. During interviews when I asked students to describe what skills are necessary to be a good spades player, the answers were intensely detailed and articulated with earnest enthusiasm. Since nearly all of the players I observed and interviewed learned spades in their homes from a relative or family friend, and since they still play in the home, spades playing is a significant part of these students' culture that they reproduce on the college campus. What is distinctive about this learning experience is that the experience has remained in the learner's memory as an enjoyable activity where competition, relief, camaraderie, partnerships and skills were fostered.

These students embrace this activity because they know how to do what is required to succeed in this activity. It is as natural to them as learning vocabulary is to those who learned to value such an activity that in the home around a family activity. This was made clear to me during an interview with an accounting professor at Deep South. He told a story of how at each evening meal in his home, his father would ask each of his brothers and sisters to tell the family one new word they learned that day. The professor's voice expressed excitement as he recalled one such occasion when as the youngest child he was able to remember the meaning of a word learned a week before that none of his brothers or sisters could remember. He told the story to demonstrate how parents must be involved in educating their children. In comparing himself with Deep South
students who are ill-prepared to be in college, he was judging his students’
experiences by his own children. He did not consider that he was viewing
education from his Eurocentric perspective that if something did not fit into some
ordered process as it was perpetuated in his experience, it was deficient. I am
sure it never crossed the professor’s mind that what the spades players are doing
is their way of surviving based on something they learned in the place where you
are first encouraged to survive. Why did the spades players play spades?

It’s relieving. It relieves a lot of pressure. (Interview, unidentified student, 4/24/90)

It stops you from being bored. Because there’s really nothing in the
student commons that you can do. You can study, do homework, you can
watch soap operas, or you can just talk. A lot of people like to play cards,
see who’s better than whom. (Interview, Juan, 2/11/89)

To me it’s like an outlet. Playing cards helps pass the time between
classes. Other people just study, study, study, and still achieve the same
grade. When my class is over, I play cards. It’s like an outlet. Some guys
are more competitive, but like I said, we always together competing against
each other. (Interview, Dexter, et al, 3/21/90)

She made a comment that she needed to play cards for release of tension.
(Fieldnotes, 12/13/89)

All of the above comments focus on spades playing as providing some
release of pent-up tension or relief from boredom. Options like sports, reading,
volunteerism, and other forms of non-work are available if one so chooses to
indulge. Spades on the other hand is so visible and accessible, there is a genuine
temptation to participate. Since it is an indoor activity, requiring no special
clothes or equipment to participate, it is convenient. Due to the spades games’
high profile in the student commons, players are encouraged to perform for
attention and popularity. The excitement, loudness, vulgarity, and hysteria associated with rap concerts is akin to the atmosphere generated by the spades games. Young people, particularly young Black people, are attracted to this atmosphere. It is a come-as-you-are, act-as-you-please environment that appeals to this group. Cursing and loud talk, often sexually explicit and profane, are acceptable in this atmosphere and aid in generating the habituative pandemonium that encourages participants to take this behavior to extreme. As a release of tension, then, the spades games appeal to those students who gain the same satisfaction from rap concerts.

While card playing as an activity is not problematic, a problem arises when a recreational activity takes precedence over a primary activity. Study as an outside-class-time activity on campus is an option for spades players, but not a priority. Though the spades players may understand the need to study and pay lip service to their study efforts, and they are capable of managing their study time, the truth is that they do not spend the time studying. It is obvious from the retensive time the players spend playing cards that they do not study on campus. It is obvious from their grades that they do not study enough at home. Spades playing obviously fulfills a need that they unconsciously or consciously assign a greater priority. The atmosphere engendered in these games, the camaraderie, the challenge, the opportunity to perform using talents and skills they know they possess, the ease in acceptability by the other spades players--these needs are obviously given greater priorities than academic success.
What does this say then for those Black students who choose not to get involved in the spades activity? Certainly it demonstrates that there is a difference in the ways Black students respond to their free time outside class. These students may have other options available to them like jobs or volunteerism.

Some spades players play the game for the attention it attracts. Joan says, "You gain a lot of friends because if you know how to play, especially at school, no matter where you at, somebody gonna come and ask you 'Do you wanna play spades?' That's how you get to know everybody here at Deep South, playing spades. They come sit down and watch you and you get to talking with them." (Interview, 4/6/90). So the social exposure of spades playing provides an avenue for being noticed and gaining friends. Many publicists would agree that if one is seeking to draw attention to oneself, one must be in the public's eye. Spades playing apparently provides such an opportunity.

Another reason why Deep South spades players play spades is that the game requires skills and techniques that players feel are significant and important to develop. This is manifested in their dialogue about the skills and techniques involved in spades playing. Words used to describe skills needed for spades playing include "think," "remember," "watch," "concentrate," "figure," "count cards," "keep on your toes," "pay attention," and "count points." Another skill necessary to successful spades playing is "bidding," being able to judge what you can realistically gain in "books" based on what cards you have in your hand and
also taking into consideration the bidding judgement of your partner.

Spades players indicate that the game also involves using techniques such as "playing defensively to stop your opponent from making his bid," "playing to win," and "making the most of the cards you have--if you have one card in one suit, you can cut about three books." According to Hammer, you should

Talk as much stuff as you possibly can. Maybe what you talking can make the other person that's sitting across from you like think "He might have a card. I don't want to play this card. He might have the card above this card." That's how you play. It's a psychic game. Just like you can play Black Jack or Poker and bluff, you can bluff in spades. (Interview, 1/6/90)

Joan describes how intimidation is a strategy she employs with other female players, "Like Lovey, I was intimidating her the whole time of the game. She threw away a lot of books cause I was intimidating" (Interview 4/6/90).

There are certain unwritten rules of spades that Joan offers: "You shouldn't talk over the board; you shouldn't say 'I got this! You have this?'; you shouldn't pluck your cards when you have the joker; you shouldn't say, 'You better cut, cause I gonna cut on top'; you can't use no body language cause that's just like talking over the board" (p. 7).

Besides skills, techniques, and unwritten rules, there are certain attributes relating to teamwork that Kevin describes as ancillary benefits to the game.

Though the players may not be aware of these as attributes that go beyond the game, they are nonetheless significant for other circumstances one might face.

Kevin: You have to have trust and faith in your partner. It does in some cases, teach you to rely on another person, because you're not playing by yourself. It's you and your partner. So if you make a mistake, you have to trust that your partner can back you up, and if your partner makes a
mistake, you back them up. You work together. (Interview, Kevin, 4/15/89)

Trust and faith in one's partner is on one level key to obtaining the best support relationship in the game. Some seek such meaningful partnerships where they may be found. The spades game is one such opportunity.

**Breakthrough**

In my own experience the card game of choice in my family was poker. I think that as an eight or nine year old, I learned to play poker by watching my parents, aunts, and uncles play on holidays and Sundays. My cousins and I played using the candies called "kits" in place of money. Also, I played pinochle while in college, but not as intensively as the spades players play spades. I was therefore comfortable with card playing as a pasttime. However, I could not play spades at the level that was played in the commons; therefore, it was not an easy task to be accepted by the spades players.

For the first four months of my efforts to enter the world of the spades players, I met subtle resistance in the form of individuals refusing to open themselves to me. The students I approached were polite, but there was not much dialogue. I did not feel comfortable, and I was under the impression they were not comfortable with me. Sometimes when I came near the table, the conversation ceased.

My initial breakthrough came about when Hammer approached me to help him get his books. He indicated that there was some problem with his paperwork
for the Pell Grant and that a financial aid officer had told him he would not get a voucher for books. I was delighted that he was comfortable enough with me to ask me to assist him. It also made me feel good to be able to do something in a spades player’s life other than watching them play cards. I immediately approached the financial aid officer assigned to Hammer to find out that his paperwork had been returned nearly four times because of errors Hammer had made on the form. The financial aid officer had gotten a promissory note for Hammer to get his classes, but books were not allowed. I did not stop with this information, but went to the director of financial aid, who informed me of an emergency fund to provide loans for just such needs. I got an application for Hammer and proceeded to the commons to inform him of this opportunity.

When I approached Hammer and told him about the loan, he did not respond in an excited manner, as I had anticipated he would. Instead he merely asked questions about filling out the application. I instructed him to return the form to me the next day. To my surprise Hammer was in the office waiting for me early the next morning. I submitted the application and was told it would take a couple of days for processing. The next day Hammer came to my office with Potato, who needed a promissory note to allow him to register. I was able to help him immediately. After the two-day waiting period, I called to confirm that Hammer had been approved. I immediately rushed to the commons to tell Hammer, who was very grateful. I think this episode helped to gain for me a reputation among the spades players that I was “all right.” However, my real
breakthrough, which also came through Hammer, was during an extensive interview off campus.

During Christmas holidays of 1989, I was determined to get my first extensive interview. I contacted Hammer, who consented. I decided to go to a cafe near the university, which I knew would not be crowded since school was closed. The following is taken from a fieldnote memorandum dated Saturday, January 6, 1990, Lakefront Cafe:

When we got to the cafe, I asked Hammer if he was hungry. He said he had eaten earlier and he was not hungry at the time. I asked if he wanted a beer. He said yes. When I sat down with the beers, I immediately said, "I want to ask you some questions. Do you mind a tape recorder? If you don't want me to use the recorder, it's OK with me." Hammer said, "I don't have any problems with the recorder, whatever you want to do."

At this point I felt that both Hammer and I were uncomfortable jumping right into the "business." I noticed that the television in the place had a football game on, the Cleveland Browns versus Buffalo Bills. Hammer and I started talking football and instant rapport developed. Both of us relaxed. During a break in the football action (the game ended and another game between the 49ers and Vikings was about to begin), Hammer went over to a table video game to investigate it. I went over to ask him what it was about. It was some sort of gambling game that included poker, race track, craps, and black jack. I got some change and we played for about an hour. We laughed and had a great time. This was the most relaxed opportunity I have had with any of the spades players.

After we played the video games, we agreed to order two sandwiches. While we were waiting for the sandwiches I went to the car to get the tape recorder. After the interview I took out the playing cards and Hammer began to give me some pointers in spades playing. After an hour of instruction, which I found very helpful, Hammer said I should "call winners" sometimes and "I'll be your partner." This really made me feel great because I have been waiting for an invitation to play with the spades players. The time Hammer and I spent together was very important in that we got a chance to get to know each other without any outside interference.
When the spring semester began and I started seeing the spades players again, I noticed a change in them. Everybody seemed to be more comfortable and relaxed with me. It was easier to get into a private conversation and also to participate in a group discussion around the spades players. It was indeed a breakthrough. I am sure that Hammer had talked about our time together, so that probably motivated a change in the players. There was no doubt in my mind that there was also a change in me (p. 1).

This breakthrough in my rapport with Hammer even helped with the response I was getting with the females. Even though the women were polite to me, they merely tolerated me, I think because I worked at Deep South. For example, Dana, a 19-year-old first-time freshmen, did not know I worked at the college. She would see me with the spades players, so I assume she thought I was another student or a visitor. When I first approached her about an opportunity to interview her, she looked at me mysteriously and said "no." Through the raising of her eyebrows, the shaping of her mouth, and placing her hand on her hip, she communicated to me nonverbally that she disapproved of my trying to "pick her up." I felt awkward.

Dana was a very infrequent spades player, so I only saw her occasionally. One afternoon I was sitting at a table in the commons with Kathy. Soon another young woman joined us; then Dana walked over and sat down. I participated in the conversation as did the others at the table. Kathy and the other woman left Dana and me sitting at the table. Since it was just before the Christmas break, I asked Dana if I could call her during the holiday. She replied, without any hesitancy, "No." I responded, "O.K., perhaps after Christmas." She responded, "Maybe" (Fieldnotes, 12/13/89). Dana did not return for the spring semester,
but I felt that had she returned somehow she also would have been reassured by Hammer regarding my sincerity. I am confident that I would have been successful with Dana in time.

In contrast to this experience with Dana is my experience with Oretha. Oretha is a tall, attractive, Black 19-year-old female student. She has a pleasant smile and appears to be very friendly, especially to the males.

I would see Oretha on occasion doing what I would call flirting with Warren and other male players. Very rarely would Oretha play spades; I think she was just learning the game. The first time I approached her, I asked if I could talk with her. She smiled said "yes" and sat down at my table. I proceeded to explain that I was doing research on Black students here at Deep South. She said "I didn't know, but I know I always see you around." I found out from Oretha that she is a first semester student at Deep South. I asked how she got to be with the spades players. She said she knew Tammy and that Tammy introduced her. I asked if she played spades. She said, "Yes, but I just learned this semester, here." I asked Oretha if she would be interested in participating in my study and she said yes. I asked if I could call her during the holidays. She said yes; she gave me her phone number and social security number. (Fieldnotes, 12/13/89)

Oretha's response to me was quite different from that of Dana. There may be several reasons for the difference. I know that Dana is a single parent, who was trying hard to be accepted. She was very free with touching the male spades players. She was a loyal groupie who took purchased french fries to the card table instead of keeping them for herself. Oretha was also unusual among the spades players in that she did not spend as much time in the commons, but did spend some time each day. What is interesting to note is that today, nearly three years later, Oretha is still enrolled at Deep South and has not interrupted her studies due to academic status.
Although Joan became one of the females I selected for my focus group, initially it was very difficult for me to persuade her to talk to me. She would constantly avoid me when I approached her, and when I did meet with her one-to-one, she would respond with one-word answers. However, she made a big turn-around toward me after the Christmas holidays. This I attribute to my newly established rapport with Hammer and my overall acceptance by the spades players.

During the course of my various observations with the spades players, female and male, I learned several important lessons about approaching these students. I learned, for example, how important it was to try to approach each informant on a one-to-one basis. This is true because (1) the group can be easily swayed by the strong personalities, (2) the group is more powerful than any one individual, and (3) the individual student feels more powerful in a group. In an ironical sense the spades players empower one another.

**Portraits of the Spades Players**

The portraits of the spades players emerged through observation, informal interviews without the benefit of prepared questions and tape recorder, and formal interviews using a tape recorder. Use of the tape recorder provided the advantage of transcriptions of verbatim accounts of discussion. The disadvantage is that tape recorders can be obtrusive and cause some to focus attention on the recorder rather than on what they are saying. Nevertheless, the research subjects
generally overlooked the recorder once they felt relaxed about our conversation. Initially my inexperience with use of the recorder was a hindrance, but as I attained greater facility with the volume control, optimum placement of the machine, and pause feature, the process became unobtrusive.

Hammer

Hammer is a twenty-one-year-old Black male student who first entered Deep South in the Fall of 1989 in order to study business administration. He graduated from a predominantly Black high school in 1986 and volunteered for the military service shortly after. He injured his back while in the military and was returned home on a medical disability, for which he collects a small pension. Hammer was single and the father of a two-year-old daughter. He did not spend much time with his daughter and did not provide any consistent income for her support. Hammer lived with his aging and ill "parents" (father 68 and mother 69) who are retired and on a fixed income (social security). They own their own single family home in a low-income and deteriorating neighborhood. Hammer's "parents" are really his childless godmother and godfather who offered to raise Hammer from age four because his mother was unmarried and could not provide support for him and his younger brother. The younger brother lives now with the mother. Hammer spoke fondly and proudly of his "parents." In numerous hours of conversation he referred only once to his biological mother, and that was in relation to defeating her in spades. In his eyes this was a grand accomplishment because he described her as a gambler who had not realized that he was so
Hammer was perhaps the most colorful among the dominant personality spades players. He is slender and approximately five feet six inches tall. Hammer has a medium brown complexion and sports a flat-top hairstyle that is four inches high with a bleached blond streak two inches wide from his forehead to the middle of his head. He has two upper gold teeth and smiles a great deal. Dressing mainly in tee shirts and blue jeans, he conceives of himself as "looking cool" and claims his appearance is intended to attract women. His nickname is Hammer because that is the name of a rapper who is his idol. He loves to rap and knows most lyrics to current and popular songs. During two college sponsored dances I observed that Hammer is a great dancer as well and appears to attract women by his ability. He loves to "play around" and is rarely serious in a group.

Hammer's affable personality made him popular among the spades players. His excellent playing ability and his vociferous playing style made him exciting to watch during a spades game. He bragged about his playing ability, and he possesses the skills to verify the boasts.

Despite the fact that on many occasions he talked about how well he was doing in school, Hammer's official academic record shows the following:
Table 4.1

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<td>Fall 1990</td>
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<td>0.77</td>
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On several occasions Hammer misrepresented his academic progress to me. During an extensive interview session on January 6, 1990, Hammer shared with me this untruth about his academic performance:

Hammer: In senior high school level I made straight A's. I was kinda disappointed in myself for making a 2.8 in college, even though the curriculum is basically a little tougher. But it was my fault for not going straight from high school to college. Achievement for me in college is doing the best I can do in each subject. I don't care if the subject is playing cards. If I can be the best I can be, make an A in that subject, I'm happy. If I make a B, I get disappointed with myself. Like I made an A in English this semester, but I still was disappointed in myself 'cause I just made a 8 on the final exam.

T.M.: What English was that?

Hammer: It was English 1.

T.M.: 101?

Hammer: Yeah. And I was disappointed in myself 'cause I just made a 8 on the final exam. I felt my capabilities was above that. I'm kinda hard on myself in that aspect of school.

T.M.: Well, were you taking 12 credits this last semester?

Hammer: Yeah.

T.M.: When did you study?

Hammer: I didn't really do too much studying at school because in
between classes I'd be playing spades. But when I get home, I hit the books. And which I think was kinda good for me that I made such a ... it was disappointing to me plus good for me because I didn't have any books this semester.

T.M.: Any books?

Hammer: Any books at all. And I made the average.

T.M.: How did you make it without any books?

Hammer: Well, I guess I took good notes. That's all I can say.

This interview with Hammer took place prior to gaining access to his academic records. The misrepresentation about his academic performance was consistent enough that it must have been true in his mind. I ruled out that he was telling me what he imagined I wanted him to say because there was no apparent reason why he would feel so obligated as often. His comment about achievement being "doing the best I can do in each subject" demonstrates that he has a concept of what is required for academic achievement, but obviously his grades do not reflect his doing that. He has certain abilities that are observable during his card playing. He can memorize, analyze, count, problem-solve, persuade and persevere during the card game. These same skills, however, were not evident in the classroom.

I think Hammer's fabricated sense of achievement was part of what nourished and helped sustain his situation, for obviously what happened to him and for him during the card game mattered more to him than what was going on in the curriculum, including whatever happened in the classroom. Though he may have understood the importance of an education in reaching his career goals in
business, there were forces keeping him in place rather than moving him forward toward that goal. A part of that something came from within and could have been rooted in an internal struggle which involved his sense of whether he could control circumstances affecting his academic achievement. This involved Hammer’s perception that his personal level of success was dependent on someone or something outside of him. This was evident by the need for the gratification of winning in spades. The game must be played with others, including a partner. At the very least the partner supports and encourages the effort. The familiarity, acceptance, and group interaction provide an atmosphere where winning is encouraged and losing is part of the game. It is apparent that Hammer and others could perform successfully in this environment.

If a similar set of circumstances could have been transferred into the academic curriculum, or at the very least if a similar atmosphere were generated in an academic environment, Hammer and others could be afforded an opportunity to experience success in an academic environment. Such success might prove as addictive as that experienced during spades playing.

Hammer was confident that he was equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to compete at spades, and he therefore welcomed the challenge of competition. This confidence derived from his success at winning and feeling like he is "somebody." His response or rather lack of response to the academic curriculum was not resistance to the knowledge required by the institution as much as a lack of confidence in that knowledge due to the
curriculum's irrelevance and nonapplicability to the lives of Hammer and others like him. Spades players repeatedly referred to classes as boring. From my observations there was nothing in the class that they could relate to or that had any meaning to their lives. During the course of this study there were only a few classes in which the majority of such students participated with enthusiasm. These were Dr. Watson's Black Writers; a Health and Safety course taught by a Black male; a child psychology course taught by a dynamic young white professor; an economics course taught by a Black male, and a small business management course taught by a Black male. In each of these courses certain topics were presented with relevancy to the students' current lives and clear implications for future study or careers. What was also evident was an African American perspective.

Hammer's statement, "I don't care if the subject is playing cards," is a slip of the tongue. He knows that there is no such course; however, below the surface he is demonstrating the connection between spades playing and curriculum. He is manifesting the seriousness spades playing holds for him and the relevance of this game to his life while at the same time he longs for some connection between what he can do well and what is required to be "somebody."

In the classroom I observed that Hammer did have ability and at the same time confirmed that he was unwilling to transfer skills from the spades table to the classroom. For example, in a sociology class while sitting next to Hammer, I noticed that he answered at least two of the six questions the instructor asked the
class, but his answers were so inaudible that even though I was sitting next to him, I had difficulty hearing him. My first response to this was that this was not like the "loud mouth" Hammer I knew. But what it did show was that the enthusiasm, excitement, confidence, leadership, problem-solving ability, and winning attitude Hammer evidenced in spades was silenced in the classroom.

Hammer was transformed from the lively participant at the spades table to the "living dead" of the classroom. Being in class for Hammer was like being restrained, sedated and stifled. The classroom became another experience for this Black man where instead of being empowered, he was weakened. There is no wonder then that Hammer could not see how or why to transfer skills already known and practiced to an environment that stifles such ability.

Sweet Potato

Sweet Potato is a 21-year-old Black male student who has been attending Deep South Community College intermittently since the fall of 1987. Potato's major is business studies; he plans to pursue private enterprise. He graduated from a predominantly white high school in the suburbs of Magnolia City; he lives with his aunt and uncle in that same suburban community. The neighborhood they live in is a Black enclave in the larger, predominantly white community. His aunt and uncle own the four-bedroom home in which they have lived for over twenty-five years. When initially purchased, the home was a small one-bedroom dwelling on a sparsely populated street. Through the years they have renovated
the home to its current size and design. Aunt and uncle are extremely proud of their accomplishments.

Potato has been living with Aunt and Uncle since age ten. He was born in Los Angeles, California, where he lived with his mother, Aunt’s sister, and his own brother. He knows his father, but has seen him rarely. When Aunt’s mother died ten years ago, her sister came to the funeral with her two boys. During that solemn visit, the sister related horrible stories about the neighborhood where she lived, and her fears about the consequences of her situation on her children. Aunt told me her sister told her how she feared that her boys would become caught up in drugs and crime; she wished they could be raised in the environment in which she was raised. Aunt’s heart was softened by her sister’s concern for the safety of her boys, so she offered to raise them for her. Though Potato’s mother, Aunt, and their nine other brothers and sisters had been raised in a rural town in which their mother had recently died, and not where Aunt lived now, Potato’s mother realized that the environment where Aunt and Uncle lived held a better opportunity for her boys.

Potato’s mother also realized that Aunt was a religious and generous woman who had raised many children including her own three. Aunt insisted that despite some very hard times financially, she had been blessed for helping so many young people. She is a school bus driver and Uncle is a gardener. Prior to being a bus driver, Aunt was a domestic worker. Through the years, she has sometimes been the sole support of the family since Uncle’s work is seasonal.
Aunt and Uncle's story is significant to Potato in many ways, for Sweet Potato projects an inner spirituality, generosity, and pleasantness similar to his Aunt's (I did not have occasion to meet Uncle). Sweet Potato is a large man five feet eleven inches tall and weighing about 275 pounds. He is dark skinned, wears a "Jheri curl" hairstyle that is usually saturated with grease; he smiles a great deal.

Potato's best friend at Deep South was Hammer. They were nearly always together on campus. They even attended certain classes together. Like Hammer, Potato spent nearly all of his time outside class, on campus, playing spades in the commons. Unlike Hammer, Potato had a part-time job at Kentucky Fried Chicken. He had worked at the same place for five years and prided himself on his knowledge of the chicken business. Also unlike Hammer, Potato almost always had money and was very generous in lending money to Hammer, even though I suspect he did not always get it back. I think Potato felt that the money was a small price to pay to be with the popular Hammer. Potato saw Hammer as fun; he liked to laugh at Hammer's antics. Additionally, Hammer attracted females, and this was a way for Potato to meet women. Though Potato is not unattractive, he appears to be less self confident because he is overweight. Sometimes Potato's generosity was excessive. I have seen Hammer use Potato's money to buy food for himself and others and at the same time "borrow" more money for a date.

Sweet Potato was a docile personality among the spades players, but his
easy-going manner and pleasantness were no sign of weakness. He appeared to be the most spiritually oriented of the spades players. Potato was involved in his church, sang in the youth choir, and belonged to the youth group. This orientation may have made Potato reluctant to engage in the sometimes vulgar discourse and cursing that took place at the spades table. However, from his easily motivated laughter, Potato did appear to enjoy such exchanges.

Sweet Potato demonstrated consistency in his job, his church activity, and his spades playing. He showed loyalty to the spades "fraternity," especially to Hammer. However, Potato's consistency, hard work, and perseverance demonstrated on the job did not extend to the classroom. For instance, during the spring of 1990 he had an 8 a.m. class, which he happened to take along with Hammer. Potato was frequently late because he lived in the suburban community and had to travel by bus. Since he was a trusted employee, quite often he had to close the restaurant, which meant not getting off from work until midnight. He had to leave home at 6:30 a.m. to make an 8 a.m. class. When it was raining, he did not come to school until he could get a ride. When he did come to class, most often he was late and had missed important information. Potato did not take notes or respond to any question the instructor asked unless he was asked specifically. Like Hammer, he sat in the rear of the classroom. Unlike Hammer, Potato seemed to just be present in the classroom as if he were there physically; that seemed the extent of his commitment. It was as if he were still riding the bus and oblivious of where he was at the moment. His G.P.A. was not surprising:
Table 4.2

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<td>Fall 1990</td>
<td>1.35</td>
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Potato's docile and affable personality made him an excellent companion to someone with leadership ability like Hammer. Potato responded positively to Hammer's suggestions and placed trust in his friend. This is evidenced by his willingness to lend Hammer money, realizing that he would probably not be repaid. To some extent Potato was paying a price for his friendship with Hammer, not just monetarily but in terms of shifting the locus of control outside himself. The qualities that Potato possesses give him potential for a working class job where consistency and loyalty are more significant than confidence, independence, and leadership. However, on an occasion when Hammer had dropped out of school for a semester due to the illness and subsequent death of his mother, Potato assumed the coordination of the spades players, who had by that time organized themselves into a "fraternity." Acting as Hammer's substitute, Potato demonstrated abilities for planning but not for dealing with confrontation. Conflict arose when Juan wanted to run the fraternity meeting, and Potato let him do it despite the fact that Potato would have done a better job.
Juan and Billy

Juan and Billy are brothers who go by the nicknames of Fat and Solid Dude. In an interview, Hammer described how the nicknames fit their personalities:

We are one in that form of solidarity. We are one, but we are all individuals, too. Like me. I’m the nut of the bunch. I’m the one that trips everybody out, makes everybody laugh, arouses the bunch. Whereas on the other hand, Billy’s quiet. He likes to have fun, but he does it in a quiet kinda way. Billy doesn’t talk too much. Our names kinda go with that. Juan, we call him Fat, because his nickname is Fatman. Billy, because he’s so quiet, we call him Solid Dude. And basically, our names go with our personalities. (Interview Hammer, 1/6/90).

Juan’s nickname is Fat because of his size. He is six feet tall and weighs close to 300 pounds. His outstanding physical feature is his stomach, which probably measures at least a size 48. Juan wears plain eye glasses (clear plastic, not designer glasses). He is dark skinned, has an overbite, and smiles a great deal. Juan has a very short haircut, and his head is almond shaped. He usually wore gray khaki slacks and a tee shirt, and due to his size he walked slowly. Juan would not be considered fashion conscious. Besides playing spades, Juan’s favorite pastime was eating. Quite often he would be seen eating french fries while playing spades. Juan also enjoyed rap music and loved to party. Juan talked about his love for women but did not appear to have a special woman in his life.

Unlike his brother, Juan loved to talk. He was aggressive, and always wanted to win an argument or discussion. He seemed like an activist looking for a cause. He was actively involved in a Black organization of free masonry called
the Prince Hall Masons, and was pursuing the various degrees of knowledge that go along with that fraternal organization. He was aware of the role the Prince Hall Masons played in local Black history and was proud that his father is a practicing Mason with several high levels of degrees. Most often Fat's conversation would revolve around spades playing, rap music, the "fraternity," or Prince Hall Masons.

As noted, Solid Dude (Billy) is the quieter of the two brothers; he is also intelligent. He is more sensitive than Juan. Solid Dude works at a local movie theater and is more fashion conscious than his brother. He too is large, about six feet tall, and weighs about 235 pounds. He is apparently a weight lifter, for he is muscular with very broad shoulders. He too is dark skinned with a short haircut. His head is shaped differently from Fat's. He wore designer glasses and a gold bracelet. He dressed differently each day, forming a basic pattern of dress that can be described as neat. He is the more attractive of the two brothers. Though he and Fat do not look a great deal alike, one can tell that they are brothers by their similar build and distinctive gait that is common to both. Solid Dude also enjoyed parties and was equally involved in the fraternity, but not in a leadership capacity as was his brother.

Juan and Billy come from a working class family. Their father works for the post office; their mother is a secretary at a local business. They own their home, a brick house with a separate apartment in the rear that is shared by Juan and Billy. Their home is located in a neatly maintained working class
neighborhood in a predominantly Black community.

Their father is a middle-age, talkative gentleman who is physically dwarfed by the large size of his two sons. He is obviously respected by his sons. He is intelligent and very much aware of his African American culture and heritage. He tells numerous stories of important people he knows in the city and is quite concerned about the general poor conditions of Black people in Magnolia City. He is a very positive role model for his sons through his involvement in his church, the Masons, and other community based organizations. He is a member of a "fraternity" and encourages his boys' involvement in the fraternity they helped initiate at Deep South. He not only allowed his sons to host a barbeque for the "fraternity" at their home; he also cooked all the food for the guests. This demonstrated his support for his sons' involvement in a positive venture. Juan and Billy were fortunate in that they were the only male spades players (there is one female) who lived with their natural father. This maybe one of the factors to which the self confidence of both Juan and Billy can be attributed.

This self confidence was often only visible at the spades table. When they were losing they did not lose composure but remain focused on winning until the game ended. Both Juan and Billy were excellent players familiar with each other's playing style, and rarely did other players want them to be an opposing team. Not only did they talk in codes, but they communicated non-verbally. They could be cheating without opponents knowing. Even apart, Juan and Billy were excellent players who possess the requisite experience and skills to be very
challenging adversaries. However, this self confidence and the encouragement from parental support were not reflected in their classroom behavior or grades; as shown in the following tables:

Table 4.3
Juan

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Table 4.4
Billy

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Kathy and Joan

There were only about four women who played spades, two of whom played only intermittently. Since the spade games were serious and intense, only those (male and female) who were skillful and confident ventured to play. There were women who knew how to play spades but preferred to be spectators because they did not want to play in such intense games. The other two women, Joan and Kathy played consistently, forming a team called the "women of the nineties." When they played spades together they were as awesome an adversary as Juan
and Billy, except that they did not use the talking and nonverbal communication cheating strategies. Because of this there was never any opposition to their playing as a team. To the contrary, both the men and the women seemed to relish the gender warfare in spades. Joan and Kathy often beat their male opponents so badly that there always seemed to be some rematch game taking place. Joan and Kathy played nearly every day, spending the major part of their time outside class in the commons. Joan worked at night; Kathy did work study on campus for about twenty hours a week. Joan and Kathy were the only two spades players, male or female, that I have seen studying. They appeared to be more serious about their school work than the male spades players. Yet, both experienced academic difficulty; as the following tables illustrate:

Table 4.5

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Academic suspension for one semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1990</td>
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Table 4.6

Kathy

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<tr>
<td>Spring 1991</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Like the male spades players, these women possessed the intellectual capability, and the cognitive skills essential to academic success. I saw evidence of their ability not only in spades game, but also in class.

For example, while the accounting professor worked on an extensive problem in the class, Kathy was supplying the answers to nearly all the questions he was asking the class. The professor, however, could not hear her because she was sitting in the rear of the class, the only Black student to do so. Kathy responded similarly in each of her classes, sitting in the rear of the classroom, yet responding inaudibly to the teacher's general inquiries. When called on directly, Kathy responded with correct answers. It was apparent to me that Kathy had the intelligence and ability, but she was not applying herself academically.

Kathy was a 21-year-old parent of a three-year-old son. She graduated from an integrated high school in 1986 and entered Deep South in August of 1987. She is an attractive young woman with light brown skin who dresses inexpensively, but fashionably. She is distinguishable from the other female
spades players in that she wears jewelry (not all real gold) including earrings and bracelets. She wears light makeup and keeps her hair combed stylishly. Kathy is slightly overweight. She does not appear to be a happy person; she does not smile a lot. I have seen her happy, though, and when she smiles her whole face lights up. While playing cards she can keep up with the "ribbing" and the cursing just as well as the males or other female players. She is a serious spades player who does not tolerate sloppy playing. She will let a player know how and why he made an error in playing.

Kathy’s parents are lower middle class working people. Her mother works as a staff person at a local university, and her father works for the telephone company. They live in a large comfortable home in an integrated neighborhood. Their family name is well known within the Black community in Magnolia City, particularly among the building tradesmen. Kathy did live with her parents until six months ago. She fights continually with her mother and resists her parents’ telling her what to do or not do. She felt that for her own sanity that she had to get her own place.

Kathy has been attending Deep South intermittently since 1989. When funds run low, Kathy drops out of school to work. Kathy was hired as a work study student, attached to a Black female administrator who serves as assistant to the President. This administrator identified Kathy’s potential and counseled her that she was capable enough to work wherever she wanted; and credentials were all she needed. Kathy did an excellent job word processing and organizing the
files; she was hired beyond the semester as a contracted worker. For a year
Kathy worked in various offices within the administrative complex until her
personal life interfered with her work. Eventually, she dropped out of school and
lost her job.

Joan is a 21-year-old single Black female who takes great pride in her
spades playing. She has stated that she sees involvement in the game as an
opportunity to be noticed. Joan graduated from an integrated Catholic high
school known for its excellent academics and discipline. She entered Deep South
in 1988 to study Early Childhood Education, and her goal was to own a childcare
center. Joan worked at a restaurant in the evenings and weekends. The only girl
and the last child in her family, with three older brothers, Joan lives with her
parents in a old middle class integrated neighborhood. One would not expect to
see many Black residents in this neighborhood. Joan's house appears small from
the outside, but is quite large and quaint due to its old architecture and ornate
trim. The house, built in the 1920's, seems to exemplify the character of that era.
Joan's parents are retired. Her mother suffered a paralyzing stroke three years
ago; she is cared for by her husband. She is confined to a wheelchair and does
not speak clearly. The house is unkept. Joan has talked about how her mother
kept her house, but it is apparent Joan has not filled that void.

Throughout her life, Joan experienced special attention from her father,
and her brothers still give her a hard time consequently. Joan is like a
"Tomboy." I think she is clear about her feminine identity, but I never saw her
in a dress. She wore no jewelry except a class ring, wore no make-up and did not style her hair. She is a rather slender woman of medium build. She smiled more often than Kathy, and appeared to be more satisfied with herself and her situation. Joan was always eager to talk about her goal of being successful in childcare.

Joan worked at night, but all of her time on campus (outside class) was spent playing spades. A serious and proficient player, she played more often than any other woman, including Kathy. Though they were a team, Joan played with male partners more often than with Kathy. Joan and Kathy were nicknamed the "women of the nineties" by Hammer and the other male players because the challenge they presented to them in spades was without precedent. According to the men, these women were "serious." The "women of the nineties" were a dynamic team that the spades players, both male and female, saw as challenging.

Rocky

The last spades player forming the focus group was Rocky. Rocky was one of the docile personalities among the spades players. He is Hammer's cousin. They look nothing alike. Rocky is very light skinned with light colored hair and eyes. He looks almost as if he were white. He stands out among the spades players due to his color, but his Blackness goes much farther than his skin color suggests. Rocky is aware of his Black heritage and culture and chooses to be associated with his Black friends over white people.

Rocky was 22 years old. He graduated from a predominantly Black public
high school in 1986. He entered Deep South in the fall of 1988, and is still not certain about his major. He had worked for McDonald's intermittently for five years. Rocky lived with his mother and sister. His father died when Rocky was seven; his mother has not remarried. His mother works for an insurance company as a sales person. They are a working class family with a fluctuating income, depending on insurance sales and whether Rocky works. As the only male in the house, Rocky had responsibilities and pressures that he did not relish. This moved him to go into the Marines. At basic training camp he injured his back; he was granted a medical discharge. After he was discharged, he returned to Deep South. Only one year later, reapplied for the Navy. Once again he dropped out of school. He is now working full time while he awaits review of his medical records.

Rocky was perhaps the most sensitive of the spades players. He did not exhibit much self confidence. He became defensive easily. He was moody, sometimes pensive and very quiet. An awkward young man who did not seem to fit in well with any group, he shuffled instead of walking with determination. He had a speech impediment that made his speech slurred. He did not appear to be bright intellectually; in fact, he may be a slow learner or a learning disabled student who does not realize that his disability can be overcome. Though he approached many females, he did not appear too comfortable around them. He remarked often that he liked to follow Hammer because he could learn patterns of speech and actions that attracted females to Hammer. It was largely because
of his relationship with Hammer that Rocky was so readily accepted, even into the "fraternity." It appeared that the "fraternity" gave him a group in which he could not only be accepted, but have seniority over new pledgees. Despite this camaraderie, Rocky still appeared unhappy.

Academically, Rocky has performed poorly:

Table 4.7

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<tr>
<td>Fall 1990</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Student took all developmental courses.

Rocky's experience at Deep South illustrates the ironic distance between hopes and reality for the spades players. Seeking confirmation of their own identity through participation in the group, they experienced academic probation instead of academic achievement.

**Competition Between the Spades Players**

An underlying structure in family relationships also motivates the spades players. That element is competition. It is possible that competition begins in the home with sibling rivalry. For example, in response to a question about what motivated Joan to go to college, she responded: "My momma, my brother. It's like in my family, it's really like, it's kind of competition, you know. In high
school when my brother started St. Alphonse you know, and he was on the honor roll and it's like, 'Your brother's doing it. Why you ain't doing it?'" (Interview, 4/6/90, p. 34). What Joan calls competition has the effect of translating extrinsic motivation into a kind of intrinsic stimulus to achieve and succeed. This type of competition emanating from the family would be considered ameliorative and fruitful. Competition, though referred to often by the spades players as a reason to play spades, has different references and in some cases different meanings that are not necessarily connected. Competition, as Joan points out above, can be a positive influence beyond spades playing, if only the right connection is made.

Dexter, a sporadic spades player, said, "To me it's like an outlet. Other people just study, study, study, and still achieve the same grade. When my class is over, I play cards. It's like an outlet. Some guys are more competitive, but like I said we always together. It really wasn't cards that got us together. We all went to different high schools. It was competing against each other, like in football. None of us smoke. We just kill time playing cards" (Interview, 3/21/90).

Dex related competition to football, but he could not link competition to study. He talked about studying and constantly getting the same results. If a similar circumstance were to arise in the display of football skill, would he be willing to forfeit the opportunity to play the sport because he was not achieving what he wanted to achieve? Despite the inequality of skills and abilities among football players, the coach would be the first to say that unless the effort to
improve is made by each individual player, there will not be any improvement.

Kevin responded similarly: "It's sort of like the reason guys play football. It's competitive. You just get into it. It's sort of like a sport 'cause you're playing to win. You're really playing for the enjoyment of playing, but when you play, you want to win. You know, it's the ego of winning; everybody wants to win" (Interview, 4/15/89). Like Dex, Kevin relates spades playing to football and referred to competition as an essential element of the game. Also like Dex, Kevin was not able to make the connection between the competition that goes on in the classroom and that of the spades game. Joan talked about "a competition challenge to beat other people," while at the same time she sat in the back of the classroom, came in late to class, and did not raise her hand in class. She also did not make the competition connection between spades playing and classwork.

Hammer stressed that a competitive attitude is a winning attitude in spades playing:

Hammer: You must have this mind of thinking where you think it's positive. You thinking to win. If you come there with that losing attitude you will lose. 'Cause Juan, Clifton, John and the rest of them, we all go with the mentality of winning and we sit down at that table as if our life depended on it. We play to win. That's about it.

T.M. : So, is that same attitude about winning anywhere else in your life?

Hammer: Basically by studying, I must achieve studies as far as I wanna know all that I can and that's the same way it is in spades. (Interview, 1/6/90).

It appears that Hammer said what he felt I wanted to hear. I have been continually concerned and at certain times saddened by the positive attitude I saw
displayed during spades playing and the opposite attitude toward classwork. It does not take much analysis to understand that there is a missing element in the translation of skills, attitude, and desire from spades playing to the classroom. Just as, in the spades players' family environment, someone had to initiate the connection between winning and competition, and just as in sports the coach instilled a winning attitude and competitiveness, there needs to be someone in these students' lives who will aggressively assert the connection between what they know how to do and academic work.

**Dynamics of the Group: Racial Solidarity**

The group dynamics of the spades players are consistent with the attributes of other student groups. For example, the cheerleaders, Circle K, the architecture club, the basketball team, and the campus ministry groups have a central focus or activity that motivates the coming together of different personalities from different cultural backgrounds. Each collective has its own terminology, rituals, and patterns of behavior that are unique to that group. The spades players' bonding is reinforced through certain ritualistic behavior. Such behavior was recognized and recorded in my fieldnotes of 11/29/89:

When Tanya came by the table where Hammer was sitting he greeted her with a touch and hug. While Tanya was sitting down Rocky came in and hugged her. I have noticed this before, that male and female spades players seem free to hug each other--much as one would see between family or very close friends. Males greet each other with a powerful handshake--something more than the traditional handshake--a variation of the African American solidarity handshake. This is somewhat also akin to what the Vietnam Vets do with each other. The handshake is a
recognition of sorts that one sees between athletes. I also notice that when
spades games take place, when a good hand is played, a "high five" is
signified by the players. Spades playing then is experienced as a sport. In
this sport men and women play as equals, as team members. It is skill, not
strength, that is demonstrated, so women can be equal participants. There
is the customary cursing and women also participate in this. (p. 2)

On the surface spades players say that they play spades to pass time
outside class and relieve tension in the process. This may be true if spades
playing were an occasional activity that occurred without the regularity and
consistency that it does. Throughout the course of a three-year period, there was
a spades game in the student commons among the same group of Black students
each day classes were in session. I am convinced that there is a more profound
and relevant reason that has not been articulated overtly, but underscores their
level of involvement in this activity. It is in this aspect of the group's dynamics
that the spades players' uniqueness from other student groups surfaces. I am
referring to the connection that relates to where the players learned to play
spades, in the home. In a like manner there is an unarticulated desire for racial
solidarity.

In the following excerpt from an interview with Kathy she relates the
family-like atmosphere among spades players to the feeling of family life at home:

Kathy: It's like when you come in and you knew how to play spades it's
like you part of the family.

T.M.: Can you relate that feeling of family with the card players to your
real family at home? Can you relate that at all?

Kathy: Yes, I can.

T.M.: What would be the basis of that?
Kathy: The fun, the competition, getting praising when you win, being sad when you lose. It's just like that. It's like at home with the family, it's like here, there's a whole group over there playing cards. And at my house it's a whole group over there playing cards. And it's like two families. I don't know. It's like that. (Interview, 4/27/90)

Kathy's comparison of her family to the spades players is based on the feelings of acceptance as a part of the collective, support when such is not available outside the collective, permission to be oneself, and sharing of activities that provide fun, fellowship, and friendly competition. Membership in the spades players collective is, on one level, as simple as knowing how to play the game. On another level, one's knowledge of the game, degree of proficiency of spades playing skills, and willingness to accept and reflect verbal abuse when issued will determine whether one chooses to remain in the collective. For those individuals whose family's involvement has similar requisites, then the spades players collective is like home. Those individuals who come from different family environments may also visualize the spades collective as a desirable group with which to affiliate. I believe that for certain of the spades players acceptance as a part of any collective is paramount, especially if racial and ethnical solidarity are present.

Sweet Potato, Rocky, and other spades players like Kevin, Johnny, Gambler, Dana, and Oretha (who are not a part of the focus group) are a part of the spades players collective for the social and racial bonding more than for the spades playing.

Kevin: Well, they want to try and get some type of unity among the Black students around here, At least, that's what I see that the other students
try to get together—to get some kind of unity among the club (spades players). So like with the recent election it was, I think it was her name’s Natasha. She appealed more to the Black students to try to have a forum and all types of other things, to get the Black students more into the election. ’Cause I, from just being around and listening to other students, I feel if there wasn’t anybody Black running in the race I probably wouldn’t have even voted. (Interview 4/24/90)

Similar comments have been made by other spades players relating to support and racial bonding among Black students. The feeling of family seems to underline the spades players’ behavior, with the possible exception of Oretha, who was more intent on being accepted into a group. The ritual behavior of the hugging between men and women and the handshakes between men are not the only rituals that suggest a brotherhood that, while ancillary to the game, was paramount to the collective. One such ritual was the sharing of food at the spades table:

She left to go to the (food) serving area. She came back with french fries, catsup and iced tea. She set the french fries on the card table next to Hammer who began to eat them. Just about every player and spectator took at least one fry. Oretha saw them, but said nothing. I notice this is a pattern—the spades players share food—usually fries or chicken. It seems as if the women buy most of the food and share it with the men, but when a male player does buy food he shares freely. The french fry sharing seems to provide an experience of bonding and sharing. Occasionally someone will buy fries and leave them at the card table instead of keeping them. (Memorandum, 1/24/90).

So, despite spades players’ articulating that they play cards to pass time, because they have nothing else to do, it is clear that there are underlying relationships and structures that make this justification an incomplete explanation. Despite the docile players’ less than "professional" spades playing ability, they
are willing to follow the whims and wishes of the more dominant personalities and tolerate their verbal abuse in order to participate. Additionally, the fact that all the spades players, especially those in the focus group, are eager to leave class to play spades indicates that they are deriving more from this activity and accompanying camaraderie than is obvious on the surface. To Joan, for example, playing is addictive:

   "It's basically the crowd that hangs together. It's more the "in" crowd than people outside. 'Cause everybody that plays spades with us, everybody in the school know them, everybody. You know like when I had my party, people was asking for invitations that I didn't even know, and I went to Lovey's party people speaking to me. "That's that girl that play the spades." And a lot of women at school sit there and look and they be like, "Dang, they could play. I like them. I like them." (Interview, 4/6/90)

This elevated self esteem is one way in which a spades player can feel "special."

The underlying structure, therefore, of the subculture that the spades players produce at Deep South is the desire to reproduce a family-like collective, provide for solidarity based on race, and provide an opportunity to be somebody. Several of the spades players talk about the family-like quality of the spades players' collective. When Joan said, "We just like a big family, and people are scared we might reject them" (4/24/90, p.2), I visualize a collective where the bonding is so strong that it appears to make those on the outside of the collective feel insecure. Kevin talked about being such good friends that "I could go to them before I could go to my parents. 'Cause it's just more like brothers" (4/24/90, p. 5). This expression of bonding sounds more meaningful to Kevin than a sibling relationship. Of course one of the differences is that Kevin is not forced or
obligated to live with any of the spades players, and he can select with whom he will share such a relationship.

The ritualistic sharing of food and the special greetings between male and females and males and males illustrate that these relationships stimulate behavior towards each other that is consistently nourishing and satisfying.

Spades Playing as a Surrogate Family

One of the characteristics the spades players had in common was the focus on family. Although each spades player’s experience of family may have varied, the feeling of family that was engendered among them when they came together was considered important enough that the issue was raised without provocation.

Kevin: Card players are like a family. It’s like when you come in and you knew how to play spades it’s like you part of the family. Okay, ‘cause once you get into the game and you get to know a lot of other people you become real close and it’s like family. You can do things with them, go places with them. They treat you just like you were. I don’t know, just like the family, just like your family. They just treat you like it.

T.M. Can you relate that feeling of that family with the card players to your real family at home? What would be the basis of that?

Kevin: The fun, the competition, getting praising when you win, being sad when you lose. It’s just like that. (Interview, Kevin, 4/24/90)

Kevin was a spades player who played inconsistently and dropped out of school after a semester and a half. His sentiment about spades playing and family, however, was insightful since it was the first of several such connections spades players made to their sense of family. Johnny, another infrequent player, indicated that some people did not play spades because the family-like
atmosphere intimidated them.

Consequently, the same characteristic that is attributed to attracting one player would intimidate another. Evidently, the students felt the value of this family-like atmosphere to be worth risking the possible rejection.

The sense of family expressed by the spades players does not necessarily mean the same thing as home. Where the image of family may encourage a warm feeling within the group, home and what that implies stimulates different feelings:

T.M.: In what ways is Deep South different from your home?

Kathy: Peace. Relaxation. clubs. Go home, you gotta cook, you gotta clean, wash the clothes, cut the grass. "Uh, You gonna wash my car today?" "Feed your child, change his diaper," you know. To me I have control of myself. I don't have nobody telling me what to do. And I'm more relaxed over here than at home. It's no hassles, no pressures.

Joan: You got a attitude problem? The only person I have a attitude towards is him. You know that's my oldest brother. All my brothers think they could run my life and I hate for somebody to tell me not to do something.

(Joint interview, Joan and Kathy, 4/6/90)

It surfaced that the only two sibling spades players acted differently at home than they did at the college. According to Kathy, Juan and Billy, who are very different, get along O.K. at school, but not at home: "Juan is more messy. He gets in everbody business. At school Billy doesn't let that bother him, but at home they fight all the time." Though it may be the norm for siblings to act differently outside the home, the implication for these and the other spades players is that being at the college in general and spades playing in particular
provides a respite from home. At the same time spades playing provides an opportunity to recreate that feeling of family that is remembered as the training field for the game.

Both Hammer and Kathy speak fondly about how they learned spades among their families.

Kathy: Well, as far as my family is concerned or whatever, well, you know, we just brought up playing cards, spades and gambling period. My older sister taught me how to play spades. My other sister, my two cousins, me, my little sister and my little brother, all play spades. And just coming to school you just find out they playing spades and you just get into it. (Interview, 4/26/90)

Hammer: I've been playing spades since I was seven years old. My mom is sort of a gambler, my real mom. It's sort of in my blood to play cards. My big achievement in spades playing is my mom and my auntee were the best players in our family. They beat everybody. Two years ago me and my lil brother beat them, and they haven't beat us since. That was the high point in my card career. (Interview, 1/6/90)

Spades Players' Racial Attitudes

Spades playing at Deep South has taken on the dimension of being associated with Black people. This association whether through chance or design has provided an opportunity for racial solidarity for those students who either consciously or subconsciously seek such solidarity.

The spades players were not articulate about racial solidarity. Whenever questions about race were asked, the first response was that they were "not racist" and "could get along with everybody." For example, when asked why he
spent his time outside class with Black students rather than whites, Rocky responded, "I like being around my people but I'm not prejudiced. I can be around anyone I'm around. I am not racial. I can't stand racial. I'm not racial myself" (Interview, 1/24/90). I know that Rocky meant to say that he was not a racist, but his insistence borders on sensitivity about being considered racist. Though neither integration nor civil rights precludes racial solidarity, it appears that somehow, at some time, ethnic and cultural groups lost their right to choose to be apart from other groups as long as they were not exclusive of others. Hence, it seems to have become affixed in the minds of these students that racial solidarity is a negative thing. On the other hand, the spades players spend the vast majority of their time outside class and on campus with other spades players who are Black. Juan said in an interview that that desire to be together even goes beyond the spades game to other functions on the college campus:

Black kids, if they play spades, they gonna always be together. The homecoming dance, the St. Patrick's Day picnic, we never went somewhere without somebody. All of us met up at one time. We was all together. We always hang around each other, becoming friends. (2/11/89)

Kevin concurred with Juan's assessment of how spades players like to be together not only in the spades game but off campus as well. In the following excerpt from an interview, Kevin also shared his feelings of closeness with the spades players. This solidarity experience for Kevin apparently fulfilled some important need in his life. Though Kevin may have not ever used the term solidarity to refer to this feeling of closeness, it is clear that he placed an important value on the experience:
One thing I notice is that by us playing cards and getting to know each other better, go out together and hang with each other a lot, we get kind of close. Like one tight-knit little group. A tighter friendship what you would have with just somebody you see everyday and talk about your classes with. I mean, most of these guys, we were just friends from me knowing them in school, but now it's like having a bunch of best friends. We go over each other's houses, sit around and talk, go out together. (4/15/89)

Like her fellow players, Joan did not articulate any special understanding of the concept of solidarity. However, in the following statement she expressed a profound insight about racial solidarity:

T.M.: Is there anything about Deep South that makes you want to spend time outside of class with Black students rather than white students?

Joan: I don't think it's Deep South. It might be just dealing with yourself, but it's not Deep South. (Interview, 4/6/90)

Joan's statement about "dealing with yourself" describes racial solidarity. Racial solidarity deals with viewing oneself in relationship to a racial collective. It means to focus on one's culture and heritage as a celebration of self and a source of understanding and relating to one's identity. There is a slogan appearing on tee shirts within the Black community that says, "It's a Black thing, and you wouldn't understand." Like Joan's statement, this solidarity expression conjures a selectively understood or experienced identity of Blackness.

An interesting picture of spades players' relationships with white students emerged from two players. Though recorded at different times and during unrelated circumstances, both players shared a similar insight.

T.M. Do you feel more comfortable in an all Black group than in an integrated group?

Joan: It doesn't make a difference. As long as they give me the respect
that I need, I deserve. I been around them (white folks) all my life. I know how too, like I say, some people, they be around white people and they go to acting funny and they can't relax 'cause they might say "Ooh, I might say the wrong thing," or "I might do this." They human just like anybody else. If they can't accept you for what you are, don't worry about them. (Interview, 4/6/90)

****

T.M. What does it mean to you to be in a group of all Black students, versus a group of Black and white students? Is there a difference there?

Juan: Not really. But you can say there is a little difference because if you're with all Black, you don't have to worry about nobody slipping up and saying a racist remark. If you're with Black and white, you gotta watch your tongue. I'm not saying it's right to talk about people, but it happens. So you gotta watch what you say with Black and white. And if it's just all white, all Black, you don't have to watch what you say, so long as you sayin' it low where nobody else can hear. (Interview, 2/11/89)

The common observation with Joan and Juan was that some Black students watch what they say when with white students. In addition some Black students act differently with white students than they act with Black students. Joan talked about how she disdained Blacks that act differently when with white folks. In the same interview she went on to describe how her cousin bothered her because when she was on the telephone she tried to speak like a white person, so that people would not know she is Black:

I say, "Diane, you know you don't talk like that. Why you talking like that to these people on the phone? I'm not saying use our basic words like ain't or we lazy and don't wanna talk right, but I mean why you wanna act all prissy and make these people think you white and you rich when you on the phone? And she tell me, "Well, I'm not gonna be a nigger," like she say, "I'm not gonna be a nigger and show my ignorance on the phone." I say, "well, hey, just 'cause you talk like I'm talking to you now don't mean you showing your ignorance, you know." She just kills me when she do that. She just kills me. (Interview, 4/6/90)
Joan's cousin may have been trying to conceal her identity on the telephone because this may have been her only avenue to "cross over" to whiteness or at least be acceptable to whites, which was apparently important to her. Joan, on the other hand, talked about how she learned to be herself among white people while being at an integrated Catholic high school. From her dialogue, Joan professed to have the self confidence to act, speak and be herself among white folks. However, by her actions among the spades players, Joan chose or was impelled to spend her time among Black students. Joan said more than once how she feels a sense of pride by being a spades player because of the popularity it afforded her. She therefore affirmed that Black solidarity was an option of choice for her, while she showed contempt for those who act differently because of whites. Since Joan feels it is important to be herself among white people, it appears that she would be honest and tolerant in her dealings with them as long as there is mutual respect. Since she does not feel such mutual respect exists at Deep South, this could be one motivation for her to remain affiliated with the spades players. The absence then of the mutual respect among Black and white students affects their relationship.

Juan, on the other hand, promotes speaking and acting differently among whites, so that whites are not aware of when Blacks are talking about them. In Juan's reasoning people talk about each other anyway, so as long as they do not hear it, that is acceptable. Though this reasoning may reflect a realistic position of both certain Blacks and certain whites, it is problematic in that equality in the
level of concern for the other race does not exist. In fact the concern for whites' feelings among certain Blacks, like Juan, is a remnant from the time of slavery or a result of years of brainwashing of Black people brought about from unequal power relationships where whites were always right, and therefore deserved respect. The statement "watch your tongue" (while in an integrated group) demonstrates how such brainwashing leads one to respect some other more than one respects one's own. Juan's final statement about not having to watch what is said within an all-race group, as long as it is not overheard, is so hypocritical that it leaves one wondering whether there could be any sincere and truthful relationships between the races if this is a common sentiment among Blacks and whites. Juan's association with the spades players therefore becomes not so much a matter of choice, as Joan articulates, but rather a situation that was forced upon him, or something he was compelled to do for survival in the institution.

It is interesting to observe the gender difference in the perspectives of Joan and Juan. According to Joan, she hangs with the spades players because there is an opportunity for her to gain personal recognition. On the other hand, Juan is more compelled to be associated in an all Black group for survival. The difference surfaces once again according to the different positioning in society of Black females versus Black males. As an endangered species, the Black male's primary focus needs to be survival. The Black female on the other hand has more freedom and flexibility in choices. The result of both perspectives is that the relationship between the spades players and white students appears to be
shallow either by choice or design.

**Gender Relationships of the Spades Players**

There are more dynamics in the relationship between the male and female spades players than what was just discussed between Joan and Juan. From the female perspective women are treated differently at the spades table than in another environment. Joan says, "They flirt. At the table we are just people. We not women. When it come down to taking score, we're just teams. Alone by ourselves and out they flirt. They don't think about 'that's that girl that beat me in spades'" (p. 5). Kathy describes the males as "Dogs--straight up."

T.M.: And what do you define as a dog?

Kathy: Try to use women. Take 'em for what they can get. Use what you got to get what you want. That's what they do. That's all they about. And if they meet a girl that's good enough for them, they can't keep them 'cause they don't know how to treat them. (Interview 4/6/90)

Kathy is an unwed mother, and her sentiments appear to go beyond her relationship with the male spades players and speak to her relationship with men in general. She does go on, in the same interview, to give an example of Marcus, for whom she bought some tacos for lunch and who looked for her to buy him a drink also. She responded, "'Me, buy you a drink? Hey, this is where the line stops. Don't try to use me 'cause I'm nobody's fool.' You gotta let them know, you know. If you let them know what you feel in the right way they may give you a lil respect" (p. 21). Kathy then deserves her name as given by Hammer, "woman of the nineties," whether off the spades table or on the table,
for she relishes control and is willing to say or do what is necessary to attain control in her relationships with men.

Joan also lived up to her nickname. When I asked Joan what was the meaning of "women of the nineties," she said, "men against the women" (Interview, 4/6/90). When the challenge was issued for a spades game, for example, Joan was ready to oblige. "I feel good because most of the guys think that men can do anything better than the women. Because every time it's time to play spades, they ask me or Kathy to play. They don't ask no other guy. They come to us. It's like, it is a challenge like men against the women and we're here to prove our point. We could do anything we want to do. And like the guys talk a lot of head. The more they talk the more we'd like to beat them" (p. 2).

The women are asked to play if they are alone or if they are together. When the women are singles, they appear to pose less of a challenge to the men. The men taunt them less and generally treat them as equals. That is, until they create an upset. Then the male ego becomes bruised. "But like if I'm playing with just three guys, it'll be cool until I upset them by myself. I'm the only girl and I did it by myself. And then they'll say, 'I just can't let a girl beat me. It's not possible'" (Joan, p. 3).

When the two women played as a team, the level of competition within the battle of the sexes heightened: "When we play together, they treat us as if we are not so much equals, but like they gonna kick our butts" (Interview, 4/6/90, p. 3).

Joan and Kathy confirmed that as a team they must contend with cheating. They
both said that the men could not beat them as a team. "They have to pull some kind of trick when we not paying attention and cheat, or they cheat taking the score. They cannot beat us straight, one (team) to one (team)" (p. 4). Between the bruised male egos and the insecurity caused by women uniting to compete against the men, there were battle lines drawn. This battle of the sexes is not a recent phenomenon and not restricted to spades playing. The females said since the guys considered themselves higher than they, when the women showed them that they were just as good, it shocked them. But Joan and Kathy went on to say that the men liked it and so did they, for it not only made the game more interesting, but it also added excitement to the male-female relationships.

On one occasion when Joan was playing with three males, I observed a situation where I felt she responded in a manner inconsistent with her image of a woman of the nineties. Joan was the partner of Hammer, both of them good players. However, they were not playing well. There was a spectator, a Black male about 29 or 30 years old, who verbalized loudly what was done incorrectly after each play. After one hand in which Joan did not play a trump card at the correct time, causing her and Hammer to get set, this same spectator began to lecture her loudly and blame her for losing the set. From that point on in the game he proceeded to assist Joan in her bidding and coach her with "good play" or "play that one." Joan did not appear to be annoyed by this in the least. It seemed, however, to be out of character for Joan not to get upset with this man. It appeared that she was almost docile to his instructions. I have seen Joan and
Kathy playing as a team, when they have been very aggressive, outspoken, and argumentative. They even joked with the guys and corrected them about their playing.

This could be an expression of team confidence rather than any indication of individual character. On the other hand, this could be another example of how these subjects verbalized one thing but acted differently. Joan is from a family with three older brothers. Her reservations toward responding to this man argumentively were consistent with what she may have had to accept in her household dominated by older males.

Both males and females said that spades playing is an equal proposition. Johnny said there is no difference between male and female spades players. Joan said that Kathy came to Deep South teaching some guys how to play spades. I have observed that spades playing is like a sport where men and women play as equals, as team members. Women participate equally in all aspects of the game including the customary loud talk, ribbing, and cursing.

Lynn insisted that men appreciate a woman that knows how to play spades, because if the female knows how to play, the men would prefer to play with a female rather than a male. "It's more fun when it's mixed" (Interview, Lynn, 4/27/90). As far as Lynn was concerned, she said she would prefer to play with "a bunch of guys" (p. 5), but would play with Kathy or Joan because they play so well. When asked if females have special skills for spades playing, Lynn offered, "Females have a tendency to pay attention to the board more than a male would
and they'll forget what was played and might cut up their partner's hand or something like that. We just pay more attention to it than they would. But other than that nothin. Everybody play just about the same” (p. 6). Juan concurred with this assessment. He says, "There are some females better that some males around here. I guess those girls have a lot of concentration. They concentrate better than the guys" (Interview, 2/11/89). Juan was also consistent. Just as he suggested watching what is said in an integrated group, Juan felt, "You gotta watch your conversation when there’s females in the game" (p. 4). Though there may be certain conversations that would be embarrassing for a female, during the time I spent observing these men and women, there appeared to be no censure of what was said. Women participated in all conversations as equally as the men.

Not all the male players professed the equality of male and female players. In fact certain male players gave the female players a hard time; that is, if they were making errors or losing. Joan said, however, that that was to be expected:

You gotta concentrate and watch the board and if you don’t you lose, and with a lot of guys you lose your respect. They call you all kind of names, wimp, nervous. "I don't wanna play with her, she nervous. She don't know how to play." You throw away a book and they go to hollering at you and stuff. A lot of people get discouraged and they don't want to play no more. But I say that's all part of the fun in the game. I get my kicks off it. (Interview, 4/6/90)

Joan and Kathy especially compensated for this by their confident attitude about their ability. When asked how they feel when playing as a team they responded, "superior." Also, when asked what the college could provide to make them feel more welcome or more wanted, Joan responded, "A women's
basketball team. Yep, give us a chance to prove ourselves and go on our lil expeditions out of town like the guys. Let us walk around there like we the uh-the big men--the big bosses around here, saying we play basketball, yeah" (p. 36).

The relationships among male and female spades players fluctuated depending on whether a spades game was going on or not. During the game the male spades players handled female players as equally skilled players. On the other hand, when Joan and Kathy, the women of the nineties, were together, a big challenge ensued because they are such good players. When female players were alone, they were, on the surface, treated as any other male player. Even when it came to ribbing, cursing, etc., the female players were not treated differently.

Outside the spades game the females were greeted with hugs and kisses and were pursued by the males with flirtations. The relationship between Joan and Kathy during the spades game was as professional and business-like as any other team that works together. The female-to-female relationship outside spades playing, however, is quite different. In speaking to Kathy about Oretha, who was a spectator more than a player, Joan showed the complexity and level of gossip that existed among the female players.

Joan: It's just that she was like in between us and her other lil' friends and it was like they started bringing their cards to school so they encouraged her to leave us alone because of dislikes, or I could say now because of a guy, Derek. All that stuff with Derek. Kim told her stuff about me, this, that and the other. And Oretha will come to me and might want to say something about Kim, but she changed her mind because she knew me. I'm not worried about it and I'm, like "Hey, Kim got something to tell me, let Kim come tell me herself. Don't worry about all this mess over a guy." You know I'm like, "Hey." That's all it is really is just mess, straight up mess. (Interview, 4/6/90, p. 8)
Though the references to individuals and emotional responses are difficult to follow, there is some similarity in content to what one might observe in a soap opera. This glimpse of female-spades-player-to-female-spades-player dialogue does illustrate there is a difference between how the females related to each other on one level and how they related to the males on another level. Had not Joan and Kathy been relating to each other in this interview, I probably would not have been privileged to this dialogue.

On another occasion in the student commons I observed Kathy sitting at a table with Lynn and two males. As I walked over to the table, I overheard Kathy say to an unidentified male, "I have that picture I was telling you about." He took the picture and started laughing loudly, jumping up and down and bending over with his chest parallel to the floor. Johnny said, "Let me see that, Man." He let out a loud scream, "My god she has enough for two women." The other male said "When she gets old she'll need a wheel barrel to carry them." Lynn said, "Let me see, oh my God I know that girl." Everyone laughed. "Oh my God you're showing that girl's picture around the whole school. I'm going to tell her." Kathy, not disturbed that Lynn knew who the girl was, took the picture back and put it in her purse. I had had a chance to glance at the picture as it was passed around. It was a bare breasted female with about size 40 breasts. Kathy said that she went to St. Magdeline (a local Catholic high school) with her. Everyone laughed and returned to the card game.

The male spades players related differently to other men away from the
spades game specifically as it involved women. As Hammer, Potato, another male, and I were walking from class one day toward the student commons, Hammer began to talk about how he had been to a nearby college town where there is an all-Black college. He met a female student who started talking to him. He felt that she was making a play for him, but she told some other girls that Hammer was like a puppy behind her. Hammer said, "Wait until I get to Indian Town again. I'm going to tell her something that will have her walking the campus with her head down." The other two players, who were obese and unattractive, were encouraging Hammer. Potato said, "I got two female cousins in Indian Town who are rough. I just have to tell Corrie to talk with her and it's all over." Hammer said, "That's all right, I can handle her."

As Hammer was relating his story to us, the other two male spades players were attentive as if Hammer were sharing with them some secrets of life. Whether the story was true as it was told is not as significant as the response Hammer was able to elicit from his peers. He was once again able to project himself as the lady conquerer. By putting this woman "in her place," he managed to elevate himself to a position he wanted to secure with his followers. Later, in an interview with me, Hammer revealed an underlying reason for organizing into a proposed all-male fraternity: "There's really no meaning outside the other meaning we have. Well like, see which one of us could conquer more women."

These sentiments are significant in understanding the underlying structures
involved in the battle of the sexes of the spades players. With the conquering attitude of the males toward the females, and the females' desire for control in competing with the males, it is clear that male-female relationships among the spades players were complex despite the desire and efforts to achieve racial solidarity in a predominantly white environment.

A contradictory element in the relationship of the male spades players to the "women of the nineties" (Joan and Kathy) is demonstrated by the way the male players sought the women as partners individually in contrast to the manner in which they sought to challenge the women as a team. Tension was generated between Joan and Kathy and Oretha as the women of the nineties manifested catty behavior toward Oretha. There was also opposition that was generated by the males with bruised egos caused by suffering defeat at the hands of the females, while at the same time they flirted with the women outside the spades game. Similar forces affected the spades players' interpersonal relationships whether among white people, their families, female to female, or male to male.

The various dynamics of the relationships among the spades players demonstrate the complexity of the subculture they produced on campus. Nearly every relationship has a tension, duality, opposition, or contradiction that strengthens the friendship and precipitates a family-like atmosphere. For example, in the battle of the sexes the men were excited about the challenge and competition presented by the "women of the nineties." They competed against these women with the same deliberation and conviction as they would present to
any other opponent. Yet, these same male players greeted the female players with a kiss and a hug. They even solicited either of the two female team members to be a partner. Another example of this duality is the difference between how the women were treated by the men individually and how they were treated as a team.

**Attitudes Towards the Spades Players**

The attitudes of faculty, staff, and non-spades playing students were based on superficial understandings for the most part. The tension, duality, opposition, or contradiction impact relationships among the spades players acted as an adhesive force that kept the collective together, in conjunction with other intangibles like love, respect, trust, and loyalty that keep a family together. These dynamics or forces at play in the spades players' relationships went undetected by others outside the collective. In fact, various segments within the college community, specifically non-spades playing students, saw only what they would consider to be negatives.

The following observation was made by me as a part of a field experience:

At times their loud laughter and physical antics cause heads to turn and looks of disgust to arise, particularly from white students and faculty. But there is also at times negative sentiment from Black faculty or staff. Such negative sentiment, however, centers on the fact that it is a shame that these students are "wasting their time playing cards when they should be somewhere studying." (Fieldnotes, 11/29/89)

A Student Government Association senator who knows how to play spades, and does so with her family, said that spades playing is addictive, more than any
other game. Nia says that the spades players are not involved in anything else on campus because "They neglect their work and abandon their position as students. They are so involved in the game that they forget where they are. Their minds are on the game, not where they are" (Fieldnotes, 11/16/90). Nia's assessment is objective in that she does not condemn the students, but rather she focuses on their behavior, which she describes as addictive. Consistent with her assessment is the fact that addictive behavior unchecked eventually becomes obsessive and everything else becomes secondary.

Natasha, the SGA president, has similar insights about the habit forming characteristic of spades playing. She condemns the lack of focus on classwork and sees the spades players' obsession with card playing as a substitute for drug and alcohol use on campus:

Spades players are not "A" students. Playing cards is habitual, cultural, from being at home (something from home that they bring to campus). People who don't have other activities and no money play cards, because it is something to do. You have to be sharp to play, but I think it is a waste of time to be at school and play cards, particularly if they have not studied and done their work. I know one of those students that plays spades in the commons. He is a "D" average student. I believe spades playing is an outlet for boredom, an escape. They can't do what they want to do on the campus, for example, drugs or alcohol. (Informal Interview, 2/10/89)

Though there is no observable evidence regarding the spades players' use of drugs, the analogy of the spades playing obsession to a drug addiction is not far off when one reviews the consequences of addictive behavior.

A white female, first-semester student shared her observations about the spades players, as we sat in the student commons: "The commons is filled with
mostly Black students on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and
Thursdays there are mostly white students. Students come into the commons in
between classes. On Tuesdays and Thursdays there is less noise; it is more
subdued. The card playing on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are mostly
Black. I wouldn't think about playing cards with Black students, but I do play
cards. I would play with white students, maybe, depending on if I knew the
students" (Fieldnotes, 4/11/89).

When I asked this student why she would not play cards with the Black
students, her response was that she did not feel they would accept her. I thought
it curious that the white student identified the reason for not playing with Black
students to be that the Black students did not accept her rather than her choosing
not to be with the Black students. As I pursued other white students' responses to
the spades players, I addressed the same issue. In an informal interview with one
white male and two white females, I received the following insights regarding their
observations of the spades players.

Female #1: Sometimes the place gets out of hand. Somebody has to call
security to calm them down. One time two students were about to fight, one of them was about to hit another over the head with a chair.

Female #2: Yeah, at times it gets carried away; it gets too noisy. Their
time is spent playing cards. I wonder about their grades.

Female #1: They play for blood. I wouldn't want to play with them.

Male: I would probably play. It's mixed, but more or less segregated, the
Blacks keep to themselves.

T.M.: Why would Black students keep to themselves?
Male: Prejudice, I assume.

Female #2: Possibly because of interest in playing cards and listening to music. (Interview, White Students, 4/11/89)

This foray illustrates how Black solidarity ("Blacks keep to themselves") is viewed as prejudice by these white students. Also, once again the solidarity of the Black students is viewed as being restrictive to whites rather than an expression of racial togetherness. This white student's opinion about the reason why Black students want to be together is not an isolated opinion and suggests uneasy feelings about Black solidarity. Such paranoia is not restricted to students. At Deep South there is a standing joke among the Black faculty and staff that when some white person sees three or more Black professionals standing in the hallway talking, they get nervous because they think it is some Black conspiracy.

Toya, a Black student in her last semester before graduating from Deep South, shared an important insight about spades playing and school. She said that in her first semester at Deep South she used to spend time in and around the commons until her grades started slipping and she got an "F". She knew that her G.P.A. would be affected, and so would be her chances of financial aid, so she got away from the commons. She attributed her decision and ability to get away to upbringing, home environment, and morals. Another Black female nearing graduation, Debbie, described the spades players as "the younger students, right out of high school, who are here for the first semester and who spend their time hanging out in the commons. The guys are into girls and they are not interested in studying. They don't go to class; they just hang around. They think college is
one big party, that is out of control. They are not interested in studying"
(Fieldnotes, 4/6/89).

Roman, a Black S.G.A. senator, says that it looks as if the spades players
go to college for show. "A lot of them are cutting classes. I say 'Why aren't
you in class?' And they say, 'I don't feel like going.' And I say, 'You're
here to learn, you know. 'Cause I'm older, I know what you are going to face
out there.'" (Interview, 10/9/89).

These students' insights are important because they provide a different
perspective on the spades players than what has been presented thus far. None of
these individuals had spent any time dedicated to observing the players, so their
opinions were based only on what they had seen and/or heard. Consequently their
perspective was an attempt at explaining what they had seen through limited
contact. Everyone else at the institution was equally restricted in their
perspectives of the spades players. Responses to the spades players varied from
the verbal responses as above, to denial and/or non-recognition from faculty who
claimed that they had not seen any such thing in the student commons.
Responses also included disappointment on the part of Deep South's Black
professional staff. Such disappointment, however, did not translate into any
institutional intervention. As a result of the image the spades players have among
their peers and superiors, they were discounted as non-serious students.

**Academic Experiences of the Spades Players**
Classroom experiences of the spades players were not opportunities for solidarity. Though Kathy, for example, spoke affirmatively about classroom experiences as "everybody working together," at the same time she spoke of enjoying the competition of the spades game, her actions demonstrated that she and other spades players preferred the challenge of the spades game and felt that competition in the classroom had no connection with competition in the spades game. Kathy also said that her desire to play spades originated from her family where "fun, competition, getting praises when you win, being sad when you lose" were important to her. On the other hand, she insisted that there was no competition for her in the classroom:

T.M.: You talked about liking the competition in playing spades. Is there any competition in your classroom?

Kathy: No. There is no competition for me.

T.M.: Not even among students?

Kathy: No. I'm a very friendly person. Everybody gets along with me. (Interview, 4/27/90)

Though it was clear that Kathy had the same concept of competition for spades playing and the classroom, this was not clear to her. Like the other spades players, she did not make the connection. Perhaps the reason for this lack of connection was the lack of "fun" in the classroom.

Consequently, the spades players refer to "boring classes." If the players were not talking about the boring classes, they were talking about the instructors. Discussions about the instructors did not relate to instruction but to personality or
some other characteristic of the instructor. During a spades game in the commons Johnny asked Billy if he was going to class. Billy was playing cards at the time and did not respond. Johnny left to go to class without but returned five minutes later proclaiming loudly, "I got up to the third floor, but I couldn't go to that class. That bitch was going to keep us ten minutes late. Fuck that man!" (Fieldnotes, 4/24/89). Johnny sat down at the table to watch the spades game.

During an interview, Kathy talked about Ms. Jasmer, who taught her a business course. "She is very nice. It's not so much that I enjoy her class, but you know, I don't mind talking to her or listening to what she has to say. I be comfortable in her class, 'cause I know I could do just about anything. I feel the same way in Mr. Nurshime's class" (Interview, 4/6/90).

Generally, the players' comments about their instructors fit somewhere into the two extremes above. What all the spades players had in common, however, was poor academic performance. Though missing classes and forfeiting study to play spades were contributing factors to poor academic performance, only two spades players made that association. At the beginning of a spring semester, Rocky was leaving the college to go into the Coast Guard. He had not registered for any classes, but had come to the college to bid farewell to his friends. I interviewed him briefly during this visit to the campus. He was leaving the next day to go to Oklahoma for basic training. I asked how he made out with his studies the previous semester.

Rocky: I didn't do so well, I am on probation and lost my grant because my average was below 2.0.
T.M.: What happened? I thought you had said you were going to do better.

Rocky: I spent too much time in here playing cards. I just didn't apply myself, but I will come back after I finish basic. The only problem is that I'll have to save my money because I'll have to pay tuition myself. (Interview, 1/24/90).

Though Rocky's hindsight vision was insightful, he returned to Deep South in the fall semester and went back to his previous routine of spending all of his time outside class in the commons playing spades. Similarly, Kathy indicated the same to me on another occasion, "I'm not going to be playing cards next semester. I have to apply myself more to bring up my grades." She too fell into the same pattern of spending her time outside class and outside work study in the commons playing spades.

In response to the question why the majority of spades players are Black, Juan proceeded to explain how white students "have their own thing. Last fall and last spring they had a lot of white people playing cards. Most of those people left 'cause they think playing spades interferes with their studies" (10/24/89). Apparently Juan thinks that those white students' placement of school work over spades playing is a part of their "own thing." This could be a manifestation of a phenomenon similar to what Signithia Fordham discovered, wherein Black students feel academic achievement is associated with whiteness. However, based on his study of Prince Hall Masonry, Juan was too aware of his ancestral roots to believe that. Juan genuinely believed, or rather had deluded himself to believe, that he could accomplish academic success utilizing his approach, which included
spades playing.

Juan's rationalization became clear as he continued his interview: "But that's only if you let it interfere with your studies. A lot of us, we'll play when we got no class, before class or after class. When it's time to go to class you might go five minutes late. You might go five minutes early. And somebody takes your place. That's why it looks like we always playing and not going to class. But we do. Somebody'll go to class, and another person takes his spot" (p. 1). This was a rational explanation for the appearance of a continual spades game, but observation indicated otherwise. Juan knew that academic achievement is significant enough to warrant the fabrication of a justification.

Juan was not alone in his exaggerations. Some spades players lied outright about their academic accomplishments. Like Hammer, whose lies about his studying were apparent from the beginning of my research, a number of the other spades players lied with regard to their academic achievements. For example, Kevin stated, "We play cards a lot, but we also all get together and study together"; Kathy made the false claim, "My G.P.A. is 2.5"; and Dex affirmed, "My grades are good; I have no problem in that department." Hammer not only exaggerated about his own performance, but others' as well: "There's only one person in our group on probation, Juan, and he got that when he was at another college."

The spades players placed the card playing at a higher priority than their academic work, or perhaps they were more determined to maintain their self
identity through spades playing than to attain a long range goal through academic achievement. In either scenario, their academic work lost out to spades playing.

Following is an excerpt from an interview with Kevin that demonstrates confused priority:

At times, when the grades come out, some students feel it's wasted time, playing cards, 'cause this time I could have spent more time studying, but I don't feel it's wasted time, 'cause really, everyday, almost everyday, somebody new comes over and plays cards with us, and by us playing cards, we meet new people. (Interview, 4/15/89)

Kevin felt that meeting new friends was equally as important as studying. Perhaps his true vocation is in the hospitality industry where his order of priority would be appropriate. In his current setting, however, Deep South Community College, Kevin's priorities would be asynchronous to the goal of an associate degree.

At times, relationships among spades players did foster personal growth and even class attendance. Kathy talked about how one gained respect within the spades players. "If you stick up for yourself and you know what you're talking about, and you don't let them talk to you any kind of way, you gain respect" (Interview, 4/6/90). According to the spades players, such impetus for personal growth came about through challenge and competitiveness. This same challenge and competitiveness experienced in active participation in the spades games provided the direction for personal growth in the area of concern for others. This concern was made visible through the spades players' encouragement of other players to leave the cards alone and attend class.

On December 6, 1989, I observed an unknown Black male approach Billy
in the student commons: "'Hey man it's time for class.' Billy just looked at him and said nothing. He kept playing cards, and a minute later, a male spades player from a game at an adjacent table said 'Hey Billy, don't you have class?' Billy did not respond. He kept playing cards" (Fieldnotes, 12/6/89). Though Billy chose not to abandon the card game, he was advised to do so by his peers. This demonstrates care on the part of the spectator and the other spades player. On another occasion, "A spades game was taking place with three male players and one female player. A male spectator from another table near the female player said 'You're not going to class today?' The female player responded, 'We got a test on Wednesday. She's only doing a chapter review. If you do that, you don't have to go to class.' The male responded, 'Somebody has to go to find out what we have to do.' The female responded 'Why don't you go? I did the chapter review.' At this point the male left to go to class" (Fieldnotes, 4/3/89). In this instance the concern the male student demonstrated for the female spades players was reflected back to him. At first glance the response from the female player was nonchalant; however, based on her comment, she was current with her work, which probably motivated the male student to prepare himself. This positive peer pressure, though subtle, is nonetheless significant.

During an interview with Juan, he shared that such peer pressure was not always as subtle:

They know how to have fun, and they know when the time to get serious is. There can be four people playing spades, and one person may have a class at 12 o'clock, but other people may not. If that person says, "Oh, I don't feel like going to class," they may stop and say, "We aren't gonna deal
anymore until you go to class. They will hold the game until that person finally goes to class." (Interview, 2/11/89)

Though I have not observed a similar instance of such peer pressure, I was impressed that Juan placed classroom attendance in priority to the spades game. Of course Juan might have said this for my benefit, thinking this is what I would want him to do. Generally, the spades players placed playing spades at a higher priority, as evidenced by the time they invested in the game.

There were certain dynamics taking place in the classroom that I observed that need to surface to complete this picture of the spades players' response to academic achievement. By far the dynamic that stands out more than any other was the spatial location of the spades players in the classroom. Without exception, the spades players sat in the rear of the classroom. In fact, in certain instances the only Black student sitting in the rear of the classroom was a spades player. A startling contrast became evident when I visited the classrooms of the Black SGA senators. To a person, all the senators sat in the front of the classroom. The classroom seating arrangement has an obvious relationship to the students' visibility and proximity to the instructor. On several occasions I heard a spades player answering an instructor's question correctly, but inaudibly so that the instructor never knew the student had answered the question. As a result, though sometimes the spades players knew the material, they did not receive credit or acknowledgement. Similarly, during a year of classroom observations I did not observe one occasion when a spades player raised a hand to offer an insight; rarely did a spades player raise a hand to answer a question.
The instructors' responses to the students' locating themselves in the rear varied. The majority of instructors made an effort to call on those students not responding, regardless of where they sat in class. From my observation those students who sat in the rear of the classroom were often called upon when the instructor asked a question regarding what had been previously covered in class. Not having studied, the spades players in the rear of class did not answer the questions unless on rare occasion they remembered what had transpired in a previous class. When the spades player was asked a question and did not know the answer, this situation provided some other student in the classroom with more time to think about the answer or to check notes. The spades players brought more attention to themselves and their unpreparedness by sitting in the rear.

When I asked the spades players why they sat in the rear of the classroom I received comments such as, "He (the instructor) makes me nervous"; "I don't wanna sit in the front to be called on"; "I don't wanna look in his (her) face"; "I just don't like sittin up front." Having visited many of their classrooms, I understood the students' sentiments. However, they obviously did not understand that students' locations in the classroom and lack of classroom participation surely affect the instructor's perception of them. Ultimately this perception affects the student's final grade. This type of behavior, coupled with limited study time left over from spades playing, translated to academic problems that led to academic probation, suspension, dismissal, or dropout.

From a student's perspective, certain classroom experiences do not
provoke enthusiasm for the subject matter, or the instructor. For example, I attended several classes in Business Law where the instructor sat while lecturing from the book throughout the entire class. The material was not dynamic, nor was the instructor. In one of these classes (Fieldnotes, 11/29/89) a Black student sitting to the right of the middle of the room spent almost a third of the entire class cleaning out her purse. She had a brown paper bag in which she was placing trash from her purse. She kept opening and closing the bag. After about fifteen minutes of this the instructor said, "That bag noise is really getting to me." She put the bag away, but continued to clean her purse. In addition to this distraction, I noticed that she had a biology book opened on her desk. She seemingly paid no attention to what was going on in the classroom. Her body language (seating posture) illustrated her boredom. It was certainly noticeable, but the instructor was unconcerned about that. The class was boring to me also (p. 3).

In a Small Business class the instructor was equally boring, but rather than a "sit back and relax" atmosphere, this instructor created a tension that appeared to be driven by extreme defensiveness. Students did not ask questions for fear of ridicule. The instructor demanded a strict classroom decorum that did not tolerate any other behavior besides listening and taking notes. This instructor answered students' questions with snaps and quips. Therefore this class experience encouraged no faculty-student interaction and provided no challenge for the students other than staying awake.
The preceding examples of classroom experiences typify those instructors at Deep South who are insensitive and non-stimulating and a commensurate student response. Fortunately, these two examples are extremes. A Child Psychology professor, in contrast, creates a classroom atmosphere where students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss course material as well as any other issues related to the topic of discussion and their lives. Students are also free to talk about problems they are having with other instructors. Besides the command of the subject matter, the instructor appears confident and sensitive to students' concerns and needs. Before I had attended any of his classes, his name was mentioned in a conversation among Lynn, Kathy and Diane. The women were lamenting all their boring classes when Diane said, "Why can't they all be like Dr. G's class?" This piqued my curiosity about his classroom and at the same time encouraged me that there were instructors who were entertaining to the spades players and other students.

While fewer than fifteen percent of Deep South's faculty members are Black, it was clear that the spades players responded differently in the Black instructors' classes than they did in other instructors' classes. One very noticeable difference was that none of the Black instructors' classes was talked about as boring. To the contrary, they were either not talked about at all, or referred to as being tough. A Black economics instructor is very popular among Black students. Each semester over half of his students are Black; frequently there is a larger percentage. He appears to be able to establish rapport with his
students easily. Discussions are encouraged, and students in his classes appear to respond positively to the volume of work required.

The Black instructor of a Small Business course has a reputation for being “fair and tough.” He is a dynamic lecturer who uses few notes. He appears to have command of his subject matter and challenges students to apply the course content to practical business situations. He is demanding of all his students. The majority of his students are white business majors. A Black student remarked to me that “Mr. Kenneth comes to class ready to teach. He tells you come to class prepared by reading before you come. If you’re not prepared you’re not going to make it. And a lot of students say he’s hard. He’s fair. He’s gonna cut everybody in class the same slack, you know, Black or white” (Interview, 10/9/89).

The majority of the classes I attended were conducted by white faculty who insist that they are sensitive to the needs of all students, regardless of race or anything else. I have observed very little specifically that would refute this. However, the unequal power relations between the faculty and Black students creates and perpetuates a chasm that hinders the development of meaningful exchange. For example in a Business Communications class, the instructor initiated a discussion about semantics and symbols by asking what was an American symbol. Kathy said “a dove.” The instructor said, “Well, I’m looking for an American symbol. What does everyone have in the kitchen? A microwave and an electric can opener.” Later the instructor asked “What do you think
about when I say 'gumbo'?" A Black male answered "a mixture of meats and sauces." She said, "Apparently you don't cook." The student was puzzled. In the first instance the instructor obviously meant to ask for an American "status" symbol, but she asked for a symbol. Technically Kathy was correct, but the instructor could not or would not concede that the student was correct because she had not answered the way she wanted her to. In a similar instance at the spades table Kathy would have never let someone handle her the way the instructor did, but she conceded to the instructor only because of the position of the instructor. Kathy certainly had the skills to confront her, for I have seen her do so in other settings. However, Kathy capitulated in light of the unequal power relations, and the instructor continued without being corrected. The significance of this episode is that the spades player was rendered feeling inadequate on an occasion when she was adequate.

In the second instance the male student was close to a correct answer, but the instructor once again dismissed the answer because it was not exactly what she had in mind. The body language of the student indicated that he was puzzled, and the instructor never did offer what she thought to be the correct answer. The student was left totally powerless in this situation. This is indeed an example of unequal power relations in which the instructor is right because he or she is an authority figure, but not in fact.

In a three-hour accounting class the instructor gave a ten-minute break during the middle of the session. When two Black students returned to the
classroom with coffee, he chided them because he indicated that it was a college policy not to eat in the classrooms. A Black female noted, "But you are drinking coffee in the classroom." He responded that he drinks coffee due to his sinus problem. A white student remarked, "And yeah, because you're the teacher." This situation, perhaps thought of as insignificant to the instructor, certainly demonstrates that in the classroom power resides in the teacher who manages the rules and always wins. The student therefore is relegated to a no-win status, which reaffirms the powerlessness of those already lacking in confidence. For the spades players this translates into a situation in which they are set up to fail.

Unlike the spades game, where the spades players could compete with a chance to be successful, in the classroom they were unevenly matched. It is no wonder then that they could not link the challenge and competition of the spades game to the classroom setting. One reason why the spades game was so significant to these students was that they chose to devote their time and energy to an activity at which they had a chance to succeed and to be somebody. Spades playing then was more a survival strategy than resistance. Survival strategy involves being able to compensate for an unpleasant external experience by devising a temporary, internal acceptance of a condition until external circumstances improve. Such mental forays may be externalized and centered in an activity that reinforces the feeling of comfort, security, and acceptance. Such an activity serves to reinforce the internal feelings of balance, in turn motivating the individual to persist in the external activity. This then can be a strategy to aid
the individual in surviving an unpleasant experience. These students elected to play spades where they could be recognized by their peers, be considered professional, exercise team competition, experience family outside the home, be supported by others and have a fighting chance to win. This is not the case in the classroom where they are forced to accept another winless and powerless situation, not unlike the large society. From their illusion regarding their academic achievement it is obvious that they placed value on academic achievement, but not at the expense of their self identity and self worth. The irony is that their choice involved either achieving and losing self identity or retaining self identity and focusing on something outside the curriculum, which caused them to fail.

**The Fraternity**

In the spades players' desire to be somebody, they formalized their collective by establishing an elite subgroup of male spades players. Originally they called themselves the Kappa Phi Nine fraternity and later changed the name to Kappa Phi Nu. They selected red and black as their colors and had tee shirts and caps printed with K-9, the nickname that they gave themselves. Their choice of name is a pun related to their image as dogs in heat for women. Joan's definition of a dog, as it relates to the men, applies here: "Try to use women. They would take 'em for what they could get. You get what you want. Use what you got to get what you want. That's what they do. That's all they about"
(Interview, 4/6/90). However, when I asked Hammer to identify the reason for the fraternity, he said:

Basically, it's just friends, just a bunch of friends that got together and decided to make something like a fraternity. There's really no meaning outside the other meaning we have, well like, see which one of us could conquer more women. You know it's just stuff like that. But, you know, it's just something we have fun with. (Interview, 1/6/90, p.19)

Their sexual interests were also evident in their selection of William as the leader of the fraternity. They referred to him as "number one," though idea for the fraternity originated with Juan and Billy, they asked William to be the leader. I surmise that since women were attracted to William, Billy and Juan wanted to be around him so that women with William would also be around the fraternity brothers and therefore available to be "conquered" by them. For his part William played the part of "number one", but Hammer indicated that at one point Juan and Billy had asked him to be number one because William had withdrawn, not wanting to wear the fraternity shirt in public along with the other brothers. However, after Juan and Billy told William they were considering giving number one to Hammer, "he straightened up." Hammer indicated that he had been invited to join the fraternity by Billy and Juan. "They saw I was a good card player and they looked beyond the cards and saw my personality and said 'He's an o.k. fella to be with.' We all got together and that was it. We became friends. Me, Juan and Billy became real tight, and Kevin. All of us became good friends. I had never met them before" (Interview, 1/6/90, p. 16).

The Kappa Phi Nu fraternity had approximately twelve members. All but
two were from Deep South Community College. The other two were not enrolled in college. All were spades players, even if only occasional players like William. All were Black males. There were three females whom they called their sweethearts and who were allowed to be affiliated with the brothers. This translated to helping them at activities they had. Apparently the women were allowed to participate in the organization only to the extent that the men would permit.

I asked Hammer whether membership was restrictive, since the fraternity was all Black. His answer demonstrates that though the organization was not exclusive racially, the purpose of forming such a group was for the members to stand out above others, to be an elite group of sorts within a larger group.

Hammer: We all have Black pride. We’re all proud of our color. But we don’t have anything against the other races. It’s just something like to fit us above. We stand out. When we come into the cafeteria people who don’t know us and we got shirts on or something, or I have a hat on or something, people ask, “What’s K-9? We wanna know what this is. Is it a fraternity?” It’s not a legal fraternity, but it’s a standard. It’s something that people want to know. People want to be involved in it. People wanna know, “Hey these guys look like they’re striving in school.”

(p. 18)

Hammer’s reference to Blackness is a rare expression of racial pride and solidarity among spades players. Though the statement is simple in appearance, it is profound in its implications. Other spades players like Hammer are aware of their Black ancestry and heritage. Though they may not articulate this awareness, they do demonstrate their racial solidarity by the time they invest in being together with other Black students. Such time is centered in a common
interest and activity, ritual behavior, support and interdependence, and a common struggle of surviving the academic institution.

Hammer's comment about not having anything against other races shows that the fraternity was not formed to be racially exclusive. It was formed to allow the frat brothers to stand out above the rest of the players. This gave the frat brothers an experience of feeling important, to feel like somebody. When he talked about the fraternity as a standard that others would want to know about, Hammer was referring to something other than an academic standard. The institution has such a standard, but the standard the fraternity projects is dependent on other things like appearance. When he talked about the frat brothers "looking like" they strive in school, he is sincere in his belief that it is sufficient to look like you are striving even though you are not.

The spades players' deception about achieving was internalized to the extent that they began to believe it themselves. In describing the K-9's Hammer said, "We strive for academic achievement. We feel that, like my saying when I so-called went on line, I'm an achiever. Achievers should flock with achievers. And I thought that they were achieving so I got with them" (p. 17). Hammer thought that the fraternity brothers were academic achievers based on their appearance, and he wanted to join them because he wanted to have the same appearance. The epitome of the fraternity's deception about academic achievement occurred during the development of the charter for the organization. The authors of the charter, Hammer, Juan and Billy, included a 2.5 G.P.A. as a
requirement for membership. This was incorporated at a time when none of the founding members of the fraternity had such a grade point average, and none of the prospective members "on line" had such a grade point average. Obviously the perception of achievement was just as real to them as the reality.

Prior to the development of the charter for the fraternity, Juan, Billy and Hammer came to me to ask if I would be the faculty advisor. They wanted to formalize the fraternity, including acceptance by the institution. I was deeply moved that they felt so comfortable with me, and I was also realistic in my assessment that they felt it was a good political move to have an Assistant Dean involved. I also saw this as a wonderful opportunity to be called upon to become involved, where I could possibly make a difference in their experiences at Deep South.

It is significant that the idea to formalize and make the fraternity legitimate originated with the spades players themselves. They felt that by being accepted by the institution they too could reap the respect and acknowledgement that come with recognition as a formal student organization. This was the spades players' opportunity to be a part of the power structure. Again this supports the notion that the spades players were not acting out of resistance to the institution. On the contrary, just as the individual spades players sought the family-like atmosphere within the group of players, they simultaneously desired to be attached to a group where they could belong, be themselves, and be recognized. They wanted to be somebody and be a part of a legitimate and formal organization
within the institution.

I received a copy of a charter from another student organization and advised them to follow the format. Three weeks later they presented a draft of the charter that was very similar to the other organization's. I reviewed the charter and noted some concerns. For example there was no reference to performing services for the community or the college. According to the charter, the organization was formed for social activities only, but it did not identify any activities. Since the charter listed me as the faculty advisor, I felt the burden of a heavy responsibility, for in the past there was another Black fraternity on campus that was banned by the college because they were caught using marijuana on campus. Although I had no reason to suspect that the Kappa Phi Nu brothers would do the same, I knew it would only take one incident to create a problem for the frats. I also knew that everyone in authority would be looking toward me for answers and a resolution. I accepted the advisorship of the fraternity so that I might influence the players, in hopes they might achieve academically. I assumed that my new relationship within the fraternity would give me a forum in which to enter into meaningful dialogue regarding them and the institution.

After the charter had been written, the next step in the process of authorization was the first official meeting where the Director of Student Activities would be present to accept the charter. I had met with Potato two days previously, to outline an agenda for the meeting, and had requested use of a meeting place. I had talked about the need to make a good first impression with
the Student Activities Director, and the prospective pledgees. We talked about appropriate dress as a means of formalizing the proceedings and giving an appearance of order. Since Billy and Juan were not in school that semester (Fall 1991) due to their academic standing, and since Hammer had also withdrawn from school due to his mother’s death, Potato assumed the leadership and was to chair the meeting. However, on the day of the meeting little occurred as planned.

The Student Activities Director was present, as were eighteen people, including the brothers, prospective pledgees, and three women from the recently formed Black female sorority. To everyone’s surprise, Juan, dressed in a tee shirt, wrinkled pants, and tennis shoes was on the stage to chair the meeting although Potato and the other brothers, except for Hammer, were dressed with shirt and tie. Before I could ask Potato what had happened, Juan was conducting the meeting. He did not use the agenda Potato and I had worked out; it was obvious that he had not chaired such a meeting before. Juan was not only crude; he was dictatorial as well. During the course of the meeting he began to make changes in the charter without giving the body a chance to vote. The Student Activities Director and I made eye contact and shared a facial expression of bewilderment.

Since I felt it my duty to react to the circumstance, I arose to address the chair and the assembly. I challenged Juan’s actions of making changes in the charter without voting, I challenged that the meeting was not conducted according to the agenda that was agreed upon, and I challenged Juan’s conduct and dress.
Somehow the dress issue was the one issue that struck a negative cord with Juan. He immediately started shouting about how dress does not have anything to do with the meeting or the makeup of a man. Billy, his brother, joined in, and the two of them stormed out of the meeting in an uproar.

Potato dismissed the meeting, but everyone stayed longer to discuss what had happened. The brothers and the pledgees told me that I was right, but they were concerned that Juan and Billy were the founding fathers of the fraternity and they were not sure what would happen. Although the Student Activities Director agreed with my actions, I harbored some regrets that this most important meeting turned out as it did.

The next day Potato came to my office to see me along with Philip. I had observed Philip with the spades players and had seen him at the meeting, but I had not had an opportunity to meet and talk with him. Philip began by saying that he apologized for what had happened at the meeting; he and Potato felt that I was correct. I asked about Juan and Billy. I was told they were still upset; eventually they would calm down. I was impressed with Philip, who was different from the rest of the spades players and fraternity brothers. He appeared confident and well mannered. He was articulate and neatly dressed.

One month passed, and apparently the fraternity had been undergoing a metamorphosis. Philip and Potato came to see me once again to tell me that Philip had been elected as the fraternity’s first president. This action would eventually prove to be the best that could have happened to the organization.
The Kappa Phi Nu fraternity has been duly authorized by the institution. It has stability and consistent leadership. The fraternity has achieved visibility doing service-related work within the institution and is no longer directly associated with spades playing only. Through the invitation of Black Student Government Association senators, Philip became an SGA senator. Since that time, he has been elected the new president of the SGA.

The first formal meeting of the fraternity had become the occasion for my personal intervention in the lives of the spades players at Deep South as a researcher with a materialist philosophical perspective. Certainly my assistance to Hammer in securing a loan for books was significant in that it helped him; it also aided me in gaining rapport that facilitated my relationship with other spades players. On the other hand, my challenge to Juan and Billy at the meeting had the potential of alienating me from the group. That was what I wanted to avoid at all cost. However, even though prior to speaking at the meeting I thought about the possible consequences of my words, I believed that they needed to be said regardless of the consequences to me and my research. I do believe that that was the correct frame of mind in which to make the comments I did in the manner in which they were projected. There was no hidden agenda or vindictiveness. I believe my sincerity was evident to the group. My role was to hold up a mirror so that the spades players, fraternity brothers, could see themselves.

At that junction in their lives at Deep South, the spade players were given a choice to either continue to be victims or begin a path toward mainstream
participation in student life at the college. They may have had that opportunity to make such a decision on their own. However, prior to this occasion they had not been aware that they could have chosen that trajectory. They had been so focused on the spades playing and what that provided for them that they were not open to involvement with other students outside the spades games. They had participated in locking themselves out of the mainstream. They needed to experience other student organizations while still maintaining their self identity, support, and solidarity. I am not suggesting that mainstream participation for marginalized students is merely a matter of their choosing. The reality of unequal power structures in educational institutions is that the majority-minority power struggle maintains a level of friction that becomes an obstacle to mobility. What I am suggesting is that the spades players had had the same ability all along, but the opportunity or occasion had not surfaced in which a decision to change was required.

Change had emanated from within the group and was facilitated by a spades player whose background, experiences, and personal changes had prepared him for the requisite tasks.

**Philip: Intervention by a Peer**

Philip entered Deep South in the fall of 1990. Philip was 25 years old at that time. He was married to a woman who had graduated from a local Black
university with a bachelor's degree in Marketing. Currently, she is working for the state. Phillip and his wife have two children. Philip works at a local hospital, in the evenings, as a counselor's assistant earning $6.58 per hour. He works with adolescents, mostly Black males, who are chemically dependent. People tell Philip that he is fortunate to have a job such as this despite his age and not having completed college as yet.

Philip entered Deep South to study nursing, the profession of his mother, who is a registered nurse. His father is a businessman who has been in business for himself as long as Philip can remember. Currently, he owns a grocery store. Philip has only one sibling. His family is upper middle class with a combined annual income of $100,000.

Philip is a medium build, dark skinned, neat man with a well trimmed beard and mustache. He is articulate and walks confidently and with authority. He has a very pleasant personality that gives him ability to get along well with others on a variety of levels, from those who are very intelligent and astute to those who are ignorant and common. Philip's G.P.A. reveals his seriousness about his studies:

Table 4.8

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Philip is a different personality from the spades players and comes from a different family and class background from the majority of them. He talks about his parents bringing him and his sister to the opera and the symphony to expose them to culture. He feels that this exposure helps him relate to a variety of individuals. Nonetheless, Philip began to play spades at Deep South. He indicates that he had attended City University, a local white university, five years before and had done poorly because he had spent so much time in the university game room with the game room crowd. He said to himself when he first noticed the spades games at Deep South, "This is all they do is play cards. This is like City University all over again" (Interview, 6/23/91). He watched them play cards for about three weeks.

Philip: It just so happened that one day I saw a guy I knew from the University. We used to play cards together. He looked at me and I looked at him and we said "These guys don't know how to play spades." We decided to call winners. Well, we got winners and beat the two guys we were playing against. We played that one game and left. Well, the word got out that there were these new guys on campus that could play spades, so everybody wanted to challenge us. We played, but not every day like those others, and we didn't miss any classes or studies to play cards. I only played when I had nothing else to do and was caught up with my work. (Interview, 6/23/91, p. 9)

Philip said he was cautious about getting trapped by spades like the other spades players. He said they would play from 8 a.m. until 5 or 6 p.m. as if they were on a job. He said that he had wasted his parents' money at the university, majoring in spades. What was different this time was that he had to spend his own money. I asked Philip where he had learned to play spades. Like the other
players, Philip learned to play spades at home with his family. They would play spades at family gatherings especially on the holidays. I also asked Philip what attracted him to the game at Deep South, especially since he had had the prior experience of doing poorly academically because of excessive card playing. He remarked, "For a new person on campus it is an easy way to meet people and get to know them. That's all you have to do is know how to play and most people play at home" (Interview, 6/23/91, p. 8).

Philip said he saw himself in the spades players. He said the spades players reminded him of what he used to be; that scared him. He saw how they were more serious about spades playing, and did not take their studies as seriously. He said that he tried to talk to them about how they were wasting their time. He said he would tell them, "Like man, there is nothing wrong with playing cards, but if you come here to get your education, don't let cards overrule your education" (p. 11). He realized, however, that being young men (the spades players were younger than he) they had to "sow their wild oats or whatever way they have to do it" (p. 12). He said he knew that when they become more mature adults they will realize what they did and wish they had taken advantage of the opportunity. He said he had told them that by the time they realized their mistake, they would have to start over again like he did.

When I asked Philip what helped him reach this understanding, he replied that marriage and having his first son made the difference. When he became a father, he realized that what his father had been telling him about responsibility
finally made sense. Being the "man of the house" made him mature; so did not
being able to lean on his parents for money. Philip's insight into the spades
players is most useful as a perspective from the "inside out."

In respect to female spades players, Philip felt they were more serious
about their school work than the men. One female in particular, Elise, played
spades but not all the time. Philip said he was not sure if it may have been
something in her personal life, but she got on academic probation. He used to
tell her, "Stay out of the cafeteria and go study." He said she just could not break
the habit of going to the cafeteria. His interest and concern shown for Elise
demonstrated his leadership ability and materialistic philosophical perspective
toward the spades players.

With respect to the noise made by the spades players during the game,
Philip reported that he had tried to tell them to keep the level down. He said he
was tempted to dissociate himself from them because the noise was getting too far
out of hand.

I'm not one to be associated with loudness and commonness all the time.
I know there is a time and a place for everything. Sometimes they did get
out of hand, more times than not. And I started to kind of pull away from
them and stop playing with them because I didn't like to sit down in the
cafeteria in particular and play a loud game of cards. All of that 'jock a
doo wee wee' and all of those antics and anecdotes they do I didn't care
for and I know a lot of other people didn't either. (Interview, 6/23/91, p. 13)

Probably from Philip's prior experiences with what he called the "p.h.d.'s (pool
hall delinquents)" at City University and his current work with adolescents, Philip
is more tolerant of noisy activity than most. What is insightful is his response to
why such behavior accompanies the game. He indicates that the noise and antics add the excitement and colorfulness that Black people seem to bring to what they do. It only becomes a problem when it is overdone, as with the spades players. Philip's assessment may be further evidence of a Black cultural expression that is dismissed by some EuroAmericans and even some African Americans as denegrating Black people rather than a cultural expression of choice.

Philip expanded his comments beyond Black students at Deep South. He talked about how mostly Black students at City University played spades. He said, "This is the way we (Blacks) interact with each other. We find out, 'you play, I play,' we interact and become a circle of friends in that respect. It is the easiest and simplest way to get to know a large number of people" (p. 14).

Philip's insights about the Black students' involvement with spades playing at City University is significant in that it broadens the scope of this activity from a mere game to a ritual that aids in the interaction of a people.

In response to my inquiry to Philip regarding why it is mostly Black students who get so seriously involved in spades playing, he could not answer. He did confirm, however, that when many Black students first come to the college they are not as serious about education as they should be, but they do have high goals and expectations of what they want to be. He went on further to say that getting involved in the spades games hinders their progress in school in that they want to spend more and more time in the commons playing spades and less time in taking classes. "They don't want all their day to be bogged down with classes,
so they take nine hours so the rest of the day they can hang out in the commons" (Interview, 6/23/91, p. 14).

Though this may not be true of all the spades players, what is true is that their behavior demonstrates that they have placed a high priority on the short-term gratification associated with feeling like "somebody" when they win a spades game. This short-term achievement is something they know they can attain. Though they may possess the skills necessary to be academic achievers, they may not be aware of them and are not confident enough in their ability to dedicate the amount of time and attention required to achieve. Instead, they are satisfied with seeking notoriety among other spades players and spectators by winning spades games.

The spades players have career goals and personal goals and are quite capable of articulating these goals. On the other hand, like many immature college students, they have unrealistic perspectives as to how these goals can be achieved. Each of the career goals held by the spades players requires a minimum of an associate degree, yet none of them generates the requisite grade point average to be in good academic standing. Instead of being concerned about their grade point average and how that relates to acquiring their career goal, these students are more concerned with pursuing the personal satisfaction or immediate gratification of winning a spades games and that a temporary euphoric feeling which comes from being "somebody" among their peers.

Due to what Philip observed about the spades players, he was critical of
According to Philip:

"Their fraternity did not show fraternal brotherhood at all. I sat back and pulled a couple of guys on the side (other Black males not in the fraternity). I said to them, "If this is the only Black fraternal organization on campus, I think we should come up with something new because I don't too much care for what these brothers are doing. They don't do anything positive on campus." (Interview, 6/23/91, p. 21)"

Philip said he felt compelled to acknowledge his displeasure with the direction of the fraternity since it was the only fraternity at the college (black or white). At the same time he was willing to take decisive action by offering an alternative fraternity. He indicated that he even pulled the leaders of the fraternity on the side to help them handle a situation that threatened to erupt in fighting and violence. Instead of this type of behavior, Philip would take the brothers in his truck to get chicken and beer and go to the part to "rap" and try to get to know each other. He reminded them that all they did on campus was play cards; they were limiting their image as a fraternity before other Black students and the whole college community. They were not providing any service to others at the college or in the community.

During the same time Philip was talking to another group of Black men about the fraternity. He continued to talk to them about doing a charter for another fraternal organization that would offer Black men an alternative. Around this time the leadership of Kappa Phi Nu asked Phillip to become an honorary member of their fraternity. After Phillip discussed this offer with the new group, he accepted the challenge of Kappa Phi Nu and dropped his plans for another organization. He did not want to hurt their feelings and make them think he was
better than they by refusing to be a part of their fraternity (Interview, 6/23/91). Philip consequently joined Kappa Phi Nu and became its first elected president.

In the spring of 1991 the Student Life Center was opened at Deep South Community College. This much needed facility provided space for students to congregate. Philip and some of the other fraternity brothers began to congregate in the student life center. They became acquainted with other students whom they would have not met at a spades game. Philip's caring and decisive intervention in redirecting the path of the fraternity did not go unnoticed by others within the college community. Cyril, a Black SGA member, asked Philip to join the Student Government Association. Philip possessed the required 2.5 G.P.A.; all he had to do was fill out an application and be accepted. Phillip was accepted as an SGA senator; he then persuaded Kappa Phi Nu brothers to become involved on campus.

It was during this time the institution banned all card playing in the commons. Based on the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs, card playing was relegated to the television room in the rear of the new student life center. There were several indications that this action was eminent. During the fall 1990 semester a rumor was circulated that card playing was banned from the commons and anyone playing cards would be dismissed from school. This was not true, but it did halt play for about two weeks. During that same semester, the Dean of Student Affairs, who rarely eats in the student commons, sat next to the spades game while eating lunch along with the college registrar and two division chairs.
At one point I observed the dean jumping out of his seat to go over to the spades table to tell them to quiet down. He was visibly angry; his countenance had turned red and he was pointing his finger at the students while he held his napkin in his hand. In about ten minutes after this episode all of the student spectators left the table and within five minutes after that the game was over. (Incidentally, that spades game was in progress prior to the dean and his guests' taking seats at their table.) The only institutional response therefore to spades playing was the indignation of a college official and the relegation of the activity to the rear of the campus.

As a result of the prohibition of card playing in the commons, spades playing virtually ceased at Deep South. Philip said that the card players were too lazy to walk to the rear of the campus. I am convinced, however, that the issue was the loss of the captive audience in the student commons. One of the central reasons for the popularity of the spades game was the notoriety and visibility that gave the players recognition, at least among the spectators of the game. The males "showed off" their card playing ability and antics to attract females, and females do not frequent the game room in the rear of the campus. Additionally, the student commons was accessible for a quick game between classes. It takes perhaps ten minutes to walk from the main classroom building to the rear of the campus where card playing was relocated.

Since that time there are still Black students left in the student commons. These students occupy the rear of the commons where the entrance and exit to
the faculty and staff parking lot are located. They sometimes engage in loud talking, horseplay, radio playing, or just sitting in the area talking. Occasionally, there is profanity and noisy activity similar to that which the spades players demonstrated. In a private conversation the President suggested to me that these Black students should be moved to some other location on campus. Despite all the institution's attempt to whitewash the commons, there is still a Black student group expressing themselves culturally. Meanwhile, Hammer, Rocky, Kathy, Joan, and Potato all dropped out of school due to their academic status; only Juan and Billy from the "old" spades players remain.

Philip used the occasion of the prohibition of the card playing to stress to the fraternity brothers that the fraternity needed to change its image so that people would no longer think that all they did was play cards. In order to change this perception Philip endeavored to involve the fraternity in student activities sanctioned by the student government activities. One such activity was the official opening of the student life center where all student organizations were invited to participate. All of the "brothers" showed up with their Kappa Phi Nu colors and letters. They were introduced along with me as their faculty advisor. After the introduction they assisted in serving refreshments and cleaning up the area. This gave the fraternity positive exposure, and led to at least three students indicating that they were happy to see that the fraternity did more than play cards. These same three students were added to the next "line" of new pledgees. One of the three students was Cyril, the SGA senator who was instrumental in influencing
Philip to become a senator. They are now members of the fraternity.

The same Dean of Student Affairs accomplished his goal of eliminating the spades games. Not only did he remove the games from the commons; he eliminated them altogether. The spades players were devoting too much time playing cards to the detriment of their studies. No one condoned such behavior; actually, the institution needed to have intervened before waiting to prohibit the games in the commons. The students' devotion to spades playing and the accompanying noise was not a recent occurrence in the student commons. Throughout the three years of this study the same situation existed. What is appalling about the action taken is that students were not counseled about how they needed to devote more time to studying instead of card playing; they were moved out of sight (to the rear of the campus) while no counsel or advice was given to them regarding why it was in their best interest not to devote such an inordinate amount of time to this activity.

More positive intervention would have involved taking the required time and utilizing available expertise to understand the needs of the Black students involved in spades playing, and developing a mentoring program or peer support program. None of these options was employed. There was no consideration given to the significance of this game to the spades players, and no opportunity for a compromise to be forged with the students. There was no thought given to the possibility that this game was a cultural expression of a group of Black students, or that the game provides an activity which permits these students to feel
at home. Deep South Community College did not live up to its mission to the spades players.
The Student Government Association (SGA) of Deep South Community College is the premier student organization that is both sanctioned and perpetuated by the institution. The SGA is composed of thirty student leaders, eleven of whom are leaders of special interest student organizations. These student leaders are called senators because they represent all the students. Each spring semester the SGA president and officers are elected. Later in the fall, senators are nominated and voted in by the student body. Other senators are appointed by the president. The institution employs a full-time person as Director of Student Activities and advisor to the SGA. This advisor continually monitors SGA activities and authorizes the use of funds from the SGA budget. Thus there is some semblance of checks and balances. Nevertheless the SGA president is a powerful student with great influence among other students, faculty, staff, and administration.

Each student entering Deep South Community College is assessed $5.00 for student activities every semester in attendance. All of these funds go to the SGA account at the college. At the time this study began, there were nearly 8,000 students in attendance for the fall and spring semester and about 4,000 for the summer. Consequently the SGA budget was approximately $40,000 for each of the major semesters and about half that amount for the summer. These funds were under the direct control of the SGA president and senators. Though the advisor had to approve the expenditure of these funds, his approval meant merely
that he had reviewed the paperwork for disbursement of funds. In reality the
president and senators controlled the entire amount. If at any time the president
of the SGA felt that the advisor was being uncooperative, the president would go
to the College President, who customarily accommodated the students. The
President of the College is very responsive to the SGA president because that
person is the one student leader who represents all students, not just one special
interest group. Also, SGA funds provide for refreshments for faculty and visiting
dignitary receptions. SGA funds can support special projects of the administration,
faculty, staff, and students. When a special workshop was organized by a
particular faculty member and state funds were not available to support the
activity, the SGA was called upon for assistance. Usually the process for getting
funds from this organization involved convincing the president who would in turn
persuade the senators to support the request. The influence of the SGA was
significant; therefore, faculty, staff and other students perceived the organization
as a powerful force.

Considering this background, it is significant that in the last six years three
of the SGA presidents were Black (two women, one man). Of the other
presidents, all three were women, and one woman is Hispanic. The
preponderance of women and Blacks in this position can be explained by the
student response to elections. Deep South is a commuter college and the majority
of the white students are employed. These students do not stay on the campus
when their classes are over, so they have little or no time for and interest in
student activities. On the other hand fewer Black and other minority students are employed; consequently, they can spend more time on campus and are available to vote in student government elections.

**Natasha: The SGA President**

Natasha was elected president during the first year of this study. Natasha is an extraordinary Black woman, a mother of three who lives in Capitol City. She commuted to Deep South each day school was open, approximately 90 miles one way. She majored in Funeral Services Education, and Deep South is the only institution in Magnolia state that offers such a program. Prior to her involvement with the SGA, Natasha was a member of the Funeral Services Club, and served as the organization's director of social activities.

Natasha is an attractive dark skinned woman who looks younger than her age, which is in her mid-thirties. She is energetic, and is often seen at various locations across the campus within the same day. She is approximately 5 feet 6 inches tall with a medium frame and proportionate shape. She chooses a natural appearance for both her face and hair. She dresses appropriately for an occasion, but appears to prefer loose fitting casual clothes. She is intelligent, articulate, and fully confident in running meetings or attending meetings called by administrators. She can communicate with individuals on a variety of levels. She relates well with professional people as well as students and community figures. For example, Natasha traveled to other colleges and universities in the state to work with other
SGA presidents on issues affecting college students throughout the state. She was one of the leaders among the SGA presidents who attended Trustees meetings. While at a student sponsored activity on campus, Natasha would be relaxed and "down to earth" enough to relate to the intelligent and not-so-intelligent student, the sophisticated student and the naive or crude student.

Natasha graduated from high school twenty years before entering Deep South. She married immediately after high school graduation, and for the next four years was a housewife raising two sons. Five years into the marriage, Natasha was widowed. She attended a paramedic training academy and worked for an ambulance service. She also attended a vocational school, was trained as a licensed practical nurse, and worked at a hospital. She worked a total of sixteen years and remarried. Her good fortune was that based on her husband's salary she could go back to school. She decided she wanted to major in funeral services education because she wanted to be in a business where there would always be a need. The immediate problem was that she and her husband lived in Capitol City, and Deep South, 95 miles away, was the only institution in the state that offered the program she wanted. Natasha therefore commuted daily to Deep South.

This brief background is important in understanding that Natasha's experiences were atypical for an incoming freshman in college. However, having such varied experiences prior to entering college is not uncommon for many Deep South students, whose average age is 28 years. Certainly varied backgrounds are
common among other Black SGA senators.

Natasha not only knew what she wanted to do, but she was willing to make the sacrifices of continuing to run a household while commuting to school. Such circumstances helped to make her serious about what she was doing.

Natasha’s academic record at Deep South manifests the seriousness with which she took her studies:

Table 5.1

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<th>DEEP SOUTH GPA</th>
<th>ACADEMIC STATUS</th>
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<td>Fall 1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 1990</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>Associate Degree Awarded</td>
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Natasha’s seriousness was not limited to her academic performance. She was quite concerned about what she characterized as racism at the college:

Racism takes different levels or degrees or outlooks. Racism is there because you have a minute majority of white instructors, over 90 percent. And the material that is used—literature, books, educational materials. When they teach things it is not on a cultural level. For example in funeral services we were taught what color a white person turns when they die, not what happens to a Black person. We were taught what a white person does to handle a funeral home, knowing full well that Black people do not do that. That concerned me. Everything in class was white oriented.

In class when you have white orientation, teachers who are not looking out for that minority regardless of how minute, you will have racism to a superlative degree because they are not caring what you are thinking. They are not caring what you are learning and your mentality, your
emotions and how you are going to be a well rounded person in an all white atmosphere. I feel that. I saw racism in the way people talked down to Black students. It is automatically known that Black students are going to fail.

When several students in my funeral service class including myself started making over 60, he talked about me as one of his best students while others would not make it. He was referring to other Black students. He was doing all he could to help the white people. The Blacks—he would look at their paper and write what he wanted on it. That is education on the lowfield. When I call it lowfield I mean just stereotyping Blacks so they can't learn. You know. There is just this class of people at Deep South who don't like Blacks and refuse to learn any more about them. They are so accustomed to having their way. (Interview, 6/21/91)

Racism is not necessarily a by-product of a predominantly white environment. However Natasha's point is that there was not the Black representation among faculty and administration in proportion to the number of Black students. This situation, in addition to the lack of institutional priority for multicultural curricula, resulted in a curriculum that reflected the culture of the majority at the expense of the minority culture.

Natasha's concern about the institution's lack of caring about Black students' being well rounded persons in a white atmosphere is evidence of an inner feeling of isolation and not belonging that Black students experience in such environments. The spades players experienced the same thing; they just responded differently. They grouped together around a family-like activity that provided support and acceptance. They responded to the powerlessness of the situation by creating their own environment where they could achieve and feel like "somebody." Though the spades players did not articulate their concerns about racism and the institution as Natasha did, their response to the institution
involved concentrating their time on the spades game to the detriment of their academic work. Their actions were a survival strategy for keeping their identity in an alien environment.

On the other hand, the senators chose to empower themselves at the institution. They elected to help change the environment in which they found themselves by seeking and receiving positions of authority. In this way they also sought to be "somebody" as did the spades players, but they took a different approach based on prior successes and prior failures. They fulfilled their desire for group solidarity through church, community, and family off campus and on campus like being a senator and good student.

Natasha's reference to "education on the lowfield" is the first student-generated term found in this study that directly relates to how racism affects the curriculum. The term is appropriate to distinguish the baseness of classroom practices, such as Natasha described, from a curriculum that empowers through multiculturalism or cultural diversity. Natasha's comment about "stereotyping Blacks so they cannot learn" is an indictment of the Eurocentric (monocultural) curriculum and the institution that condones such by default. Natasha has provided an important student perspective on the curriculum at Deep South. This demonstrates not only her insight and awareness, but the ability to articulate the root of the problem as she sees it.

According to Natasha, it was her experience with racism at Deep South and her desire to do something about it that motivated her to get involved in
student government. Her initial student organization involvement was with the Funeral Service Club. She was vice president in charge of planning social activities. She said, however, that there was no recognition for a Black person in such a position; she felt limited to a certain sphere of influence. She also recalled that there was a Black male who was president of the Sign Language club. He also got no recognition outside the Sign Language class. The Student Government Association, on the other hand, was viewed differently:

When you say "student government people" with authority over money and who have to deal directly with the top dogs and staff, these people start looking at you as someone who can do some damage. I use the term damage because you can do damage. Prior to getting in SGA I was nothing, just a dot on the wall, just another student who was there. When you try to find something or talk to someone you are looked down upon. Afterward when you come into a position, people fear or respect certain kinds of authority (Interview, 6/21/91, p. 3).

Natasha's reference to damage is symbolic of what she felt to be the means of resolving the racism she encountered. The use of this jargon is reminiscent of the Black power militancy of the late 1960's. I think Natasha perceived the potential for damage to be equivalent to a loaded gun that gives the oppressed a feeling of equity with the oppressor. With its money, visibility, and access to key administrators, faculty, and staff, the SGA had power and authority. In her attempt to gain recognition and effect changes at Deep South, Natasha found her vehicle as a SGA senator.

When Natasha likened her experience prior to being in SGA to "a dot on the wall," she was describing the experiences of Black students who are marginalized in a predominately white situation. Being looked down upon is also
a part of being marginalized, and according to Natasha. Black students outside the SGA were looked down upon. It is difficult to document, and therefore to report, that someone manifests a negative attitude toward someone else as if one person were less than or somehow lower than the other. Natasha's response to being looked down upon was to seek an opportunity to reverse the situation by being in a position of authority.

Natasha had not considered running for an office within the SGA until the Student Activities Director asked her to consider running for SGA president. She was uncertain until the new President of the College was appointed. The new president is a Black male. This inspired Natasha to seek the presidency of the SGA. This situation suggests a potential benefit of providing Black professors as role models in various levels of administration and instruction.

Once Natasha won the election, she began to recruit other students to be SGA senators who could help her accomplish her goals:

> When I got who I wanted in the senate we got things done. I tried to involve everyone in what I was doing. Mr. Stuart, Student Activities Director, would always call them my posse. Of course these were people I could trust. We went out, did things. I tried my best to instill into those associated with me how we needed to change some things that were going on here. The first thing is if you think there is racism here, expose that. Bring it out discuss it with your teachers, 'cause I was discussing it with my teachers. We would talk about things like that and what we could do. People need leaders, and I am more of a take-the-lead type person. (Interview, 6/21/91, p. 12)

Natasha's leadership style was assertive and at times confrontational; she had had disagreements with senators from the previous administration. It was important for her to have people around her who were willing to help her. Her
special group of close friends consisted of nine people: three Black females (Elaine, Beatrice, and Nia), three Black males (Lloyd, Aaron, and Roman), one Hispanic female (See), one Hispanic male (Hector), and one white female (Lilly). These senators were her closest allies. Just as her special friends reflected multicultural and gender sensitivity, so did the various functions and events sponsored by her administration. Deep South Community College is the most culturally diverse institution of higher education in the Magnolia State, so Natasha’s emphasis on diversity in functions and activities was indeed justified and recognized by those who saw the benefits. Natasha however did not forfeit her Black identity in the process. She was able to maintain her ethnic bond with other Black students even within her special group.

Natasha acknowledged that she had two levels of association with the senators. Her relationship with all the students in her little group was built upon mutual respect and admiration and a working relationship in which she provided the leadership. She gave them directions about what to do, and then she would back them. Her relationship with Beatrice and Nia in particular was more like soulmates, confidants, or sisters. She describes them as a different class of people:

Nia is so supportive. She told me "anything you want to do I'll be there." She was heavy into Blackness. She talked about the community and the school. She is a pillar of strength with tremendous commitment to the community and extensive community connections we could tap into. She is a profound Black woman.

Beatrice is more intellectual, dealing with rationalizations—trying to get in depth and understand the why's and make sure there is a clarification of
what is happening. She understood what was happening and wanted to change. When dealing with racism she got more perplexed than we did 'cause she wanted to know "why does a person do this? Why is this allowed to happen? Why is something not being done about it?" She is profound, religious, solid and trustworty. (Interview, 6/21/91, p. 21).

It was clear that Natasha treasured her relationship with these two women. It was as if they were her anchor that kept her steady, focused and supported. Natasha also had more in common with these women than the others, for like her they were married people with families. She felt that they saw things from a different perspective and could analyze things on many levels - in contrast, for example, to Lloyd and Elaine, who had demonstrated vigor and agility, but were single and much younger. Natasha also had a special relationship with Aaron, who like Beatrice and Nia, was married with a family. Aaron was religious, a strict church goer. In fact Natasha indicated that all of the students in her special group were strong believers. "They constantly put forth the Creator. Their faith and belief in what they believed in was striking to me and helped me appreciate them more. They had that in common. I was the only one who didn't have that. But I respected them for it" (Interview, 6/21/91, p. 6).

As an assertive and strong Black woman, Natasha is a tremendous role model for other Black students. Her intelligence and ability alone are admirable, but her personal commitment and sacrifice in providing leadership to Deep South students went beyond what was expected. Current innovations in student life at Deep South, including a tutoring and enrichment program for children of night students and permanent offices for SGA senators, are a testimony to her efforts
during her administration.

Natasha's participation in this study is significant in at least two ways. First she served as a catalyst in motivating the spades players to sign the consent form to participate in the study. Secondly, her leadership of the SGA provides a striking contrast to the leadership of the spades players.

Natasha selected individuals whom she wanted to serve as senators based on certain characteristics about them she had observed. She approached each student with the eagerness of an Armed Services recruiter while making them feel that their talents were necessary to the functioning of student government. She persuaded them that they could make a contribution to the institution and to the student body.

There were fourteen Black SGA senators during the year Natasha was president. She provided me an opportunity to talk to all of them regarding participating in my study. I decided to focus on those who were appointed by Natasha and who were considered a part of her special group, but all of the Black senators were eager to participate. I chose this special group as my subgroup of focus because this group spent more time together than the other Black senators. And, according to Aaron, a member of this subgroup, they did not spend a great deal of time together. They would give parties for all senators as a reward for some extra effort. The white senators would not come to the party, so it became a Black senators' party. At such functions Natasha's special group would be found socializing as one would expect to find in a collective of friends. The
senators I will focus on in this section, then, are Black male and female academic achievers who share a common desire to get involved and to make a difference at Deep South Community College.

Roman

Roman, a 36-year-old divorced father of four children had a history of involvement on campus and within the community. At Deep South he was involved in a volunteer campus organization called Circle K, the Single Parents' Support Group, and intramurals prior to being nominated and appointed by Natasha. Roman is a short, overweight (not obese), olive complexioned man who has a mature appearance and demeanor; he is energetic and a very hard worker.

Roman is the only child of a working class couple. His father owns and drives a taxi; for years he was a parking-lot attendant. His mother is an assistant manager for National Car Rentals. She has held several clerical jobs prior to this job. His parents' joint income is approximately $55,000. They live in an all-Black neighborhood that was once occupied by working class homeowners; now the houses are mostly occupied by renters. The overall appearance and cleanliness of the neighborhood has changed throughout the years. Houses and lawns are no longer consistently cared for; papers and debris litter the streets. There are, however, families that have lived in this neighborhood all their lives.

Roman graduated from a Black Catholic high school in 1973. He was drafted, served in Vietnam for eleven months as a medic, and stayed in the military for nine additional years. While in the military he took correspondence
courses and advanced to a rank of E7 at an earlier age than anyone else in his unit. Also while in the military he married; children followed. After the military, Roman returned home and was employed at a Catholic elementary school as the athletic director, coach, and teacher. He eventually left education to pursue a career in business as a manager of a men's clothing store. It was there that he eventually lost his job to someone who had a college degree. This persuaded him to attend Deep South to pursue a degree in business administration and mid-management. In 1985 Roman divorced his wife and was awarded custody of the four children. Since that time in order to make ends meet Roman has taken work-study jobs at school, works at a department store on weekends, and works for a catering company as a bartender. Besides these jobs, the pressures of parenting, and the burden of attending college, Roman still found time to be active as an SGA senator and active as the youth ministry coordinator at his church.

It is remarkable that Roman is capable of juggling all these elements in his complex life and still find time to achieve a 3.0 G.P.A. and to serve others:
Table 5.2

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Roman was responsible for several innovations in student activities such as the homecoming ball, expanding the grounds for competition for Miss Deep South to include intelligence, character, and talent as criteria beyond popularity. He instituted and organized candidates' debates for SGA elections and promoted an organized plan of action for all student organizations. Roman also organized a spades tournament in cooperation with the intramurals program.

When asked what motivated him to organize the spades tournament, Roman responded:

Just to show it was a positive thing. A lot of people were saying that these students (spades players) were just wasting time and not going to class. Some were in class with me, so I knew they were in class. I just wanted to show that you can use your intelligence to play a game. Rather than just throwing cards down you had to have defense and offense. You had to know the other person's skills to play as a team. It really showed. The winning team showed they knew how to play. They knew each other's moves and motions to win. There was a female team that did real well also (Interview, 5/20/91).

Roman's attempt to bring the spades game to another level was successful. The
organization and rules he provided for the tournament prohibited all the loud
talking, cursing, and expressive movements during the game. Roman handled all
the details of the tournament single-handedly. I was the only other person who
helped him other than spades players themselves. The tournament provided
another opportunity for the spades players to manifest their ability to achieve at
something they knew they knew. The winners were Hammer and Juan. They
won a trophy that was provided by the college's intramural office. There were
about thirty participants, male and female, mostly Black, but there were at least
six whites who were eliminated in early rounds.

The tournament made an observable impact on the spades players as
evidenced by the change in their countenance. They seemed to change their
demeanor during the games to fit the formality of the tournament. It also
appeared that their self concept received a boost, just to have had the opportunity
to play in the tournament.

It was also significant that a senator initiated this without any urgings from
the players themselves, or anyone else. When I asked Roman what motivated
him to do this he recalled his two years at City University where he said no one
cared about him; he was just a number. He said he had taken classes with 150 to
200 students. He said when he made an appointment to see a professor, he was
seen by an assistant who only graded tests and did not know him.

Roman: At City University the enrollment in the fall was great; by spring
the enrollment had dropped tremendously. Everybody was on probation or
suspended. Blacks rarely survived back there.
T.M. Did you spend any time at the student commons?

Roman: It was a known fact that the student commons was where Black students hung out. And most of the Black students that hung out there—they were the ones that flunked out. I rarely went in there because I worked and I was in the military.

T.M. Why do people who mess up as youth come back and do well a few years later at Deep South and become more serious about their school work?

Roman: Because when you go out in the business world and need a degree to be competitive in the real world to get a decent job, you can't get it if you socialize in the student center or commons. You have to put time in your books.

T.M. How did you learn about this?

Roman: Through a few set-backs of my own. I didn't spend enough time studying, and after a few tests it showed. (Interview, 5/20/91, p.9)

Roman had experienced academic difficulty and had entered the work world before he realized how important it was to have a college degree.

Aaron

Aaron is not as outgoing as Natasha or Roman, and he does not go out of his way to talk to an instructor. Nonetheless, Aaron does maintain a grade point average that is consistently above 3.0:
Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th>CUM</th>
<th>GPA DEEP SOUTH</th>
<th>ACADEMIC STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1989</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1989</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1990</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Honor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1990</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Honor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1991</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>Dean's List</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aaron is the only one of the Black senators who is majoring in a technical area. Aaron's career goal is to own his own electrical and air-conditioning/refrigeration service business. This type of business is already in his family, for his uncles and father-in-law do this type work.

As the oldest of six children, Aaron started working in the summers doing construction work at the age of 13. His mother is a licensed practical nurse, and his father is a supervisor at a local cafeteria. Their joint family income is currently $30,000. They live in an older integrated neighborhood where working class home owners reside.

According to Aaron, he did not do very well in high school. He graduated from his Black high school in 1980, and volunteered to serve in the Marine Corps. He was in this branch of the military for six years. He joined the Corps to get an opportunity to work in electronics, but for six years he was unsuccessful in obtaining that training. When he left the military, he returned to New Orleans to
attend Deep South to pursue an associate degree in electronics. Aaron is married to a registered nurse; they have four children. Currently he works as a security guard while taking his last two courses before earning his degree. He does electrical work as additional work.

Aaron was not involved in any student organizations until he met Natasha during her campaign for SGA president. He was so impressed with her positive attitude that he decided to work in her campaign. Eventually she convinced him to become a senator. I asked Aaron if being a senator made any difference. He responded:

Yes, it made a difference. Since I accepted the position as senator I have a different outlook about myself. I felt that after I became a senator I was able to help a lot of people. I got involved in a lot of things. I got involved in a math program for students having problems with math. Students tend to look up to senators. People started coming to me more and more and asking me questions. Any problems a student had would come up to an SGA senator. They knew I was a senator because they either saw me during the campaign or they noticed my senator’s name tag. (Interview, 8/9/90)

Obviously being a senator made a difference in self-image. The senators wore their name tags with pride. The name tags were brass plated pins that said "Deep South Community College, SGA Senator" and the senator’s name was printed below. In addition to this the senators had special sweat shirts designed in the school’s colors, with “SGA Senator” printed on the left front of the shirt. Ostensibly the purpose for this was for a student to easily identify one of the student representatives. It certainly did that, but it also created a kind of elite group among students. When the students wore their name tags or sweat shirts,
they did so with pride and confidence that distinguished them from other students. According to Aaron, another effect of this identification was that faculty seemed more relaxed in initiating and holding a conversation with SGA senators. This facilitated open communication with the faculty. Aaron said that before he became a senator he did not relate to anybody else at school. He merely attended classes and went home. After he became a senator, however, he became more observant. He began to communicate with students and offer his assistance. He was particularly proud of convincing a student to return to the college after he had dropped out.

When I asked Aaron about the spades players he responded that it was strange that I asked about those students because he had always looked at those students and felt that they were "reaching out to one another. There was a closeness, their way of communicating with one another" (Interview, 8/9/91, p. 22). Aaron believes that the difference between him and the spades players is maturity and having goals that include supporting his wife and children. Aaron offered a profound insight into the spades game and spades players that deserves to be quoted here in its entirety.

Me personally, myself, I don't play cards. I never played cards but my mother, father, sister, and brother all play cards, and they play spades. My wife plays spades and so do her family. I really think spades is a Black people's game. Black people play spades. I really and truly think white people play hearts, but they don't express themselves. I think it is a way of comforting one another and communicating. I really think that from my experience this is just something Black people do. In the service a lot of Black people were stressed out. For some reason Black people would get together and play spades. I would leave and go out to town and when I come back four or five hours later, they were still playing spades. Being
away from home, being in a different atmosphere, I feel spades pretty much brings people together. (Interview, p. 23)

Aaron's comments seem to be substantiated by my observations and interviews with the spades players. It is evident that spades playing holds more significance among the Black students at Deep South than what is apparent on the surface. As such it has cultural significance for these students and should not be treated as something less than any other cultural expression that has special significance to a people. Spades playing is a vehicle for making Black people feel comfortable and at home in an environment where they are left out of the mainstream.

Beatrice

Beatrice, another member of Natasha's posse, is one such competent and caring peer. Though she has graduated, Beatrice still talks to and meets with a Deep South student whom she has counseled about her self-image. This student continues on the Dean's list and last year was selected as Miss Deep South. Beatrice also joined the SGA at the request of Natasha, who had met her prior to Natasha's involvement in the organization.

Like the other members of Natasha's special group, Beatrice came to Deep South as an older student. Beatrice had graduated twenty years prior to enrolling at Deep South. Beatrice moved from the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee, where she lived in a working class Black neighborhood where people had farms and farm animals. Beatrice's father was a postal worker and her mother was a domestic worker. Beatrice insists that their collective salary
provided for her brother and sister to the extent that they wanted for nothing.

Beatrice had the distinction of being one of four girls to integrate Stratford High School in Nashville, so she was on the front lines of the civil rights struggle as a youth. She graduated from that high school in 1969. She entered Deep South nearly twenty years later, in 1987. During that time Beatrice held bank teller jobs in several banks. She married and had two children. When her marriage failed she moved to Magnolia City and eventually remarried. She entered Deep South to major in accounting. Her career goal at the time was to earn a certification as a public accountant. Currently she is pursuing a Bachelor's degree at a local Catholic University in Business Education.

Beatrice says she joined the SGA while at Deep South because she was not satisfied with just being a student; she wanted to get involved to make sure that students had a "say-so" in what went on at the school. She wanted to make sure that other students benefitted as much as she did from her college experience. When I asked her about the students who played spades in the commons, she felt that they were wasting their time, and speculated that they were wasting financial aid money that could be used to help some other deserving student. Beatrice said that she worked with one of the spades players at a downtown hotel. She was impressed that the young man was articulate and intelligent. However, she did not understand why he spent so much time playing spades. "Why does he find the necessity to waste his time, I don't know" (Interview, 10/16/91).

While at Deep South Beatrice consistently maintained a grade point
average that exceeded 3.0:

Table 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th>CUM</th>
<th>DEEP SOUTH</th>
<th>ACADEMIC STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1989</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1989</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Honor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1989</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Honor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1990</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Associate Degree Awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the question about what is the difference between her and the spades players, Beatrice's comments can be summarized with the one word, "maturity." She speculated that the spades players were almost directly out of high school or a couple of years removed from high school. They probably did know what they really wanted to do with their lives. She felt that that had a lot to do with their behavior. "Being an older student, I've seen what the world has to offer—not always a pretty picture. You have to make it what you want it to be; therefore, I was more serious about what I wanted" (Interview, 10/16/91, p. 6).

Beatrice said she would not approach the spades players about her feelings toward spades and their school work because they would not be receptive. Beatrice's opinion about the spades players, however, was probably a hindrance to her saying or doing anything to help them. She therefore would not be a good candidate for peer counseling or intervention. It is interesting to note that she did not have an experience similar to Phillip's, who had mistakenly spent two years at City University focusing more on spades playing than schoolwork. Beatrice had
not attended another university. She had not seen Black students drop out of school en mass. Therefore, she did not particularly sympathize with the spades players, and was not responsive and outgoing enough to reach out to them, even when stimulated by this research project. Nevertheless, I am confident that within the context of an organized effort at intervention, Beatrice would be sincere and effective in responding to students like the spades players.

Nia

The last member of Natasha's special group to be introduced is Nia. Nia is a woman who is dedicated to African American culture and heritage. Her physical appearance exudes her conviction. She wears dresses and head wraps made from African print material, African jewelry, and African handbags. Her home has an African decor including curtains made from African print, pictures of African Americans, rugs with African prints, a collection of feathers, and incense. Nia's conviction goes beyond cosmetics, however. She is motivated and driven by the seven principles of Blackness called the Nguzo Saba, as espoused by Dr. Maulana Karenga (1977) in Kwanzaa: Origins, Concepts, Practice. These seven principles are Umoja (unity), Kuujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith) (p.9). The instruction and promulgation of these principles throughout the African American community occurs through a vehicle called Kwanzaa, an African American festival that traditionally takes place
in African American communities annually around Christmas time. Nia felt she could appreciate these principles because as a child her mother would continually speak to her ten children about similar issues. For example, Nia says "We lived in a community that practiced more of an African style of upbringing which is called Ujima, collective work and responsibility" (Interview, 12/8/89, p.10). Nia went on to describe that in her community males and females had different responsibilities. The males had the job of taking care of the females and the families; the males therefore were valued more. The females' job consisted of taking care of the household and making sure that the males were cared for, so they could take care of the farm and bring in meals from hunting and trapping. "The kind of upbringing with my Mom and Dad was that we were taught to respect the opposite sex in a higher manner. I don't resent that because it taught me well how to balance it out for myself" (Interview, 12/8/89, p.10). Nia is too involved in today's struggle for female independence to believe that society should be structured like the community in which she was raised. However, Nia does feel that many of the problems facing Black youth today stem from their not taking responsibility for themselves and their own behavior. "They blame the society, they blame their parents, they blame the school. But they still haven't pointed the finger at themselves, to see that they also have responsibility for their behavior" (Interview, 12/8/89, p. 12).

Nia and her family lived in a very poor rural community sixty miles from the nearest city. Her father, a preacher and plantation worker, died at an early
Her mother raised all of her children alone. Mrs. Williams, now in her 80's and in ill health, has remarkable stories to tell about her struggles in raising her children, alone and in the heart of the racist deep South.

Nia currently lives in one side of a double house; her mother occupies the other side. The house is located in central-city, a very poor community surrounding a housing project. Nia and her mother's house is located directly across from the housing project. Next door is a Baptist church pastored by one of Nia's brothers.

Nia graduated from a Black high school in her community in 1989. She moved to Magnolia City six months later and met the man she would eventually marry, with whom she would have four children. This individual was a community activist who along with Nia formed a theater and produced plays for the Black community. It was through her husband that Nia's love for working in the community developed. However, after ten years of marriage Nia and her husband separated and Nia was left unemployed with no skills, no college education, and four children. It was at this time she decided to attend a local Black public university to study business. "Without my school work I recognized I was limited even though I had the charisma. I had the determination and I had the drive to do all these things in the community, working with kids and even with church activities. But I was limited so. There was always someone that they would put over me in certain jobs because this person had a degree" (Interview, 12/8/89, p. 6).

After a year at that university she became acquainted with and influenced
by a Black female entrepreneur who owned a funeral home and was active in the Black community. Nia decided at that time that she would enroll in the funeral services program at Deep South.

Nia maintained full-time student and full-time work schedules. She worked in the chemical dependency unit of a local adolescent hospital from 4 p.m. to midnight. "It's very complicated getting off at midnight and my first class is at 9 a.m. and getting the kids off to school at 8 a.m. However, I put that task upon myself and so far I'm doing o.k." (Interview, 12/8/89, p. 1). It was during this time that Nia met Natasha at a funeral services student organization meeting. The women were impressed with each other and soon became friends. As with the other members of Natasha's posse, Nia was invited to participate.

Nia joined the SGA senate and helped out where she could, considering her schedule. Besides chairing the Black history month celebrations, her biggest contribution was in her role as confidant and supporter to Natasha. Nia's positive attitude and self confidence made her a role model for Natasha. It is also significant to note that despite her family and commitments within her community and Church, Nia maintained good academic standing while at Deep South:
Table 5.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMESTER</th>
<th>CUM GPA</th>
<th>DEEP SOUTH GPA</th>
<th>ACADEMIC STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1989</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1989</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1989</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1990</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Associate Degree Awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of Nia's projects included involvement with a non-profit community organization founded by the female entrepreneur who had influenced Nia to be in funeral services. The organization, with Nia's help, raised over $1200 for the local charity hospital. Nia was given the responsibility for spending the money on various items for the indigent patients at the hospital. Her involvement left a lasting impression on her. Nia said that helping someone else made her feel like somebody.

Nia's desire to be somebody was instilled early on as a child. She said that at her family's weekly prayer meeting at home her mother would each of her kids, "What do you want to be when you grow up? Every week we had to tell mother what we wanted to be when we grew up. That was to keep us on a path of wanting to be something. We all had to confess that we wanted to grow up to be someone."
Academic Performance of Senators

I was fortunate to attend a class in which four Black senators were enrolled. It was a course in Black writers which was taught by a Black female English professor. I attended the class the entire semester, partly to observe the senators in the classroom setting, but also because the course content was so interesting and the professor so stimulating. Of the many classes I had attended with the spades players none could compare to the excitement exhibited in this course. This course was different from other Deep South courses for several reasons. The most obvious difference was that the classroom was filled to capacity, with only two or three seats available on any day (average class attendance was 33). There were three white students in the class and the rest were Black. I had not observed such a racial makeup of any class at Deep South. Another unusual feature of this course was the excitement generated by the students. There was always lively discussion. The students were given an opportunity to bring to class for review articles, poems, stories, books, or any other literature of preference that they felt related to Black writers. I was amazed at the insight of the students and the scope and variety of literature they shared. This was an upper level (sophomore, 200-level) literature course; students must have taken the composition course as a prerequisite. The students' writing reflected their prior training, for it was insightful, coherent, and in certain cases capable of publication.

Another unusual element of this class was that few students arrived late for
class. Everyone who arrived early began to fill the seats up front rather than sitting in the rear as I had observed in the spades players' classes. Two to three white students sat in the rear of the classroom together. The level of student excitement and exchange generated by discussion was unlike any other class I had attended in two years. The closest experience to this one was the General Psychology class taught by Dr. G. referred to earlier, but even there the ratio of Black to white students was different. The students in this class felt confident to pose questions and raise issues about Black history, racial relations in this country and abroad, contrasting white and Black instructors at Deep South, and any other issues they chose to share. Prof. Watson was masterful in handling such discussions and allowing students the freedom to share, while always getting back to the content area designated for that day's class. She organized the class by beginning each session with about a fifteen-minute presentation either on the topic of the day or a summary of the previous class. After her initial presentation students responded with their own assignments, usually papers on an era or Black writer under discussion. Students were given the option to work in small groups or individually. The more shy students (few by comparison to other classes) chose to work in groups. The senators taking this class were Beatrice, Roman, Nia and Lloyd. I had been invited to attend the class initially by Nia, who told me how excited she was about the course. She invited me early in the semester to listen to a guest speaker that Prof. Watson had arranged to come to the class. She routinely invited local Black writers to share their work and experiences with the
The first day I visited the class there was a guest poet and storyteller who shared her work. The students, like me, were amazed at the level of local talent available in Magnolia City. Other guests included Black writers of different genres, historians, politicians, and activists from the community, from other colleges and universities, and from out of state.

As I entered this classroom each day of class, I felt that I was leaving Deep South and entering some other environment where being Black was celebrated instead of feeling out of place in somebody else's place. In other classes I had observed that the usual chatter and excitement among students which occurs prior to the instructor entering the class died a sudden death when the instructor arrived. This was not the case for this class. The anticipation of an exciting class appeared to permeate the entire classroom. Prof. Watson worked with this excitement and channeled it into the topic of the day. The final grade distribution in this class indicates that the majority of students earned a grade of B. This demonstrates that the level of participation of the students was something special. And the fact that classroom discussions spilled out into the corridors after class indicates that the experience struck a chord within those students that awakened something within.

I appreciated that my presence was never acknowledged by the professor or the other students. I talked with the senators prior to each class, but for the most part I did not appear conspicuous. The excitement generated in this class and the enthusiasm for instruction focused on Black heritage and culture made it
very clear that this course was meaningful to the students. This classroom experience was particularly refreshing, nourishing, and memorable to me because it showed that given the right subject matter, and a competent and caring professor, Black students at Deep South Community College can respond as excitedly as interested students anywhere. The dynamic of several Black SGA senators in the same class made this observational experience unique in this study. However, what I observed in classes where there was only one of the Black senators was also important. For example, I observed that the senator sat in the front row of the class or very near the front row. The senator went out of the way to speak with the instructor before class; usually the conversation was unrelated to the coursework. The Black SGA senator participated in classroom discussions, took notes, asked questions, and generally made her or his presence known. At the end of the class, the senator would make sure to speak to the professor before leaving the room. I have also observed that both Natasha and Roman when walking down a corridor or some other place on campus, or eating in the lunch room, each would go out of the way to acknowledge an instructor with a greeting and a smile, and generally make a valiant effort to elicit a response.

The observable in-school experiences of these two groups of Black community college students reveal that the senators are more successful academically and more personally satisfied with their experiences. The spades players are less satisfied. As a result, their response is to create a subculture on campus that allows them to feel at home and affords them an opportunity to
achieve and feel like somebody. If the spades playing student comes to the college deficient in academic preparation, the situation is compounded so that the student may be overwhelmed.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMATION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study of Black subcultures at a community college, it became clear early on that Black students are not monolithic. Although the focus of this study has been limited to the spades players and senators, the similarities and differences among these achievers and underachievers demonstrate that Black student groups are diverse and the dynamics of their behavior are complex.

Summary Comparison of Senators and Spades Players

A comparison of the Senators and the Spades Players reveals both similarities and differences. Both groups demonstrated awareness of racial identity, and both groups revolved around leaders. But the empowerment of those leaders was vastly different because of their different relationships to the institution. Following is a comparison of the leaders of the two groups:

Table 6.1

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENATORS</th>
<th>SPADES PLAYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Natasha was elected leader.</td>
<td>* No formal leadership, but three dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Female leader, male and female followers.</td>
<td>personalities. Philip eventually elected leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Leadership recognized and sanctioned by</td>
<td>* Male dominant personalities, female and male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institution.</td>
<td>docile followers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Perceived by faculty and peers as positive</td>
<td>* No official status of organization or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>role models.</td>
<td>leadership prior to fraternity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Power and authority based on control of</td>
<td>* Perceived by faculty and peers as wasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funds.</td>
<td>time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* In position to influence the power</td>
<td>* Power restricted to influence over docile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure.</td>
<td>players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Academic achiever.</td>
<td>* No influence with the power structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Structured leadership with responsibilities</td>
<td>* Risky academic status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and goals.</td>
<td>* Leadership that is unstructured.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These obvious differences in leadership of the senators and leadership of the spades players forecast a pattern for differing groups of Black students within the same institution of higher education. The following illustrates the other areas of major difference, as well as areas of commonality:

Table 6.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SENATORS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Relish position of authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Individuals helping individuals; retain self identity in group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Sense of wanting to make changes for the good of all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Hand chosen by Natasha without prior knowledge of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Wore name tags for recognition as senators at anywhere and anytime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Varied backgrounds; broad work experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Average age 33.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*African American heritage and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Average family income $34,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Attended predominantly Black high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Seem more in control of their lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to racial consciousness, a significant pattern emerged in this study: Whereas the academically successful senators articulated intellectually a commitment to being Black but acted in a manner acceptable to the white institution, the spades players did not articulate about their Blackness, yet they demonstrated racial solidarity, used language and mannerisms associated with the
Black community, and reproduced the local Black culture on campus in the form of spades playing. While the senators behaved more like mainstream students trying to fit into the institution's norm of behavior, the spades players responded to the institution's expectations in an indifferent manner, similar to the indifferent manner in which the institution responded to them.

Rather than resisting outright the institution's expectations, however, the spades players concentrated on an activity and accompanying behavior that reflected a family-like atmosphere. In this way they accented a positive cultural expression that should have been accepted by the institution as demonstration of cultural diversity.

Comparisons with Other Studies

The findings of this study contrasted with those in Lois Weis's (1985) study of Black community college students in a number of ways, although there were many similarities as well. Weis characterizes the culture of the group of students in her study as being late for class, using drugs, and abusing financial aid. Like students in the Weis study, the spades players in my study were late for class or did not attend. These students manifested compulsive behavior, but not with drugs as did Weis's students. There was no evidence of drug abuse among spades players on campus. And like Weis's subjects, most of the spades players would return to their ghettos without accomplishing their goals.

A major difference between the Weis study and this one is that a group of
Black students at Deep South Community College—the senators—did achieve academically and at the same time demonstrate a willingness to serve others. The Weis study did not reveal a contrasting group of Black students like the senators, who provided in my study a balanced treatment of Black students and their response to what the institution does or does not provide for them.

Another difference between Weis' study and mine is that some of the spades players experienced a degree of change stimulated by intervention of a Black administrator and Black students. Unlike Weis' students, the spades players were involved in an activity on campus which at least made them available for possible intervention. Thus, whereas Weis did not find evidence of change or hope for change among her research subjects, my study demonstrates that the situation is not hopeless.

My findings were more in line with those of Yvonne Abatso (1985), whose statistical study of Black community college students led to the conclusion that non-intellectual factors such as coping skills were key determinants to the students' academic achievement. In my study I found that factors like acceptance by the institution, fulfillment of the need to "be somebody," and willingness to be of service to others were factors in the academic achievement of Black students. In fact, the majority of the Black SGA senators at Deep South had family responsibilities including dependent children. They also had had prior college or work experience in which they had encountered difficulties, leading them to take their present responsibilities more seriously in most cases. Thus their past
experiences helped to instill in them a desire to improve conditions for themselves and for others also. The senators confirmed that all these non-intellectual factors affected their academic performance.

As both a spades player and an SGA senator, Philip is a primary example of how motivational factors positively influence academic achievement. After Philip joined the SGA, his grade point average jumped from 2.5 to 3.5 by the end of his first semester as a senator. Philip attributes this to his being around other positive students and to his increased seriousness brought about by his additional responsibility as a representative of other students.

The study of Black high school students conducted by Signithia Fordham, which contrasted students who succeeded and those who failed, cited somewhat different reasons for students' success than my study revealed. Fordham concluded that in order to succeed, Black students had to adopt "race-lessness," sacrificing their own cultural identity. This conclusion did not parallel the experiences of the senators. While the senators did not participate in an all-Black group on campus as did the spades players, they fulfilled their need for racial solidarity in group activities off campus so as to remain focused on academics and service while on campus. Although the senators did not group themselves on campus with only Black students, they kept their cultural identity intact by planning and sponsoring Black History Month activities and attending the Black Writers class.

The spades players, on the other hand, paralleled more closely the
unsuccessful students in Fordham's study. Both her subjects and mine kept their cultural identity on campus to the exclusion of all else. The spades players did not attract other-race students into their group because despite their continued insistence that they were not a racist group they were perceived as such by at least the white students interviewed in this study. There is no proof that this factor alone determined their lack of academic achievement; however, the contrast between the spades players and senators on the issue of racial solidarity supports Fordham's findings that Black students who fail to compromise with the demands of the majority culture end up on probation, suspension, or dismissal. The chart on the following page provides a summary comparison of Fordham's findings and mine.
Table 6.3

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FORDHAM</strong></th>
<th><strong>DEEP SOUTH</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School officials appear to disapprove of strong ethnic identity among Black students.</td>
<td>Similar: D.S.C.C. officials want spades players to congregate some other place other than the student commons. They disapprove of the loud noise and music.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students who succeed project a raceless persona in and out of school. They forfeit their strong allegiance in the Black community and connection with their fictive kinship system.</td>
<td>Similar: Senators are aware of their Blackness, yet they choose to “act out” the role of the student the institution encourages for success, such as developing a relationship with faculty in and outside class, sitting in the front of the class, service to the college, attending student activities. Dissimilar: Senators are actively involved in church, civic, social and political organizations geared to advancement of Black people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racelessness among the Black high-achieving students appears to be influenced by gender, with females appearing to be more willing to be closely identified with values and beliefs of the dominant social system.</td>
<td>Similar: Among the senators, females predominate in numbers and leadership roles. Dissimilar: Among the spades players males predominate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The message conveyed by the institution is that Black students cannot be culturally different and at the same time achieve success as defined by the dominant society.</td>
<td>Similar: Spades players reproduce their culture from their communities and are looked down upon by administration and staff. Dissimilar: Senators are able to preserve or maintain their Black culture and interest by participating in Black oriented activities and organizations off campus. On campus activity is restricted to SGA related functions.</td>
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*The term refers to a kinship-like connection between and among persons in society, not related by blood or marriage, who have maintained essential reciprocal social, economic and political relationships. The term conveys the idea of “brotherhood” and “sisterhood” of all Black Americans; thus a sense of peoplehood or collective social identity (Fordham, 1988, p.56).*

**Conclusions Regarding the Spades Players**

The spades players did not choose spades playing for resistance to the curriculum. This is evidenced by the immediacy of their joining the spades game.

Most spades players began playing spades prior to the middle of their first
semester. New students were attracted to the excitement of the game and the ease in belonging. Spades games surfaced prior to their attending enough classes to form an opinion about the curriculum. The spades players did have enough information on which to base an impression of the institution, however. The small number of Black faculty and staff assisting with registration and advising, along with the lack of any special support group or programs for Black students, makes Black students feel unwelcome in a predominantly white institution. Instead of reacting to this indifference by engaging in disruptive behavior for the sake of resistance, as did Willis' lads and Everhart's boys, the spades players took a more proactive approach by creating their own subculture where they could experience some success and also feel at home in a larger environment that was indifferent to them.

The spades players' own created environment provided acceptance and equal opportunity, with ease of entry and freedom from restrictions. By participating in this activity, new students on campus were able to meet other students, and all the players were able to meet students of the opposite sex and socialize on campus. Here they could be themselves and be accepted. Moreover, spades playing helped to build their confidence that they were indeed capable of achieving something on campus even though it was not directly related to the curriculum. In the college setting, spades playing became their curriculum of choice, providing satisfaction that they perceived to be more useful and important to them than the knowledge the institution offered.
The ritual of spades playing as a survival strategy for Blacks is not peculiar to students at Deep South Community College. Through my observation and testimony of others it is clear that spades playing occurs on other college and university campuses, in the military, in jury pools, and at a variety of gathering occasions for Black people, at least in the Magnolia State. The reason for this is that spades playing originates in the home, where individuals usually feel comfortable, capable, and competitive. It is easy to become a member of a spades playing group because it involves doing something one learned to do in the home.

Spades playing also provides a forum at which to discuss issues relating to the Black race, promoting racial solidarity, camaraderie, and mutual support. During the spades games at Deep South Community College, discussions arose that dealt with issues such as racism, drugs, the death rate of Blacks, and the situation of Black males as almost an endangered species—In other words, issues affecting the students. Such topics of conversation arose spontaneously during games; a comment was made followed by a brief discussion, and then the conversation would shift to some other issue far less serious or even silly. The significance is that the activity provided an atmosphere of support for such topics to arise.

Black students become involved in spades playing because it allows them to "be somebody" by achieving at an activity in which they are comfortable. At the moment that they win, or while they are winning a game, they are "somebody" in
the eyes or the spectators and other spades players. This experience, then, provides short-term, immediate gratification. Furthermore, power relations among the spades players are less unequal than those of the indifferent institution. Those who win a game are more powerful than those who lose, but the tables may turn at each game. Therefore every game begins with all players having an equal chance, insofar as their skills allow. This equal opportunity does not exist for these students in society or in the educational institution.

Both spades players and senators described to me how their parents desired for them to grow up and be "somebody." This meant to be a professional with a college education. The majority of the parents of the spades players and senators are not themselves educated professional people. Many of them expressed to me their personal desire for their children to be "better" than they. This translates into a college education, the desire for which was instilled in these students from childhood. Consequently, the Black students who make it to college want to maybe have a job in an office, or they want to drive a new car and have material things. They want to be respected--to be "somebody" and all that implies. So when they get involved in a spades game, they have an opportunity to succeed for the moment without giving up their identity.

The subculture the spades players produced on campus illustrates their ability to survive. It is a throwback to the ability of Black people to survive a society that was openly segregated and unequal. The students created this subculture as a result of marginalization they experienced from a dominant-
culture institution. As a means of survival, this subculture had a positive effect on the spades players, even as it interfered with their studies.

My opinion of spades playing therefore is understandably ambivalent. Spades playing is really like a double-edged sword that swings one way that could be an advantage; the other way it swings is clearly a disadvantage. While spades playing provided the students in this study a strategy for coping with an alien environment, it unfortunately became habituative. Students became so obsessed with the immediate gratification of the game that they placed more emphasis on that feeling than on accomplishing a long-term goal. They repeatedly referred to classes as boring while talking about the excitement and challenge of the spades game. And they not only spent most of the time outside of class playing spades rather than studying, but they also habitually missed class.

While the spades players understood the importance of academic achievement, they had an unrealistic concept of how it is accomplished. They apparently were not capable of transferring the skills used in playing spades to the classroom or to coursework, nor were they aware of such a possibility. No one made the connection for them. Likewise, they boisterously bragged about their ability at spades but became meek and mild in class, showing none of the aggressive, competitive spirit. When asked why they missed class or were late, the spades players' response was that the classes were boring. Apparently, they did not associate the achievement of career goals requiring a college degree with going to classes. All the spades players had career goals that included a college
degree, but they gave up because of the boring classes. At least two players dropped out and returned to school to the same behavior that they had previously acknowledged was detrimental to their academic achievement.

In conclusion, I believe the spades players were seeking the camaraderie and solidarity from the spades games that (1) proved more satisfying to them than academic preparation and (2) provided a survival strategy brought from and reminiscent of their homes to the indifferent and marginalizing environment of a predominantly white institution. Playing spades helped them cope with an alien environment by maintaining their identity. Their efforts failed, however, because the strategy they employed to cope with the environment had the opposite effect on their academic performance.

Conclusions Regarding the Senators

The Black SGA senators are the unsung champions of this study. They are unsung, in part, because they have not created a problem for themselves or anyone else at the college; they are achievers, and often achievers are not recognized unless their accomplishments are extraordinary. Their participation in the institution has been positive and successful. Though equally significant, their stories have been given less attention in this study than the spades players'. This is the case because they have found a place in the mainstream of the institution; they are in need of less support to make it because unlike the spades players they have demonstrated that they are capable of achieving.
The senators are champions because they are role models for other students. Like many students, the senators had entered college with high hopes about the outcome, though they may not have known what they wanted to do in life. As Nia and others related, parents instill in children a desire to be somebody when they grow up. The senators' parents, like the spades players' parents, saw a college education as an opportunity for their children to accomplish more than they did. The senators are not only fulfilling their parents' desires for them, but also serving as excellent role models for the spades players and others. In a minority community, the successes of individual members are a source of pride for all. And once the senators learned to be open to students like the spades players rather than turning away from them as the institution has, they provided excellent role modeling for those students.

The senators responded differently than the spades players to the lack of welcome and the indifference of the institution. The senators saw an unmet need for Black student initiatives and decided to do something about the situation. Encouraged by the leadership of a Black female student (Natasha), they were motivated to bring about change in the institution with respect to how Black students were treated. Unlike the spades players, the senators were able to feel a sense of self worth because of their good academic status and their visibility with faculty, staff, and administration. Their recognition as senators was reinforced by the distinctive sweaters and name tags that they always wore.

The past experiences of the senators were important in motivating their
success. Most of them were older than most of the spades players, and they had learned from their own mistakes. When Roman, a senator, lost his job to someone with a degree, for the first time he was motivated to go to school. Philip and others told similar stories. The senators had also experienced first-hand some of the social changes of the civil rights movement and had some knowledge of pre- and post-civil rights days. They talked about how pride in their racial identity gave them the desire to experience academic success as a counter-offensive to the racism that had held them back in the past.

It is tempting to conclude from the senators' experience that maybe it is to be expected that Black students have to fail before they can return later to succeed. I disagree with such a conclusion. The common element among the senators' testimonies is that there was no one at the institutions which they had attended previously who was available to mentor them, to care enough for the students to teach them how to succeed in that college setting. Similarly, there was no evidence of guidance about college from the home, no role modeling from parents who were attending or had attended college. Lacking such guidance, students usually opt for peer group activities to feel accepted.

The senators had learned, through experience, how to balance the need for racial solidarity with the demands of the white-dominated institution. I was told that the Black senators did not want to segregate themselves from the white senators because that would not be appropriate. They committed themselves to postpone expressions of their racial solidarity and avoid appearing more interested
in one racial group than another. According to Natasha, SGA senators were
elected representatives of all students and should act accordingly. Philip, on the
other hand, remains president of the predominantly Black fraternity even while he
is president of the SGA, which represents all students. He feels no conflict
between the two roles.

The senators did not have to forfeit their racial identity to succeed, but
rather they redirected their racial solidarity to their church and community. On
campus, they desired to be a part of the dominant culture—not as being white or
raceless, but as demanding a position in the mainstream through recognition for
academic success and service. In direct contrast, the spades players did not
verbalize anything about group solidarity but remained interdependent on each
other for support both on campus and off campus. Other than church, the spades
players did not take part in cultural community activities that supported racial
identity, as did the senators.

It may seem ironic that the senators talked about racial pride, yet chose to
restrict the satisfaction of their group solidarity needs to their families and
communities. Even when they were promoting the awareness of Black culture on
campus, they did so with all races in mind. The activities of Black History Month
and lectures by African American speakers such as Dr. Francis Welsing were for
all students and the general public. This is in contrast to the fraternity organized
by the spades players to focus attention on themselves more than on others—and
on socials rather than academics. Nevertheless, the fraternity was an
improvement over the habit of spades playing in that it provided a link to the institution as well as an occasional opportunity for service. By organizing the fraternity, with the encouragement of the senators, the spades players were taking a step in the direction that the senators, as positive role models, had led.

The Role of the Institution

The institution's indifference to the Black students is evidenced by the small number--12 percent--of Black professionals including administration and faculty when the Black student population is 38 percent. In contrast to the lack of special services, programs, and organizations for Black students is the attention given to international students. Although the international student population is less than 20 percent, there is an International Students Office with two full-time professionals. One of them is a special needs counselor whose job is to help these students adjust to the college climate, make them feel welcome and at home, and help them become acclimated as quickly as possible to increase their chances of success. Deep South has made a commitment to the international students, whereas Black Americans are left on their own and watched as they fail and drop out, victims of neglect.

There is little infusion of African American or Asian-American culture in the curriculum or campus life. Students who are not of European descent can justifiably be led to perceive the institution as either indifferent, unfriendly, even hostile to them. The institution has demonstrated by its indifference that it is not
interested in the culture of students. There are too few Blacks in authority for Black students to relate to, too few role models. The only two courses in Black studies, Black Writers and Afro-American History, are upper-level courses that a developmental student would have to wait a year to take.

I see a pattern of institutional response disclosed by this research by which the lack of attention and lack of receptivity toward the behavior of Black students like the spades players result in their dropping out of school. This pattern of reaction to spades playing at Deep South Community College also surfaced at City University, according to interviews with Roman and Philip. A similar response toward spades playing by Black military servicemen while off duty was described by Aaron, a senator and former serviceman. Additionally, I observed this phenomenon recently during several weeks of jury duty, as Black jury members passed the time playing spades, demonstrating some of the behavior of the Deep South spades players and eliciting some of the same negative reactions.

The problem of cultural barriers and intolerance permeates the society. For this reason, educational institutions have a vital responsibility to correct the situation. The institution's complicity in society's pattern of response to deviant cultural behavior involves a failure to acknowledge the real problem, in the case of the spades players. That is, these students' behavior needs to be changed because it undermines their academic achievement and the accomplishment of their goals. Instead of performing some direct action to redirect these students from a path that leads to dropping out of school, the institution chooses to allow
them to fail. Institutions somehow justify such neglect by rationalizing that students have a right to fail. What is not considered is that when any student fails, the institution is partly responsible.

The institution certainly contributed to the spades players' failure and the alienation of their subculture, first by barely tolerating them and later by relegating their activity to the periphery of campus. The subculture that the spades players created apparently did not involve what the institution condoned or was willing to tolerate. Since the only place for students to congregate outside class had been the student commons, students and faculty representing all ethnic and cultural backgrounds were forced to be together in one location, not by choice but by circumstances. Since there was no other place for students to go outside of class, the administration could not forbid their playing cards in the commons. There were rumors to that effect, however. Members of the faculty and staff, including high ranking administrators, expressed concern about the disruptive noise created by the spades players and the fact that card playing interfered with their studies. As professional educators, they could see that these students were evidencing behavior that would put them at risk academically. Yet nothing was done in the area of positive intervention. No other group formed on the basis of race, sex, or class was reprimanded or admonished to alter their behavior, save the spades players. Eventually, when the student life center was opened, card playing was restricted to the rear of that area, where no one wanted to "hang out." This virtually ended the spades games.
Despite the absence of the spades games, a new group of Black students started congregating in the rear of the student commons, near the entrance and exit frequently used by faculty and staff who park near the commons. These students did not play cards, but sat on benches talking loudly and playing music. In a private conversation, the President of the college asked if I knew of some other place the Black students could congregate besides the commons. I told him that they had decided to be there on their own, and on their own would decide on some other place, if they so chose. He did comment that on nearly every campus he had experienced, Black students had their own location that they had chosen to occupy. Somehow the President did not realize that he was suggesting that it is more comfortable to keep the Black students on the periphery than to allow them to be themselves in an environment that is controlled by whites. What is discouraging is that he is the college's first president of African American descent.

The institution's neglect of the spades players resulted in their dropping out of school as the institution, represented by its personnel, policies, and practices, watched passively. Comments such as "Those students are just wasting their time" were common among college personnel, but there was no action taken or other interest shown that addressed this phenomenon other than relegating the spades players to the rear of the campus to keep them out of sight and therefore out of mind. The situation was compounded by the lack of intervention and resolute action on the part of the institution to step in and provide specialized
personnel who can relate to these Black students culturally. The institution's current attitude reinforces the "revolving door" concept of white institutional response to minority students, i.e., easy access to college and easier college exit. I submit that this institutional response is not only ethically and educationally inappropriate, but it is also costly.

**Change**

Change is a purpose of the critical ethnography within schools. A goal of this study was to contribute to positive change in the student subjects of the research, the institution, and the researcher. By the end of this study, each of the two distinct groups of Black students had begun to change. Through contact with one another facilitated by this research, each group had learned something from the other. The remnant of the spades players had become more like the senators through the leadership of Philip. The senators had become more tolerant of the spades players by beginning to view them as the individuals they were instead of the misfits they had perceived them to be. This new attitude led at least one SGA senator, Cedric, to want to become a member of the fraternity of former spades players.

It appeared as if the change within the spades players was stimulated when as faculty advisor I took the stand to tell them what they needed to do regarding the fraternity. This stimulated Philip to want to provide an alternative fraternity. The prospect and the implications of the demise of the Kappa Phi Nu fraternity led to the spades players' decision to follow Philip's leadership. Their decision
to change in order to keep the fraternity demonstrates (1) the importance that the
spades players placed in the organization, (2) their desire to change to attain a
goal, and (3) their trust in capable leadership. Such characteristics are positive
and can easily be employed in other circumstances, including making a difference
in academic achievement.

Philip was the catalyst who made it a personal campaign to persuade his
fraternity brothers that they needed to effect a change in their self-image, which
would translate into a change in the image other students had of them. What
brought the spades game to an end, more than the prohibition against playing
cards in the commons, was that the spades players discovered another outlet for
being somebody. The fraternity would allow them to retain their solidarity and
participate in mainstream activities. When Philip arranged for the fraternity
brothers to help serve refreshments at the dedication of the new student life
center, he provided an opportunity for the fraternity brothers to be recognized for
service to the college and to other students. It was this recognition for service
that gave the spades players that feeling of "being somebody" that they sought
while playing spades. The spades players became more involved in student
activities as a result of Philip's dual office as SGA president and president of the
fraternity. Whenever student organizations were requested to provide service for
a campus activity, Philip would make sure one or more of the fraternity brothers
were involved. This new exposure for the fraternity eventually produced a change
in their self-image and their image among other students. Now fraternity brothers
report students' comments like, "Oh, y'all don't just play cards anymore!"

I have observed that of the spades players chosen for this research only Juan and Billy are currently enrolled in school and actively involved in the fraternity. Joan is enrolled, but she is not involved with the fraternity. Even though Hammer, Rocky, Sweet Potato, Johnny, and Gambler are not now enrolled in school, they come to the campus weekly to be with the "brothers" and participate in fraternity activities. During "Welcome Fest," a recruitment activity for campus organizations, Hammer and Rocky helped to organize Kappa Phi Nu's table and actually recruited members.

As the professional who intervened on behalf of these students, I positioned myself in the subculture of the students as a participant observer. I was available during the opportune times at which to assist or direct the students. It was at one such opportune time, the first official meeting of the fraternity, that I was able to spark a chain reaction that led to Philip's being elected president of the fraternity. The significance of this act has led to a different level of out-of-classroom participation of spades players at Deep South Community College. It is hoped that as a result of intrusive intervention from the institution, further change in the spades players will be realized in classroom performance and participation.

During the course of this research, I changed from an uncomfortable misfit in the company of the spades players to a friend and confidant affectionally known as "Big Brother Dean Mi-T." While I had assumed from the outset that Black students' groupings were varied, I learned that even within a single group
there was rich diversity. I began to appreciate these students for who they are. This led to my respecting and accepting them, but more importantly this led to my caring enough about them to intervene even at the risk of being intrusive.

At a time when Black students--especially Black males--are at risk, the institution needs to aggressively employ non-traditional strategies in order to intervene in the cycle of failure. Spades playing and other such subcultural behavior should be viewed by the institution as a vehicle for reaching students. The hope lies in the potential for change. Spades games as a cultural expression have potential for instruction, growth, and communication. These games provide an occasion where the institution can demonstrate acceptance of those students who find the activity significant to them. There is no evidence that such change has taken place at Deep South Community College, but there has been a definite change in me. As a result, there is hope and potential for change of the institution.

Fortunately, the spades players in this study had the benefit of successful peers and one Black professional who intervened. Philip, Natasha, and I were able to help in four ways: (1) by relating to the spades players based on common racial and ethnic identity; (2) by accepting and appreciating the students' subsulture produced on campus as elements of the cultural diversity reflected in the population within a large urban community; (3) by caring enough about the success of the students to intervene, even at the risk of being intrusive, and (4) by treating the students with respect as persons of value.
A pattern for change, then, in Black students such as the spades players has unfolded based on personal growth; trust of others; and support, encouragement, and intervention from a Black professional and Black peers. Natasha persuaded the spades players to cooperate in this study, and Philip intervened in a personal way to involve them in fraternity life and academic pursuits. As a result, at least two spades players became part of the mainstream of campus life. Whether that affects their academic achievement remains to be seen. Philip, who had himself previously experienced academic difficulty and dropped out of school, possessed the knowledge and maturity necessary to intervene and assist the spades players in reorganizing their priorities. As the professional, I took time to know students in the environment they created for themselves on campus. That knowledge of the students turned into acceptance and respect for the subculture they created on campus.

As researcher, I began to view the spades players with respect and gain a degree of trust and respect that eventually placed me in a position as role model for this group. This is evidenced by the rapport and relationships that have continued throughout the research. I also became aware of the changes that need to take place at the institution in order to provide an alternative to obsessive spades playing on campus. I changed further by realizing that resolute, even aggressive action must be taken to help Black students like spades players take advantage of these alternatives and hopefully increase their opportunity to succeed.
A review of the assumptions with which I entered the field of research reveals further the extent of change within me. My first assumption was that there was no evidence of Deep South Community College as a hostile institution to Black students. However, the institution's indifference to these students despite their large numbers (38 percent) is indefensible. There is no retention program for Black students, nor are there special support services or personnel assigned to minority affairs. The 12 percent Black faculty rate demonstrates insufficient regard for providing adequate role modeling for Black students. The graduation rate among Black students, estimated at 15 percent based on numbers of Black freshmen enrolled in 1988 and the number of Black graduates in 1991, clearly indicates that Black students are being neglected. These students are being written off as being at risk when they enter the institution, so it is easy to justify their dropping out. I submit that the lack of any intervention to retain them constitutes indifference if not covert racism.

My assumption about the variety of cultural expressions among Black students was confirmed at least among the two groups under study. I anticipate that a closer look at other groups of Black students will reveal further diversity of cultural expression.

My assumption that my job might negatively affect my research by creating problems proved ultimately to be groundless. Although my entrance into the students' subculture was awkward for me, once I began to feel more comfortable, those feelings dissipated. In fact, my participation in this research produced
meaningful changes in my perspective toward students like the spades players who are indeed at risk of dropping out. The most important understanding I gained was that these students are worth retaining and that the institution, including personnel, policy, and practices, must provide the necessary intervention when appropriate. I also learned that such intervention requires a combination of professional and peer individuals, preferably Black, who have an interest in helping students. Contrary to hindering this research effort, my position has allowed me to observe and assess the situation from the vantage point of being a part of the institution.

As a result of my experiences while conducting this research, I am no longer the same person. I have grown spiritually from my relationship with the student informants in the study in that I see them now in a different perspective. Rather than viewing them as students in an unequal power relationship with me as an administrator, I view them as friends who happen to be students. I have learned to view these students as individuals. I respect them and love them with a brotherly love. From their response to me, I believe they feel similarly about me.

I can no longer, therefore, watch passively as other students like the spades players I studied spend their time on campus more focused on spades playing than on attending class and studying. Spades playing, as observed during this study, is not an isolated phenomenon; there is now already a new group of students evidencing the same behavior pattern.
The biggest change that occurred in me is that now I am more confident that there is something I can do, along with others, to help retain Black students like the spades players. I am determined to devise and implement a plan for intervention for the new spades-playing students that involves current Black faculty and staff and members of the Kappa Phi Nu fraternity.

As a result of this research, members of the Professional Black Caucus (the organization of Black faculty and staff at D.S.C.C.) are aware of my interest in the spades playing students. I have been approached by the President and officers of the group to discuss with the membership ways in which this organization can help these students refocus their attention on school work and improve their chances of remaining in school until graduation. My first response to the officers was that there was no quick or easy resolution of the situation, but the first step begins with gaining rapport with the students by coming to know the students in that environment they have created for themselves in the institution. The purpose of this action is to be in position to act as mentors and role models for these students so that when the need for intervention arises the intention of the Black faculty or staff member is not suspect. This in turn will open the way for even intrusive intervention if such is required.

I envision the fraternity brothers acting as peer counselors to the new spades players. This peer group can be most helpful in relating to the spades players the benefits of involvement in alternative activities on campus and the potential for hindrances to school work caused by overindulgence in spades.
playing. If Black students like Philip are motivated and activated to work with the new spades players, while at the same time the Professional Black Caucus is equally committed to mentoring, I believe the spades players' chances of remaining in school will be enhanced.

In a like manner, if the institution acknowledges spades playing as a cultural expression, respect from the institution, its personnel, and other students will provide fertile ground in which to grow. The recognition of this activity as a cultural expression allows it to be contextualized within the auspices of the student activities area. This translates into resources and financial support that may include spades lessons for all students, tournaments, and personnel available for counsel and intervention where appropriate. Improvement in self-concept among spades players might be enhanced.

Curriculum may also be impacted by a positive perspective on spades playing. The concept of working in teams with study partners, similar to the cooperative work among spades teams, may encourage the incorporation and acceptance of this concept into instruction and learning styles, and other classroom practices.

The valuing of spades playing as a cultural expression by the institution brings recognition to this activity learned in the homes of Black people. Such recognition will in turn begin to engender a more welcoming and receptive environment for Black students within the institution that may lead to the correction of preconceived ideas regarding Black students by faculty, staff and
other students.

To assist students like the spades players whose attention and focus have been misdirected away from academics, intervention may be required. Such intervention may include mandatory study hall for students on academic probation, required seminars on transferability of skills from spades playing to the classroom, and general counseling.

The responsibility for increasing the students' potential for academic achievement ultimately rests with the student and the institution in which the student invests trust to provide required instruction. In order to achieve, the student must fulfill all requirements of the institution at a level that has been predetermined by accrediting agencies and boards of education. The institution for its part must provide, as the mission statement for Deep South states, "an environment conducive to learning."

What has emerged from this study is that there are diverse groups of Black students that respond differently to the curriculum and the institution. This is relevant because we should no longer view and treat Black community college students monolithically. Those Black students like the senators who respond well to academics and to the institution are viewed as exceptions among Black students. The majority of Black students like the spades players are viewed as at risk of failing anyway, so nothing is done to intervene because their failure is viewed as inevitable. This latter attitude has gone unspoken at Deep South but is evidenced by the omission of appropriate intervention to change the situation.
The changes that occurred in the spades players, senators, and this researcher during the course of this study have provided a gleam of hope that when professional personnel and experienced peers possess the proper attitude toward Black students and the desire to assist them, their potential for achievement is enhanced. What has also emerged is that in order to unlock that potential, the institution should extend its resources as needed to provide aggressive intervention.

**Recommendations**

While the spades players themselves bear a large part of the responsibility for their failure, the institution must also share the blame. It is the obligation of the institution to coach every student to achieve academically. Such intervention should go beyond giving a placement test to determine whether the student needs remediation. The decisive action required goes beyond encouraging the student to visit the academic counselor or advisor for five minutes each semester to select courses. I contend that any such resolute action to aid academically any Black students like the spades players who develop their own collectives at the institution must begin by assertively seeking to understand, accept, and respect these students' diverse culture.

Such a change in the institution's attitude toward its Black students—that is, from oversight to seeking and validating the students' insight—will encourage improved self concepts among these students. A positive institutional change in
attitude toward Black students will mean that the administration, faculty, and staff will accept and respect Black students' cultural dynamics and expressions as equal to and not less than those of the majority of students. This type of institutional response to its students is what historically Black institutions have been doing successfully for years, as attested by these institutions' graduating the largest number of Black students annually.

The personal change I experienced during this research taught me many things. One of the important lessons is that I should not participate in the "destined for failure" sentiment that individuals who have achieved a degree of success, academic or otherwise, often express. One can easily forget that failure is not restricted to the other person. Everyone is equally vulnerable to problems. Some who have experienced difficulties but overcame them forget quickly that they were fortunate to receive help from someone along the way, sometimes without asking for help.

The key to assisting students like the spades players is getting to know the students in their own environment, accepting them as they are, respecting their diverse cultural expressions, and having structured intervention available to offer assistance even without request from them. This requires a genuine desire on the part of the professional to see students succeed. It involves the ability to see beyond the physical characteristics of the student and envision what he or she can become. Furthermore, the professional must be open enough to allow the student's potentialities to be developed to the extent that he or she is ready to
receive whatever benefit the institution is capable of providing.

The academic professionals who advise these students should care for them as if they were caring for relatives. Therefore, these professionals should reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of the students. For example, the Black spades players from Deep South would profit from African American academic professionals who are specially designated for students at risk of academic failure. Such students are not likely to seek out an academic professional and tell him or her that they are at risk of failure. The spades players' self assessment of their academic status was unrealistic at best. According to their assessment, they were all "doing fine in school."

My reaction to this statement was that the spades players were not telling the whole truth to me because they were embarrassed about their performance. I have learned from the players as well as from academic appeals of other Deep South students who have been suspended for academic status that students are just not aware of what services and personnel are available to help them achieve academically, and they do not seek assistance prior to doing poorly. Many never seek assistance. Despite the on-going theoretical discussion of whose knowledge is important—the students' or the institution's—the reason why individuals go to school is to learn something they feel is or will be important to them for any of a number of possible reasons. The academic professionals who work in the school environment should be committed to helping students accomplish what they set out to do.
Predominantly white institutions of higher education need to do a better job of retaining and graduating Black students. Currently Black students like the spades players at Deep South Community College are treated like less important entities in an institution that purports to offer all the special opportunity to go beyond their current circumstances and seek a more rewarding future. Instead of such an opportunity, these students have been given a license to fail and are taking that option. These students' initial order of priority for entering an institution of higher learning becomes reversed, so that instead of placing academic achievement first, they have made spades playing their focal activity. Rather than watching these students die on the educational vine, the institution should intervene. Spades playing should be accepted and respected by the institution as a cultural expression that is meaningful to this group of Black students. African American academic coaches or counselors who can relate to these students need to get involved with them to encourage the translation of their spades playing skills to study skills, time management skills, and other cognitive and academic skills necessary for success in college. Only until such action is taken on the part of the institution should the claim of community colleges' mission be taken seriously.

The first display of assistance the institution should provide, then, is sound and comprehensive advising by academic professionals concerned about student retention and successful completion. It is essential that students take required courses in the proper sequence and with all prerequisites. It is also helpful to
advise students to avoid those professors who are known to treat students differentially according to race or sex. Those who think playing spades is the problem these students face are missing what is really going on. The problem is that they cannot transfer the skills they use in spades playing into another environment. First of all, the motivation for doing so must be present. After the student understands what is involved in academic achievement, that is, being in good academic standing (a grade point average of 2.0 and above), advisors and counselors should encourage the student to put forth the required effort. Then the college should provide programs, seminars, or sessions to assist in the transference or bridging of previously acquired skills used in spades playing to skills necessary in study, memorization, analytical thinking, and other cognitive skills as well as various learning styles. At the same time, they should be encouraged to become involved in service to others for image and self esteem building.

In this study I have observed Black students who have failed, but I have also observed Black students who are achieving and reaching back to get involved in helping others. I submit that the creation of a family-like activity or atmosphere on campus is significant to Black students like the spades players. This can be accomplished and given the opportunity to work or make a difference if the institution sanctions such action. The first step is to begin to change attitudes toward these students from the administration to the faculty and staff. Secondly, Black professionals would be hired to work with these students.
Individuals who can look into the faces of Black students and see brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and other loved ones who are important in their personal lives are needed for this position. This identification with the students is essential because it deepens the employee's resolve to help a student if the employee is approached. It is more difficult to see someone fail that looks like you or looks like someone you love dearly. Black professionals who are currently employed at institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, are themselves striving to survive in a white environment. The institution should empower them to respond on its behalf by doing what is necessary to retain Black students and bring them to graduation. The institution is key to the reversal of this trend. Competent and caring Black professionals and peer counselors are also essential to provide the guidance, support, survival skills, and alternative activities that will help rather than impede students' progress.

The institution should make a commitment to establishing and maintaining an atmosphere and campus climate in which cultural diversity even among Black American students is desirable and appreciated. The institution should begin to acknowledge students' subcultures as contributing to this diversity. Students with varied cultural backgrounds, whether from America or some international community, should be received and accepted with the intention of retaining them. As an additional demonstration of the institution's sincere commitment in this regard, and upper-level college students from similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds should be encouraged to act as peer counselors. Periodically, issues
arise that focus attention on the situation minorities face in white institutions. One such issue is cultural diversity or multicultural awareness. As a response to the recent resurgence of hate activity and racism on campuses, some educators and politicians are calling for a new receptivity and acceptance of cultural diversity. This is a new way of stating that it is far better to accept people for who they are than try to assimilate them into the dominant culture. On the surface, it appears that maybe we are waking up to the reality that America is not a melting pot after all but a rich gumbo of cultures that blend together but maintain their own distinctive flavor. Curricula are being broadened to include diverse cultural perspectives. The Magnolia State Board of Regents for Higher Education has developed a cultural diversity task force to develop a policy for the state's master plan for higher education, yet the recognition of cultural diversity at the campus level is minimal. Rather than being recognized as culturally diverse, the spades players somehow have just been overlooked as they fell through the cracks and dropped out of school.

Currently, as Black Americans continue to lose advantages of affirmative action programs and civil rights legislation, the numbers of black males in prison exceed the numbers of Black males in college. At the same time, the numbers of Black males dying as victims of crime steadily increase, as do the numbers of Blacks addicted to drugs, the numbers who are unemployed, illiterate, homeless, and without jobs skills. The response to these devastating circumstances warrants drastic measures, especially from educational institutions like the community
In order to reach students prior to academic failure to ensure that they make use of assistance that is available from a variety of resources, they must be led. That requires intervention. Everyone is ready to say how students such as the spades players are wasting their time and how stupid they are for not studying. But no one takes the time to get to know the students as individuals—persons in an unfamiliar environment who, despite their potential and native ability, will make errors in judgment that others have made before they have learned what must be done to succeed. If academic personnel are committed to encouraging students to learn and do for themselves, these personnel cannot sit by and watch them fail without placing any of the blame for that failure on themselves.

While accepting and respecting the students' right to choose their associates with whom to build solidarity, the institution needs to devise strategies to help them succeed academically. Such strategies go beyond coursework and may involve working with the students in the location on campus where they have chosen to congregate. Those students who do not achieve with such resolute and preplanned action should be counseled into different career paths. In cases involving first-time freshmen or new lower-level transfer students, intervention may involve parent-like counsel in which these students are charged to perform particular tasks or to limit the performance of other tasks that get in the way of academic success. Although on the surface this suggestion sounds demeaning to one's independence and appears to impose on the rights of the adult student to
fail, I see it as a proactive measure that is superior to placing a student on academic probation and eventual academic dismissal without the benefit of some alternative. The mere designation of academic status provides no offer or suggestion for academic intervention or remedy.

I am proposing that the institution intervene even to the extent of being intrusive. With respect to spades playing specifically, students should be encouraged to pursue those activities that reflect their racial and ethnic solidarity and at the same time allow them an opportunity to belong, but such activities are effective only when scheduled to allow study to be completed prior to recreation. Many students are not able to do this on their own. While intrusive intervention sounds repressive on the surface, I see this strategy as a preferable alternative to the benign neglect that is the practice at Deep South. Community colleges are losing too many Black students. As a part of the mission of the community college, it purports to provide an alternative to traditional higher education. Retention of Black students, especially those who are at risk of academic failure, requires nontraditional strategies. One such strategy is the infusion of Afrocentricity into the institution - its personnel, policy and practices. The effectiveness of such a strategy will depend upon the degree of genuine priority that is given to retaining Black students. Unfortunately, until the retention of such students translates into a benefit to the institution there will only be the occasional expression of concern about the problem while colleges (especially predominantly white colleges) remain a revolving door experience for too many
The aggressive intervention that I propose may involve symbolically turning over the tables in the manner of Christ in the temple and disallowing card playing altogether. At the same time, this family-like activity would be replaced with activities that provide similar opportunity for Black students to group. Such a substitution would have to involve the students themselves and the competent and caring professionals assigned to work with them. Aggressive intervention may also take the form of requiring students who have been observed obsessively involved in certain on-campus activities that hinder academic progress to attend mandatory study skills and time management seminars. Students may also be scheduled to attend tutoring and study hall as a part of course requirements. Intrusive intervention may also mean approaching students to talk to them about their behavior in class and out of class that may affect their academic performance and ultimately their career plans.

More specifically, I propose the following methods of intervention:

1. Provide an ombudsman for minority student affairs. This professional would monitor the academic progress of incoming freshmen; organize a study hall and tutoring program for students on probation; and seek out intervention opportunities where necessary. This professional would also be responsible for identifying and training peer counselors who are senior Black students suitable as role models.

2. Organize a mentoring program where each Black faculty and
professional person is assigned one or two Black at-risk students per semester to advise and counsel. This will mean hiring additional Black counselors and other professionals. Guidelines for the frequency and type of student contacts should be developed to ensure the effectiveness of the time spent together.

3. Make a public commitment to student retention that includes orientations, seminars, and staff development activities where student retention is given highest priority. All college personnel need to be trained in relating positively to students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

4. Link merit raises and promotion considerations to college personnel's contribution to Black students' retention and graduation.

5. Provide academic advising that assists students in building a schedule by selecting not only required courses but also courses that are motivating and stimulating, such as Black studies, and those that contain an Afrocentric perspective.

6. Encourage peer counseling by successful Black students by offering incentives through student organizations and other means, with the guidance of Black professionals.

7. Require students on probation to attend study hall, tutoring, and a series of time management and study skills seminars.

8. Require faculty to monitor and report attendance and punctuality of students on probation to a professional staff for personal follow-up by Black counselors.
9. Provide an accepting and receptive atmosphere toward Black culture and heritage through an organized program of student activities.

10. Provide more classes like Dr. W.'s class where Black students can get excited about reading, writing, and discussion concerning Blacks who have made significant contributions to mankind, a particular discipline, or an art form. The excitement generated around the Black Writers course seemed to spill out into the hallways. Such enthusiasm and excitement can be infectious and could possibly serve as a substitute for the similar behavior demonstrated by the spades players during the game.

11. Institute a Black studies program including courses in African and African American art, history, drama, and humanities to demonstrate that Black people are respected enough to study.

12. Incorporate Afrocentricity into the existing curriculum and give faculty incentives for making their courses multicultural.

The institution must commit itself to the view that it is to the benefit of the institution's own current status and future survival to begin to regard Black students as contributing resources to society and to the perpetuity of the institution. The benefit to the institution will be realized in increased retention and graduate rates, increased generation of student credit hours, and recognition for making a contribution to preparing Black Americans for successful employment.
REFERENCES


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VITA

Anthony L. Molina, Sr., was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he attended St. Augustine High School. He received the B.S. degree from New York University and the Master of Arts degree in Theater from Miami University in Ohio, in addition to post-graduate studies in Education at Rutgers University.

Following a year as instructor and counselor for minority students at Rutgers University, Mr. Molina was employed as Theatre Program Coordinator and English Instructor at Essex County College, Newark, New Jersey. There he was appointed Coordinator of Adult Basic Education.

In 1974, Mr. Molina returned to Louisiana, where he worked as Area Supervisor for Adult Education for the Louisiana Department of Education for eight years.

From 1979 to 1985 Mr. Molina served as a member of the Board of Trustees for the State Colleges and Universities. He chaired several committees for the Board and served as Vice President. From 1981 to 1986 he worked in private business.

Since March 1986, Mr. Molina has been an administrator at Delgado Community College, on City Park Campus, first as the Assistant Dean and Director of the Night School, and currently as Associate Dean of Instruction. He holds faculty rank as Assistant Professor.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: ANTHONY L. MOLINA, SR.

Major Field: EDUCATION

Title of Dissertation: "SPADES PLAYERS" AND "SENATORS": AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF BLACK SUBCULTURES IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination: NOVEMBER 6, 1991