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THE KNOWLEDGE AGE: AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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THE KNOWLEDGE AGE: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family including my spouse, James H. Means, Jr., and children, Alyssa A. and James H. Means, III, as well as my mother, Bertha M. Adams, siblings and extended family who patiently waited to see the first female family member obtain a doctor of philosophy degree. It is also dedicated to my father, Rev. Julius Adams, and two brothers, Julius and Jeffery, who passed away without the knowledge that I would one day attainment the terminal degree. I thank family, friends and mentors for their support and encouragement during the dissertation process.

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I would to acknowledge my dissertation committee for this assistance in taking me through the process of doctoral research. Utmost recognition is given to Dr. George Sylvie, my dissertation supervisor who allowed me the freedom to complete this research. I would also like to thank my committee members, journalism professors Gene Burd, Mercedes de Uriarte, Maxwell McCombs, and Joseph Strauhaar from the Radio, Television and Film Department. This research began as an outgrowth of a graduate research project on the digital divide in Dr. Straubhaar's course and provided the opportunity to learn more about the East Austin community and its social status in a technology dependent society.

In addition, the School of Journalism could not have an identity without recognizing my first dissertation supervisor, Dr. James Tankard (deceased), and professors, Mrs. Lorraine Branham, Paula Poindexter and Dave Garlock – all of whom provided their support during graduate school. I would like to recognize my circle of friends and classmates who provided a listening ear and suggestions including Mrs. Janet Means-Scott, Ms. Lora Williams, Ms. Diana Fallis, Ms. Karen Hays; and Drs. Mary McGehee, Reggie Owens, Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, and Donald Collins.

My family has been my best team of cheerleaders. There has never been a time in the lives of my children when I have not been in school. As a wife, parent and student, I am certain my family never received my full attention as I worked and attended school.

Mothers, wives and daughters of elderly parents often find their resources stretched to the limits when trying to make an educational or career transition. That is just the way it is. They have been good troopers and I hope they will appreciate the sacrifice made in order to bring this degree to fruition. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Rev. Julius Adams and Mrs. Bertha Adams, for their quiet patience.

The Knowledge Age: African Americans in the Information Society

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Previous studies on access to information technology, primarily computers and Internet access, have described the disparities in the acquisition rate of technology between minorities and other racial groups. The Federal government conducted a series of large-scale studies during the 1990s, and early 21st century, to chart the penetration of information technology into American society. African Americans, with incomes of $40,000 or less, were most frequently identified as the population least likely to have equity in use of these technologies. Policymakers and scholars perceived this disparity in technology access as potentially detrimental to the economic and educational advancement of not just African Americans, but other minorities as well. The discourse on the inequities in technology access was metaphorically referenced as "the digital divide." The Internet held the promise for reducing disparities in access to information in a 21st century knowledge age that could potentially improve the social advancement of all populations. While the Internet has great potential to serve as a knowledge-base and an empowering resource, a qualitative analysis of the lives of African Americans in East

Austin, Texas, revealed participants actively use information technology. Ethnographic interviews and in-depth analysis; however, suggests the complexities of their heritage, community, culture, and social welfare present barriers, other than technology access, that potentially impede their social advancement despite having access to technology.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

African Americans in East Austin, Texas, are the focus of this research. Ethnographic methods were employed to gain insight and describe the lives and experiences of this population in 21st century America. Ethnography is described as, "a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system…The researcher examines the group's observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and the ways of life" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58). Tedlock (2003) explains that ethnography has several pathways to new inquiries including continued research on previous inquiries "An ethnographer may begin with an extended monograph based on either a master's thesis or a doctoral dissertation. Each chapter unfolds spatially and logically, treating a standard topic - - environment, social relations, identity or worldview – constructed by means of a repetitive accumulation of equivalent episodes and data" (p. 171). This research is an outgrowth of a community ethnography begun as a graduate course about the digital divide. The digital divide comprises disparities between persons with information technology and computer (ICT) access and persons who do not have access to these resources.

An earlier ethnographic study on Internet and computer technologies (ICTs) conducted in 1999 on East Austin minorities observed their social conditions, the digital divide and life in an information society[1]. That research served as the genesis for this current study on African Americans and the information society.

One specific observation made during the 1999 study of an African American family "Cathy's Story" (Means, 1999), discussed in Chapter 2, is the foundation for the current research. Of interest following the 1999 ethnographic inquiry was whether there were other families, such as Cathy's -- families desperately trying to socially advance in an information society but who find themselves in a constant social quagmire that holds them in a marginalized stasis thus preventing them for making any significant social gains in Austin, Texas, and American society.

[1]This research represents part of a larger, long-term research project, "Crossing the Digital Divide, which has also looked at minority ICT use, Latino migration, and changes in ICT and media across generations in the Austin, Texas area. Dr. Joseph Straubhaar, University of Texas, Austin, and Dr. Viviana Rojas, University of Texas, San Antonio has directed the project since 1999. UT graduate students or graduates Becky Lentz, Martha Fuentes-Bautista, Jeremiah Spence, Zeynep Tufekci, and Juan Piñon have contributed greatly to project design, data collection and analysis over several years. Other major contributors include UT graduate students or graduates Assem Nasr, Erin Lee, Carolyn Cunningham, Young-Gil Chae, Weiching Chen, Carol Adams-Means, and Holly Custard. Both undergraduate and graduate students in the following classes at UT Austin, RTF 342 (2006), 359 (2000, 2001), 365 (1999, 2000, 2004, 2005), 380g (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003), and 387 (2003), helped with interviewing in research and service learning classes.

The study of the humanities and social sciences has numerous descriptors to define its disciplines and approaches for investigation of phenomena or issues that arise within society. Some of these approaches to inquiry may include, but are not limited to, narrative journalism, urban journalism, cultural anthropology and ethnography. The exigency of this study took the form of ethnographic inquiry based on the methodologies used in the earlier study on East Austin.

The outcome of this inquiry may result in a grounded theory (Dey, 1999) by observing the social conditions of African Americans in Austin, Texas. According to Charmaz (2003, p. 370), "Grounded theory fits into the broader traditions of fieldwork and qualitative analysis. Most grounded theory studies rely on detailed qualitative materials collected through field, or ethnographic research, but they are not ethnographies in the sense of total immersion into specific communities." This current qualitative research involves the study of a constructed "community," East Austin, but is not an extended immersive study since the observations about the community come via analyses of narratives provided by the participants. Charmaz (2003) further observes grounded theory as an approach to storytelling about the lives of the persons observed, but explains the approach has recently faced criticism from "empiricists" who claim the grounded theorist contaminates the data collected by becoming an integral part of the data analysis. Further, "postmodernists and poststructuralists castigate the story as well"

(p. 217); nevertheless, it would seem grounded theory is most appropriate to this research since the researcher-observer is historically entwined with the African American community and its social progress.

Grounded theory is considered in this research to arrive at answers about digital equity and social experiences of 21st century African Americans living in East Austin. Grounded theory, according to Creswell (1998) "is to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation" (p. 56).

The current inquiry investigates digital equity following policy rhetoric associated with analyses of reports on access to information and information technologies, e.g., Internet and computers, (ICTs) compiled by academicians, government agencies and corporations on digital equity, but focuses on 14 African Americans associated with East Austin, Texas. These reports created a descriptive metaphor referred to as the "digital divide," meaning the disparities between persons who have access to information technologies and Internet access and those who do not.

Chapter 1 briefly provides a background introduction for the genesis of this research. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a context for the underlying conditions that explain the discussion of a digital divide and how these disparities affect African Americans in East Austin. Of greater importance is the discovery of other divides such as social, educational, employment, health, housing, and criminal justice that impede the social progress of African Americans in East Austin.

African Americans are as much a part of the tapestry of American history as other historic figures in the development of this nation. Some of the earliest accounts of excursions to the New World note an African present – begin with Estevanico, a Black who history records as traveling with the Narváez expedition to America in 1528. Estevanico, a slave, was perhaps the first Black to arrive near the wilderness of the Galveston coast that eventually became part of the State of Texas (Arrington, 1986). Other Blacks would enter the New World over a period of more than three centuries; each new generation of Blacks, although disenfranchised from American policymaking, would find themselves enmeshed with many aspects of the nation's history and its development.

In 1619, the first Blacks arrived in Northern America aboard a Dutch sailing vessel (Wood, 2000). According to Johnson and Smith (1998), seamen bartered with the Jamestown colony for supplies in exchange for 20 Africans. Indentured servitude was an accepted practice at the time, and Johnson and Smith suggest some of these first Blacks integrated into the early Jamestown society, secured their freedom and became landowners. In just under a century, however, legal statutes, known as "Black Codes," created a slave class through institutional slavery, a practice that would continue for another 144 years.

African Americans have contributed to the creation of the economic wealth of America through years of labor and toil, some as freemen and others largely as slaves in human bondage. Slave labor was perceived as necessary in order to build a nation; the

nation that Adam Smith wrote of in *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (1776) and Alexis de Tocqueville in Volume I of *Democracy in America* in 1835. Smith and de Tocqueville were foreign observers of American society and its dichotomous tenets of democracy and slavery. The social progression of American Blacks from slave-class to full citizen was lengthy and difficult. American history is a patchwork quilt of the many stories and historical events that influenced the social advancement of African Americans in this country.

It would be the mid-20th century before African Americans were granted full democratic rights as citizens despite the earlier passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution. Still, Blacks managed to function within mainstream America despite social, educational, cultural and legal barriers. African Americans would survive across economic periods from the agricultural age to the industrial age; Blacks currently face the transition to an information age, which offers unprecedented opportunities for everyone. What distinguishes this period from any other is the introduction of information technology that is potentially accessible by everyone. Access to information provides unprecedented empowerment to the ordinary citizen – information that previously may have been difficulty to locate or obtain. Today, digital libraries, public documents and user groups make information available to anyone with Internet access. Information technology at present demands a knowledge and skill that is cognitive and physical. The cognitive aspect requires the ability to comprehend the basic operation and function of an expanding array of communication technologies and the

cognitive ability to seek information, then discern what information is beneficial. The physical requirements involve having the tactical skills to operate a computer keyboard or other device to input and extract information from an information source. The challenge of a 21st century society is whether people who hope to advance economically and socially will acquire the digital literacy in order to keep pace with a society where information is a commodity.

This research follows the social migration of East Austin African Americans to an information society. Published reports and surveys provide large-scale studies on the American population and its transition to the information society. Data show that persons with incomes of less than $40,000 a year do not use information technology at the same rate as the rest of the population (NTIA, 2002; Strover and Straubhaar, 2000).

Early studies on the disparities in technology access reported minorities, low-income women and persons living in rural and urban America are the populations least likely to use computers, and later, the Internet (NTIA, 1995, 1998, 1999; Pew, 2000; Strover, 2000). These reports, primarily surveys, by their nature have limitations in comprehensively explaining the underlying factors that promote or impede the rate of adoption of, and access to, information technology by this population. Surveys, unlike ethnography, are unable to describe the complex social conditions in which these respondents live. In contrast, the current research used in-depth ethnographic interviews to produce a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Creswell, p. 184, 1998) that vividly details the lives of these participants and their views about the changes in society around

them. The accelerated development of information technology (IT) at the close of the 20th century eclipsed the consumer acquisition rate of any previous telecommunication developments in America. Earlier technologies such as the telephone, radio and television had a slower acquisition rate than digital technology in gaining public saturation in America (Schement, 1995). As computers, modems, and Internet access became more functionally intuitive, commercially available, and affordable, segments of the American public increasingly acquired the new technology. The advancements in technology and governmental deregulation of telecommunications, with the Telecommunications Act 1996, opened opportunity for free enterprise, new applications of technology in science, education, communication and entertainment, but it also illustrated how much society was unprepared for the transition to an information society.

Technologies and applications often change before lawmakers can create laws to regulate them. Issues of social behavior online, digital piracy, privacy, fraud, pornography and cyber-terrorism are just a few of the unsavory aspects of the digital society that beg attention from society, government and the private sector to stay one step ahead of the next digital dilemma. Ongoing policy and regulatory discussion on management of Internet content as well as access to that content, and issues of privacy and freedom of speech represent but a fraction of the concerns surrounding the new information age. The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) "Falling through the Net" series of reports beginning in 1995 were produced to plot the trend in adoption and the access rates of information

technology, primarily Internet access and computer ownership, by the American public. These reports helped fuel the political agenda surrounding the advancement of information technology in society while justifying continued federal and corporate funding of technology programs, allegedly for minimizing any social and political disparities among populations that were falling behind the rest of society in computer and Internet access (Aufderheide, 1999).

Again, minority populations identified as the last to adopt information technology, were consistently defined as low-income minorities (African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans) (NTIA, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002). While these populations have made strides in gaining access to the information and information technologies (ICTs), the overall percentage of persons actually doing so still lags behind other socioeconomic groups in America.

Questions remain about what information technology means to this segment of society. Why are some African Americans adopters and others not? What factors affect the rate of access for this population? What cultural, social, political, economic and educational barriers impede the social migration of African Americans to the information society? Conversely, do African Americans take advantage of information technology despite obstacles in their lives?

"Cathy's Story" describes some of the difficulties she faced in making the leap to the information age. The intent of this research was to provide a descriptive profile, a snapshot in time, of where African Americans in East Austin stand regarding their social

condition and access to information technology at the beginning of a new century. The 21st century represents the first in which African Americans have not lived under laws and policies designed to restrict their social, educational, political and economic advancement. The elimination of such legal restrictions offers unprecedented opportunity for research on participation and representation in the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992; Miller, 1996) -- a democratic place for expression of ideas for all people, but which has become a digital public sphere in the 21st century.

African presence in this country has been a paradoxical existence since the first technologically advanced sailing ships began to import Blacks to the Americas. Removed from their native land, Africans have searched for their place in America. Africans provided the labor necessary for much of the creation of wealth in North America as they helped build the American infrastructure, cultivated the land and produced goods for consumption and exportation to the general population. Despite invaluable service to the development of America, statistically, Blacks rarely shared in its wealth because of political and economical constraints in American society. Early "statistical" reports and census were more concerned with property holdings and black headcounts as property rather than Blacks as freemen and freewomen (Jefferson, 1791, 1850 County Census, Genovese, 1973). Civil and human rights for African Americans legally eroded, even as the early immigrants pressed for an independent, democratic nation and individual civil rights.

During the colonial period, before American policymakers determined it was economically advantageous to deny Blacks their civil liberties, however, some Black indentured servants managed to gain their freedom. This created a class of early "freedmen," but as America moved toward nation building, Blacks began to see their chance at freedom diminish through the enactment of laws that systematically positioned Blacks as a slave class (Johnson and Smith, 1998; Kelly and Lewis, 2000). This would last until the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation that abolished slavery in 1863 and the ratification of the 13th Amendment in January 1865. However, June 19, 1865 is the date recorded as when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, with the Emancipation Proclamation notifying Texas Blacks of their freedom - the place where the first Black, Estevanico, arrived.

The abolition of slavery, however, offered no guarantee of civil liberties for American Blacks despite the addition to the Constitution of the 14th amendment granting citizenship to all residents of the United States, and the 15th amendment granting the vote. The gradual withdrawal of federal protections in place during Reconstruction led to the decline in political gains made by Blacks in Texas politics and opened the doorway for the creation of what became known as Jim Crow laws.

Control of the election ballot and restriction of Black voting rights ensured political power remained in the hands of Whites. The elimination of the protected rights of the newly freed slaves further diminished when the United States Supreme Court in 1883 ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional (Marable, 1991). In 1896,

the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruled the Louisiana state law providing separate rail car accommodations for Whites and "colored people" did not violate the 13th or 14th amendments. *Plessy v. Ferguson* is a defining moment in the "separate, but equal" doctrine that sustained separation of the races in nearly every venue, thus relegating Blacks to second-class citizenship and sustaining the American system of apartheid.

Justice Harlan's dissenting opinion on the *Plessy* ruling appealed to reason and expressed his concern for the potential detrimental effects of continued racial segregation in America,

> "In my opinion, the judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case. It was adjudged in that case that the descendants of Africans who were imported into this country and sold as slaves were not included nor intended to be included under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and could not claim any of the rights and privileges [**1147] which that instrument provided for and secured to citizens of the United States; that at the time of the adoption of the Constitution they were "considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant [*560] race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the government might choose to grant them." 19 How. 393, 404. The recent amendments of the Constitution, it was supposed, had eradicated these principles from our institutions. But it seems that we have yet, in some of the States, a dominant race -- a superior class of citizens, which assumes to regulate the enjoyment of civil rights, common to all citizens, upon the basis of race. The present decision, it may well be apprehended, will not only stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal and irritating, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but will encourage the belief that it is possible, by means of state enactments, to defeat the beneficent purposes which the people of the United States had

> in view when they adopted the recent amendments of the Constitution, by one of which the Blacks
> of this country were made citizens of the United States and of the States in which they respectively reside, and whose privileges and immunities, as citizens, the States are forbidden to abridge. Sixty millions of whites are in no danger from the presence here of eight millions of blacks. The destinies of the two races, in this country, are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law. What can more certainly arouse race hate, what more certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races, than state enactments, which, in fact, proceed on the ground that colored citizens are so inferior and degraded that they cannot be allowed to sit in public coaches occupied by white citizens? That, as all will admit, is the real meaning of such legislation as was enacted in Louisiana."

American segregation remained until the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (concluding the notion of "separate, but equal"), and the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

In 2004, America commemorated the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the Civil Rights Act of 1965 is just more than 40-years-old, a fraction of the time Africans spent in slavery, and but a mere flash in the timeline of history. Nevertheless, there is an anti-affirmative action movement that seeks to reverse equal rights legislation and affirmative actions programs designed to diminish the disparities experienced by Blacks resulting from slavery and subsequent Jim Crow laws. According to Marable (1991), southern states seized upon the opportunity to rewrite their constitutions further limiting the political strength and any alliances potentially forged between Blacks and poor whites in the South by restricting the voting rights of African Americans.

Since 1865, Blacks and the American nation have struggled to resolve an ugly past that serves as an embarrassing reminder of the sanctioned exploitation of a race of people for economic gain. The disproportionate distribution of rights in America remains evidenced by disparities between Blacks and the rest of American society in economic wealth, education, employment and political representation. This research considers the historic legacy of Africans in America an important factor in describing contemporary African American life.

Chapter 2 provides a brief demographic summary of the socioeconomic disparities of Blacks in Austin, Texas. Ancestral lineage for many African Americans is uncertain. However, a collection of Travis County slave narratives gathered by the Worker Projects Administration (WPA, originally Works Progress Administration) in 1937 suggests that several emancipated slaves settled in East Austin[2].

Some of the most poignant and shameful moments in American history were the primary and secondary accounts of legal and social events that relegated Africans to a secondary, slave-class status in America as illustrated by the WPA narratives. To use the term "citizen" seems inappropriate since Africans were not citizens according to the 1856 U.S. Supreme Court Dred Scott ruling.

[2] There were other communities in Austin founded by freedmen including Clarksville and Kincheonville. Wheatsville was also a Black community, according to the Handbook of Texas Online.

Black slaves were not citizens; they were primarily property of the dominant class. The 14th Amendment (1866), earlier mentioned established citizenship for former slaves. Section 1 reads, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdictions thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside." The concept of a public sphere assumes that citizens join in the public discourse within the sphere (Calhoun, 1992). The information society implies there is a digital, egalitarian public sphere in which all persons may participate, that is, if they have the skill to access that public domain of cyberspace.

The systematic, persistent and prolonged subjugation of one race of people to servitude, social and legal oppression could only result in far-reaching consequences that retard the ability of this population to integrate into the larger society once released from bondage. In addition, the psychological trauma endured by some slaves could factor into the social behavior of emancipated slaves. Records, biographies and narratives left behind describe their experiences from which inferences maybe drawn about the mental state of some slaves following emancipation. W.E.B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903, 1995), suggested freedmen and freedwomen faced chaotic complexities as they struggled to integrate into American society upon Emancipation. He observed many of the American customs, practices and habits of conventional society were meaningless to the former slave.

The correlations between stymied social, economic, educational and political progress and bondage are not definitively established. There is only an implied

connection between slavery and the social progress of Africans in America, nevertheless, evidence of the lag in progress between Blacks are apparent in nearly every statistical report produced in this country. Liptsitz (1998) in *The Possessive Investment of Whiteness* suggests policies and laws facilitated the social progress of Whites while suppressing the social, educational and economic progress of American Blacks or other minorities. He comments, "Subsidies to the private sector by government agencies also tend to enhance the rewards of past discrimination" (p. 17), in this case tax abatement for redevelopment thus allowing the developers to bypass paying taxes that could support public services and school funding to low-income communities.

This research does not discount the histories of social strife by other ethnic groups in America. The scope of this work, however, is limited to African Americans in East Austin.

Access, equity and representation are the underlying themes that define this research and its methodology in ascertaining an Austin digital divide. It is worthwhile to observe whether these three elements exist in the minority community since studies suggest they are marginally occurring.

Reflexivity, described as when the observer becomes integrated with what is observed (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), also plays a role in the importance of this research since it involves the study of an American minority group by a member of the same minority group, The ultimate aim is to contribute to overall discourse on African American life in this society. The researcher must maintain objectivity according to the

canons of academe, yet reflexivity compels the observer to interject personal knowledge and experiences into the study analysis. Obidah (2003) experienced this in her sojourn as a social scientist of color in White academe. It represents the same "two-ness" or "double-consciousness," of which DuBois wrote in 1903, yet living and behaving in a way that is acceptable to one society but belonging to another society.

Ideally, social research should be without bias and social scientist of any ethnicity and gender should be quite capable of conducting unbiased inquiry into communities that are not of their same origin, background or social experiences. Nevertheless, persons of a similar origin, history and social background potentially bring many shared experiences into social inquiry on race or ethnicity. As Obidah (2003) discovered, when both researcher and the subject of inquiry share some commonalities, they assume the role of observer-participant in carrying out the ethnographic inquiry while "donning an analytical lens" (Thomas, 2003, p. 36).

Unfortunately, the dearth of social scientists of color limits the volume of social science research by American Blacks about American Blacks, particularly in the Southwest. Chronicling the heritage of African Americans in the Southwest, specifically, Texas is the focus of this research. The 21st century represents an opportune time for this inquiry, as it is the turn of the century, and the beginning of the information age. A new century provides us with a fresh page on which to write the stories of 21st century society and its people. This study explores the African American past, a mainly slave past, as the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) of Blacks - a past that provides the linkage to the

present and future of African American people in the 21st century. This current research considers the slave heritage of African American people since this legacy will remain with African Americans in perpetuity despite assimilation into the American mainstream. While assimilation into American culture represents a hybrid mix of African, slave and regional experiences mediated by social and political forces, the vestiges of a slave past remain entwined with the experiences of African Americans in this new century.

The WPA narratives of the1930s provide a documented insight into the life experiences of persons who transcended the centuries from slavery, leapt into the 20th century and survived long enough to tell their stories. Now the 21st century offers new opportunity to gather the experiences of African Americans who have survived the social and civil strife that surrounded contemporary Blacks as the last vestiges of a segregated society enters the twilight of history. The old narratives provide a first-hand account of the experiences of chattel slavery, but they also provide the historic clues for understanding the lives of African Americans in the 21st century.

Media access, acquisition, representation and equity did not begin with the policy debates of a digital divide. Media access, acquisition, representation and equity began perhaps with the first attempts at record keeping and recorded history. The history of media access incorporates the press, film, radio, television and now the Internet. Cyberspace, a potential forum for democratic public access and expression; however, is often dominated by entities or people who have expertise or knowledge that give these groups advantages over less adept users of ICTs. Lessig (2000) argues in *Code and*

Other Laws of Cyberspace, that entities who control the "codes" that make communication in cyberspace possible also govern the use of these codes.

Public access to traditional print, audio or visual channels remains limited since numerous factors mediate access including adequate capital to acquire a media outlet, including availability of media licenses, regulatory policy, technical expertise, access to channels of media distribution, media gatekeepers, media conglomerates and profitability. What is unique about 21st century access are the traditional barriers to media and communication dissemination can be minimized by acquiring basic digital media skills and some inexpensive equipment such as a computer and modem or digital subscriber line (DSL); then channels of media distribution become highly accessible (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2004).

Numerous free blog (Weblog) sites such as Blogger make it possible for the least digitally perceptive person to join the online public discourse within cyberspace via Internet access. Heretofore this kind of power has been in the hands of a few traditional and powerful media organizations like print, radio, television and film corporations (see "Who Owns What," http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/).

Today, digital technology makes it possible for anyone with an inexpensive video camera, a computer, video editing software and Internet access to be a news reporter or producer, film writer, director, producer and/or distributor – all via the Internet. Inexpensive camera phones can keep a picture diary of the day's events for distribution over the web. Video logs (vlogs) are gaining prominence in the 21st century and may

replace traditional news channels as amateur videographers capture events by simply being at the right place at the right time. When the London Underground trains and double-decker buses fell under terrorist attack in July 2005, it was people with camera phones who sent out the first horrific scenes from the London underground tunnels. Ordinary Londoners became the reporters in the field that infamous day as citizen journalists.

During the 1970s, the federal government began an initiative to increase minority ownership of radio and television stations. It created various incentives like distress sales and tax certificates for existing owners to encourage transfer of broadcast stations to minorities. Political activist Pluria Marshall, Sr. and his National Black Media Coalition lobbied for greater minority ownership of media.

The National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters (NABOB) organized in 1976 to provide a forum for African American media owners. NABOB is a broadcast trade organization and describes itself as an outlet for "broadcasters who desired to establish a voice and a viable presence in the industry and to address specific concerns facing African-American broadcasters." (NABOB, 2003). According to NABOB, there were only 30 Black-owned radio broadcast facilities when the organization formed. There were no Black-owned television stations. From the 1970s to the 1990s, minority ownership made some gains in the broadcast media, but since the passing of the Telecommunication Act of 1996, and subsequent repeal of the ownership incentives to sell broadcast properties to minorities Black minority ownership has slowed, according to

former FCC Commissioner William E. Kennard (1998). Kennard commented in a 1998 speech to the National Black Media Coalition that diversity in media helped everyone, "What frequently gets lost in this debate, is the issue of why this is important. Programming, ownership, and employment input from people of color invariably make society stronger and better as a result. Diversity should not be thought of solely as a black thing, or a Latino thing, or an Asian thing. It is an American thing, and it is the right thing to do" (paragraph 26). A review of broadcast ownership will show that many minority owners primarily are White women (FCC, 2005).

While broadcast ownership was less attainable for Blacks, print media was more accessible. Some of the earliest Black presses such as *Freedom's Journal* (1827), *The North Star* (1847), and *New Orleans Tribune* (1862) served as resources for news and platforms for condemnation of social injustices (Wolseley, 1971, 1990). Even in Texas, in the years following emancipation, there were Black presses such as *The Informer* and *Texas Freedman* (later *The Informer and Texas Freedman)*, one of the oldest Black continually operating newspapers in Texas, established in 1893 (personal communication, Hall, 2004). The *Informer and Texas Freedman* was available to a readership of newly literate African Americans living in the Gulf Coast region of Texas.

It was through the Black press that African Americans were able to illuminate many of the accomplishments of Blacks as well as to criticize the atrocities and social injustices committed against this population (often chronicled in publications of activists and journalists Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Du Bois).

Underlying concerns remain about minority representation in media and access to communication venues. In 2003, the annual Radio Television News Directors Association/Ball State University Annual Survey of women and minorities indicated that while the overall employment in the industry increased, the number of minorities hired remained proportionately small and showed some statistical decreases based upon industry hires (RTNDA, 2003). The disparities between African Americans and the rest of society remain extensive, but it is not the intent of this present research to investigate this very complex and multivariate list of media issues at present. The intent of this research is to examine a discrete group of people and their responses to a very specific number of research questions about their lives in East Austin and the information society.

This research addresses the newest media frontier - the media frontier of the information age and the information society. This research has earlier cited the discourse concerning disparities between race and class in access and representation in the digital age. It has become synonymously associated with and metaphorically described as the "digital divide." Again, as with earlier media forms, minorities and low-income persons are identified as persons who are least likely to use ICTs, who will least likely own information technology, be trained to use information technology, have jobs that use or develop information technology, or produce the content delivered by information technology. Much of the discussion concerning access to information technology centers around social advancement, that is, persons must gain a level of information literacy in order to economically and socially advance in the information

society, a society that will increasingly value acquisition and ownership of knowledge (Drucker, 1994, Lessig, 2000). Persons who hold the knowledge and transfer the knowledge will enjoy the greatest social advancement.

The information age of the 21st century is like no other in that the process for acquiring information is migrating from a physical, analog form to a digital form. Utilization of technology, while not a requisite skill for accessing information, becomes a useful aid for the expedient acquisition and application of information. Persons who possess the technology and cognitive ability to access information have an advantage over others who do not possess these resources. Whether people have the resources, tangible or intangible, mediates access to information.

With this as the underlying theme for this research, several procedures helped to compile the information presented in this study.

Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, addresses the contextual background of this research. This section introduces several concepts designed to summarize the African experience in America. Recently, Black scholars such as Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates (PBS, 2006) have undertaken projects to find linkages between well-known African Americans, such as television host Oprah Winfrey, and their ancestors. The chapter also explores such linkages by employing Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives on life in America, and the social and oppressive experiences of other ethnic groups such as Holocaust survivors. Other discussion in this chapter includes Bourdieu's field of cultural production, Bandura's social learning theory, critical race theory, Leary's

posttraumatic slave syndrome, posttraumatic stress disorder, previous discussions and research on the digital divide, slave narratives, qualitative ethnography and the East Austin cultural scene, as well as contemporary quality of life for African Americans in (Travis County) Austin.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach to this current research. This is a primary investigation of African Americans with a cultural, social and historic connection with East Austin. The qualitative methods employed arise from a ground theory approach used during a 1999 ethnographic study of low-income families and minorities living in East Austin, and their experiences with technology. The significance of the 1999 ethnographic study on East Austin provides a context for this current research that covers the first years of the 21st century. The observations and procedures used and the findings of the 1999 study create the theoretical framework for this new inquiry. The description of the life of one East Austin family in 1999 provided opportunity to ask what life was like for other African Americans in East Austin. This current investigation attempts to address the standard caveat of "further research is needed" by extending the research begun in 1999. It is exhilarating to begin the next step, but it by no means is the concluding chapter for research on this community.

The current study of fifteen African Americans living in the East Austin area who were at least 18 years of age, with incomes of $40,000 a year or less, were recruited for this study in accordance with the protocols approved by the University of Texas at Austin, Institutional Review Board (IRB), Office of Research Support and Compliance.

The method of inquiry was by ethnographic interview using a structured questionnaire containing items designed to form an index of life experiences that allowed for "thick description" (Geetz, 1973) or detailed description of the participants. Most participants lived in Austin for at least two years, and many were long-term residents.

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the outcome of ethnographic interviews conducted with 15 African Americans affiliated with the East Austin community. The chapter begins with profiles that are a descriptive narrative for each participant – a world tour in an effort to introduce the reader to the African American participants and their "cultural scene" as they perceive it. The chapter continues with an a textual analysis of their interview responses to the structured, but open-ended questions from which the participants describe their experiences living in East Austin, and perceptions about their personal social, political and economic capital. As with qualitative inquiry, often information emerges during the research process that extends the original scope of the project, but enriches the quality of the textual data thereby complementing the initial intent of the research inquiry and often offering new research threads for a future analysis. This chapter answers the initial research questions, but identifies other emergent themes from the extended inquiry into the lives of the 21st century African Americans.

Chapter 5 is the summative discussion of this ethnographic inquiry and makes recommendations for continued evaluation of social and economic policies to ensure equity for all citizens in a democratic society. This study captures the contemporary

experiences of members of the Austin African American community by concentrating on a specific group of people in East Austin in an effort to describe their social conditions as society enters the information age.

The results of this study suggest a multitude of social, political and economic issues that continue to concern the African American community in Austin.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background

The following discussion examines the late 20th and early 21st century rhetoric surrounding the new information society and the digital divide, social theories concerning social and cultural advancement of African Americans in a 21st century society, Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives about the lives of Blacks in America and the primary accounts of Blacks, past and present, from East Austin, Texas.

Equity in information technology -- the opportunity for equal representation and participation in the information society occasionally referred to as "cyber democracy" (Miller, 1996) – became a policy issue in the United States during the Clinton administration. The passage of the Telecommunication Act of 1996 promised increased consumer choice and greater telecommunication competition, and it paved the way for providing universal service and access to telecommunication systems and services (Telecommunication Act of 1996; Aufderheide, 1999). The Act also provided financial support to schools, libraries and telemedicine facilities so those entities could also acquire the technology and access (i.e., Internet or data lines) that would advance them to the information age. The exigency for advancement of these sectors – as well as the push toward social advancement to a knowledge-based, information age – was underscored by a series of national surveys conducted on the diffusion of computer technology and access to the National Information Infrastructure (NII), more commonly referred to as the Internet. Several studies identified disparities in the American population between

persons with access to computer technology and the Internet and those without access. Minorities -- Blacks, Hispanics, and low-income Americans -- were most frequently identified as falling behind the rest of the society in gaining access to information technology. These disparities were metaphorically referred to as the "digital divide." Even when Blacks matched Whites in income, for example, Blacks acquired and used information technology at a lower rate than Whites (Pew, 2000). This population, also referred to as the "have nots," is often viewed as persons marginalized by their socioeconomic status, digital access and digital literacy. Light (2001) suggests that achieving digital equity is no different than equity in other public services, writing, "From electricity to the telephone and the automobile, most technologies did not enter U.S. society equitably. Disparities in access generally persisted for a time and then lessened as innovations were transformed from luxury to mass-market goods" (p. 712). Light argues that telecommunication policy helped describe even the telephone as a 'universal' service that was a "necessity." The rhetoric of telecommunications has historically been used to advance communication policy, according to Light.

The relevance here is whether segments of American society, for this discussion, define themselves as marginalized because they lack the technological resources and digital literacy to access the same information at the same level as the rest of society; in other words, their ability to participate in a digital democracy. Access and digital literacy are key components to digital democracy. Digital literacy is discussed in further detail later in this research, but for now, digital literacy is defined as having the skills to use

computers to access the Internet, as well as corporate, governmental and non-profit information public access databases, digital libraries or even school homework related Web sites. Digital literacy also means having basic literacy to use communication codes, and the ability to spell and use keystrokes on a keyboard to type in those semantic codes or words to search for information. Digital literacy further requires the ability to discern credible information from reliable sources and recognize what is fraudulent to avoid becoming a victim of cyber crime or relying on or interpreting erroneous information as credible. Access alone cannot redress disparities in populations that have been marginalized for decades.

Perceptions about the Digital Divide

While the list of studies on technology diffusion illuminates the disparities between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged, these studies helped to create a new, technology-related statistic stratified by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics were often cited as the population least likely to own computers or able to access the new, digital technology. The reports offered extensive quantitative information on the social migration to an information society, but often did not provide qualitative data that could fill in the context for the disparities in ownership, access and equity in digital technology. The disparities warranted further inquiry beyond the statistical data to ascertain the underlying explanation for these disparities. Of interest was the presence of any social economic constraints that impeded acquiring or accessing information technology; or perhaps there

were attitudes, beliefs or culture bound factors that hindered access to information technology and resources. The intent of this study was to investigate some of these questions.

The reports defined the advantaged group (persons with access to technology and the Internet) as "haves" and the disadvantaged group as the "have-nots." In a more recent government report, *A nation online: How Americans are expanding their use of the Internet* (2002), the populations least connected in the information society are "the unconnected." While descriptive categories may help most of society to quickly digest the populations in reference, they also stigmatize persons who remain on the lower end of the socioeconomic strata. Such limited characterization prevents participation and input that helps describe and bring clarity to digital divide discourse, specifically, defining the digital divide. As Henry Jenkins of MIT describes it, "The rhetoric of the digital divide holds open the division between civilized tool-users and uncivilized nonusers...As well-meaning as it is as a policy initiative, it can be marginalizing and patronizing in its own terms" (Young, 2001, p. A51). In an attempt to bring attention to the technological polarization of American society, policymakers and theorists who coined these descriptive terms – regardless their intent – potentially created as much social harm as technological good since the digitally-disadvantaged were categorized by experts and *authorities*; yet, members of this population have limited opportunity to provide *their* commentary and perceptions about the issue. This research provides a forum in which a small group of persons previously silent on this discourse voice their opinions about life

in a society increasingly reliant on technology and knowledge for social and economic success.

The literature on the digital divide and technology access covers academic scholarship from public policy institutes and governmental agency reports beginning with some of the early reports by Novak and Hoffman (1997), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Pew Internet and the American Life Project, Servon (2002), van Dijk (2005), Schement and Curtis (1995), Mossberger, Tolbert and Stansbury (2003); and regionally, the Telecommunications Information Policy Institute (TIPI) with reports primarily compiled by Strover and Straubhaar (2000).

Data collected by Novak and Hoffman, CommerceNet and the Nielsen Internet Demographic (IDS) for spring 1997 was among the earliest studies to suggest a disparity between African Americans in computer ownership and Internet access. The data – gathered from households via a telephone survey derived from a random digit-dialing sample frame – found that persons with incomes of $40,000 or more were near parity in computer ownership and Internet access, but African American teens, regardless of income and whether they owned a computer, tended to lag behind White teens in Internet access. In this case, the researchers felt that race mattered in technology access. Another marked finding was the lack of access for persons with incomes of $10,000 or less. In this group, Whites (10.1 percent) in this group were more likely than Blacks (7.8 percent) to own a home computer. However, the small sample size prompted the researchers to

consider racial differences in technology access as an "isolated" occurrence. Since the sample was derived from a random-digit dialing methodology, it is highly probable that persons with low incomes were excluded because they did not have telephone service in the home. In 2000, telecommunication policy researcher Jorge Schement (personal communication, 2000) described a technology environment in which some segments of the population did not have telephone service and some communities in San Antonio, Texas, still used a party line (a communally shared telephone line in which separate households must, by courtesy, relinquish the shared line to another household, if the telephone line was needed). In a 2006 Government Accounting Office report titled, "Telecommunications, Challenges to Accessing and Improving Telecommunications for Native American Tribal Lands," the 2000 decennial census estimated the national telephone subscribership at 98 percent.

Furthermore, Hoffman, Novak and Schlosser (2001) conducted longitudinal studies on computer and Internet use. Working from a consumer-driven model (i.e., the potential consumer market for computers and Internet service) they surmised that given time and opportunity, African Americans would acquire computer technology and in doing so gain access to the Web.

Governmental agencies contributed to the digital divide discourse as well by producing special reports on technology access as part of a large, national survey of consumer productivity growth. Unfortunately, the methodologies, variables and instruments used by the U.S. Department of Commerce changed from one period to the

next, making it difficult to compare data over time. Analytical comparison of technology acquisition by demographic characteristics becomes problematic and difficult when attempting a trend analysis of consumer behavior for certain variables that may be of interest to researchers. Mossberger et al. (2003) had similar observations in *Virtual Equality*. The authors analyzed what they perceive as other "divides" impacting the "digital divide." These divides are categorized as: access divide, skills divide, economic opportunity divide and democratic divide. Their study, conducted in June and July of 2001, utilized computer-aided telephone survey interviews of 1,837 persons living in high poverty census tracts in 48 states. The ethnic distribution of the sample included 70 percent White, 19 percent Black and 9 percent Latino.

In the chapter, "The Need for Reliable Data and Analysis with Statistical Controls," the authors observed it is difficult to conduct detailed statistical analyses of previous digital divide data because of type of data collected: "Most studies have simply described the percentage of a certain group that has a computer or Internet access…Looking at differences across only one or two variables does not permit the researcher to control for the effect of other related factors. Many demographic factors, such as income and education, are interrelated…" (p. 23-24). Further, many of the previous digital divide studies conducted since then have presented data as frequency counts and percentages, but as these authors have said, the inconsistency of variables makes it difficult to conduct a meaningful analysis of the digital divide question: "The independent effects of race, ethnicity, income, education, age, gender, and employment

status can be found only by using an appropriate statistical method, such as multivariate regression" (p.24). Their research sought to address methodological inconsistencies in previous digital divide studies by creating a survey with better methodological controls in the 48 states they surveyed. As described, the methodological problems of previous digital divide studies including the use of descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency counts and percentages in digital divide surveys) and lack of substantial analyses that address underlying issues mediating technology acquisition and use, also underscore the rationale for applying a qualitative methodology specifically narrative ethnography, in the current East Austin study. Mossberger et al., for example, reported it was often difficult to obtain income information during their telephone survey, as people did not wish to reveal such information. Telephone surveys are abbreviated communication and involve interaction with unknown persons who desire to elicit personal details, creating limited opportunity to establish interviewer/participant rapport. Effective, in-depth, qualitative interviews allow the researcher more time to gain the participant's acceptance, thus establishing the trust and rapport conducive to open communication (Spradley, 1979). Rapport and trust are perceived as important to interacting with special populations such as minorities, and specifically African Americans, who are often the subject of quantitative, statistical reports, but not part of the fact-finding team. Qualitative study of minority populations necessitates becoming part of the "cultural scene" as Spradley described; in other words, "…the scenes known to some people, but not to others" (p.

21). Without becoming part of the scene, the research may never fully understand the scene.

Pew Internet and the American Internet Project, a private research institute, also used telephone surveys to study the national trends in information technology and user behavior. Pew Internet surveys focused on how their respondents use the Web. The Pew Internet findings also followed the national trend for technology acquisition, Internet access, and socioeconomic status with low-income minorities again found as the least likely to have these resources.

Strover and Straubhaar (2000) also reported a distinct gap in computer and Internet use between racial groups in Texas. The findings of a probability sample of 1,002 telephone interview participants, presented in a report titled, *E-Government Services and Computer and Internet Use in Texas*, indicated just 32 percent of the African American respondents used computers and the Internet. The authors observed that African Americans, (this population was weighted to compensate for the under-representation, 8.9 percent compared to the total population of 11.9 percent) with incomes between $30,000 and $40,000 a year, were less likely to use the Internet. In *Aspects of Internet Use in Texas* (2000), Strover reported 26 percent of African Americans felt Internet access was too expensive. The 2000 surveys by Strover and Straubhaar help to establish a benchmark measure for African American participation in this new information society in Texas.

Fairlie (2005) took issue with federal government reports that suggest the digital divide is less of a problem than when statistics were first collected on computer and Internet use. His primary target for criticisms is a report titled, *A Nation Online: Entering the Broadband Age*, which indicated an increase in the number of African Americans using information technology. Fairlie offered an astute observation: "A closer look at the data, however, reveals that we have a long way to go. For example, slightly more than two-thirds of all White, non-Latinos have access to the Internet at home. In contrast, only about 40 percent of African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans have access to the Internet at home" (p.5). To what extent does this become important when considering digital democracy?

The Pew Internet 2005 report, *How women and men use the Internet*, indicated African American women were outpacing African American men in online activity (Fallow, 2005). The men (50 percent); however, were only slightly behind women (60 percent) in their online use. The Pew Internet methodology stated the sample population closely mirrored the national population "in terms of age and sex" (p. 44).

Fairlie (2005) reported home computer ownership is higher if a father uses a computer at work than if a mother uses a computer at work. Fairlie did not offer a definitive conclusion about the factors determining the decision process in acquiring a home computer since the thrust of his study was school enrollment; but he commented that family income is "important in determining who owns a home computer" (p. 541). Perhaps gender and income become highly important in the final decision about computer

purchases. These observations by Pew Internet and Fairlie are not confounding, but juxtaposed since the Pew report suggests women, if they have computer and Internet access, tend to utilize the resource more than African American men, while the Fairlie study found that male parent computer use seemed to have a greater influence on computer acquisition than did use by the female parent.

All of this suggests that women are more self-efficacious in their personal internet decisions, but are less efficacious in their ability to influence others concerning computer use and Internet acquisition. The current study will avoid any further polarization between the gender and family structure within the African American population with statistical data since its thrust is to help alleviate the stigma and division society seems to place on populations that have been historically marginalized by the majority population.

Social Migration into an Information Society

Rationale

Peter Drucker, one of the foremost respected leaders on the study of business management, used the phrase "knowledge worker" in *Landmarks of Tomorrow* (1959) to refer to an emerging group of workers who would engage in lifelong learning in order to keep pace with the information demands of modern society. Migration to the information age advances exponentially and propagates among segments of the population who immediately embrace the transition to digital, electronic information access while adapting information resources to their own needs. The worker's decision to make the change or to embrace a shift to information-driven work, however, could not

occur independently of other events, such as access to informal company networks that informed a worker of company changes affecting employment advancement or grooming employees for advancement to a higher position in the organization. Organizational contacts also inform of opportunities for career advancement. Persons outside that network often find themselves at a disadvantage in gaining upward mobility within the organizational structure. These factors become relevant when examining the social transition of the workforce to employment based on knowledge and information; more specifically, knowledge mediated by access to technology.

In his essay, "The Age of Social Transformation" (1994), Drucker referred to White industrial workers who sought new training to prepare for the shift from the industrial age to the knowledge age. The White industrial worker, according to Drucker, acquired the education, knowledge and skills to make this transition to information work. Drucker attributed a continual low employment rate of minorities to the changes in job skills; a change anticipated by the "non-black blue collar" worker who shifted from industrial and low-skill jobs to information jobs that required more education and training. Drucker did not comment on other variables, such as informal networks and opportunities for advanced training afforded some workers and not provided to others. Perhaps provident and anticipatory thinking becomes a factor for workers if left to their own self-efficacy in employment advancement when the employee is not a party to the organization network.

Drucker speculated, "America's industrial workers must have been prepared to accept as right and proper the shift to jobs that require formal education and that pay for knowledge rather than manual work, whether skilled or unskilled" (p. 63). Of concern is not only the tactical skills required for future workers to earn a living wage, but the skills and resources to access information in order to perform the most rudimentary tasks, since companies and governments are migrating (transferring) many of their services online, presumably to streamline routine administrative tasks such as renewing drivers licenses or responding to a county jury summons.

Drucker's essay helps lay the framework for the current study by describing how a set of unskilled laborers began to differentiate themselves from other worker classes through awareness of organizational and technological changes. From his perspective, this differentiation is the genesis for disparities in the labor force as large-scale industrial labor is replaced by automated factories and knowledge work. In addition, from the perspective of this study, Drucker's predictions are somewhat valid, but there also is opportunity to rectify these disparities since the information society has just begun.

Conceptual Framework for Explaining the Digital Divide

The current primary research attempts to describe the 21st century life experiences of African Americans living in East Austin, through ethnographic interviews and narrative description of their voices, rather than solely relying on the rhetoric of distant observers. Obidah (2003) suggests it is the role of African American researchers

to give equity and voice to persons who are often the subject of scholarship, but rarely direct contributors. The intent is to contribute to the available qualitative studies on the lives and culture of this population in a rapidly changing society and community. Ultimately, this work borders on a cultural anthropology of the East Austin Black community.

Perhaps the earliest, extensive ethnographies about East Austin are from the 1930s Work Projects Administration collection of the life history of former slaves who then resided in Travis County, many of whom were concentrated in East Austin. These historic interviews provide a descriptive account of the African American social, cultural, economic and educational status as late as the 1930s, a mere 70 years ago. Within seven decades, these slaves went from chattel slave/agricultural worker to emancipated slaves, but missed the industrial age since Travis County never had any large-scale factories. The slave narratives provide a context for the social and economic mobility of Blacks who resided in Travis County. These narratives merit consideration because they describe the social and economic capital possessed by Austin Blacks as they migrated from institutional slavery to an industrial age, but not to the information age.

One narrative was that of Ellen (Kinnard) Alexander, who lived at 2008 Concho St. (now the Red and Catherine McCombs baseball field on the University of Texas campus), which was part of East Austin where many of the former slaves eventually took residence. The emancipated slave narratives provide a small historic account of this population in Austin, in the early part of the 20th century. Through their

narratives, society has the opportunity to learn about the former slaves and their social condition during that time. One goal of this study was to record the life stories of African Americans in order to capture their experiences and lifestyle in Austin, at the beginning of the 21st century.

AFROCENTRIC AND EUROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVES

Traditional social science theory originates from a Eurocentric philosophy. For example, cultural observations by Bourdieu (1984), Thompson and Bertaux, Elliott, and Bandura's social cognitive theory on behavior and self-efficacy (1997) offer a plausible model to explain and study the Black experience in America. The work of Bourdieu, Thompson, Bertaux, and Elliott investigating the role of social, political, cultural and educational capital within social networks served as the underpinnings in applying the different forms of capital to the present study. But, Bourdieu, Thompson, Bertaux and Elliot addressed their experiences with Algerian, British, French and immigrant Scottish populations. The social, political, and educational experiences of African American differed from the cultures observed by these social scientists. African Americans experienced a lengthy period of enslavement followed by years of racial segregation and discrimination. Nevertheless, the work of these researchers provides a foundation for adaptation of the theoretical constructs surrounding "capital" to the social advancement of African Americans.

This research is influenced by the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu whose work encompassed nearly every aspect of human social practice and behavior including the social structure of community, education, culture and cultural practices as well as economics. His works including *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (*La Misère du monde*, 1993), a collaborative volume of research ethnographies and interviews on various social groups as well as his concepts regarding field, habitus and capital discussed in Bourdieu's signature publication, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). *The Field of Cultural Reproduction: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993) also served as a guide for the initial inquiry and interpretation of the lives of persons living in East Austin in the 1999 study. Bourdieu's early ethnosociology -- the intersection of ethnography and social science -- into the culture of the Kabyle in colonial Algeria and Béarn peasants in France, were not unlike the ethnographic project on low-income minorities conducted in East Austin in 1999, which is the origin of the current research. According to Wacquant (2004) and Bourdieu's early works like the Algeria study that examined the social displacement of the Kabyle under French colonial rule and the social structures of the Béarn village influenced his future investigations of culture, social structure, education, economics and gender. Bourdieu sought to provide plausible explanations for the differences or disparities between social groups while eschewing temptation that further objectified the population of research interest. According to Wasquant (2004), Bourdieu turned to the ancient "Aristotelian-Thomist" concept of habitus following his investigations of the

Kabylia and 'peasant society' of the Béarn village. Bourdieu's purpose with his observations of Kabylia and Béarn was to bring salience and meaning to the apparent dialectical existence that enshrouded the members of those societies. The natural, social evolution of the Kabyle society had been disrupted by colonization and resettlement. Similarly, the social evolution of Blacks was disrupted by the commodification of human labor in the form of slave labor in the Americas, and later by placing Blacks in a segregated American society.

Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus as he sought meaning to the experiences of the subjects of his early work (Wacquant, 2004). In respect to the Kahyle, habitus helped to "capture and depict the troubled and double-sided world of crumbling colonial Algeria" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 392). American Blacks perhaps remain positioned in a society that has yet to make sense of their historical past.

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1995), Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* expressed the plausibility that social conditions influence the experiences of persons of similar backgrounds –

> "The habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same

> conditions, hence, placed in the same material conditions of existence…social class, understood as a system of objective determinations, but be brought into relation not with the individual or with the class habitus, the system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures" (p. 85).

The "individual" historical experiences of African Americans since their first introduction to America are expectedly different. Black slaves were dispersed throughout the land and served at many labors in the slave holding regions of North America. Upon emancipation, former American slaves began the transition from slave class to citizen. However, as described in this chapter, progress of this transition would be affected by social and political conditions that either impeded or supported the transition. Habitus forms the intersection between African Americans and their social structures where the "dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures" (Bourdieu, p. 85) whether there is a direct linkage with slavery or not, collectively recognize a historical connection between American Blacks and American slavery. Like the Kabyle, the structures of the societies from which blacks emerged were structures imposed by commerce, law and racial classification resulting in a slave class, followed by a class of emancipated men and women. As Bourdieu (1995) observed, "each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class" (p. 35). African Americans were not only confronted by class, but by race as well. Johnson (1984) in his introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Liberature*, contends that habitus begins

in childhood, becomes second nature and "last throughout an agent's (the individual's) lifetime" (p. 5). If so, it would be a life's work or the work of several lifetimes to overcome the habitus of the structures associated with the origins of Blacks in America.

Bourdieu provides this formula to illustrate the elements that result in practice, "[(habitus)(capital)]+field=practice" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.101). Along with habitus are forms of capital combined field of power that is, literary, artistic, economic, political, educational, cultural, that produce "a *relational* mode of thought to cultural production" (Johnson, 1993). *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) is Bourdieu's exploration of the use of culture to create distinctions among classes depends on their consumption and knowledge of different cultural genre from fashion to classical music. While that work was largely concerned with the acquisition of culture in the artistic sense, the concept of cultural capital in the field of cultural production seems relevant to the study of the East Austin community.

The key forms of capital that affect social outcomes, according to Bourdieu, are *symbolic capital* and *cultural capital*. Symbolic and cultural capital are described as, "the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honor and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance). Cultural capital concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competencies or dispositions" (Johnson, 1993, p. 7); this special knowledge becomes an empowering force that distinguishes one person or social group from another. Bourdieu does not limit the forms of capital to symbolic and cultural, but incorporates economic, academic, linguistic, social, and political capital.

Political capital is a dimension of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital, also described as a composite of several forms of capital, considers other characteristics such as the acquisition of social status which, according to Bourdieu (1984), is "the accumulation of economic capital merges with the accumulation of symbolic capital, that is, with the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability that are easily converted into political positions as a local or national *notable*…" (p. 291). Symbolic capital relies upon economic and political capital that assists persons with symbolic capital in maintaining their status through access to resources that lead to 'economic profits'. Political capital was of importance to this study in ascertaining whether the population studied would express or exhibit efficacy in political involvement, regardless their status in life. People who possess symbolic capital have the ability to exploit that form of capital to their advantage, if they chose to do so. These forms of capital are not uniformly accessible, but are "unequally distributed among social classes and class fractions" (Johnson, p. 7). Access to capital coupled with access to various fields produce a cycle of practices that influence the behavior of social groups. Bourdieu's theoretical constructs were the foundation of the initial study of East Austin, but his theories only partially begin to address the long social history of Blacks in America. Nevertheless, his work is informative for the exploration of cultural, social, political and economic capital within the African American community in East Austin.

Kvasny (2006) employed Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction and social order as the theoretical framework for her ethnographic study on an inner city community

technology center (CTC) and information and communication technology use. In approaching the study, she pointed out that "class-based factors" affected social order, these included – "income, occupation, family background, education attainment, geographical place of residents and life history" (p. 162) and cautioned that the quantitative assessment of diffusion of technology into society and the digital divide were only a partial assessment of issues associated with a technology gap, and it was a much broader issue than solely having access to ICT. Further, she cautioned that the operation and organizational structure on a CTC could affect how people used the centers. Her observations were not limited to the technology centers alone, they encompassed the broader Sugarhill community of 4320 residents which was 94% African American (the name of the city is not provided). Kvasny described Sugarhill as a community of contrasts - in one section community revitalization was highly visible while another section of the community remained rundown and dilapidated. During observation of 15 participants who frequented the CTC and their class facilitator over a 14-week period, Kvasny learned that participants believed the CTC could facilitate their "social inclusion" and economic advancement, although the center did not provide workforce training. Participants and their classroom facilitator noted the lack of advanced training beyond basic Internet access and computer literacy. Free classes in "Word, Excel and Powerpoint" were available, but were considered too advanced for persons only using the CTC once-a-week. Further, Kvasny noted that some participants needed assistance with basic literacy such as spelling, or when word processing used all capital letters. The low

language and computer literacy of participants was magnified by continual rhetoric of the CTC staff about the necessity of gaining computer literacy for social advancement. Kvasny found that the training participants received, despite their enthusiasm, did little to improve their opportunities for better employment. In addition, reduction of "digital inequality" required a planning to set aside the requisite amount of time needed to receive comprehensive computer training. Time was at a premium for these participants who were constrained by family obligations and limited transportation to attend the CTC classes. Kvasny surmised that culture played a role in "reproducing digital inequality," and that other determinants influence the success of marginalized people in their socially advancement this included, in her opinion, "social, economic, technical cultural and historical factors." She concluded that "culture is a cause of inequality" for which "CTCs and ICT" are only a small part of the solution. Bertaux, Thompson, (1997) and their collaborators found interviews informative for the study of social mobility in Britain and France with the Families and Social Mobility: A Comparative Study project. They argued understanding events that influence advances or setbacks in social mobility are enriched by using case studies, life histories and in-depth interviews that often augment data collected in statistical surveys and questionnaires, "when given a full chance to explain particular events in their lives in the in-depth interviews, the same respondents were able to develop much more coherent descriptions of the context of the event, the complexities of their situation arising from constraints and from previous commitments..." (p. 16). Thompson (1997) followed the life stories of women and men

in ascertaining factors that contributed the changes in social status for people interviewed in Britain noting that women were often at a disadvantage when trying to socially advance. He referred to persons who advanced socially as "risers" and those who declined as "fallers." One hundred families comprised this group of participants.

Class structure affected the upward or downward mobility of informants entering the workforce between the 1940s and 1960s. For men of different social classes, Thompson observed changes in the economic structure and policies favorable to "regional growth" provided opportunity in the public sector for persons of the working-class following post-World War II industrialization, "Many took advantage of the new job security and opportunities for advancement offered by the nationalized coal, gas, and electricity industries, state education, local council work…" (p. 35). Middle-class males benefited as well, "Men from middle-class families found opportunities in both public – and private-sector middle and upper management…most middle-class men also saw a definite if undramatic [sic] improvement in their position" (p. 35). The careers of women, however, peaked by the time women reached 30 then declined, according to Thompson. Child-birth compromised the ability of women to work full-time. Many left the workforce for several years. Overall, however, men and women in the industrial sectors of London were viewed as fallers.

Further, Thompson proposed that in addition to occupational attainment, families were important to "upward mobility" as "transgenerational influences." The contribution of families to this upward mobility extended beyond the normative expectations of child-

rearing to encompass tangible and intangible contributions including "family housing, education, culture, and inheritance," but he commented family transmission of social mobility was very "broad" and involved family culture, family systems described as "an interlocking and mutually influential system of emotional and social relations," as well as parental aspirations and expectations sometimes arising from vestiges of "ancestral 'ghosts' or familial legacies. His research found familial occupational influences on the career choices made within four generations of one middle-class family. In this instance family members clustered around occupations associated with construction beginning with a grandparent who was a builder and family members who followed with careers in support occupations such as architecture, an electrical business or Water Board inspector. Overall, family members' occupational choice was influenced by the paternal grandfather leading to the success of subsequent next generations.

In other cases, an "aspiring mother" became the impetus for social advancement in families by refusing to accept the social constraints imposed upon them. These mothers transcended their familial ties to affect their personal advancement therefore improving the socioeconomic status for themselves and/or their children. Key observations were that upward social mobility sometimes required breaking family ties and traditions either with the support of family members or through individual motivation, upwardly mobile industrial working-class members used education as a means of advancement by lending support to children or siblings who received advance education with the intent they would also receive better employment. Familial support

contributed to "positive transgenerational attitudes" and these included positive family values associated with "love and encouragement in childrearing…religion or work" (p. 53).

Brian Elliott (1997), a contemporary of Thompson, Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, incorporated Bourdieu's concepts of material, social, and symbolic capital in describing the social mobility of Scots in Canada between 1945 and 1975. A primary motivation for migrating from the United Kingdom to Canada was perceived threat of "downward mobility" because of familial, social and educational constraints as well as financial losses. While they were immigrants, Elliott observed most immigrants were not destitute when they arrived at their new home, "Migrants to Canada have not generally, come from the ranks of the very poor. Not even the Highlanders who fled at the time of the 'clearances', nor the Irish who came in the immediate aftermath of the famine could be counted among the destitute," (pp. 207-207) since they at least had the financial resources to buy passage to the new land and an "alternate life." Often social structures were in place to assist the immigrants in adjusting to their new environment. These structures included existing social capital of "networks of people" of Scottish descent who had previously settled in Canada. This social capital provided support and access to resources and organizations as noted by Elliott including "the Sons of Scotland, St. Andrews and Caledonian Societies, the Highland and Scottish Dance Societies, the Pipers Societies and others" (p. 212). These organizations provided the social capital that assisted the immigrants in adapting to their new home. Elliott also commented that ethnic identity is

another form of social capital that is of importance, "Being Scots enables newcomers to access a large pool of fellow-Scottish immigrants and, beyond that, all Canadians who more or less overtly present themselves as 'Scots-Canadians' (p. 215).

Women, according to Elliott, also shared a role in the formation of social capital through their networks of relatives, "neighbours and friends" and the relationships they develop and in which they involve their children (p. 214). Through their extended social networks, women form a cadre of human resources they come to trust and rely upon prompting Elliott to surmise that social capital possessed by women exceeds that of men.

In addition, he observed that cultural and social capital influenced what Elliott referred to as "downward or blocked" mobility. He referenced Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital as "'embodied' state in the dispositions of individuals; in its 'objectified' state in items like books and pictures and instruments in its 'institutionalized' state in educational credentials (Bourdieu 1990b)…" (p. 216). In some instances, however, it was possible to "convert" cultural capital that at first seemed detrimental into positive cultural capital that further supported the social capital for these immigrants. The negative cultural capital related to education, training, linguistic accents and ethnic heritage that did not reflect the culture and heritage of the dominant society. The conversion was the ability to capitalize on the cultural difference by finding an appropriate niche that added value to their uniqueness of their ethnicity. Ultimately from Elliott's perspective, the upward or downward mobility of these immigrants was contingent upon how they used their social and cultural capital as a resource by accessing

these resources either through community networks or personal efficacy became a catalyst behind the social mobility of immigrants in this study.

The theories of Bourdieu and Bertaux were applied in research on low-income and minority communities conducted by Rojas, et al. (2004). Rojas' work addressed the initial cohort of families in East Austin, this included the Cathy narrative begun in 1999, and continued with additional interviews in 2004 for a total of 36 respondents. Rojas considered low-income family engagement in information technology was influenced by their predispositions about the relevance of information technology to them. Technology use became relevant when considering its impact on social mobility. Of concern to Rojas was whether "human beings will have more or less social mobility depending on the amount of the different type of capital they accrue through interactions and struggles in different social fields" (p.298). Rojas observed economic and cultural capital influenced participant use of communication technology to access information, and participants often sought information relevant to them such as news. Rojas observed the theories of Bourdieu and Bertaux were informative for explaining the social constructs that impacted "underprivileged and minority populations in Austin" (p. 306) use of information and communication technologies. Rojas also noted that "economic class" and "habitus" affected whether the most economically disadvantaged developed an interest in using ICT which she referred to as "acquiring techno-capital."

In addition to the concepts associated with forms of capital, social cognitive theory introduce explores the role of cognition on human behavior. Psychologist Albert

Bandura described human behavior as multidimensional that is, the result of "triadic reciprocal causation." Multiple experiences influence personal development, but he also proposed that people have the agency or internal potential to affect their lives, "People are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental events or inner forces…within biological limits" (p. 266). In this regard, the role of self-efficacy becomes fundamental to understanding social development and advancement. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as -

> "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes. Outcomes and efficacy expectations are differentiated because individuals can come to believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but question whether they can perform those actions…" (p. 79).

Bandura observed that social systems in which one resides "cultivate efficacious self-beliefs," and can assist individual self actualization through resources provided by that social system. Bandura's view, self-efficacy intersects nearly every dimension of social being. It is the "personal agency" in decision-making that assist personal achievement, but "Bandura notes this agency is often surrounded by what he referred to as "sociostructural influences". One aspect of this current research asked to what extent the East Austin participants used "personal agency" in affecting the events surrounding their lives.

The social system from which African Americas arose began with

enslavement -- a practice that disrupted the family and tribal structure, and eliminated or fused language, tribal ancestral and religious practices with American traditions (Blassingame, 1979). The deleterious effect of American slavery on society in which race was a key factor in who became a slave and who was allowed to go free perhaps has not been adequately addressed.

In the years prior to the signing of the United States Constitution, Blacks had a chance at obtaining freedom, as exemplified by the *Brom and Bett v. Ashley* case successfully argued in the state courts Massachusetts in 1780 in favor of complaints by Brom and Bett. Bett (Elizabeth Freeman) and Brom sued for their freedom, which they eventually won. While such cases challenged forced slavery while other cases led to the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts, other states were less empathetic about race-based slavery, as illustrated by the pro-slavery petitions of Virginian's between 1784 and 1785:

> "Some men of considerable weight to wrestle from us, by an Act of the legislature, the most valuable and indispensable Article of our Property, our SLAVES by general emancipation of them....Such a scheme indeed consists very well with the principles and designs of the North, whose Finger is sufficiently visible in it...No language can express our indignation, Contempt and Detestation of the apostate wretches...It therefore cannot be admitted that any man had a right...to divest us of our known rights to property which are so clearly defined...To an unequivocal Construction therefore of this Bill of Rights we now appeal and claim the utmost benefits of...in whatever may tend...to preserve our rights...secure to us the Blessings of the free… We most solemnly adjure and humbly pray that you Gentlemen to whom we have committed the Guardship of our rights of property, utterly reject every Motion and Proposal for emancipating our slaves...and totally repeal the Act for permitting Owners of Slaves to emancipate them;" (Lundenburg County 1785).

Wood (2000), Marable (1983, 2002, & 2003), Genovese (1964, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1979, and 1985) and others describe a series of events that led to the slow descent of American Blacks into the status of a slave class until 1864. These events (including the passage of slave laws on the national and state level, public discourse on slavery and proslavery rhetoric) manufactured myths to justify slave labor to promote free enterprise in America. Later, even municipal codes, such as the 1928 City Plan of Austin, proposed that Blacks reside on the east side of town if they were to receive municipal services, thus legally fostering racial segregation in the community. The 1928 City Plan recommended by consultants Koch and Fowler reflected similar strategies in several communities to restrict Black residences, "The most prevalent and widespread segregation of living areas was accomplished without need for legal sanction. The black ghettos of the 'Darktown' slums in every Southern city were the Negro's economic status, his relegation to the lowest rung of the ladder…In 1914, there were six such towns in Texas" (Woodward, 2002, p. 101). Prior to that ordinance, African Americans were dispersed throughout Austin, but many lived in Clarksville and Wheatsville. Clarksville, established by freedman Charles (Griffin) Clark in 1871, would not fully receive municipal services until the 1970s, according the Handbook of Texas.

Slave narratives, collected through the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, provide the historical record of Blacks, freedmen and freedwomen, captured in their own voices that were transcribed into text. Yetman (1964, 1984) referred to the WPA collection of 2,000 interviews as an important

source for learning about lives of African chattel slaves from a primary source -- the slave. According to Yetman (1984), "The interviews, most of the first-person accounts of slave life and the respondents' personal reactions to bondage, afforded aged ex-slaves an unparallel opportunity to give their account of life under the 'peculiar institution.' To describe in their own words what it felt like to be a slave" (p. 181). His observation that most of the freedmen and freedwomen interviewed "had experienced slavery within the states of the Confederacy and still resided there" (p. 181) paralleled the observation of the slave narratives captured in Travis County. Most slaves who eventually arrived in Austin in Travis County migrated from another Texas town upon emancipation.

Yetman continued with his treatise about the importance of this collection to research,

> "The Slave Narrative Collection has not only provided a wealth of previously unexploited data on the institution of slavery, but it has also responded to the interests of proponents of the 'new social history' for data that would reflect the perspectives of the voiceless masses, who seldom left written evidence from which to write their history" (p. 190).

This current research finds the WPA narratives, despite potential imperfections in their preservation and transcription (Tyler & Murphy, 1997), help to minimize the mystery of slave life in American. The intent of the current research, however, was to extend the discussion of the digital divide by arguing that narratives past and present help explain the social condition of African Americans in a 21st century information society.

The State of Texas is the fortunate beneficiary of the WPA efforts since many of these primary source audio recordings and transcripts still are available. This research

utilized the transcripts of slave narratives of Travis County available at the Austin History Center and the University of Texas in order to better understand the conditions of Blacks in the Central Texas region after slavery. Further, this research used the Travis County Slave Narratives in an effort to understand the origins of social conditions that affect African Americans associated with East Austin nearly 75 years later.

Several of the Travis County narratives suggest that many slaves, upon release from bondage, lacked the basic skills to provide for themselves in a war-ravaged South despite Reconstruction and efforts by the Freedman's Bureau. Set free, former slaves described themselves as lost and wanting for lodging or food. A few former masters mentioned in these narratives offered the freedman the choice of remaining on the property and helping with the harvest for pay or leaving the plantation. Other former masters simply told them they could go. Some slaves elected to remain with their masters. Even in 1990, the Liendo Plantation built in 1853 (Handbook of Texas, in Hempstead, Waller County, Texas) still employed a descendent of former slaves (personal conversation with Ms. Jenkins at the Liendo Plantation, 1990). The Travis County narratives describe the post-emancipation experiences from the emancipated slaves' perspective. The narratives also suggest no one associated with the slaves, White or Black, was prepared for life after the Civil War.

These narratives also lent support to arguments by Bourdieu, Thompson and Bertaux concerning the development of social and economic capital as many narratives suggest there was minimal investment in the slave's educational or social development to

assist the newly emancipated toward self-sufficiency. Many of the African Americans in these narratives left bondage with little more than the clothes on their backs. The WPA narratives of Travis County are only a sample of former slaves who were selected by the agency; therefore, these interviews cannot stand as a truism for all former slaves. Some former slaves, like the Kincheon family, established Black communities within Travis County, and history is filled with accounts of former slaves who took positions of leadership in Texas following the Civil War by participating in state Constitutional Convention from 1868 to 1869 (Brewer, 1970). Beginning in 1869, forty-six Blacks served in the Texas Legislature (thirty-two in the Texas House and three in the Senate) until the Black vote was eroded by the introduction of the primary election system in 1905 (Brewer, 1970). Brewer's (1940) account of Blacks in Travis County revealed Blacks in working in prestigious occupations including education, religion, medicine, business, and government.

Several of the interviewees confided they never received an education or they never learned to read. Others were left without family or social ties. Sadly, many out-lived their children. Only a few of the Travis County slave narratives indicated the emancipated slaves had a trade or skill that could generate an income for the recently emancipated.

Ellen Kinnard Alexander's family may have been an exception, since she said her father was a blacksmith and a free Black who resided on a nearby plantation (Travis County Slave Narratives, 1937). Several statutes were passed in Texas concerning free

Negroes residing in the state before the establishment of the Republic of Texas and after. One was the proposed statue of January 5, 1836, *An Ordinance and Decree to prevent the importation and emigration of Free Negroes and Mulattoes into Texas*. The ordinance mandated all free Blacks and mulattoes forfeit property and leave Texas or face enslavement. If they failed to do so, they would be arrested and sold into slavery. An act passed June 5, 1837, allowed free Blacks to remain in Texas if they resided in the state two years before the Texas Declaration of Independence. Acts passed in December and February of 1840 restricted Black immigration into the Republic and forced other free Blacks to leave the state or face enslavement. Only appeals to the Texas Congress could protect free Negroes who immigrated to Texas two years before the Texas Declaration of Independence from suffering this fate. Through the Ashworth Act of December 12, 1840, the Ashworth families of Jefferson County were recorded as free Blacks granted permission to save their family members from enslavement under this act, according to the *Handbook of Texas*. However, the Slave & Race Petition at the University of North Carolina cite several petitions filed with the Texas Congress that seek continued domicile of free Blacks and others seek the emancipation of their slaves.

If slaves had a master who allowed them to develop a trade, they could then earn extra money by hiring out their services once their primary duties to their masters were completed. Female slaves could also earn extra money by taking in laundry, sewing or baking as described in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Yellin, 1987) and by Frederick Douglass in his biography. The number of skilled craftsmen on one or several

plantations, however, would be limited as the bulk of slavery in Texas was needed to harvest crops such as cotton.

The Travis County narratives state that slaves who settled in the area were used as agricultural labor. The interviewees seldom mention the services of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands or the Freedmen's Bureau established by Congress in 1865 to assist with the assimilation of freedmen and freedwomen into American society during Reconstruction. Only a few narratives indicate the former slaves attempted to attend school or educational programs; some suggested they were too old to learn.

Accounts of the African slave experience provide a historical perspective of the social migration of Blacks in Texas. The slave narratives, despite their limitations, serve as important documents for understanding the rise of Blacks from a slave class in 1865 to 21st century citizen in less than 150 years. Perhaps scholars have only begun the rudimentary scholarly work needed to fully understand the impact of slavery on Black Americans (Ball, 1999; Blassingame, 1975, 1979; Genovese, 1972; Gutman, 1976; Tyler and Murphy, 1997; Jordon, 1982) has just begun. Since the opportunities for investigation and development of social theories about the Black experience in America, from an African American perspective, are boundless. Since this research sought alternate methodological approaches, such as narrative ethnography to better understand the contemporary, 21st century social status of African Americans.

Afrocentric Scholarship

Afrocentrism is an emerging contemporary Black American scholarship developed by Black academicians as an alternative social science approach to understanding the cultural, social and political condition of African Americans.

Akbar (1996) proposes that African Americans, subliminally, continue to suffer from the psychological trauma of slavery, commenting, "The 300-year captivity of Africans in America is an indisputable fact which too many have sought to deny as relevant to anything more than an event of the past. Our formulation suggests that the blemish of these inhumane conditions persist as a kind of post-traumatic stress syndrome on the collective mind of Africans in America and though its original cause cannot be altered, the genesis can be understood" (p. *i*). He inferred African Americans, through their sense of mainstream social integration, did not realize they had yet to achieve true freedom.

Leary (2005), whose academic specialty is social work, proposed that many of the social and psychological behaviors of African Americans are associated with more than two centuries of oppression and abuse through slavery and segregation. She attributed these behaviors to "post-traumatic slave syndrome" (PTSS). Leary hypothesized the traumatic experiences of slavery have lasting impact on men, women, children and families who descended from chattel slaves. Her thesis challenges American social history by suggesting that Blacks continue to suffer from the lingering effects of slavery. The salience of her argument, however, is no less controversial than the literature in support of the thesis for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD, according to the

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, "is marked by clear biological changes as well as psychological symptoms" (paragraph 2, PTSD, 2006). The center literature suggests PTSD "is not a new disorder" and refers to documented cases of early accounts of PTSD occurring during the Civil War when it was labeled 'Da Costa's Syndrome' (PTSD, 2006). Rimmo, Abërg and Fredikson (2005) define PTSD as "…a debilitating anxiety disorder resulting from trauma and exposure.' (p. 291). Sher (2004), in an editorial on PTSD, writes,

> "The essential feature of PTSD is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to a extreme traumatic stressor characterized by: direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other treatment to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death or injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. The person reacts to this event with fear and helplessness, and tries to avoid being reminded of if." (p. 1).

Sher (2004) provided a list of traumatic events associated with PTSD, including military combat, violent personal assault, being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration, natural or man-made disasters, automobile accidents, or receiving a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness. Sher further commented that rape; combat, assault and tragic bereavement are events that are "a violation of pre-existing schemata of the self and the world…" (p. 1). Thus, "Trauma has been characterized as breaking three basic assumptions: the belief in personal invulnerability, the perception of the world as meaningful, and the positive view of self. All victims must deal with the psychological distresses caused by the violation of these basic beliefs" (p. 1).

The adaptation of research on PTSD or De Costa's Syndrome to the experiences of former slaves and their descendents becomes less absurd when the traumatic events experienced by slaves are taken into account. The Travis County narratives describe their experiences in terms of many of the same traumas associated with events that constitute clinically relevant diagnoses of PTSD. These traumas include, but are not limited to, kidnapping, enslavement (e.g., incarceration, extreme violent acts and abuse, destruction of family and threat of harm to self or family members. The Travis County narratives do not mention "rape," but the accounts of slave women describe the ever-present threat of sexual violence as described in books such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (*Yellin*,* 1987), *Collected Black Women's Narrative* (Gates, 1988) and the semi-autobiographical *Cane River/Lalita Tademy* (Tademy, 2001).

Moreover, the traumatic events of slavery did not end with emancipation since the period of Reconstruction and Jim Crow ushered in new terror in the form of night riders and the Ku Klux Klan (Dailey, et al., 2000; Woodward, 2002; Wormser, 2003). Codification of segregation laws and control of elections through "White" primary elections further eroded Black political power. The threat of lynching was another fear that freedmen faced. Ida B. Wells-Barnett's, *Red Record* of 1892, reported lynching of Black Americans at crisis proportions, and the *Handbook of Texas* lists Texas as third in the nation in the number of recorded lynchings between "1885 and 1942." Collectively these experiences possibly equate a form of "cultural trauma" as Alexander (2004) describes as the result of "a horrendous event."

Other recent scholarship has noted the paucity of research on African Americans and PTSD and propose the topic warrants additional research and treatment resources to assist persons who may suffer from this disorder (Alim, Charney, & Millman, 2006; Quimby, 2006).

The Travis County narratives detail some of the atrocities witnessed and experienced by these former slaves as illustrated by the stories of Ellen (Kinnard) Alexander and Clara Johnson. Clara described how she, and a playmate, were kidnapped from Eastern Shore, Maryland, when she was just seven years old. Clara was kidnapped from her parents and home, transported by boat through Alabama and eventually to Austin, where she was enslaved, abused and nearly starved to death. Clara, ironically, was often befriended by two Jewish children who would leave her food in a hollow tree all those years before the atrocities of the German death camps of World War II.

An Afrocentric approach applied to this study of the digital divide and East Austin has merit as emerging scholarship in describing the Black experience. While Afrocentric scholarship has its supporters, it has critics as well. Perhaps the main criticisms arise from efforts by Afrocentric scholars to write history from a Black perspective, and it is here that Afrocentric scholars clash with Western or Eurocentric thought on issues from the very basic origins of man, the development of literacy, and the Black contribution to ancient society. The loudest criticisms are associated with the heritage of ancient rulers, inventors and contributors to philosophical thought. Glazer &

Moynihan (in Blauner, 2001, p. 89) observe that critics of Afrocentric scholarship suggest Blacks have no written history and offer very little to the cultural evolution of the human race.

Lefkowitz (1996) is one critic of Afrocentric theories about race and the cultural contributions of Blacks. She cites flaws in the methodological approaches employed in some Afrocentric research. Lefkowitz is highly critical of the credentials of some Afrocentric scholars and the documentation of their research. She alleges the claims of Afrocentric scholar Dr. Yousef A.A. ben-Jochannan, are "factually wrong." Her criticisms of Afrocentric scholarship are lengthy, but misdirected at the conceptual framework for an African-centered approach to research which could potentially fill a void in the social literature on the complexities of African American culture. Asante (n.d.) responded to Lefkowitz's criticism by suggesting Eurocentric scholarship is concerned with maintaining its dominant position in society which Asante referred to as "sustaining the American myth of triumphalism."

Another critic of Afrocentrism is Black scholar Cornel West who found Afrocentric perspectives as limited when addressing race by excluding other topics he finds of equal importance, including class, gender and sexual orientation. West, however, lauds Afrocentrism for shifting the research paradigm from a White to a Black point-of-view by bringing black issues to the forefront of scholarly debate.

Afrocentric research has its greatest strength in its desire to define life events through a black, cultural lens, thus offering a new cultural and historic perspective. This

does not mean a complete rewrite of history, but a history that adds to the body of social science literature that is inclusive of scholarship on African Americans by Blacks.

Considerable opportunity exists for Afrocentric research of more contemporary themes related to African Americans through documented events. The relationship of slavery, cultural production and social migration are open to ongoing investigation into the historical legacy of slavery and its continued impact on contemporary African American society.

Slave narratives provide a rich resource for understanding the development of capital in the African American population. Scholarship on the Travis County narratives has not been fully explored as a resource for understanding the Austin community.

The 21st century has the greatest potential for social advancement in America since it is the first century since the founding of this nation that can claim, theoretically, that all persons are equal under the law. This milestone should serve as a cause for continued research on the impact of laws and programs designed to reduce disparities in education, training, and employment that ultimately make a difference for advancing all of American society. The federal investment in programs supporting community technology centers, education and training of low-income families in information technology and access must be assessed for their value and influence on social evolution and migration to the information society. Conventional approaches to social science research may require augmentation or an infusion of other concepts such as Afrocentrism, Critical Race Theory or Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome that take into

account the negative impact of racial discrimination on the social advancement of African Americans in the United States.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) considers rhetoric as the basis for discourse on race as a fundamental tendency of human nature that compels society to classify and name. CRT theorists argue that words and labels can become as destructive an act as physical and psychological abuse. This current research explores the continued influence of the physical and psychological trauma of slavery and discrimination on African Americans in contemporary Austin. Further, this research asks how a metaphor of a digital divide further stigmatizes disenfranchised and marginalized populations – creating the "differend." The "differend," as discussed in Delgado & Stefancic (2001),

> "occurs when a concept such as justice acquires conflicting meanings for two groups. A prime example would be a case where a judge seeks to hold responsible an individual who does not subscribe to the foundational views of the regime that is sitting in judgment of him or her. In situations such as this, the subordinate person lacks the language to express how he or she has been injured or wronged" (p. 44).

The authors reference the court system in their example, but it is equally plausible to apply this to persons in positions of authority and persons who are powerless to voice their opinions such as slaves or Blacks in the digital divide.

Critical race theory (CRT) offers an alternative approach for understanding the African American experience as well. The contemporary movement behind critical race theory originated with a group of law school professors and students who proposed that laws form the basis for Black subjugation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Valdes, Culp and Harris, 2002). The early discourse on critical race focused largely on issues related to affirmative action, but this study suggests that CRT encompasses much more than just contemporary criticisms of law. This current research argues that CRT is relevant to the historic passage of laws that served to sustain a racial divide never mended.

Olmstead (1998) proposes that one must be a part of the process in order to feel that one can affect the rules of the game, "Within a given society there must be an understanding of who can play the game and what the rules are, and there must be respect for the governing institutions which determine the rules" (p. 325). Olmstead suggests that CRT theorists have taken a progressive stance by analyzing rhetoric, interpreting it and applying it to their advantage. "By setting out their goals in terms of a rhetorical model which names, institutes, and enforces a new reality, they have indicated a knowledge of the rules of empowerment" (Olmstead, 1998). Proponents of CRT offer an alternate approach to research concerning the African American population. The course of inquiry here is to gain insight into the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the population unfortunately labeled as the "have-nots" through use of interpersonal communications (conversation) and ethnographic interviews. In doing so, it

is hoped that a human persona emerges to complement the empirical, yet detached quantitative data previously collected. The information gathered in this study could provide a benchmark concerning the status of this population in the early 21st century including their perspectives about the information society, and how they visualize themselves in the society.

Critical race theory suggests that laws in America helped manufacture the social position of African Americans; laws that eventually led to full institutional slavery. Boskin (1966) in "The Origins of American Slavery: Education as an Index of Early Differentiation," cited early laws that promulgated institutional slavery and comments, "By the 1640s, slavery's most essential characteristics are to be found in acts which singled out the Negroes for special treatment: longer labor sentences in the general course for violating laws, higher prices for Negroes than for White servants, tax discriminations, [sic] sexual prohibitions." (p. 128). Boskin continued his premise by citing Jordon with reference to the sequence of laws that codified legalized slavery "…the initial policies relative to the Indian and the African were established within the first forty years of settlement. Consider, for example, the rapidity of adoption of legislation assigning slave status to the Negro; Massachusetts in 1641, Connecticut in 1650, Virginia in 1661, Maryland in 1663, New York and New Jersey in 1664, and South Carolina in 1682" (p. 128).

The Constitutional Congress in 1787 superseded anti-slavery sentiments (Wright, 1993) and established a second-class status for Blacks in America with the

signing of the Constitution. It included Article I, Section 2 [3], that concerned congressional representation and taxation,

> "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons."

Although this document does not implicitly identify Africans as "all other Persons," other laws helped to codify the intent of the Constitution.

What distinguishes African Americans as a racial group from other racial groups in America is that Blacks were the only race in America systematically and legally forced into a slave class primarily because of their race. Blacks, unlike White indentured servants, according to Wood (2000), had little recourse for legal redress from servitude and there were few forums in which to present their plight. The formal Black press, as a public forum on abolition, would not emerge until the 19th century, according to Wolseley (1971, 1990). Of course, there were abolitionist and other opponents to slavery, but it would be 200 years before their voices triumphed.

The United States Supreme Court upheld the Civil Rights Act of 1866 eradicating state Black Codes (Kelley & Lewis, 2000). Prior to that time Black Codes were other laws that ensured the position of Blacks as a slave class. The United States Supreme Court upheld the right of a slave owner in *Scott v. Sandford* (1857), denying Dred Scott's

protests that he should have gained freedom once he and his wife were taken into a free state by their master (Kelley & Lewis, 2000).

In 1868, Congress passed the 14th amendment granting citizenship to former slaves and in 1870, the 15th amendment granting freedmen the right to vote. Legislation drafted to equalize the democratic status of Blacks in America such as the Civil Rights Act of March 1, 1875 was reversed in 1883. The Supreme Court ruling of "separate, but equal," in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896, as mentioned in the introduction, ushered in the era of Jim Crow and racial segregation setting the course for American apartheid that would last through much of the 20th century.

The 15th amendment of 1870, which granted the vote to men regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" became the instrument of equity for American Blacks, but as federal intervention diminished, Black access to the vote also diminished. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, enacted just 41 years ago, restored access to the ballot to all Americans. Even so, provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) are scheduled for renewal in 2007 and may present a new challenge for ensuring equitable access to the ballot. Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, has observed political manipulation that could affect voter access at the state and county levels:

> "From Texas to Georgia to New York, we continue to see attempts by states and counties to implement voting practices that would diminish the impact of the minority vote…In August 2007, three key provisions of the Voting Rights Act will expire unless they are renewed by Congress, including the federal preclearance provision (Section 5), the minority language provisions (Sections 203 and 4(f)(4), and the federal

> observer and examiner provisions (Sections 6 and 8), which authorize the federal government to send federal election examiners and observers to certain jurisdictions covered by Section 5 where there is evidence of attempts to intimidate minority voters at the polls" (Smiley, 2006, p. 126).

In 2004, several plaintiffs (League of United Latin American Citizens, et al, Appellants *v*. Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, et al., Eddie Jackson, et al., Appelants *v*. Rick Perry Governor of Texas, et al, GI Forum of Texas, et al., Appelants *v*. Rick Perry, Governor of Texas, et al.) argued before the United States Supreme Court that the 2003 Texas Congressional Redistricting Plan violated Section 2 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act of 1965. Section 2 of 42 U.S.C. 1973 (b) provides that no citizen should have "less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice." The plaintiffs cited a violation of that provision "because it redrew lines of old District 24, in which African Americans constituted 21.4 percent of the voting age population. The second question under review was "Whether the State's redistricting plan violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act because it establishes six rather than seven majority-Hispanic districts in South and West Texas, where Hispanic districts constitute 58 percent of the citizen voting age population." The U.S. Supreme Court ruled February 2006 that the 2003 Texas redistricting plan did not violate Section 2 of the VRA. Of concern is whether, in the 21st century, the American democratic voting process can take place without the need for continued federal intervention. On June 28, 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld its

earlier ruling in the redistricting complaint, but determined that a state court should evaluate redistricting of District 23 (LULAC, et al. v. Perry, et al., 2006).

While access to an instrument so basic to the American democratic process would seem so fundamental to this society, apparently there remains some question about whether all citizens truly have access to democracy. Digital democracy is but one aspect to gaining democratic and social equity. These are but a few examples of legal decisions that influenced the polarization of races in America that would last until the passage of the Civil Rights Act, July 2, 1964.

This research on the digital divide in Austin, argues racial polarization in previous centuries began an economic and social divide that continues into the 21st century. Texas provides a fertile ground for Afrocentric research because of the state's historic origins and the changing status of Blacks through the course of Spanish, Mexican, Republic, Union, and Confederate governance.

Texas history scholar Eugene C. Barker wrote extensively on the colonization of Texas through the efforts of Americans Moses Austin, son, Stephen F. Austin. Moses Austin began negotiations with the Spanish government during its occupation of the region, and he continued negotiations with Mexican government following the Mexican Revolution (1810-1821) until his death in 1921. His son, Stephen F. Austin, carried forward the plan for American colonization in Mexico after his father's death.

Despite delays from the Mexican government, Stephen Austin received permission in 1821 to bring the first colonists to Texas. Colonization of the "Eastern

Interior Provinces of New Spain," as argued by Anglo American settlers required slave labor. According to Barker (1985), early communication between colonizers and the Mexican junta government asked for a clarification on the importation of slaves into the territory. In the early 1820s, American settlers who declared themselves Catholic and "good character," received permission to emigrate, however, the Mexican congress had yet to address the issue of slavery. The question concerning importation of slaves was posed to the provisional Mexican junta government in 1822, but the pressing matter of establishing and stabilizing a new government apparently superceded the colonists' question about slave labor. According to Barker (1985), it ultimately became apparent that the colonization laws of the Mexican government were not in favor of the continued practice of slavery in Mexico, "the (colonization) committee deplored the existence of slavery and the slave trade in the world, 'which dishonors the human race,' and it proposed to prohibit the slave trade in Mexico…" (p. 55). Further, children of slaves imported into the Mexican empire would be emancipated at fourteen years of age. The issue of continued use of slave labor by the colonists was one of many points of discord between Anglo American settlers and the Mexican government.

The National Colonization Law of August 18, 1824 established the policies for immigration to Mexico. In July 1824, the Mexican government issued a law that "prohibited" the importation and sale of slaves (Prohibition of Commerce and Traffic in Slaves). Violators of the law were subject to fines, except for colonists who received a six month moratorium. However, colonists who owned slaves prior to the law were

allowed to retain their slaves pursuant to existing law, that is, children born of slaves "should be free at fourteen" (p. 204). Barker observed, however, that "Neither the federal colonization law nor the federal constitution mentioned slavery, and the state colonization law of March, 24, 1825, merely said that in the introduction of slaves the colonists should subject themselves to existing laws and those that might be passed in the future" (p. 203), suggesting there was not definitive language on the rights of slave holders or slaves.

The eventual signing the constitution on March 11, 1827 (p. 207) clarified the management of slavery in Texas. Foremost, Article 13, granted certain concessions to immigrants such as allowing the importation of slaves through November of that year, but it also provided for the manumission of slaves, 'From and after the promulgation of the Constitution in the capital of each district, no one shall be born a slave in the state, and after six months the introduction of slaves under any pretext shall not be permitted' (Bugbee, 1898). Austin, on behalf of immigrant slave holders, protested that Article 13 interfered with property rights, but his complaints when unanswered during that period of time. In September, a new provision called for a census of all slaves received additional protests from Austin.

The arguments between the Mexican government and Texas colonists were often unresolved as colonists continued to insistence that slave labor was critical to the continued development of Texas. The Mexican government often conceded to this continued practice in an effort to avoid exacerbating relations with the colonists (Bugbee, 1898). The eventual rebellion between the Texas settlers October 2, 1835 at Gonzalez,

the declaration of independence from Mexico March 2, 1836 (Barker, 1903), and ending at San Jacinto April 21, 1836, resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Texas. The constitution of the Republic of Texas ensured the continued practice of slavery.

As the Texas Republic was established, laws were enacted to ensure political and economic power remained under control of Whites. One of the most demeaning Black Codes in the State of Texas was an 1836 law remanding free Blacks and mulattoes to slavery, and Article VIII, Section 1 of the 1845 Texas Constitution that prevented the Texas Legislature from emancipating slaves without the permission of slave owners.

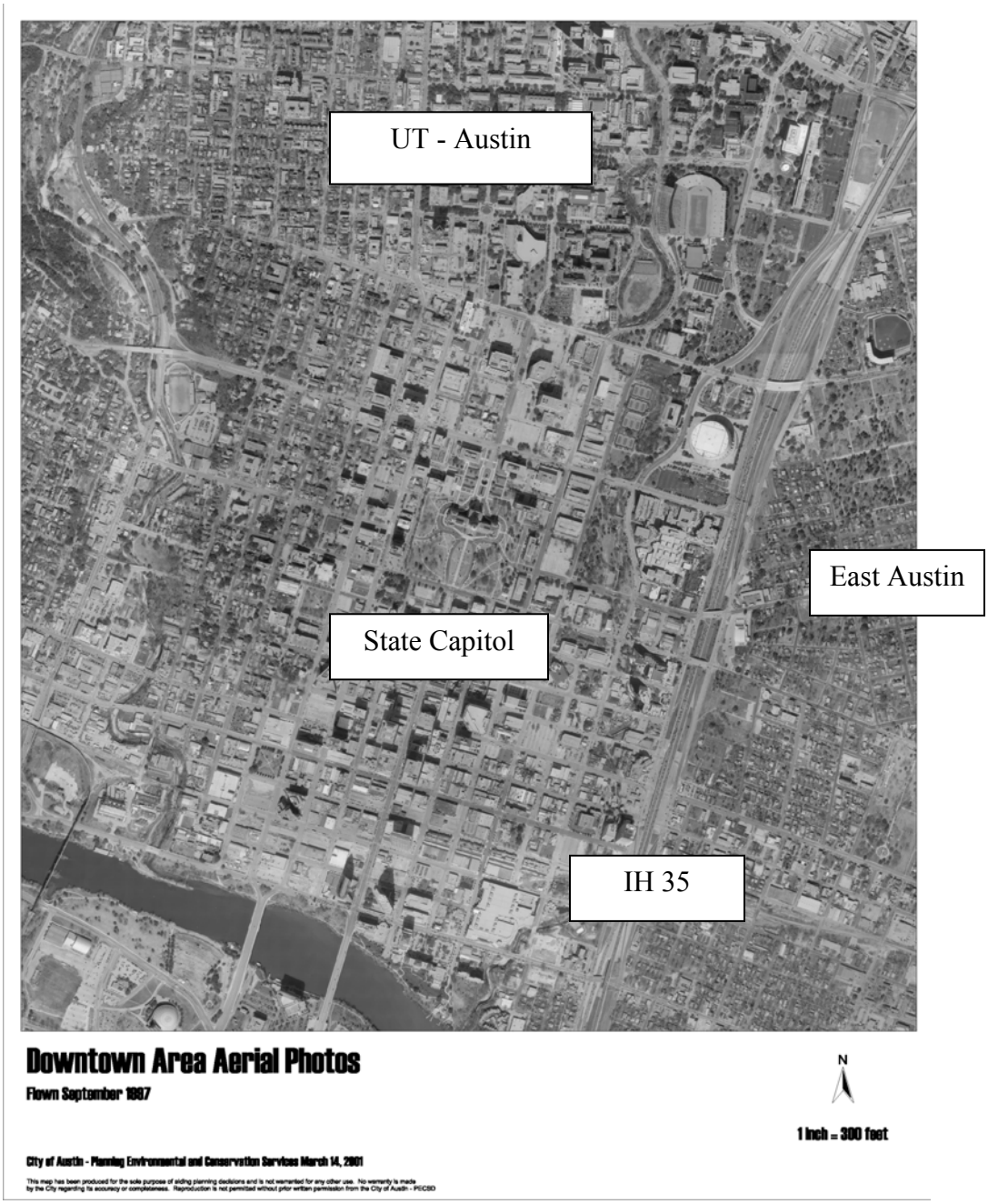
Slavery and discriminatory practices should not be discounted as contributors to the lag in socioeconomic advancement of African Americans. Blacks have yet to gain socioeconomic parity with other ethnic groups in Austin, Texas, as summarized in a City of Austin report, "Background Issues and Summary of African American Quality of Life in Austin Texas: A narrative discussion of background issues and data trends." Key findings of that report are discussed at the end of this chapter.

At the municipal level in 1928, Austin, would attempt to create segregated communities through zoning under the City Plan. The plan, prepared by the engineering firm of Fowler and Koch, recommended that special residential districts be created for Blacks in East Austin. In one sense, the plan represented progressive thinking for the time in terms of comprehensive city planning; in another it would preserve the vestiges of an American system of apartheid.

The U.S. Fair Housing Act of 1968, passed only 40 years after the proposed City Plan of 1928, technically ensures that persons may live where they choose; the effects of the 1928 Austin City Plan remain geographically evident today. This is illustrated by the north – south vertical dissection of the city by Interstate Highway 35 (I-35), thus dividing the community into east and west. I-35 is more than a geographic divider (see Illustration 1 below); it is also an economic divider since centers of commerce and government lie just west of I-35. The vestiges of historic community segregation linger even as the city enters the 21st century. A visual tour of East Austin suggests the community remains economically underdeveloped despite revitalization efforts underway.

Austin was once identified as the Silicon Hills during its technology boom in the late 1990s and early 21st century. The state capitol and The University of Texas System's flagship campus are within a five-mile radius of East Austin. Technology firms also dotted the remainder of the Austin community. The communities lying to the east, where many African Americans continue to live, seem in most need of economic redevelopment despite gentrification and urban renewal efforts.

Illustration 1. Aerial Map of Interstate 35



Source: City of Austin, Planning Environmental and Conservation

The communities to the west hold the seat of city and state government, business, entertainment attractions and major universities. The symbolic differences between these two communities are what form the foundation describing the digital divide in Austin.

The African American Slave Heritage and Austin

African American slavery ended in 1865, a very short time ago by the timeline of history. Historians, authors and historical narrative serve to provide accounts of the American heritage. Autobiographical accounts and historical documents offer insight on the lives of Blacks whether free or slave (Blassingame, 1975, 1979).

The collective histories of Blacks presented by other authors (see footnote), nevertheless, offer a sufficiently broad picture of the slave experience in America. Their stories, with slight variances, show that the Black slave class served at the caprice of their owners. The conditions under which slaves lived varied, dependent upon geographical location, religious, social and the political beliefs of their communities, governments, masters and mistresses.

Footnote:
Blassingame (1979) in *The slave community*; Frederick Douglass (1845) in *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, An American slave;* Olaudah Equiano (1791, 1995) *The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* ; Harriet A. Jacobs (1987), *Incidents in the life of a slave girl*; DuBois (1903), *Souls of Black folk*; de Tocqueville (1835), *Democracy in America*; and in collective works like *Africans in America: America's journey through slavery* (Johnson and Smith, 1998), *Collected Black women's narratives* (Schomberg Library, 1988), *Autobiography of a people: Three centuries of African American history told by those who lived it* (Boyd, 2000), and *To make our way anew: A history of African Americans* (Kelly and Lewis, 2000).

These collective narratives suggest that the fate of a slave could be decided by the owner's mood on any given day. Even slaves such as Harriett Jacob (Yellin, 1987), who fared better than some of her slave brethren, found that she, too, would be reminded of her slave status when it was convenient for her master to do so.

Listening to the Slave Narratives of Travis County

(The collection of the narratives were primarily prepared by Alfred E. Menn, et.al., Travis County, WPA, District No. 9, 1937, "These copies were transcribed from original transcripts in Austin-Travis County Collection, Austin Public Library")

Blacks were primarily slaves, their culture and social structure was that of slavery. Their access to other venues upon which to model themselves was restricted by their social condition through institutionalized slavery. Also relevant to the slave experience is the long term, perhaps, psychological impact of the trauma of slavery as hypothesized by Leary (2005) and described in some of the slave narratives.

As previously discussed, this chapter examines some of the broad social and political history of African Americans. "The Slave Narratives of Travis County, Texas" more narrowly described the lives of Blacks who settled in the Austin, Travis County area. The narratives suggested that emancipated slaves who migrated to Travis County upon manumission continued to remain in the area, but few seemed to make much social and economic progress.

On a haunting, yet intriguing note, it still is possible to geographically pinpoint the residences of some of these former slaves who lived in East Austin, the community of interest to this research. This contemporary research addresses African Americans who

have a historic and social connection to the East Austin community. It is documented that the descendents of one of the slaves featured in the narrative, the Kincheon family, still reside in Austin.

East Austin is where a large population of African Americans continues to reside at the beginning of the 21st century, but the demographics of that community are beginning to change as elderly Black homeowners die out and their children move out. They are replaced by renters and entrepreneurs who are contributing to the gentrification of the historically Black neighbors. A prime example of this is the Clarksville (roughly located between 6th and 15th streets, and just west of Mopac, Texas Loop 1, along the Missouri-Pacific rail line) and former Wheatsville sections of Austin where little remains to suggest these were once primarily Black communities. Clarksville, while retaining some of the historic character of its architecture, has it residents only minimally connected its Black heritage.

The Travis County narratives consist of 65 interviews that serve as a time-capsule of the community and a theoretical construct for dissecting the social, political, economic, cultural and educational capital of a race of people who were American slaves.

Ellen (Kinnard) Alexander's poignant story is the first of the 65 indexed, Travis County narratives. It suggests that she was about 11 years old when emancipated. She was 83 at time of her interview, June 1937, in which she described her life and the traumatic atrocities witnessed on a Chappell Hill plantation about 93 miles east of Austin,

> ‘Proctor was de name ob de overseer on de plantation (Sam Atkinson Plantation, near Chappell Hill, Washington County). ‘Now, you know I’se tellin’ yo’ de troof, when I can remember de name ob dat overseer. O-o-oh, he sho’ was a mean man. When he got ready to whoop a slave, he had him stripped naked, and tied his arms around a cottonwood tree. Den ole Proctor would do the whoppin’ hissef. When a woman was whopped, she had her dress rolled down below her breast, and her hands and arms was tied aroun’ dat big cottonwood tree. Den Proctor would lay on de whoop. When he got through wid de whoppin’ ob each pusson, he turned him loose hissef. Sometimes old Proctor whooped ‘em till de blood run down dere backs. I remembah how a lot ob times I had to help rub lard on de backs ob de folks whut got whopped, so day could wear dere clothes again…’
> (This quote is as transcribed by the interviewer in an attempt to retain Ellen’s slave dialect)

The exact period of time in which these atrocities occurred is unclear in Ellen’s narrative. The Texas Constitution of 1845, Article VIII, Section 3 called for prosecution of any person who brought harm to slaves: “Any person who shall maliciously dismember, or deprive a slave of life, shall suffer such punishment as would be inflicted in case the like offence had been committed upon a free White person, and on the like proof, except in case of insurrection by such slave.” Further archival research would be required to investigate whether any prosecutions for abuse of slaves ever occurred, and it is not the scope of this present work to investigate these prosecutions.

Ellen does not elaborate her mental anguish experienced while witnessing the slave whippings or any empathetic connection she may have shared as she tended the open, fresh wounds of her brethren who had recently undergone the lash. It is implied that the whippings were carried out for some infraction a slave had committed on the

plantation. The public slave whipping on the plantation at the "cottonwood tree" served to set an example for any other slave who would commit an infraction. Ellen suggests that men and women equally received the lash. Her vivid, singular description of the slave whippings indicate the experience still burned in her 83-year-old memory. Ellen personally suffered her mistress' wrath when the mistress tore earrings from her ears.

Ellen's narrative suggests that slave punishment did not require any formal legal charges for the infraction or crime the slave had committed. There was no jury of peers except the slave witnesses to the punishment. The sentence and punishment were carried out by the overseer and the slave was left without recourse to seek retribution for the beating.

The slave was powerless in effecting his own justice or civil protection from the beatings as described by Ellen. The overseer, in her experience, was the judge and jury, and the slaves were without the political capital to effect legal changes that could rectify the injustices carried out against them.

Families Torn Apart

Ellen further described the disruption of family and social structure in the slave community through the separation of families at slave auctions: "De mawster sold some ob his slaves right off'n dat block. Dere was times when chillum was sold away f'om de mammies, and husbands was took away f'om de wives."

Her account is only one example of the slave auction, but it suggests that the destruction of the Black family through sales of human flesh was very much a reality on

the Texas slave plantation. This disintegration of the family unit perhaps was the basis for bankrupting the social capital of the slave family as well. Disintegration of the family unit became profound when these slaves gained their freedom and found themselves without a family anchor; that is, children were without parents, wives without husbands, families without fathers and a potential disconnect from any extended family, except for the slave community. Amir and Lev-Wiesel (2003), in a study of 43 child survivors of the Jewish Holocaust of WWII, concluded that 55 years later, "…the Holocaust experience for a child might be a lifelong narrative. As the child survivors enter retirement age some do not live as full a life as their counterparts that were not exposed to the same atrocities 55 years ago…a child survivor is indeed [sic] a vulnerable position in late adulthood" (p. 298). Their comments suggest that persons who experienced such a life trauma do not fare as well as their peers who did not undergo such atrocities – suggesting a potential linkage between stymied social progress and trauma much like that experienced by African American slaves.

The slave's social capital was diminished and impaired due to the destruction of the family unit. The slave entered freedom with a deficit of social capital and was thrust into a society that historically had little empathy for ensuring the social continuity of a slave class. The freedman had to face racism, segregation, brutality, bigotry and prejudice in a state that could retaliate against him or her at any given moment. The Freedman's Bureau during Reconstruction could, however, provide some assistance provided their services were accessible. If the slave was fortunate to have a trade or skill, he could gain

access to economic capital that would sustain him and any remaining family members. Ellen was fortunate since her father, Sam Kinnard, was able to remain at a nearby plantation during her enslavement. Sam Kinnard, according to Ellen, was known as a "free nigger." He was a blacksmith, carpenter and jack-of-all-trades (Kinnard lived on the Kinnard Plantation). His skill in ironworks and carving, according to Ellen, made him invaluable to the Chappell Hill community. Kinnard's value to the community, while not explicitly stated, provided him with the means to support himself and his family. Upon emancipation, Kinnard gathered his family and moved to Chappell Hill.

Ellen left bondage illiterate, her skills were largely manual labor, and she did not possess the educational capital to effectively change her social status. Perhaps she was psychologically traumatized by her observations of treatment on the plantation. Perhaps the experience was something she accepted. Society will never know if she ever received professional counseling during any part of her life for the trauma she experienced as a child, that information was not provided in her narrative.

The capture and enslavement of Clara Anderson gives another traumatic account of how a seven-year-old child is ripped from her parent's home and enslaved. Ellen Kinnard and Clara Anderson provided their testimony to the atrocities and trauma of slavery, and as previously described by Sher (2004), the PTSD Center, these are but two narratives that begin to describe the collective experiences of Texas slaves.

Slave Literacy

The information society requires a level of literacy and skill. Written literacy is the first skill set required to migrate to digital literacy. The ability to translate thoughts and words into codes that technology can understand is requisite to using information technology, even when text messaging on a cell phone.

If people are fortunate to have the financial wherewithal to purchase a computer, would they have the consumer savvy to select the best computer for their needs? Then, a methodical and tactical skill set is also required to connect the computer components, turn the computer on, configure the system, properly identify the icons, software and applications required to use a computer or word processing program. Internet access is a higher-order, task-oriented, cognitive function since it requires activation of an Internet service provider (ISP) account and ensuring that the right software is installed on the computer to access the Internet from the home. Selection of an ISP requires another form of literacy and that is consumer literacy, both in selection of the ISP and filtering undesirable content found with the Internet such as pornography, spam and fraud. The absence of basic literacy is a major barrier and stumbling block to gaining digital literacy.

Ellen's story makes it plane that as late as 1937, there were some former slaves who never learned to read or write. Ellen's narrative indicated that she lacked basic literacy years after gaining freedom, "In dem days us slaves knowed nothin'. We was jes' natchelly ignorant, and dat's de way de folks on de plantation wanted us to be. De main paht was dat we had to work. I can't read or write to dis day, 'cause nobody of our

White folks ever learned me anything." Her narrative does not indicate whether she had an opportunity to attend any of the freedmen's schools established after Reconstruction or even sought literacy education later in life. It is clear, however, that she remained illiterate at the age of 83 when she was interviewed.

In 1966, Boskin found it peculiar that colonial laws made an investment in education for every population except Africans. Emancipated slaves were at a deficit as they entered society, free but deprived of the educational, social, cultural, economic, political capital to affect their self-sufficiency and personal efficacy as they migrated from slave to freedmen and freedwomen.

Many of the former slaves were subsisting on a State of Texas pension that averaged about $10 a month at the time of their interviews. The other narratives in the Travis County collection suggest that a few of the 65 interviewed were fortunate to have a skill or meager assets to begin their lives upon emancipation, which placed them in better social and financial position at the time of their interviews than other former slaves in the collection. A few slaves shared a household with multiple family generations. It is unclear whether the shared household was out of financial necessity or choice.

The slave narratives suggest the beginnings for a population whose existence was based primarily on a slave society similar to that described by Blassingame (1975, 1979). The narratives serve as a rhetorical measure of the social progress of these 65 former bondsmen in Travis County. It would be inappropriate to broadly theorize that there is an association between the social conditions of former slaves who settled in East Austin and

African Americans living in East Austin today. However, it is appropriate to revisit the African American community in East Austin to gain contemporary insight on this population, through contemporary narrative, using similar procedures employed for the interviews collected in the 1930s.

The intent of this research was not to write a new volume on African American slave history, but to give a historic context that briefly describes the African American experience over the centuries that Blacks have resided in America.

The Digital Divide and African Americans in East Austin

The genesis for the current research arises from an earlier study on African Americans in East Austin, the digital divide and a continued interest in the lives of people living in that community.

BACKGROUND ON THE EAST AUSTIN ETHNOGRAPHIES

Interviews were conducted with participant cohort parent/child pairs on two occasions in 1999. Additional interviews were conducted in 2003 and 2004 with 15 additional African American men and women between the ages of 18 and 55. The 1999 interviews served to define the ethnographic procedures employed in 2003 and 2004.

The first 1999 interviews were conducted at the student participant's school, Johnston High School, in Austin, and a second interview was conducted at the parent participant's home. The remaining 15 interviews for the current study were conducted at various locations including restaurants, libraries, homes, public meeting and work places.

The research largely focuses on the parent participant who in 1999 was a single, African American woman paired with her 15-year-old son, a ninth grade student attending Johnston High School (her son was interviewed separately for another portion of this project and his narrative is not included here), and the 15 African Americans interviewed in 2003 and 2004.

Participant selection was based on a theoretical sample (Lindlof, 1995; Neuman, 2000), convenience sample of volunteers from a ninth grade Algebra I class. African Americans in the later interviews were recruited from various venues including the Black Family Technology Day at the East Austin Millennium Youth Center, public libraries, book stories, historical societies, public housing projects and computer classes.

The ethnography with Cathy and the community observations made in 1999 established a grounded approach to the later interviews conducted during the current study. At the time of her interview in 1999, parent-participant Cathy (a pseudonym) was upbeat and the challenges of her past were behind her and she was optimistic about the future. Eight months prior her interview, she built and relocated her family to their new home in east Austin after having lived a lifetime either in the projects or in public-assisted housing. On the day of her final interview, she was celebrating her 33rd birthday.

The methods and procedures for the first ethnography on African American life and the digital divide in East Austin will be described in Chapter 3, Methods. This

methodology served as the grounded theory approach to discovering the cultural scene of East Austin.

Macro Analysis of the East Austin Community

The median income for families in East Austin was less than $25,000 annually during the time of the interviews, according to census data from 1990. Regardless of race, according to several surveys, CTCNet, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Benton Foundation, Novak and Hoffman, Strover and Straubhaar, Bertot and McClure, the most determining factor affecting whether a family would have access to computers or the Internet was income. Terms such as "have" and "have-not" referred to families who have access to computers, information technology and the Internet, and those who do not. As surveys have indicated, families with incomes of less than $25,000 tend not to be owners or users of technology.

Cathy, the head-of-household of the participant family, worked for a fast food franchise as an assistant manager. She had held this job for three years at the time of her interview. She only inferred that she was a low-wage earner or had diminished net income because of her cost-of-living as a new homeowner and family medical expenses. As a single parent, she was rearing four children; paying a house note, medical care, utilities and transportation with her sole income derived from her position at the fast food store. Her son received disability benefits because of a lifelong illness. She had no other source of funds. Her probation for drug possession dictated that she sever all ties with her previous community. She was in a transitional period of her life and she had yet to

establish a new source of community support to provide her the social strength that can be derived from an extended family whether biological or through friendships.

Cathy seemed highly intelligent despite having lived through years of addiction to crack cocaine and other drugs. She appeared in good health and well nourished. On the day of the home visit her house was neat, filled with decorative objects and well organized. She pointed out the possessions she brought with her from the "projects" or public-assisted housing and the possessions acquired since moving into her new house.

As previously described, it is important to understand and partially embrace the participant's "cultural scene" (Spradley, 1979), that is, Cathy's cultural scene in East Austin. The ideals of American society are complex, but America still promotes the stereotypical concept of the nuclear family, i.e., a family with married parents of the opposite gender who have at least a high school education, and perhaps two children, and aspire to homeownership. They live in a crime-free, middle class neighborhood with good schools in mainstream America where everyone enjoys a homogeneous, bucolic existence. But this was not Cathy's life. She was a single parent rearing her own children and one child from an extended family. She was trying to start a new life after having spent 33 years living in one form of public-assisted housing or another. Again, because she severed ties with her old community she had no reported relationships to build upon. Previous social ties were detrimental to her. Even her mother, who remained in the projects, could not provide Cathy emotional support.

Cathy described her past life as irresponsible, consisting of negative associations, bad male relationships, out-of-wedlock children, limited goals and living at a level of subsistence in which she was only concerned about having a roof over her head and a little bit of money. A high school dropout with two children before the age of 18, she indicated that she attempted to obtain her G.E.D. through the local community college while still living in multifamily public housing or the "projects." But she said the lure of hanging out with her less-motivated friends had her skipping classes and eventually giving up on earning the G.E.D.

Cathy described herself as being, "out there." In other words, she lived the street life not as a prostitute, but as a "carouser." She said she had a dope dealer car, was good at setting a "rock on a pipe" (crack cocaine), and she was "the bomb." However, most of the negative behavior and activity was linked to her male relationships, in her opinion. She admitted smoking marijuana in her teen years, but she did not become involved with hard drugs until her first long-term male relationship. She indicated that the male would bring drugs to her while keeping her a virtual prisoner in the home. If she insisted that she did not want to partake he would suggest that her refusal was a rejection of her love. She said he would ask, "You love me don't you?" would be the standard phrase and then she would do what he wanted. According to Collins (2004), minority women often find themselves subjugated by relationships as a construct of extant masculine society. Even minority men, in Collins' view, aspire to join the dominant group, men, over racial identity, African American "In the United States, hegemonic masculinity is installed at

the top of the hierarchical array of masculinities. All other masculinities, including those of African American men, are evaluated by how closely they approximate dominant social norms. Masculinity itself becomes organized as a three-tired structure: those closest to hegemonic masculinity, predominantly wealthy White men, but not exclusively so, retain the most power at the top; those men situated just below have greater access to White male power, yet remain marginalized (for example, working-class White men and Latino, Asian, and White immigrant men); and those males who are subordinated by both of these groups and occupy the bottom (for example, Black men and men from indigenous groups)" (p. 186). Women then become victimized by a social system that disrupts the opportunity for harmonious, supportive bonds between Black women and men, "Black femininity is constructed in relation to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity that subordinates all females to masculinity" (Collins, 2004, p. 187).

Elliott (1997) suggested that women provide the social and cultural capital to the family structure to assist the family toward improved quality of life and upward mobility. But women who fit Cathy's lifestyle do not carry that type of capital. They often find themselves in overwhelming circumstances. At least in Cathy's world, women are dominated and controlled by negative male influences. This mirrors the backgrounds of other women who become entangled in the penal system. They find themselves in the revolving door of the criminal justice system because of their commission of crimes while under the influence of a dominant male, as described in a 1999 article in *U.S. News and World Report***.** Criminal acts can range from minor assault to shoplifting, hot check-

writing to armed robbery to murder. This cycle is repetitive and transgenerational (Locy, 1999).

These women, like Cathy, carry the additional burden of rearing children without the benefit of a dual-income household. But, unlike Cathy, they were unable to put their behaviors in perspective when faced with incarceration. Cathy, fearful of losing her children to social welfare, opted to change her lifestyle to avoid incarceration. Locy (1999) wrote,

> "Even if the identity is one of a criminal or a drug user, the profiles of a typical adult female offender and a female juvenile delinquent are strikingly similar. Both are poorly educated, live in poverty, and make dismal choices in men. Both have been physically and sexually abused. Both have problems with drugs and alcohol, which they often use to medicate the pain of what has been done to them. History is repeating itself – only faster. The girls seem to be trying drugs and having babies at younger ages, with generations separated by as few as 13 or 14 years."

Cathy fit this profile as well; she was concerned about her teenage daughter succeeding. She was also a mother who had few options for keeping her family intact; she had to modify her lifestyle if she wanted to hold on to her children. Cathy appeared to be doing everything she could to make the court-ordered changes. Several life events prompted her to change, but it was difficult to determine the stronger motivator – threat of incarceration -- fear of losing her children to child welfare, a desire to ensure that her children did not succumb to the lure of the streets or all of these in aggregate. The first event was perhaps her drug overdose following the birth of her child. She talked about the male in life having her "strung out" on drugs and almost overdosing. When she learned she was pregnant again, Cathy decided to abort that fetus, fearing it would be

born addicted to crack cocaine – a "crack baby." She said after that she tried several times to stop using crack, but it was through a relationship with a younger man that she was able to finally kick her addiction. It took several months for the effects of her crack addition to finally subside. She never reported seeking professional help during this period. She tried drugs again, after kicking her habit, and deduced that she was not an addict but a (recreational) "user" because her boyfriend made the drugs so available.

Another life event was her arrest and conviction for drug possession. Cathy reported that after she stopped using drugs, she became a drug dealer. Her near-incarceration and threat of losing her children were strong motivation, she reported, for trying to change her lifestyle. She managed to receive probation for drug possession and was on probation for that conviction at the time of her interviews.

Her final life event was the near-loss of her son, who also was interviewed separately for this project. Cathy appeared to have a strong nurturing mother instinct. She indicated that her children came first.

Her son developed a liver disease approximately a year and a half before this interview was conducted. The illness caused his liver to fail and required his hospitalization in Dallas and Houston. In Houston, Cathy's son received immune system suppression treatment to prepare him for a bone marrow transplant. It was during his hospitalization that her son was first introduced to the Internet and email. The hospital was also where Cathy first learned about Internet and email. She said that despite her son's weakened condition, he enjoyed working with the computer.

Again, Cathy's son was fortunate because his sister was able to provide the transplant marrow. He returned to Johnston High School, where he was in the mainstream school program. He seemed a typical teenage boy and in reasonable good health at the time of the interviews.

During her ordeal, Cathy managed to develop a close bond with a maternal aunt, whom she referred to as her mother. Her biological mother could not support Cathy in any way, so it was Cathy's aunt who provided support and reassurance that things would improve. Cathy surmised that she needed to wake up. The fear of losing her son and potentially the other children to child welfare, if she went to prison, apparently frightened her enough to try to change.

The social, economic and cultural structure of Cathy's life was only to her detriment. Her toughness, endurance, resilience and maternal instinct were her greatest strengths (and that ultimately facilitated her salvation). In order for Cathy to preserve her family, and herself, she had to sever all ties with her previous social contacts (i.e., the drug culture). With a conviction and probation it was mandatory that she avoid contact with many of her former relationships. Beyond this, she took on financial responsibility by becoming employed at a fast food restaurant, moving her family away from the projects by purchasing a new home; she sold her drug-dealer car and purchased what she called, "a nice little family car!" Cathy said she became more selective about her relationships with men to avoid potential threats to her goals and family since the wrong associations could jeopardize the terms of her probation. She talked of getting her

general equivalency degree (G.E.D.) and seeking computer training for better employment opportunities. It appeared that somehow, Cathy found her personal self-efficacy in determining the course of her life at this juncture.

Cathy talked frankly to her children about her life in the hope of keeping them from following her path. She wanted to ensure that her daughter did not produce children before time by insisting that she use birth control and avoid bad relationships. Cathy used her life as an example of what to avoid.

Home ownership was a challenge for Cathy; she admitted it was difficult and she sometimes considered returning to the projects where there was less responsibility, but she also feared that her children would "go bad," if they returned to the projects. So, she continued to struggle as a single parent with four children.

Cathy worked for a fast-food restaurant as an assistant manager at the time of her interview. Her job required she use a cash register and data entry terminal for point-of-sales reporting and inventory control. Operation of the terminal required only a minimum of programming for the purpose of managing sales. She was not intimidated by the technology.

At home, she had telephone service and cable television with cable service including HBO 1, 2 and 3, Showtime and all premium service. Cable TV served as a source of entertainment primarily for her son. The telephone was maintained for her daughters. In her opinion, both services kept the children occupied and off the streets. Other technologies within her home were a VCR, large screen TV and Nintendo 64

electronic games. She was concerned about some of the cable channels because her four-year-old seemed to find the adult channels, but it had not occurred to her to simply have them cancelled.

Cathy talked of having a computer and Internet access and getting a job that used computers. She had a fairly sophisticated knowledge of Internet and computers despite her limited use of a computer and Internet other than the data terminal at work.

Asked about the things to do with computers and Internet, Cathy responded that her children could do their essays and homework, that she could do legal documents that looked professional. She said you could get your GED on Internet, meet people and communicate with relatives through email, shop and catch up on the news when you missed it on television. Her son suggested she might be able to play bingo on the Internet and have her pay check printed right off the computers. She was aware that "WWW-dot-COM" meant something, but asked, "what that mean, where is it going to take me?" "I cain't do nothin' about it," since she did not have a computer.

After her initial interview, Cathy visited her aunt who has a computer and observed her using email. She approached her aunt and asked if she could try. From there Cathy, with the assistance of her aunt, ventured into chatrooms, and met people, but did not really surf the Web.

Asked about the experience, Cathy responded that it was fun, but she also indicated that you could easily get "hooked" on the Internet, recognizing its addictive nature. Cathy felt she would be on the Internet all night because she did not have free

time until the children were asleep. During her first experience on email and chatrooms, she stayed up until 1a.m.

Asked what she thought about chatrooms, Cathy said you have to be careful because you can be anybody on the Internet. She said, "…some of the people you meet could be murderers," an astute observation for someone with limited experience with the Internet. She was surprised by the amount of information people released in the chatrooms such as telephone numbers and addresses.

Cathy and her son looked forward to the day they would own a computer. Her son saved the Internet service provider (ISP) CDs they receive in the mail so he could see what was on them when he received a computer.

Cathy's had a sense that society was shifting to a time when everyone must have some level of technology; another astute observation in 1999 since it has become a reality in 2006. She perceived television would become obsolete and that computers would be the primary communication technology. Despite her concerns about the attractive lure of the Internet, she felt that computer technology was "overall good."

Austin Free Net, a non-profit initiative, helped initiate free Internet access to the public through the municipal library system. Austin Free Net was partially funded by a grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Neither Cathy nor her son (from focus group interviews) would consider the library as the place to use the Internet. While both stated they would like to use the

Internet the desire was not strong enough to ignore preconceived feelings about "what the library stands for" (a place that is for books and reading), and use the library Internet for their personal benefit.

The library serves as an extension of "the government," another bureaucratic labyrinth that is looked upon as a place for some people and not for others. Cathy had a number of experiences with governmental entities from housing, to public welfare, to the criminal justice system. Cathy said she was not a library person. The library had no appeal for her as a place to access the Internet. However, she did not fully realize the extent that the Internet could be made available to her until our interview when she was informed that the Internet was free at the library.

Nevertheless, when told that the library had Internet access, Cathy responded that the library did not seem like the place to use the Internet; it was for books and, essentially, people telling you to be quiet. It was the place where there were rules to follow. Indeed, there were rules to follow at the municipal library for Internet use as recorded during library observations during this project with Cathy. The main library limited the amount of time a patron may spend on the Internet terminal (City of Austin Public Library). Some libraries offer flexibility in use by allowing extended time if no one needs the terminal. Other libraries apply the rule regardless of library patron demand. Now the Austin Public Library uses a reservation system to schedule client Internet use.

Cathy's son experienced Internet use while hospitalized at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston as he awaited a bone marrow transplant from his sister, as mentioned before. At times, according to Cathy, he was so weak and sick from his immune system treatments that he had to be wheeled to the computer lab. Her son reported that he enjoyed using the Internet in the hospital, but he would not use it at the library. He said there was no way he would ride the Metro bus to the library to use the Internet. The public transit stop was some distance from his house. There was no mention of possibly taking the family car to the library.

Cathy's story began with a broad overview of ethnographic interviews, narrative as cultural capital, technology surveys and community observations. The focus was on minorities, technology and the digital divide. However, the broad scope of the large-scale quantitative studies does not provide the details that describe underlying barriers that prevent minorities and low-income families from gaining full benefit of the information age as Kvasny (2006) suggest.

As with Cathy's narrative, multiple factors impeded her ability to succeed: family health, drug abuse, incarceration, relationships, the daily struggle of work and family, social and medical problems, feelings of belongingness (as in the case of entering the library for Internet access) and awareness of available services. All affected the ability of these participants to maintain a lifestyle that was more "mainstream" versus one that would pull the parent into the criminal justice system and the children into the social welfare system (i.e., placement of children in foster care because the parent has been

removed from the family structure). Given the list of events in Cathy's daily life, it would almost seem absurd to ask, "Do you have Internet access?"

In this case, Cathy and her son were highly motivated to use computers and the Internet, but they did not go to the library to use the Internet (one problem may have been that they were not aware that Internet access was available free of charge). Cathy and her son indicated they did not like the library. Her son commented he would have to take the bus to go to the library, clearly there was no public library within walking distance to their home, and he was not in favor of riding the bus. Taking the bus was not "cool," and using the Internet was not important enough to merit taking the bus to go to the library.

Despite all her life events and lack of technology resources, Cathy still looked to a future that would involve technology, computers and the Internet. In her opinion, there was no turning back and it was mandatory that people have some technology skills to be successful in the 21st century. Cathy was very insightful in this regard. Cathy's story was but one story of marginalized African Americans who teeter between mere subsistence and survival while trying to catch up with a 21st century society. Of interest was how other African Americans living in East Austin were faring as they transitioned to a 21st century society. The intent of this study was to build upon the observations made about Cathy's life in East Austin.

Further Observations about African Americans in East Austin

In 2004, the City of Austin conducted a survey on the quality of life for African Americans in the community. "Background Issues and Summary of African American

Quality of Life in Austin, Texas: A narrative discussion of background issues and data trends," was revised in March 2005. The key findings of that report were that African Americans lagged behind other racial groups in Austin in nearly every socioeconomic category. The median family income for African Americans was about half of what Whites earned. Austin Blacks had one of the "lowest" rates of home ownership in America for African Americans and have a poverty rate of 19.5 percent, compared to an overall city poverty rate of 14.4 percent. The unemployment rate, according to the report, was 7.9 percent for Blacks compared to 3.2 percent for Whites. The numbers of African Americans who held at least a bachelor's degree was 19 percent, but Austin is a college town (it has several public and private post-secondary colleges and universities, including the University of Texas), and in this regard the report comments that "African American education attainment is relatively low." Perhaps the most unsettling statistic in the report was the percentage of African Americans incarcerated in Travis County jail, 32 percent compared to the total Black population for Travis County which was 9 percent as of March 2005. One public administrator commented, "the Austin described in the report is certainly not the Austin I enjoy and love." Life in Austin means different things to different people, research must be more inclusively describe society in order to better serve "all" its citizens.

Again, the Austin quality-of-life study only helps to give a quantitative interpretation of life for Blacks living in the city. Of concern is what is not captured in a survey, i.e. the qualitative explanation for these disparities.

The discourse concerning African American life in the 21st century is just beginning. These interviews and reports such as the narratives of the former slaves conducted by the WPA in the 1930s, serve as rudimentary beginnings for social commentary on this select group of African Americans in East Austin, Texas at the beginning of a new century. Certainly, the observations made here cannot be translated to a larger aggregate of the African American population in Texas or the rest of the country. However, these interviews serve to give identity to the lives of members of American society who offer their narrative as a form of cultural capital to the 21st century. It is within this context that the current research is conducted on African Americans in East Austin and the social context of their lives in an information society.

Cathy's story served as the foundation for additional interviews with African Americans in East Austin. Of the 15 interviews, two participants were men; the others were women. During the course of these interviews, similar themes on health -- including drug addiction and chronic disease, income, education, child welfare, criminal justice, social support systems and employment -- emerged. The results of these interviews are described in Chapter 4.

Technology and Social Relevance Uses and Gratifications

How likely is it that a low-income population will attend to the Web? Wilhelm (1997) commented, "People who are struggling with financial poverty are also often information poor…Information is important in our society because democracy depends on well-informed citizens." The steps toward democracy, however, require a level of

knowledge about its inner workings even if delivered via the basic education required of all high school students. The information society, however, evolved, without the benefit of wide-scale information or computer literacy education programs; since persons who were beyond primary and secondary education prior to mid-1980s did not receive basic computer literacy education, thereby leaving a gap in basic computer literacy for an adult population. They may lack the basic skills required to access information technology or fail to access training in the use of computers and information technology. African Americans as a population have the potential to positively or negatively influence subsequent generations on the relevancy of computer literacy to the next generation. As society becomes more technologically dependent, it is inherent that everyone has a degree of digital literacy and access.

Ruggiero (2000) proposed adaptation of uses and gratification (U&G) theory to computer-mediated media. He argued that U&G could explain a user's decision to engage the Web, and comments, "…the use of personal computers has been linked to the individual's motivation to use the Internet for communication purposes linked to the fulfillment of gratifications such as social identity, interpersonal communication, parasocial interaction, companionship, escape, entertainment and surveillance" (p. 28).

Pew Internet (2000) reported in a telephone survey that 12,751 respondents used the Internet in ways that had relevance to their lives. Of 586 African American respondents who used the Internet between March and August 2000, Pew found 89 percent used email to communicate with family. Another 45 percent used the Web to

access health information. Regarding women, Pew reported African American women tend to use the Internet for "health information, job information, and religious information online" while men buy online and seek sports and financial information. The research suggests this online behavior follows "the overall Internet population." Only 38 percent of African Americans reported accessing a government web site, whereas 41 percent of Whites did so. The percentages are not that different between Blacks and Whites in this respect. Fewer than 40 percent of Blacks and Whites indicated they have ever accessed political news from a Web site. The cyberdemocracy debate that the Web will promote online equity for all citizens does not appear supported by the responses to these question items at present, but as governmental agencies increasingly transfer routine services and information online, Internet users may be forced to heavily rely on the Internet for solutions to their everyday transactions and needs.

It should be noted that the 586 respondents who reported being online represented less than half the total sample of 1,501 African Americans. The entire sample for this survey was 12,751. The African American population represented approximately 12 percent of the entire sample. Also, Pew comments that biases arise in telephone surveys because of "non-response." As a control for bias, the organization used sample weighting in data analysis.

Another Pew Internet study (2000) surveyed persons who were not online. The organization described this population of hard-core non-users as "the Nevers." Of this group, 57 percent of women and 43 percent of men said they "definitely will not go

online." Although no detailed breakdown of African American responses was presented on that item, but the report indicated Blacks and Whites are equally distributed in the "Never" category. Some other characteristics of "the Nevers" were related to education and income, 82 percent had a high school diploma or less, 43 percent had an income of $30,000 or less. The statistics again support the lagging level of Internet (and information) access for persons with low socioeconomic status, and suggest a need for information literacy in this population.

Perhaps greater awareness of online resources would spur their interest in the usefulness of online information as Cathy had become aware of the changing demands of an information society. Mossberger et al. concur and suggest a need for greater investment in educating marginalized people on the use of information technology. They proposed there are other divides in an information society that go beyond computer access and acquisition and that there are even greater divides that further impede the social advancement of marginalized people. In Austin, African Americans seem at a social disadvantage as indicated by the 2004 and 2005, "Background Issues and Summary of African American Quality of Life in Austin Texas: A narrative discussion of background issues and data trends," report.

Based on the previous discussion the following research questions were constructed:

R1: What is the quality of life for African Americans living in East Austin today?

R2: What intervening factors associated with class, race, ethnicity, and gender have

prevented this group from fully participating in the information society?

R3: How important is it that African Americans gain a level of literacy in use of information technology?

R4: If they have access to computers and information online does it contribute to a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy in this population?

To answer these questions, a qualitative study method was employed. The Chapter 3 methodology section will further address literature on qualitative methodology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Background

The qualitative methodology for this research employs ethnographic interviews to collect narrative data for detailed textual analysis (Collins, 2003; Roberts, 1996) in describing the population of interest. While a number of quantitative studies and data have been collected about people and technology use, this study uses a qualitative method in an effort to personify the people who are often presented as a research statistic. Large surveys and quantitative data numerically describe the population and penetration of ICT use and access, but fall short in describing the rationale behind why and how people use this technology. As a result, some portions of the American population may be overlooked when assessing ICT utilization.

This ethnographic research extends the 1999 East Austin study conducted with minorities by focusing on African Americans. The methodology is adapted from methods used in the earlier ethnography. The intent of above cited research was to ascertain the level of engagement of low-income families with information technology, specifically, the Internet and computer technologies (ICTs).

While the parent/child cohort that led to the Cathy interview (presented in Chapter 2) described some of her experiences with computers, the parent/child cohort did not have extensive use of computers at that time, since the cohort in Cathy's Story did not

own a computer in 1999. Even the algebra class where the child participant attended school had one computer for some 20 students in 1999, the time of the initial study.

Context for Defining East Austin

At the close of the 20th century, the City of Austin was a rising star because of the increase in information technology-related businesses during the technology boom. The Austin technology industry garnered national press, spotlighting Austin as a hotbed of technology activity. The Austin metropolitan area is the home of Dell Computer Corporation and had branches of several other technology-based industries such as IBM Corporation, National Instruments, Motorola, Advanced Micro Devices, Tivoli, Vignette, Oracle computer game developer and others at the time. In addition, dot-coms such as Dr. Koop.com and Living.com were thriving enterprises, both of which are mainly non-operational in Austin today.

Within the same community, technology flourished while very little changed for the inner city of East Austin, as William Holstein (2000) described in a *U.S. News & World Report* cover story article titled "A Tale of Two Austins." The article contrasted the apparent socioeconomic disparities between "East Austin" and economic opportunities in "West Austin" – two communities geographically divided by north-and-southbound Interstate 35. The national spotlight was on Austin as a burgeoning, and technology-accelerated community. Holstein observed, "…poorer residents, mostly African-Americans and Hispanics who live in East Austin on the other side of north and southbound I-35 – which divides the city, literally and figuratively – often don't have

access to computers and the Internet…the impact of this boom is more vivid in Austin than in Silicon Valley or larger cities such as Atlanta or Dallas because it has happened in such a short period of time" (p. 44). The intent of Holstein's journalistic approach to describing Austin in a national publication left open to speculation how large an area he was referencing. Limitation of print space to extensively describe East Austin perhaps left the reader with a very vague idea of the geographic location and characteristics of East Austin.

The City of Austin was also considered an extensively "wired" (Internet access wiring) city. The City of Austin installed an advanced high-speed, fiber optic network ring, Greater Austin Area Telecommunications Network (GAATN), designed to provide fast data access to schools and local governmental agencies. According to the City of Austin GAATN Web site, the network could provide distance-learning courses to area schools and distribution of "books, videos and music" from libraries, and increase business opportunity along with providing other services for the citizens of Austin. The network, however, required technology to gain access to its information resources.

Examination of this dichotomy of wealth, technology resources and poverty within the same community became a question of research interest. The community became as much a geographical sample as the people selected to participate. As described earlier, IH-35 literally vertically dissects Austin between east and west. East Austin is where the City Plan of 1928 suggested Blacks and other low-income residents live in order to receive city services. In the 21st century, the City of Austin identified

East Austin as needing greater ICT access. At present, the city is devising a plan to install high-speed wireless Internet access in parts of the city such as Zilker Park and portions of East Austin. Again, access to public utilities is at issue, but the utilities now include 21st century telecommunication utilities.

East Austin Economic Profile

East Austin is composed of several racial and economic groups. The 2000 U.S. Census reported African Americans made up 41 percent of the target research area while 49 percent of the population was classified as Hispanic, 8 percent as White and 2 percent as other. Household incomes for the study area ranged from $10,000 to $200,000-a-year. The median household income was $26,653 according to 2000 U.S. Census data (an aggregate report of income was not available from the 2000 census for the study area). The wide income range within a relatively small geographic area further illustrates the extreme economic contrasts in the study area.

Study Area Characteristics

Of the population living in the study area for this research, 40 percent was classified as low-income (the 1990 U.S. Census estimated the poverty rate at 17 percent), but 44 percent of the persons living in the research area owned homes. An estimated 57 percent of the population over the age of 25 living in the study area did not have a high school diploma while that rate was only 17 percent for the entire Austin population.

Procedures and Methods in the Initial Ethnography

Procedures and methodology for this study are adapted from the earlier East Austin ethnography on the digital divide (Rojas, et al., 2000). During the month of November 1999, graduate and undergraduate students from the College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin conducted ethnographic interviews on Internet, computer and technology use with ninth grade students enrolled at Johnston High School in the Austin Independent School District, and their parents or guardians.

Protocols for the interviews consisted of the parent-child cohorts granting consent to participate in the study, as is customary for research compliance with the standards for use of human subjects in research. The protocol also offered reward incentives for participation that included providing each household with an Apple computer from university surplus property upon completion of the project.

Procedures included tape-recorded interviews based on a predetermined set of questions provided to the student ethnographers. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by student ethnographers for a formal report. This procedure seemed effective for the question under investigation at that time: "What is the nature of the digital divide for low-income families living in East Austin, Texas?"

It is fortunate that this methodology provided contact with an African American parent/child cohort. Analysis of this pair produced grounded theories and emergent themes that extend beyond a simple question of "Do you have access to the Internet?"

The methodology used in this study follows procedures used in the 1999 ethnography involving Cathy, participation in Austin community technology events such as Black Family Technology Week, and previous qualitative studies that employed ethnography and grounded theory (Dey, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Constant engagement in the community and the East Austin technology events provided the stage for a grounded study approach on how this community would respond, interact, experience, migrate or otherwise engage itself in an information society.

Methodology

GEOGRAPHIC SAMPLE

East Austin is geographically changing as described in the background section of this chapter. This study however, considers East Austin as the geographic area bounded by I-35 to the west, Manor Road to the north, Airport Boulevard to the east and Seventh Street to the south.

Sample

The population of interest to this research was also a theoretical sample. According to Neuman (2000), a theoretical sample includes a group of "people, situations" representative of the sample characteristics of interest that assist in developing a grounded theory about phenomena under investigation. The current research concerned the study of African American participants, their ICTs use, and the East Austin community The income selection criteria for the sample in this study arose from

several studies on ICT use. Those studies identified African Americans with incomes of less than $35,000 as the population least likely to have access to information technology (NTIA, 1999, 2000). In Texas, however, Strover and Straubhaar (2000) reported persons with incomes below $40,000 were less likely to own computers and have Internet access. The reported income for the Texas study on ICTs use became the selection criteria for participants in this study†. Only participants with annual incomes of $40,000 or less participated in the study (participants were not asked their specific incomes as this was considered a sensitive question for this population).

†FOOTNOTE:

The income benchmark for users ICTs also varies. In 2000, 44.6 percent of the American population at the $25,000 to $34,999 income level owned home computers. As the income level increased from $35,000 to 49,999, 58.6 percent of the population owned computers in the home (NTIA, 2000). Only 34 percent of persons with incomes between $25,000 and $34,999 had home Internet access, and 46.1 percent of persons with incomes between $35,000 and $49,000 had access in 2000. The 2000 NTIA report found that just 27.3 percent of African-Americans with incomes between $15,000 and $34,000 owned computers at home and 17.9 percent had Internet access at home. In 2000, 52.7 percent of African-Americans with incomes between $35,000 and $74,000 owned home computers, but only 38.7 percent of that same population had home Internet access. In 2001, 55.7 percent of African Americans owned a home computer, but only 39.8 percent used home Internet access (NTIA, 2002). In 2003, 61.8 percent of all American households owned a computer, but only 54.8 percent had Internet access at home (NTIA, 2004). The 2004 NTIA report did not provide statistics form computer ownership and Internet access by income and race in that report.

The study selected only adults 18 years of age or older to minimize consent difficulties that arise in conducting studies of minors,

Participant Recruitment

A convenience sample was constructed through the use of recruitment flyers and letters explaining the purpose of the study, selection criteria for participation and researcher contact information. The recruitment letter, flyer and procedures for contacting and interacting with possible participants received prior approval by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin for research involving human subjects. Study protocol also permitted monetary compensation for participants, up to $50, upon completion of all interviews in recognition of their time investment since the interview process averaged 2 to 4 hours.

Participants were recruited from sites in East Austin frequented by African Americans including Austin Public Libraries that hosted Austin Free-Net community Internet access centers, the Goodwill Technology Center at the Rosewood Community Housing project, Eastside Story (a multipurpose community center), and Millennium Youth Center during the Black Family Technology Day. Other recruitment sites were the Sisters and Friends (a youth empowerment organization) youth recognition day, Afrocentric community listservs, the Passon Historical Society (a Black historical society), Nappy Day (a meeting of African American women held at a local hotel), Mitchie's Bookstore (an Afrocentric bookstore, formerly located on Manor Road), Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity (African American male fraternity) house, and African American churches. These places were selected since they were geographically located in the target area of East Austin or they were frequented by the populations of interest.

Some participants who received a recruitment flyer responded via email to express their interest in the study, other participants made contact by telephone. Potential participants were prescreened by phone or email to ensure they met the study criteria. When their eligibility to participate in the study was validated, schedules and interview sites were established. All recruiting venues were in or near East Austin. All participants selected were affiliated with East Austin and considered it their "community."

THE RESULTING SAMPLE WAS COMPOSED OF -

African Americans, over the age of 18, living in the Austin community with household incomes below $40,000.

Fifteen of the persons recruited for the study qualified to participate – two men and thirteen women. Of the fifteen, one woman withdrew toward the end of her interview. Protocol prevents the use of data when a participant withdraws; therefore her narrative was excluded from the analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through in-depth interviews. Interviews were semi-structured with an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire was developed based upon an earlier ethnographic study (Rojas, et al., 2000) conducted in East Austin, previous surveys such as the National Telecommunication Infrastructure Administration and Pew Internet reports, and media reports surrounding the discourse on African

Americans and the digital divide by illuminating the social conditions either facilitating or impeding access to information technology for this population and community.

The questionnaire collected life histories, biographical information, socioeconomic data, and social experiences in American society, participant interest in computers and/or the Internet, the value of information technology in their lives and whether information technology made any difference in their lives. Other questions solicited their views on technology use in general (pagers, VCRs, cell phones, cable television, high definition television, CD players), their views about the future and their perspectives about their role in a future society.

Participants were also asked whether they felt race relations in America had an effect on African American social and economic advancement in the 21st century. In addition, they were asked about trends in society that could assist the transition from the industrial economy to an information economy.

Participants were asked to describe their social conditions at the beginning of the 21st century much like the former slaves who participated in the WPA narratives at the first third of the 20th century. These questions sought to bring insight, clarity, salience and understanding of this evolving community and its marginalized people. As in any ethnographic study, interviews help capture information that describes the lives of the participants and matters that affect them, in this case, communication technology.

The interview questionnaire (Appendix A) elicited the following information from participants:

life histories (social and cultural capital,)

literacy and educational capital,

economic capital and political capital,

self-efficacy indicators,

opinions about the information society and ICTs use, and

perceptions of their futures.

The question items were pretested on a small sample of five participants before applying the interview questionnaire to the entire sample. This was done in order to ensure interviewer effectiveness and reliability in capturing and addressing the main questions of interest to this study. It sought to determine whether the researcher needed to adjust approaches to the interviews because of lifestyle or social situations that required changing the structure of the interviews. Or needed to modify the questionnaire as new research themes emerged over the course of the interviews to ensure question items effectively elicited information that addressed the areas of research interest.

While the sample required minor situational adjustments based on the participant's personality or lifestyle, no modifications were made to the main questionnaire during the course of the study.

The Interviews

Interviews were conducted over a nine-month period, July 2003 to April 2004. They were audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis. Interviews were conducted in a variety of venues to accommodate the participants, and minimize the amount of intrusion on their daily schedules while ensuring the most natural and complete responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interview sites included places of employment, private homes or apartments, hotel lobbies, and often community libraries that offered Austin Free-Net computer access. The libraries also offered a neutral site in which to interview participants, particularly upon the first meeting since participant and interviewer had not formally met prior to the initial interview. They offered a safe environment for initial contact to alleviate any anxiety and mistrust held by the participant or the interviewer, and vice versa. This was important for the first meeting since participant and interviewer needed an opportunity to become acquainted without feeling undue pressure to participate or control the meeting. Mutual trust was of utmost importance to maintaining open communication with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Extreme care was taken to develop a productive, non-threatening and open rapport with the study participants and to decide upon a mutually convenient time for the interviews. Following this interaction, a comfortable, and reasonably quiet place was selected in which to conduct the interview. Before interviews began, participants

received further explanation of the purpose of the study including information concerning voluntary participation in the study and terms of their withdrawal from the study, and that there would be no penalty if they withdrew. However, participants were informed they could not receive compensation until they completed all interviews. They were asked to sign the study consent form before any taping began, and were allowed to ask other questions about the purpose of the study and how it would affect them. A convenience sample was constructed of the first fifteen individuals who met the sample criteria and who agreed to continue with the study.

Participants received pseudonyms to protect their identity. Several of the participants had literary interests and the selection of new identities often took a literary direction when they selected the first name of an African American author. Some names were from authors of the past and others were contemporary authors. Other participants elected to use less famous names.

During the interviews, the tape recorder was positioned in the most unobtrusive location to assist a more natural dialogue between participants and interviewer, yet provide optimum sound quality for later transcription.

Questions about participant life histories served to encourage a positive rapport and trust (Fontana and Frey, 2005) between interviewer and participant. The initial interview was limited to an hour or an hour-and-a-half to avoid tiring the participants or over-taxing them during the first interview. The intent was to minimize the process so it

did not seem burdensome to the participants. The interaction sought to foster their desire to continue with the project and provide rich, reliable information while minimizing study influences on the participant that arose from their sheer participation in the study (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). It was important to maintain a good working relationship with participants since gaining their confidence required patience and the ability to hold their interest in completing the interview process.

While this study relied on face-to-face and tape-recorded interviews, it was often possible to observe and note the participant's social scene (Fetterman, 1989) and living conditions.

After establishing an interview rapport and completing the first interview, schedules were developed for subsequent interviews. The next interviews were more relaxed since the first interview helped establish mutual trust and facilitate interaction between interviewer and participant. As the stories of these participants were woven between a fixed set of questions, but allowing for divergent interview threads, these participants began to produce a rich tapestry of their lives in 21st century Austin, Texas.

Data Organization and Analysis

The primary unit of measure for this study was the spoken word. Once the interviews were completed, audiotapes were organized by the participant pseudonym and transcribed into text. The methodology for capturing audio and converting it for transcription has evolved with the continual changes in digital audio technology. If

protocol had permitted, actual audio clips from the interviews could have been added to provide the actual voices, tone, inflection, and texture of their voices. Text, context and nuance of the participants' spoken words communicate more than any text on a page can ever describe.

The textual data were organized into categorical tables based on the research questions and questionnaire categories. Participant responses to the questionnaire were summarized for each respondent and grouped into columns and rows.

Initially, interview text was compared across participants to identify commonalities or differences in their responses to the question items. Themes arose from participant responses to the primary, fixed question items. A secondary evaluation identified emergent themes from the interviews (i.e., topics that were unanticipated but emerged during the interviews). Secondary themes were placed in separate categories for further comment. The advantage of qualitative work is that it allows for inclusion of unanticipated responses that become part of the evolving research. Therefore, it was necessary to maintain a level of flexibility through using constant comparison of participant responses to the questionnaire to permit the creation of new categories and themes as they emerged (Collins, 2003).

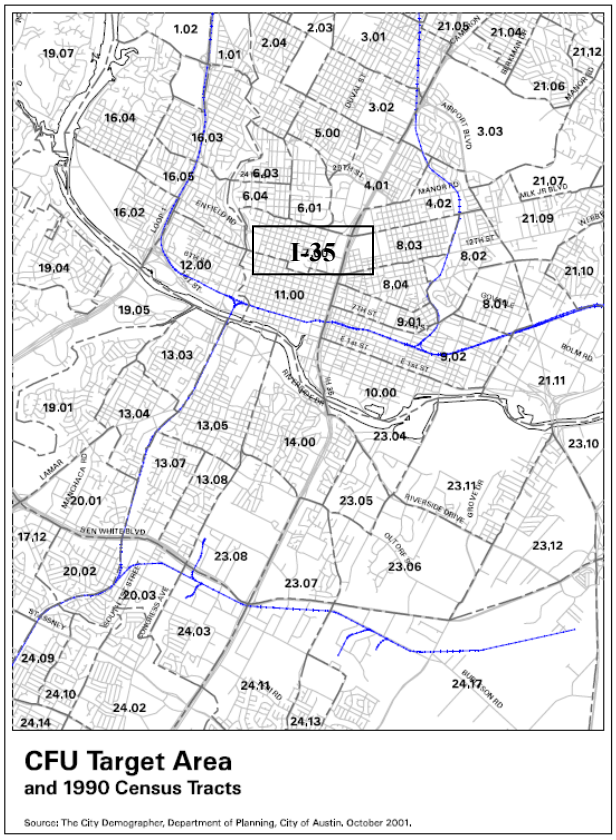
Lastly, a summative analysis was conducted to gain a comprehensive, composite picture of a small sample of African Americans with incomes of $40,000 or less who live in, or affiliate themselves with the East Austin community to learn how they live within

an information society. This was an initial step toward fulfilling the overarching intent to examine African American access, equity and representation in an information-dependent society where access to information is increasingly mediated by technology. This research project captures a brief glimpse of a segment of low to moderate income African-Americans in Austin, Texas, at the beginning of a new century.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

The introduction to this chapter is an observation of the social and cultural capital of the participants in this study through life histories. This chapter examines participant literacy and education capital, economic capital, self-efficacy, political capital, participant views about the information society and views about the future. Illustration 2 provides a geographic representation of the East Austin community referenced in this study.

Illustration 2. Map of Central Austin including area East & West of I-35



The East Austin ethnography conducted in 1999 provided a model for the ethnography interviews conducted with the 15 participants described in this chapter. The opening sessions with these participants began with a tour of their life histories as well as the social and cultural structures of their lives. A series of interview questions constructed to explore life histories was partly influenced by the outcome of the 1999 ethnographic questions, the report style employed during that ethnography and by the WPA workers who collected the slave narratives. The report typically opened with a paragraph describing the interviewee including age, income and residential location. The summary paragraph was followed by narrative provided by the former slave, usually in the transcriber's interpretation of slave dialect. No all interviewees apparently spoke in a slave dialect as some transcripts are written in standard American English.

This study partially replicates the narrative style of Alfred E. Mann (WPA), who was listed as the interviewer for most of the Travis County slave narratives. The outcome of the WPA interviews provided highly informative in describing the social conditions for this group of people in the 1930s. Like the WPA interviews, Chapter 4 begins with profiles of each contemporary participant in order to provide a context for their lives. The question items used to describe the participants were as follows:

Life Histories (Social and Cultural Capital)

Q1: Often our life experiences affect how we feel about ourselves. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Q2: Tell me about your family and your relationship with the family.

Q2a: Tell me about the family members. How many are there?

Q2b: Where do you fit within the family (family structure, e.g. head-of-household, single parent, two-parent household, extended family, etc.)?

Q3: Have you lived in Austin very long? **(If not native, ask, "What brought you to Austin?")**

Q4: What is it like living here in Austin and your neighborhood?

Q4a: Have you ever thought of living somewhere else? Why/why not?

Q5: What are some of the things that make life easy for you?

Q5a: What makes your life difficult?

Q6: Where did your family come from?

Q6a: Do you recall any family stories about your ancestors, things they did, where they worked?

Q7: Do you think slavery had any lasting effect on your family? How so?

Anna

Anna represents the 21st century generation of an African-American family that has lived in Austin, Texas, for at least four generations. She reported that her family lived in East Austin, beginning with her maternal great-grandparents. Anna also lived with her grandparents as a pre-teen near the Rosewood area in East Austin, in a home they owned. During her early childhood she attended Blackshear Elementary School, Pierce Middle School and LBJ High School in East Austin.

Anna was 26 years old at the time of her interview, an unmarried, single mother of two since the children's father spent much of his time on the road as a furniture mover.

She recalled having a dual life in East Austin. As a child, she, her brother and a cousin all resided with her grandparents after her mother and aunt became addicted to crack cocaine. She reported that, of all the family descendents, only her brother managed to attend college; everyone else was incarcerated or became pregnant at an early age. According to Anna, her neighborhood was filled with crime, from drug dealing to rape. She said that despite her mother's drug addiction, her mother managed to provide Anna and her brother with food and clothes while her aunt rarely did anything to assist Anna's cousin. Like many of her relatives, Anna became a young mother at 16 while still attending LBJ High School. Her mother at first was not supportive, but later began to help Anna. Despite the support from her mother, grandmother and friends, the demands of school and pregnancy become overwhelming and Anna dropped out of high school. She completed a general equivalency diploma (G.E.D.) a year before this interview.

Anna recounted another time, when her grandparents owned their home and several other properties; her grandfather had been in the military and her grandmother worked as a nurse. She expressed her pleasure in spending time with her maternal grandfather, who volunteered with a community service center and involved Anna by allowing her to assist him at the center when she was about 12 to 14 years old. She expressed sadness upon the loss of her grandfather. The family appeared to unravel following his death. Her grandmother could no longer afford to care for the three children and retain their property as Anna prepared to become a mother herself.

In an effort to escape her troubled life, Anna found her relationship with her children's father was a means of leaving East Austin. The children's father was from an upper-middle class family in Northwest Austin, but his mother and stepfather had limited involvement with him and Anna. Anna said, "His mother's also the type of person where she wants you to be the adult; be the responsible one. So, she's not gonna give it (financial support) to you." Her primary concern during her interview was getting additional training as a nail technician until she could save up enough money to become a licensed vocational nurse (LVN). Working as a cashier at Wal-Mart, she said she lived from paycheck to paycheck. As a low-income parent, she qualified for programs that assisted with daycare and food for her children.

Asked about her family history, Anna talked about life as her grandmother and grand aunts lived, it included picking cotton and living in a house with nine children. Some family members still pick cotton. She said, "…They worked so hard for so little money." Later, her grandmother became a nurse, which improved the household income.

Anna had limited job training; she never indicated attending any kind of career training courses, but she had managed to hold a few office jobs before taking the cashier position at Wal-Mart.

Coach

Coach, a public school teacher and middle school athletic coordinator, seemed highly motivated about her career, entrepreneurial endeavors and maintaining her quality

of life in Austin. She was a 34-year-old single parent with a 13-year-old son. Coach was recruited for this study at Mitchie's Fine BlackArt in East Austin (then on Manor Road).

Her family was originally from East Texas – Douglasville – but she was reared in North Texas and had lived in Austin approximately 15 months when interviewed. Coach grew up in a two-parent, strict household. She explained that her activities involved school, athletics and church. She expressed that she had been a star athlete, completed high school and went to junior college on a basketball scholarship. Her son was born after Coach completed junior college, but she never married the child's father, who lived near her parental home. After returning home, Coach tried attending school part-time, but decided that was ineffective. Through her parents support, Coach became a full-time student, completed a bachelor's degree in education and secured her first teaching position in a small Texas town. She later returned home where she taught school, coached and completed a master's degree in education.

Coach eventually obtained a teaching position in Houston, followed by her teaching and coaching position in Austin. Upon her arrival, she was dismayed by the small African-American population at her place of work compared to the school districts in the Dallas and Houston area. She went to East Austin to find a sense of community.

"I remember one time after I first moved here (Northeast Austin), I didn't see many (Black) people," she said, "so I thought there has to be railroad track on the end of Austin, so I'm like, 'OK, let me drive on the other side of the railroad, maybe I'll find someone over there,' and I went to the east side and that's where I found them. You

know, I was just kind of riding around just to see where the African American people were."

Coach recounted that her family lived in East Texas near Texarkana and Linden where her grandparents worked as domestics and sharecroppers. "…Somebody was working for somebody. You know as a nanny or a house cleaner…they talked about picking cotton a lot…They were fortunate enough not to go through slavery and stuff, but they still had to deal with racism and being called a nigger…" In her opinion, slavery has a lasting impact on society because it was a common experience for most Blacks. "Even if you didn't go through it, somebody in your family did. My great-great grandmother told it to her daughter and then it was told to her daughter and then my grandmother found out about it…then the stories were told to my Mom, then of course it comes to me….It does something to you emotionally."

Three things seemed to motivate Coach – her career, her son and entrepreneurship. Her outlook on life was upbeat despite the death of her mother to diabetes and coronary disease at age 55. In her spare time, she engaged in quality activities with her son, including his athletics and vacation travel. An achiever, she was looking forward to her next career step as an assistant principal with a plan to retire at the principal level, in addition to owing a business. She was well on her way. Since last contact with her, Coach had obtained an assistant principal position and opened a small, frozen treat convenience stand. She reported the convenience stand was not a good choice because it was a seasonal business and it was difficult to manage the expenses in

the off-season. Coach seemed completely self-sufficient and self-efficacious in achieving the goals she has set. What seemed to set her apart from other women who are single-parents described in this study were her nurturing and supportive parents, stable family environment (excluding the recent death of her mother), her motivation, access to education and employment and opportunity for advancement. Her success is an indicator that single-parenthood becomes less a barrier to success, if the parent has a support structure and access to resources that ensure the parents have adequate income to support the family.

Eleanor

Eleanor met her husband in the military and was a stay-at-home mother of two until her divorce. Both her children received a college education. She was in her early 50s when interviewed for this study and had lived in Austin 10 years since her relocation from New York. She said she was looking for a change and fell in love with Austin. Divorce motivated her to obtain an associate of arts degree in political science. Upon graduation, she was hired by a New York state senator as a legislative aide, and worked there for nearly 20 years. She never completed a baccalaureate degree. Eleanor had worked for nine years as a Texas state government employee in social services at the time of her interview and was approaching early retirement age. During her stay in Austin, Eleanor became involved in East Austin doing volunteer work. She was very pointed about her observations of the community and its need to progress rather than stagnate and decline. She frequently described a perceived unity among other ethnic groups and

immigrants who rely on family bonds, extended family, initiative, industriousness and self-efficacy. Survival was the common bond, according to Eleanor, that brought immigrant groups together in America.

She felt African Americans should follow that example, "Anything we do for ourselves is fine, but we also have got to remember that we have to survive in this society…We want to be a force in this world like some other ethnic groups…If you don't become a powerful force, financially, in this country, you can forget it. We're not going to be able to do that with all the young men in jail, and all the young women running around trying to take care of three and four babies....I get so depressed when I look at our young folk." She said there was an absence of unity within the African American community, unity needed to facilitate opportunities for self-improvement, job training and social advancement through reciprocal family support. That is what she perceived was different between African Americans and other ethnic and immigrant groups.

"Talking about Asian Americans, I've seen them, 10 of them, will live in one room, and they all work, and a year later they've bought that building; now they are renting me a room. We (African Americans) don't do that. I might have one room and you need somewhere to stay…Naw baby, I only got one room, that's just enough for me.' You've got to find your own place....I've seen families turn one another away....You have to build some type of community in your own group."

In her opinion, one step toward socioeconomic advancement for African-Americans is through homeownership, "After slavery.…the '50s and '60s, the thing was

land, buying property/house…After the Civil Rights Act, we had the opportunity to buy homes, but a lot of us didn't! Came the time of the '70s.… My mother had the opportunity to buy a home (in St. Louis), but she didn't want to do that, and a lot of that was out of ignorance. She had about a fifth grade education, she didn't know a lot about owning property, she didn't want the headache….We couldn't help her then, but now she has kids who could tell her what to do and how to fill out the paper work.…She regrets that to this day that she never, ever (bought a house).…I don't care if it's a one bedroom shack, it's yours!"

Eleanor gave considerable thought to intergenerational transfer of social capital and sees this process interrupted by the removal of African-American males from society when they are incarcerated. "We are just not passing along… we can't. Most or our young men today, are in prison, so you've got to start with the younger men. The 18, 19 years, some of them you're just going to have to give up; it's too late. But start concentrating on the two-, three-, four-, five-year olds because in 20, 25 years from now they will be your councilmen, your senators, and we would hope, governors, presidents...people that would have a say. But you're not going to have that unless, at some.…I've seen an article that says about 50 percent of African-Americans don't have computers.…Twenty years from now, if you don't know how to use a computer, you can't even work at McDonald's. One thing I would say about the average White family, they will do whatever is necessary to put a computer in their kid's hands…whatever he needs to get the tools in society.…because they have built something in life to pass on to

their children.…and the family, as a group, will probably help each other. We need to be doing something at this point to get a toe-hold on that business…and move forward."

When she first came to Austin, Eleanor volunteered with an East Austin social service agency that assisted the elderly with errands and transportation. While there were similar programs in other parts of the city, she opted for East Austin, where she felt the need was greater. Three years later, the caregivers program was discontinued when the funding dried up. "The funds were just not there. I've always like to work in the community.…I grew up in the 'hood and I know there is more of a need…Some of these people make you want to just cry…They have no one…They live very poorly.…This one lady hadn't had her hair washed.…She didn't have any running water." Eleanor conveyed delight in recounting her volunteer experiences with the low-income elderly of East Austin. What was disconcerting to Eleanor was the social behavior she observed in parts of the East Austin community, which she attributed to emulation of stereotypes. "Maybe Austin hasn't offered them any more.…Even talking to children, 'Sit your ass down,' I never talk to children like that.…That's just not how we were brought up, you don't talk to your children.…Everything they talk about…they're on drugs, they're in jail, they're out of jail….Going to jail is like a badge of honor."

Her main concern was that children deserved a little more from life than what they were getting. Loss of community, or community-extended family, was of concern to Eleanor because she suggested that a communal approach to community building would lessen the burden on individual members in their service to the community. She

recounted the intergenerational cycle of welfare, social service dependence and incarceration in one family she assisted.

"They're not a bad family of people, and it's just that they don't know any better. This is their lifestyle…all their lives; now it's being handed down to the greatgrand children because they're around this all the time."

Some of her other community activities included participating in health screenings through her church. Despite her early involvement in the community, Eleanor said she felt alienated from East Austin. "I don't have the same feeling here…East Austin doesn't seem like it's a community that wants intervention. Sometimes when you're an outsider, they're just not as friendly…I'm still considered an outsider."

Despite her relative success working in politics and government, Eleanor lamented the lack of diversity within her state agency. "It kind of gets to you when you go to various meetings….Our top brass is all White. Your board members are all White….There are about 60 people in my department, and when they (department staff) have their weekly meeting, they're all White. The directors, and above, are all White…They recently hired one lady and she is Black. That kind of bothers me when we go into these meetings when everybody looks the same, acts the same, comes from the same type of communities…you think along the same lines. That's probably why there's not a lot of change. I don't even think it's recognizable." She attributed that attitude to regional culture and referenced Vidor, Texas, a historically all White community. Eleanor clearly stated that much of this was just her perception about things from her

direct observations in the workplace and in the community. She expressed that she would like to move to Atlanta, where one of her daughters and grandson lived.

Evelyn

Evelyn represents a reverse trend in African-American geographic migration. Her family was originally from the South, but she moved north seeking industrial employment. She relocated to Austin in 1970 as a teen just out of high school. Her sisters, one married, one single, had earlier moved to Austin when Evelyn's brother-in-law was stationed at the former Bergstrom Air Force Base.

Evelyn's family was originally from Georgia, but migrated to the North like many southern Blacks during the 1940s and 1950s. Her family settled in Ohio, where her father obtained employment as a construction worker in what she described as a blue-collar community. Her mother was a housewife, and Evelyn said that while she respected her mother, she did not want to be like her mother – cooking, cleaning, tending the garden, taking care of 10 children and being subservient to her husband. Her mother died when Evelyn was in the eighth grade.

Despite her large family, Evelyn said that she did not feel deprived as a youth. Her family was much like all the others in her community – average, with good family values; the primary difference since they were usually the only Black family in the community. She described that community as very industrial with several manufacturing plants.

Moving to Austin, Evelyn said she experienced culture shock. She had limited experience in living among a large community of Blacks and Hispanics. "I had never seen a Mexican until I came to Austin." In addition, while she felt her father earned better wages than southern Blacks, they seemed to have a better lifestyle than people in her northern community. Her impression was that northern Blacks engaged in conspicuous consumption to show their northern success and leave behind their southern roots. Her parents owned a home in the North and had fair wages although they were primarily unskilled laborers. Evelyn's mother and father never finished high school; however, Evelyn did pursue an associate of arts degree in computer technology, but did not complete the program.

When she arrived in Austin, Evelyn observed a difference in the demeanor of Blacks in the community. She said they were less assertive than other racial groups and avoided confrontation, "…the friends that we had didn't know how to talk to White people." She had difficulty in understanding or accepting that behavior. "They (Blacks) all went to Black schools….They didn't want to have to mingle with them (Whites).…The people here felt inferior to White people and they didn't know how to interact with them.…That's how it was, some people right here in Austin." In Ohio, she reported there were only seven Blacks in her high school graduating class of 600 and she was accustomed to interacting with White people, "…You had to get some White friends.…We were all like the same ages…It didn't matter to me whether you were

White…I would befriend…." She acknowledged she was unaware that school desegregation remained a delicate issue when she first moved to Austin.

Her early days in Austin were spent trying to find affordable housing after her married sister left town. This search led her to the Rosewood and Airport Boulevard area in East Austin. She liked the Black community and the places where they gathered, e.g., "Givens Park where people would congregate, and everybody would congregate on Sunday. They would ride through the park. We didn't have anything like that in Ohio."

Evelyn was employed in a skilled profession – as a hair stylist – in one of Austin's upscale, retail department stores where she enjoyed success, eventually becoming the salon manager and a representative for the franchise that operated the salon. That success ended when Evelyn began to suspect the department store was engaging in employment discrimination. When she inquired about the store's hiring practices, Evelyn felt the store pressured the salon franchise to terminate her and another employee. She said, "That store was known for not allowing Blacks to try on clothes before the late '60s."

Nevertheless, Evelyn continued working as a hair stylist by contracting space in Austin salons. Today she still feels disparate treatment when the salon operators avoid scheduling walk-in clients or new clients with her, even when all the other stylists are booked. She says she is as skilled as any White stylist, but suggests she is not given the same opportunity as the White stylists. What is crucial for Evelyn is the loss of customers while her salon lease expenses remain the same.

In her opinion, it is difficult to get financial support from lending institutions as well. "We've got ourselves in such a fix that even if it's not discrimination, they're still gonna say, 'Well, you still don't qualify because of this or that…' Some White folks – they'll go beyond that to help them. They ain't gonna do that for Black folk." She described other examples of racism in contemporary society, referencing a local incident of alleged police brutality, "Some things change, some things remain the same. We have not evolved. We say we have, but we have not evolved, and every day something's happening (that) shows you that every day. For instance, that boy that got beaten in the car by policemen and the police got off. Jury let them go. Plain as day, you saw what they did on video."

Contrary to her feelings about the racial conditions in Austin, she said it is the only place in Texas she would want to live.

Fatima

Fatima, a native of Austin, was 51 when interviewed for this study and was recruited during the Black Family Technology Day at the Millennium Youth Center in East Austin. After her mother's death, Fatima spent most of her life in East Austin in a home owned by her father and stepmother near Walnut and 19th streets (now Martin Luther King Boulevard) close to Givens Park, which offers numerous East Austin community programs throughout the year and is a popular community recreational site.

Fatima was in her second marriage, and described a harmonious marital life with her husband, originally from North Carolina. She does not have any children. She and

her spouse are government workers. Fatima has worked in county government for 22 years.

Before going to live with her father at age 5, Fatima resided in a rented home in the Hargrove area near what is now the Millennium Youth Center, not far from the former Black high school during segregation, "Old Anderson High School…It was kind of a little poor area. In a little small rented house, it was my brother, my mother and my great-aunt."

She observed changes in the neighborhood since attending high school. Some community changes were positive such as the Millennium Youth Center. Fatima also expressed concern about the changing population and social structure in the neighborhood where her father still lived, "The area is like, I call it a half-way house for guys that are out of jail or prison and they have to stay somewhere.…They're building a second (half-way) house across from (confidential) ….I kind of would like to get him (her father) out, if I could afford it…The music is loud.…I tend to think people have broken in on him." She first noticed the neighborhood changing in the 1980s, first with the ethnic shift from Black to Hispanic, and the exodus of young people. "You always want to move up.…" Aging owners and changes in home ownership were also points of concern to Fatima. She expressed despair about the transitions in her old neighborhood.

Gladys

Gladys was a single, 43-year-old African-American woman born in Austin, and resided in the city since birth. She is a community health worker employed by a local,

non-profit, sexual health education organization. Gladys continues to reside in East Austin with her parents who are also long-term residents of Austin. She attended school in the Austin Independent School District in and outside her community. She was bused to Anderson High School where she was a member of the marching band. Upon graduation, she attended the University of Texas and was a member of the varsity Longhorn Band. She majored in music, but did not obtain a degree from UT. She later attended Austin Community College and Southwest Texas State University where she received training in counseling. She previously worked in a bar patronized by the gay community. She began community outreach work when she saw many of her gay customers and friends dying of AIDS and other diseases. She went to work for a local AIDS service and later her current employment in reproductive management services. She feels her community involvement in AIDS prevention helped qualify her for a position in sex education. Her focus is teen health and sex education. She indicates satisfaction with her position and feels that she always intended to become a teacher of some kind.

Greg

Greg was a divorced man in his mid-to-late 30s. Greg was originally from New Orleans, where he spent his early life in the projects with his single mother and eight siblings. He said the family moved from the housing projects in 1972 and he was able to attend a new school. Greg recounted as a child he often wondered what it was like to be a slave. When he was 7 or 8 years old, he had to pass an abandoned plantation each day.

He said he would play in the plantation and imagine his life as a slave. "I can remember on the way to school, we had to walk past some woods and there was this area. There was this big old plantation house and it was all boarded up and sometime we would like run around the house and just imagine what it was like to be a slave." He said his ideas about slavery then came from the media, "Well, some TV. We'd seen...this was a few years before *Roots* but we'd seen *Gone With the Wind* and stuff we had seen in other films on TV about slavery and stuff." Greg's imaginative play incorporated some ideas about the slave experience albeit cultivated by what he was in the media.

He lived in Austin about 10 years following his discharge from the military. Greg intermittently worked as a nurse and was in the Army reserves. Greg described a love-hate relationship with the military. In one respect, the Army and the National Guard gave him opportunities such as obtaining his G.E.D. Conversely, he seemed to despise the military policies and his perceived disparate treatment from his commanders. Greg dropped out of high school at 16 and joined the Army. His views about the military seemed associated to the duty assignments he received, whether he felt he had received a fair assignment, and his desire to perform those duties. The military transferred him to a number of duty stations, including Germany, but after two years and a failed marriage, he was ready to return to America. Greg re-enlisted in the military several more times before completing his training as an LVN while stationed in San Antonio in 1994. The training as a nurse helped Greg obtain employment as a nurse in Austin, but as a socialist, he reported he hated the profit-driven, corporate management of health care,

"Politically I'm a socialist and I would prefer to work in a socialized healthcare setting. People say that is utopian but it's not all that. I lived in Europe for two years and they have a much better health care system. It is much more socialized than our system, so that does stress me out when I have to work in an environment like that."

Greg reported his first experiences with activism in New Orleans when he joined the young socialist movement, but left it behind after he dropped out of school at 16. In Austin, Greg established associations with KOOP radio and the community-based technology groups, then rekindled his interest in community activism. Later, Greg began to participate in grassroots initiatives designed to increase technology access in the Black community. In addition, he was a volunteer at a middle school and volunteered in other community-based activities. Greg maintains a community listserv and distributes information on local community events and forums including political events as well as entertainment.

Ida

Bright-eyed articulate, intelligent and astute, Ida, a New York transplant, first came to Texas in 1982 and moved to Austin in 1998. She acknowledged being a lesbian. Ida was in her early 50s and had multiple health problems that led to her classification as disabled. Before becoming disabled, she worked in state government, but now receives a monthly disability stipend and lives in public-assisted housing. Ida is a recovering alcoholic and a former drug abuser who had a failing liver due to a hepatitis C infection, and she had diabetes. She was optimistic that she would receive a liver transplant.

Despite her health problems and reliance on public transportation, Ida was actively involved in the community; a poet, writer and public access channel producer. She was recruited for this interview during a public forum on Austin police brutality at the Passon Society in East Austin.

Throughout her lifetime, Ida struggled with her identity; first as a tall, thin, dark girl with an African father and African-American mother. Then she struggled with her sexuality, desperately trying to adhere to the perceived normative rules of the Black community; that is, living as a heterosexual, but knowing that she was not. She also reported being sexually molested as a young girl.

During the time she was adjusting to her sexual orientation and gender identity, Ida began using alcohol and drugs, primarily cocaine. She had two pregnancies, one of which was aborted and the other miscarried. Ida had minimal current family contact, other than the extended family of her artistic and lesbian community. Even so, she felt ostracized from her lesbian community on occasion, because of her age and race, and ostracized from the Black community because of her sexuality. Ida expressed that she would like to be embraced by the Black church, but felt homosexuality remained taboo in the Black community. While she was active in the East Austin community, she seemed to prefer maintaining anonymity by becoming invisible, except for her poetry and as a producer of an access television project. Nevertheless, she approached her sexual orientation with a sense of humor by assuring, “We (lesbians) don’t recruit.”

Maya

Unfortunately, Maya withdrew from the study shortly before completing her interview sessions. Research protocol prevents any discussion of her interview.

Nate

Nate was a single male in his early 30s, a non-traditional student, who was completing his baccalaureate degree at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His family lived in East Austin for at least three generations and he fondly recalled the family gatherings, celebrations and picnics they held in some of the East Austin parks, such as Rosewood Park.

A talented artist and science fiction writer, Nate aspired to illustrate and publish his own books. He completed a 600-page novel and was in the process of illustrating the book. As a low-income student, he never overtly complained about limited financial resources needed to complete his education and was usually upbeat and optimistic about his potential for success. Nate often attributed much of his inspiration to his mother, also a writer, poet and publisher.

Nikki

Nikki, a 49 year-old, twice-divorced mother of two, lived in East Austin most of her life. Her ancestors originated in Sears and Calvert, Texas where they picked cotton, worked as domestics and farmed. Her parents moved to Austin when her father was stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base. Her mother remained a homemaker until she was 40 years old, then she returned to school.

Nikki resided in the family homestead not far from the Carver Library and Cultural Center on Angelina Street at various times, but mainly dwelled at the family home. Nikki reported a very structured but supportive family environment with strict parental discipline, high family values and goals. She said they were referred to as "as proper" children, meaning she and her siblings used correct grammar and language. They did not know slang or use Ebonics, a form of African American dialect.

Nikki attended Kealing Junior High and Austin High School and observed disparities in educational expectations between the schools. She attributed these disparities not to discrimination, but educational preparedness indicating that teachers at Austin High School seemed to communicate these expectations differently. She said, "It seemed like they were talking a different language."

Her father was intolerant of poor grades and Nikki had to work to keep up, eventually making the honor roll.

Nikki reported attending community college and attempting a senior college, but withdrew when her mother became ill. She entered her first marriage and produced two children, but never returned to college, commenting, "My commitment was to my children. I felt they deserved that."

Nikki had worked at the University of Texas most of her adult life and was planning for retirement by consolidating, paying off debts and thinking of starting a business.

She spoke of moving to the country, noting her neighborhood had some positive changes with new construction and new neighbors, but there was crime and that worried her. Overall, she felt the changes were good for the community, but she would like to see more done to curb drug dealing, prostitution and burglary in the neighborhood, saying, "There was a drug raid down the street and that scared me."

Robin

Robin was in her late 40s and the thrice-divorced parent of two children: a daughter in her late teens and a son in his 20s who had one child. Robin's family has a generational connection to the Austin area. Her parents attended Huston-Tillotson College (University) in East Austin, but moved to Long Island, New York after their graduation. Her grandparents resided in East Austin. Other family members lived in various parts of Travis County. Robin recalled family visits to Austin during her childhood, but primarily attended public school in Long Island. As a high school student, Robin began to have difficulties with her father and asked if she could live with her grandparents in Austin. She attended Reagan High School for one year. Robin did not volunteer the nature of her difficulties with her father. After high school, she attended a state university in Houston, but did not graduate at that time. During college, Robin worked in broadcast news and married her first husband. Robin's major was art, and her husband's major was broadcast media. When she landed a position in media, Robin said, her husband became envious and was frequently abusive. Despite the fragile relationship, the couple had a child together, but eventually divorced. Robin allowed her

husband to take custody of her son, and she moved to Austin. She married a second and third time. Both marriages ended in divorce. Her second marriage produced a daughter who was living with Robin. According to Robin, the discord in her marriages perhaps arose from her high personal goals that exceeded the goals of her spouses. She frequently complained that she needed a spouse who was as committed to emotional and financial success as she; otherwise, there was no need for a marriage.

Terri

Terri was born in Buffalo, Texas, but her family returned to Austin shortly after her birth. Her mother, now deceased, was a homemaker, but later became a licensed vocational nurse when Terri and her siblings reached maturity. Her father, also deceased, was a sanitation worker, cab driver and 'loan shark,' according to Terri. A divorced mother of three adult children, Terri lived in the family homestead with her brother in East Austin. Terri earned associate of arts and baccalaureate degrees and worked for a State of Texas agency, but reported her income was inadequate to cover the rising cost of living, particularly regarding the property tax increases due to housing programs that allowed for new home construction in her neighborhood. The appraised values of the new homes also caused an increase in her taxes.

Terri was unmarried when she had her first child in 1972. The father never expressed interest in marriage and eventually left the city. Nevertheless, through parental support, she returned to college, completed a bachelor's degree and obtained employment. Seven years later, she married a man in the military who transferred to

Georgia, then to Hawaii where Terri's second child was born in 1982. The family returned to Austin and lived with her mother following her parents' divorce. Eventually, Terri and her husband divorced in 1984. Terri fortunately obtained employment with the state after her divorce and was able to support her family.

Terri seemed to have experienced a blissful childhood growing up in East Austin. Her community, not far from where some of the emancipated slaves once lived, was primarily residential. She recalled days spent at the park, attending nice schools, going to church and living in a good community. During her interview, she mentioned the changes in the ethnic and housing make-up of the neighborhood – diverse racial groups, public-assisted Section 8 housing (housing for low-income families), new home construction under neighborhood revitalization programs and the traditional residents. The neighborhood transitions left Terri in a quandary, again, about how to keep up the homestead and pay the taxes, while trying to adjust to her new neighbors who were Hispanic or Anglo. Her brother, however, seemed oblivious to her concerns. She felt he often suffered from depression that perhaps affected his ability to obtain or maintain adequate employment.

Terri indicated she would like more family contact and that she uses the Internet at home to keep in touch with family members. She is actively involved in church, commenting, "I love going to church."

Toni

Toni, a single mother of two, moved to Austin from Lubbock, Texas, at the age of 22. According to Toni, Lubbock had limited opportunities for Blacks, her life and social relationships had stagnated, and many of her friends seemed complacent about personal advancement or were involved in self-destructive behaviors like drug abuse and abusive relationships. She had lived in Austin for three years at the time of her interview.

Toni and the father of her first child, a daughter, were 16 when the child was born. Toni's mother did not detect the pregnancy until Toni was in her seventh month of maternity. She attributed this to her athletic physique which helped to conceal the pregnancy. This meant Toni did not receive prenatal care until her seventh month of pregnancy, despite the fact that her mother is a nurse. She was able to complete high school a year early because she had extra academic credits before her pregnancy, and she briefly transferred to a high school designed to accommodate pregnant students. Nevertheless, she reported experiencing post-partum depression following the birth and said she gave the baby minimal care.

"I felt more in shock, I think.…in my mind, I guess I was trying to think of my health for myself. I don't believe I was in the state everyone said I was in.…I was young and I had never taken care of a baby before. My mother was always there, but then, something snaps… 'This is not my mother's baby, this is MY baby!' " She was 30 when she had the second child, a son. Her first child was born in Lubbock and her second child, 8 months old at the time of her interview, was born in Austin. The father of the

second child has three other children with another woman, and did not provide child support. She said, "I feel like he just don't care."

Toni also experienced early parenthood. Her mother became pregnant as a teen at age 14 and married her husband who was also 14. Her father had only a fifth grade education. However, her mother became a licensed vocational nurse and was preparing to become a registered nurse. Her father worked as a mechanic.

Toni's parents were very supportive of her after the first baby was born. She was also able to obtain training as a phlebotomist at the hospital where her mother worked. That paid $6.50 an hour in Lubbock, but she was unsuccessful in her first attempts to become a licensed vocational nurse at the community college. Apparently, she was undaunted by this because she talked of trying a four-year college for training as a physical therapist.

Her second child has various medical problems that required medications costing at least $50 a month. The baby had been hospitalized five times since birth via a Caesarean section. Both Toni's children were Caesarean births.

Toni expressed great appreciation for her parents and the grandparents of her first child, but was disheartened about not providing her children with a two-parent household, "I had two parents, I don't know what it's like for my daughter.…I don't know how to be a man (for my son)."

With high aspirations for her children, and extreme concern for their educational success, she changed her residence from East Austin in search of a better school for her

first child. Toni also wanted to ensure that her children did not become teen parents. Her older child was involved in various activities for which she made financial sacrifices to support extracurricular activities, at least $85 a month. A friend, an unofficial godmother, often helped with these expenses.

Finances were a major problem for Toni. While she felt her family would assist her, she preferred to be self-sufficient. Her salary was higher in Austin, but she relied on Section 8 housing and other social services such as WIC (Women Infants and Children) that provided milk, eggs, cereal, peanut butter and juices for her children. She said the WIC supplements helped out after she returned to work and cut back on breast-feeding after funds ran short following a lengthy maternity leave because of her second Caesarean section. Unfortunately, her children did not eat very many of these substances. Toni would prefer not to rely on public assistance, but found it necessary to supplement her income. She filed for child support, but had not received any money at that time. Toni wanted a second job, but found it difficult to work two jobs and responsibly parent two children.

Zora

Zora was a single parent in her early 30s during the time of her interview. She had one child who had health problems that affected Zora's decisions about her career and any advanced study. Disharmony at home, her stepfather's alcoholism, a strict mother and limited opportunity in her hometown led her to relocate to Austin from Bryan, Texas, when she was 18. She moved in with her sister, but after three years, her

sister returned to Bryan, and Zora remained in Austin. Despite her mother's warnings and her Christian beliefs about sex before marriage, Zora became pregnant at age 20, two years after moving to Austin. Her mother has since died, but she has two brothers, a sister and her son's godmother as her remaining family. Zora works as a church administrative assistant and a freelance journalist, who also does newspaper layout, yet she expressed a lack of self-confidence and partly attributed that to never being encouraged to seek advanced education beyond high school from her parents, or being encouraged to seek opportunities outside of Bryan. Nevertheless, she managed to complete a course at a proprietary business college and attempted to take some courses in community college in digital media, but her self-doubt, childcare needs, finances, lack of transportation, pregnancy and inability to accept help from others often led to self-defeat. Now she feels that she is too old to fit in with younger people attending college. Mainly, she expressed that she could not get beyond feeling like a failure.

When Zora became pregnant, she was encouraged by a pregnancy counselor not to terminate her pregnancy. Later, she moved in with the counselor who eventually developed a new romantic relationship, and Zora was forced to move several more times before receiving public housing assistance that landed her in a high crime area. During her residence there someone was shot outside her apartment window, but she continued to live there for another five years. Eventually Zora received Section 8 housing assistance for a duplex in East Austin where she had lived for the two years preceding her interview. Her son was receiving child support from his father who also lived in Austin. Both she

and her son receive food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and Medicaid, but she hated having to go through the process of applying for welfare and what she felt were enticements to apply for additional aid. Most of the time she expressed embarrassment in visiting the welfare office because there always seemed to be a stigma placed on welfare recipients as dead-beats.

In addition, her son had six surgeries between ages 2 and 7. He developed speech and hearing problems that required him to attend therapy several times a week. Zora used public transportation to take her son to therapy. She commented her son's father would frequently see them at the bus stop, but just drove by. Zora expressed that she often feels overwhelmed and disappointed with herself because she never finished college. For her, college represents a chance for better income and a better life for her son.

Zora recounted her grandparents once owned land and livestock; however, the family no longer held the property. Another family story recounted her great-uncle's lynching in a small Texas town for allegedly stealing food for his family. (She offered the story was verifiable in the city history).

At the time of her interview, she was working on an invention designed to amuse children who are bedridden after observing her son who had remained in bed during his illnesses.

Obviously, the above participants share some attributes but also are unique individuals. Table 1 summarizes age, marital status, age at first pregnancy and number of

children and grandchildren for the participants described above. This chart helps to illustrate the extended, family responsibilities for each participant. While six participants were unmarried at the time of their first pregnancy, four of the six were in their teens, ranging in age from 16 to 18. Four other participants, 2 men and two women, did not have biological children.

Table 1. Family Size and Status at First Pregnancy

Participant	Age at first pregnancy	Marital Status first pregnancy	Reported Pregnancies	No. of Children	Grandchildren
Anna	16	unmarried	2	2	
Coach	18	unmarried	1	1	
Eleanor	unknown	married	2	2	1
Evelyn	N/A	N/A	0	0	
Fatima	N/A	N/A	0	0	
Gladys	N/A	N/A	0	0	
Greg	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	
Ida	16	unmarried	2	0	
Maya †	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nate	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	
Nikki	20s	married	2	2	1
Robin	20s	married		2	1
Terri	20s	unmarried	2	2	2
Toni	16	unmarried	2	2	
Zora	20s	unmarried	1	1	

† Maya withdrew from the study.

Literacy/Educational Capital

The second and third levels of inquiry addressed literacy and educational capital as well as economic capital. The literacy and educational capital questions consisted of four prompts, beginning with a general question about experiences in school and ending with whether finishing high school or going to college would have made a difference in the participant's life. The question items were as follows:

Q8: Tell me about school. Did you graduate from high school? **(If no, go to Q9a.)**

Q8a: Any advanced study?

Q9a: What happened that you didn't finish high school?

Q9b: Do you think finishing high school or maybe going to college would have made a difference in your life?

The third level of inquiry on economic capital utilized five question prompts with a skip pattern depending on the employment status of the respondent. The question items constructed to ascertain the level of participant economic capital consisted of the following:

Economic Capital

Q10: What kind of work do you do? **(If unemployed, skip to Q10a. If yes, skip to Q11)**

Q10a: Tell me why you are not working right now. **(Go to Q10b)**

Q10b: How do you support yourself/family when you are not working?

Q11: What kind of training or education did you need to perform the job?

From the responses obtained from the participants, it was determined that 13 of the remaining participants finished high school, two of the participants (Greg and Anna) held a general equivalency diploma (G.E.D.). Greg also obtained a diploma as a licensed vocational nurse. Eleanor completed an associate of arts degree. Gladys and Evelyn attended college, but dropped out after a few years. Coach, Fatima, Robin, Terri and Ida held college degrees. The remainder of the participants held high school diplomas.

Greg and Gladys were the most vocal about the disparities they observed in their primary and secondary school experiences. Gladys attended local, Austin public schools in the 1960s and '70s. Greg attended public school in New Orleans, but he became active as a community volunteer with Kealing Middle School when he moved to Austin.

Gladys' mother worked in the Austin public schools. Her mother successfully placed her children in elementary schools that perhaps were viewed as having a rigorous curriculum. Gladys attributed some of her success to those early educational experiences. She participated in extra-curricular activities like school band, but observed that she was often one of the few African American students in the band. When Gladys entered high school, she was bused to the new, predominantly White, Anderson High School in Northwest Austin, a school surrounded by an affluent neighborhood that once listed Michael Dell, of Dell Computers, as one of its residents. The "old" High School was previously located in East Austin and was a predominantly Black high school. Fatima attended the "old" Anderson. She lamented its closing and the void it left in her old East Austin community.

Gladys attributed her feelings of isolation in high school to her personality rather than to ostracism because of discrimination or prejudice. She observed that being bused to "new" Anderson limited her interaction with teenagers in her local community, but did not suggest this negatively affected her social development. Even so, she completed high school and was admitted to the University of Texas at Austin where she continued her participation in band with the UT Longhorn Band. Despite her academic preparation

and family support, Gladys withdrew from UT-Austin and had not completed her degree at the time of her interview. Overall, Gladys felt that her educational experiences and family support were good, but attributed her inability to finish a college degree to the challenging demands of a post-secondary institution and being focused on her academic performance. She indicated that she would like to finish one day, but it was a difficult choice to return to school.

Gladys, Terrie, and Fatima were products of the Austin Independent School District and had experiences in common, but they had other experiences that were unique to family educational expectations, family support systems and access to educational opportunities.

Greg's views about the public education system in New Orleans were juxtaposed with Gladys' experience in Austin. He was highly critical of the schools he attended. Greg's family was poor, yet he indicated he looked to school as an outlet for creativity and learning. But he reported feeling discriminated against and experiencing rejection at his school. Greg commented that he often wanted to take the college preparatory curriculum, but was placed in remedial math or lower-level courses. He felt he had the ability to be competitive in the college prep courses, but felt that he was intentionally restricted from those classes. Independently Greg read works such as the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* and books by Karl Marx. He often ran at loggerheads with his teachers and the school administration when he challenged their policies. In frustration, Greg dropped

out of high school, and lied about his age to enter the military. He later obtained a G.E.D. and a degree as a licensed vocational nurse.

Four of the participants were teen or single mothers and their experiences as young mothers seemed to affect their educational experiences more than any vestiges of school desegregation or access to educational programs.

Anna and Toni became pregnant in their last years of high school while Coach, Terri and Zora became single mothers after high school, but before finishing college. Coach completed baccalaureate and Master of Arts degrees, Terri held an associate of arts degree when she became pregnant but later obtain a baccalaureate degree, and Zora had taken a few college courses.

What seemed to influence the social advancement of the women who were teen parents in high school was parental or extended family support with housing, emotional and financial assistance. For example, Anna and Toni were in high school when they became pregnant. Toni lived in a stable, two-parent household. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a general laborer. Toni managed to conceal her pregnancy for several months before her parents became aware of her condition. Nevertheless, the family was supportive of Toni when they learned of the pregnancy, then during pregnancy and postpartum. She also attended a high school that was receptive to teen mothers. Toni attributed her ability to finish school to those two factors. She continued to receive the support of her family and friends following the birth of her daughter. While at home, Toni's mother assisted her in obtaining employment as a phlebotomist at the hospital

where she worked as a nurse. The skills obtained as a phlebotomist provided Toni with a marginal income and the opportunity to relocate to Austin.

Anna's mother was unable to parent her children. Her grandparents were responsible for rearing Anna from middle school through high school along with her brother and a cousin since Anna's mother and aunt were drug addicts. Anna indicated they used crack cocaine, and she suggested her mother's addiction negatively impacted Anna. She recounted,

> "My mother and my cousin's mother was on drugs. That kind of affected my life a lot as far as school and maybe the reason I got pregnant and everything. But, you know, it didn't stop anything."

She added that her family faced a number of difficulties ranging from teen pregnancy to incarceration. She stated,

> "I can say my whole generation in my family went through the same thing I went through, and I wasn't the first one. Between the ages of I can say now 17 through 25, neither one of us successfully graduated. It's about nine or ten of us between male and female. All the males in my family between that age range got incarcerated. And the girls got, you know, pregnant, dropped out of school. So, you know, I tended to think sometimes it was just our family, or maybe our family was cursed or something."

Anna vaguely recalled a time when life was better. Her grandmother was a retired nurse, but her grandparents began to experience financial difficulties that reduced their household income. She reported insurmountable stress during her pregnancy due to the financial strain on her grandparents, their increased responsibility with childrearing, financial constraints, drug addiction, incarceration and Anna's own teen pregnancy at the

age of 16. A junior in high school, she recalled the difficulties experienced in continuing her education. She stated,

> "Getting pregnant at an early age set back my goals. So, I'm trying to get back to where I can achieve my goals and everything that I've worked for.…It (teen pregnancy) disrupts – it changed my whole life. I wasn't ready for a child, but God bless me, he came. So…I tried to continue in the Delta program (a program for pregnant teens), and it didn't really work trying to take care of my baby and trying to find a part-time job and everything."

Anna attempted to persevere, but found the pressure overwhelming and she eventually withdrew from school. She eventually completed a G.E.D. when she was 23 years old, but her low employment skills only prepared her to work at unskilled jobs such as a stock clerk or a cashier at a large discount store. She expressed interest in obtaining a skill or trade beginning with employment as a technician in a nail salon, and later perhaps by attending community college to become a licensed vocational nurse (LVN).

Toni was able to obtain skilled employment as a phlebotomist, but Anna's minimal work skills limited her ability to earn a better income.

Coach, Terri and Zora became single mothers after graduating high school. Coach was attending college; Terri had completed her associate of arts degree and Zora attempted a few courses at the community college. All were from a two-parent household, but Coach indicated she had a stable home environment with two parents dedicated to assisting her through the pregnancy and helping her earn a college degree. Terri also reported her mother was very supportive of her, but her college education was momentarily interrupted during that time. Zora reported having an alcoholic father and a

critical, unsupportive mother, who were less inclined to come to her aid. Her social contacts in Austin were also limited since her sister moved away.

Coach returned to her parents' home when she became pregnant. Terri was living in Austin attending a local four-year institution, and Zora, already living and working in Austin, decided to remain in Austin during her pregnancy.

Coach had financial and emotional support of her parents during her pregnancy and postpartum. She was able to return to college while her parents cared for her son until she graduated with a bachelor's degree.

Zora, however, reported being fraught with self-doubt, uncertainty and financially burdened during her pregnancy. The biological father only intermittently provided financial support and Zora was frequently unemployed or under-employed. Her son developed health problems after his birth adding to Zora's emotional and financial difficulties. Nevertheless, Zora managed to attend a few courses at the local community college, but was never able to earn sufficient credits to obtain an associate degree. She expressed feeling incapable of finishing the degree and often being overcome with self-doubt about her ability to succeed in life. Zora continued to work at various jobs. She was employed as an administrative assistant for a church and was a freelance reporter for a Black newspaper when interviewed for this study. Nevertheless, she reported having to rely on public welfare, plus assistance from the church and community in making ends meet.

Eleanor, Evelyn, Fatima, Nate, Nikki, Robin, and Terri reported successfully matriculating through secondary school without any major setbacks in obtaining their basic education. Fatima, Robin and Terri completed a 4-year college degree. Eleanor held a two-year associate degree. Evelyn completed a vocational training program in cosmetology and Nikki worked as an administrative assistant since high school. Nate, a non-traditional student, was nearing his junior year at a Texas state university in San Antonio.

Of this group, Fatima expressed most concern for the loss of Anderson High School in the Black community. Both Fatima and Terri attended Anderson, but Fatima was more introspective about what "old" Anderson High meant to the Black community. Fatima was nostalgic about the school and the community that surrounded it. She never commented about any disparities in education resources at Anderson compared to other schools. Instead, she recalled the social and educational contributions the school made to the community as a place for Black students to learn, socialize and find pride in the community.

While Fatima began her early life somewhat impoverished, her quality of life improved when she left her grandmother to live with her father and stepmother. Terri, on the other hand, grew up in a stable household with two parents who supported her through school. Both Fatima and Terri completed their post-secondary education at Huston-Tillotson College (now, University) and were able to obtain employment with state agencies in Austin.

Fatima lived in a two-income household, but Terri was the sole source of income in her household when interviewed. Terri shared the family homestead with a brother who was sporadically employed, and he rarely contributed to household expenses. While Fatima seemed financially secure, Terri was concerned that her income was insufficient to maintain the family home, pay the rising property taxes due to neighborhood gentrification, pay the rising cost of her medical care and support her brother. Terri often mentioned that she sacrificed purchasing her diabetes medication in order to pay other bills.

Robin appeared most confident about her educational and work experiences. Robin, a talented artist, had marketable skills in mural painting and sculpting. She never mentioned any negative experiences or disparities in educational resources at the schools she attended. A single, divorced mother of one, Robin's primary complaint concerned her former spouse who she reported failed to meet her expectations as a husband and provide financial support. Robin worked at a private charter school, but she was satisfied with her income and lifestyle as single parent. She was engaged in several artistic projects at the time and expressed pleasure and pride in her accomplishments.

Nate was also an Austin native who was completing his post-secondary education in San Antonio. In his 30s, he was optimistic about his ability to complete his degree and continue his career already in development. An artist and writer, Nate, like Greg, reported receiving low grades in high school English. He felt he had a high level of creativity, but was never considered for placement in academic programs for gifted and

talented students. It was only after he graduated from Reagan High School that his former English teacher asked him to share his work with her students, commenting that more students should have his determination. Nate attributed much of his self-confidence and support to his mother, a single parent. Nate reported he had a large, extended family that also contributed moral support to his achievement. While in college, Nate managed to obtain part-time employment at a community college until he could graduate from the university. Nate's compromised income was partially attributable to his being a full-time student, but he was optimistic that his artwork and science fiction novels would be published with the assistance of his mother who was a self-published writer. Nate suggested a strong determination to obtain his education. Unlike his peers, he did not own a car, so he relied on public transportation that took hours for him to make the 40-plus miles from his apartment to school, then work and finally back home. While attending school, Greg indicated he lived on the east side of San Antonio where more African Americans lives, and it was more affordable than other parts of the city.

Ida held a college degree and had a moderately successful career in public service before she became ill. She attributed her illness to drug abuse in her early adulthood. Ida, a single woman, was disabled, suffered from hepatitis C and was in need of a liver transplant. Her income was from social security disability payments. She lived in publicly assisted housing. She once owned and drove a car, but now relied on publicly assisted transportation. Nevertheless, Ida remained productive and involved in the community through her public access television program. She often attended community

forums despite her reliance on special transit services. Ida's future remained compromised because of hepatitis C, chronic liver disease and the need for a liver transplant.

Eleanor, who seemed self-confident and most self-efficacious in her career development and community involvement, attributed her success to training received in the military. She reported the military helped build character and provided her with additional workforce training. In addition, she indicated having the good fortune to obtain employment as an office aid to a prominent politician led to her employment with the Texas state government. Despite her divorce, her children completed college and Eleanor was looking forward to a comfortable retirement from the state.

As illustrated in Table 2, all participants achieved at least a high school education by obtaining a diploma or G.E.D., regardless of family income and available family support. Further, 11 participants pursued a post-secondary education, six of which achieved at least an associate degree. At least one participant completed a Master of Arts degree. Those who seemed most able to complete a post-secondary education also appeared to have a family structure that could facilitate successful matriculation through college. Other participants, who had either technical skills or a trade, managed to obtain employment that met their basic financial needs as long as their expenses were manageable for their income level. Persons with two-income households fared better than single women with a single source of income. Lastly, participants who were single, female parents with low education and low employment skills had the most difficulty

maintaining stable employment, often in jobs with low, inadequate incomes for their households. The mothers in this category often relied upon publicly assisted housing, health care and food supplemental payments. Anna sometimes relied on daycare for low-income families provided by Child Incorporated.

Table 2. Participant Education Status

Participant	G.E.D.	H.S. Diploma	Vocational School	Some College	A.A.	B.A.	M.A./M.S.
Anna	*						
Coach		*				*	*
Eleanor		*	*		*		
Evelyn		*	*	*			
Fatima		*				*	
Gladys		*		*			
Greg	*		*				
Ida		*			*	*	
Maya †	n/a						
Nate		*		*			
Nikki		*					
Robin		*				*	
Terri		*			*	*	
Zora		*		*			

(* denotes educational attainment. † denotes that Maya withdrew from the study.)

Self-Efficacy

The fourth level of inquiry intended to learn about participant self-efficacy, which becomes relevant in this study since its focus is on what influences the behaviors of the participants and their decisions to initiate certain actions on their behalf or on the behalf of the community. The role of self-efficacy would seem to influence decisions about whether these participants may use that efficacy to eliminate problems or barriers that prevented them from accomplishing a task or succeeding at changing their

socioeconomic status. Bandura (1977) observed self-efficacy is influenced by "expectations of eventual success" (p. 80). He proposed that persistence and achievement after confronting "obstacles" increased efficacy:

> "Those who persist in performing activities that are subjectively threatening but relative safe objectively will gain corrective experiences that further reinforce their sense of efficacy thereby eventually eliminating their fears and defensive behavior. Those who give up prematurely will retain their self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time." (p. 80)

According to the WPA slave narratives, slaves had minimal opportunity for affecting the outcome of their existence since their lives were directed by the philosophy of their masters and slave laws. The participants in this study were not under such constraints. There may have been other determinants, however, that positively or negatively affected their self-efficacy. The intent of this set of questions was to identify those circumstances. In this respect, the inquiry goes beyond personal self-efficacy in managing routine life events to asking about whether the participant had any community involvement, specifically, in East Austin. This portion of the interview began with a general question about childhood memories and experiences. The items also were designed to cross-validate information gathered in the first level inquiry on "life histories."

Self-Efficacy

Q12: What were some of the most memorable things you did growing up?

Q13: Did you ever take part in community activities? **(If yes, skip to Q13a. If no, skip to Q14.)**

Q13a: What kinds of community things have you done?

Q14: Have you ever had any problems with companies, social or governmental agencies? What were they about? **(If no, skip to Q15.)**

Q14a: What did you have to do to resolve or clear up these problems?

Q15: If you could change your life in any way, how would you change it?

Of the 14 remaining participants, six were Austin natives, as mentioned earlier. The remaining participants moved to Austin in early adulthood. Anna and Fatima's lives were the more poignant of the Austin natives.

Anna's family has lived in Austin for at least four generations. Her memories about East Austin seemed affected by the presence or absence of her maternal grandfather who died when she was in her early teens. Anna was very close to her grandfather, often helping him with civic activities, following him to community centers where he worked several times a week. She talked of family celebrations, reunions, meetings and communal prayer. Conversely, after her grandfather's death, she observed, "The area (Rosewood community) was kind of bad with drugs and the violent crimes and everything going around that part of town...people breaking into other people's houses, rape, there's a lot of things." She said the children were expected to be home by 6 o'clock. Despite these experiences, Anna had hopes of home ownership and finding a different life, she stated,

> "Some of the agencies that they have out now are very helpful. On the other hand, you know, other things are very hard like as far as to get a new car or a new house for the first time buyers. They try to make it fairly easy, you know, a lot of us with no credit or not enough money down – it's fairly hard."

Beyond her perceived difficulties in obtaining a home, Anna managed to find time for civic activities including taking part in Ron Kirk's U.S. Senate campaign by distributing flyers, answering phones and assisting in other capacities, and she participated in the Hip Hop Summit Action Network voter registration rally held in Houston in 2004. She offered that her paternal grandfather had savings and that her family might be able to open a group home for "minorities, or anyone that, you know, didn't have anywhere to go, or their parents were on drugs or anything."

While her life events seem contradictory, they are reflective of the marginalized and dichotomous existence experienced by low socioeconomic people, such as Cathy, who teeter between poverty and mere subsistence – self-efficacy, in Anna's case, is mediated by under-employment, early parenthood, absent role models and limited education. Her narrative suggests that Anna, like Cathy, is self-efficacious when the basic necessities of life are met such as adequate income, housing, childcare and parental support. Of concern is whether she will ever achieve enough stability in her life in order to break the socioeconomic barriers that impede her social advancement. The optimism expressed by Anna and her youth indicate she may accomplish some of her goals that became compromised by early life events. Asked what she would change about her life, she responded, "I would've finished school," (i.e., before becoming a teen mother).

Of the other long-term Austin residents, Fatima's life marginally reflected Anna's experiences. Fatima said she had an impoverished childhood. She and her brother were born to a single mother during a time when unwed parenthood carried extreme social

stigma. Eleanor, meanwhile, exhibited her assertiveness when managing her career, personal development and advancement. Twice she was forced to appeal to her upper management in order to receive equitable treatment. One involved her supervisor's lack of support to attend a minority conference for personal development, and the other involved her obtaining a higher salary in a new position when the supervisor wanted to start her at the beginning pay grade. After appealing, she reported that she was allowed to attend the conference (paid for by her department), and she was able to transfer to a new position at a higher salary.

POLITICAL CAPITAL

Q16: Have you ever done any political work, election campaigns or rallies?
Q16a: Why/Why not?

Q17: Have you ever represented your family or community to bring attention to the needs of the community?
Q17a: Why/Why not?

Twelve of the 15 participants reported engaging in at least one activity that involved volunteering time or taking in at least one form of civic activity. As a child and a pre-teen, Anna reported helping her grandfather in the community centers, and later taking part in a political campaign and attending a voter registration event directed at youth.

Coach has an entrepreneurial spirit and frequently looks for opportunities to encourage women to go into business. She often attends events that support the Black community such as community forums and book presentations.

Evelyn, a hair stylist, dedicated a considerable portion of her adult life to mentoring African American youth by assisting youth with improving self-esteem through personal grooming and motivational seminars. She also worked political campaigns for various Austin candidates from all ethnic groups.

Fatima, despite her gentle nature and feelings that she is apolitical, participated in events such as the Black Family Technology Day at the Millennium Youth Center and a rally in support of a child on trial for murder, "I'm kind of low-key, I'm not into a lot things, and don't align myself with people that are doing sit-ins and stuff. I don't want to go to jail. So, I haven't done a whole lot of that. Sit-in's and political rallies and stuff like that…just I'm… that's just not me." Nevertheless, she did take part in a community rally surrounding the arrest and trial of Lacresha Murray, an 11-year-old, Austin, African-American girl accused of capital murder in the 1996 death of 2-year-old Shayla Belton. Fatima said she was compelled to take part in a lunchtime rally, "I think it was Lacresha Murray, when that situation was going on, and they asked for people to come down at lunch time and participate in the march….Well, the fact that, here this young girl was, and her rights were violated….They didn't do things in order, the way the law stipulates and we just felt like she got shafted. And so I participated in that, because it could be tomorrow or my niece tomorrow, you never know. So, you wanted to take a stand." While Fatima did not want confrontation, she felt the Murray case was more important than her own comfort, safety and protection, however, decided to support an 11-year-old Black girl.

Gladys' interest in community outreach began when she worked in a bar and observed the number of her customers and friends who were exposed to sexually transmitted disease and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). She sought employment at a community health center as a means of community outreach and prevention of STDs and AIDS/HIV.

Greg, a socialist and community activist, also runs a community listserv in which he announces civic and community events. He has worked as a community volunteer at Kealing Middle School and participated in various community programs that address disparities in technology access in Austin. Ida's health limited her ability to have a full-time job, but she managed to attend community town hall meetings and produce an award-winning public access television program that focused on the gay and lesbian community.

Table 3 illustrates various community involvement activities and self-efficacy responses of the 14 remaining participants. Eight of the participants indicated serving in some volunteer capacity. Five took part in political campaigns, and eight participants made efforts to address a community issue. The issues of concern to the participants included discrimination, political campaigns, social justice, AIDS, education, gay and lesbian concerns, police brutality, community litter and property maintenance as well as public welfare.

Table 3. Self-efficacy and Community Involvement

Participant	Volunteer	Political Campaign	Community Issue	Type of Issue
Anna	*	*		
Coach	*			
Eleanor		*		
Evelyn		*	*	Discrimination, political campaign
Fatima			*	Social Justice
Gladys			*	AIDS Awareness
Greg	*	*	*	Education Politics, Social Justice
Ida	*	*	*	Gay/Lesbian/Police Brutality
Maya †	N/A			
Nate				
Nikki	*		*	Litter
Robin			*	Property Maintenance
Terri	*			
Toni				
Zora	*		*	Public Welfare

* INDICATES PARTICIPANT ENGAGED IN ACTIVITY

VIEWS ABOUT THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The following items were created to solicit participant perceptions about an information society.

Q18: When people talk about technology, what comes to your mind?

Q19: How did you learn about these technologies?

Overall, participants responded they thought of computers and the Internet most often when asked, “When people talk about technology, what comes to mind?” This alleviated any doubt about their awareness of computers and the Internet. Participants

concurred: Computers and the Internet represented technology. Greg, however, added that he viewed technology as cultural in that persons may be aware of different technologies, but their culture may not integrate computers into their lifestyle - even when they owned a computer, "I think a lot of people have access, but culturally they are not there.…I see it in the demographics, most of the people I meet online are young." He felt that this also translated into ethnicity, gender, race and class.

Nikki thought of computers and the film, *Star Wars*. "A lot of things I see on Star Wars, I see being acted out right now…the space age, astronauts. I had an uncle who worked in security and they did some kind of security thing where they did the scanning of your hands and your facial…your tones, you [sic] speaking…your sensory type things...the technology *is* here, it's not going away any time soon." Nikki was referencing biometrics, a method of mapping identity based on biological and physiological characteristics. She said, "I think it's something people need to be more aware of. I don't think people know how much technology is out there."

Asked, "How did you learn about these technologies?" participants indicated they learned through various sources, Anna said she sometimes heard announcements about Web sites on radio and television, then she would look up the sites on the Internet. Coach said her information was through work, news media and magazines. Newspapers and magazines were Eleanor's primary source of information on technology. Evelyn first learned about technology through friends and a few computer courses she took in community college as well as through magazines. Fatima was introduced to computer

technology through her job. Computer monitors were still cathode ray tubes at that time. Fatima indicated she was intimidated by the new technology, but went to the library to learn more about computers and to improve her skills. "The library is chock full of experienced people and information, and all you have to do is ask …. (They) can show you how to do this, and I always knew that the library was the place to go to get information about things." Nate said his early experience with computer "things" was through video games, then through an early home computer system his mother bought. Gladys learned about technology through school, by watching other people using it, reading or hearing about it in the news. She also used software that supported her textile crafts. Greg explored computers and the Internet in 1995 at a new Cybercafé in San Antonio, and later he used computers at the library and the University of Texas at Austin. Nikki attributed some of her exposure to technology to her father whom she considered an innovator. She also learned about various computer applications at work beginning in 1975, and through "computer wizards" friends. She acquired her first computer, a rebuilt model, from a friend, and accessed the Internet using a free Internet service provider.

Of the group, only Nikki and Greg mentioned meeting people online to develop friendships and dating. Nikki later married someone she met online.

Table 4 summarizes participant responses to questions about the type of technologies they owned, their experiences with the technology and how they used the technology. All of the participants had access and use of the telephone, radio, television (except Greg), and compact discs. All participants had experience using the Internet and

computers. Nine of the participants owned home computers at one time, and seven had home Internet service. Eleanor discontinued her ISP as an unnecessary expense and Ida's computer needed repairs.

Table 4. Technology Ownership and Internet Access

Participant	Phone	Cell	TV/VCR/ DVD	Radio	CD	Cable	Internet/ Computer Use	Home Computer	Internet At Home
Anna	*	*	* *	*	*	*	*	*	*
Coach	*	*	* * *	*	*	*	*	*	*
Eleanor	*		* *	*	*		*	*	
Evelyn	*	*	* *	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fatima	*	*	* *	*	*	*	*	*	*
Gladys	*	*	* *	*	*		*	*	*
Greg	*			*	*		*		
Ida	*		* *	*	*		*		
Maya	N/A			N/A	N/A				
Nate	*		*	*	*		*	*	*
Nikki	*	*	* *	*	*	*	*	*	
Robin	*		*	*	*		*		
Terri	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Toni	*		* *	*	*		*		
Zora	*		*	*	*		*		

Participants also were asked about different forms of community technologies they used beginning with some of the older technologies such as the telephone and radio, followed by questions about information technologies such as computers and the Internet. The items were as follows:

Q20a: Have you ever had any experiences with things like-

1. telephones (telephone service in the home)
2. televisions/VCR/DVD
3. radios
4. cell phones
5. CDs
6. cable TV

7. computers (computer used in the home)
8. Internet (Internet access at home)
9. others

Q20b: How do you use these technologies?

Q20c: Have you ever used the Internet to get information, look up government information, renew driver's license, fill out an application or complete some other task?

Q20d: Do you ever create anything using technology **(refer to items 1-9)? (If not, skip to Q20e).**

Q20e: What keeps you from using **(ask about the technologies they don't use, items 1-9)**

Table 5 also represents participant responses to these questions, "How do you use these technologies?" "Have you ever used the Internet to get information, look up government information, renew driver's license, fill-out an application or complete some other task?" "Do you ever create anything using technology?" Participants who used computers indicated they engaged in a variety of computer and online activities, regardless of their educational or employment status, family size, age or gender. Most participants used email for work and to keep in touch with family and friends. Several of the participants indicated they would not complete financial transactions online because they did not trust online security. Nikki said she heard stories about people having their identity stolen. However, Nikki and Coach had purchased airline tickets online because they trusted the airline sites they used. Nikki and Terri also used their computers to produce documents and flyers for their churches.

Studies by Pew Internet reported that African American women frequently use the Internet for church-related activities and to keep up with community events. Pew Internet (2005) also reported gender and age differences in how men and women used the Internet, observing that women tend to use the Internet more often for communication via email (94%) than men (88%). Men used the Internet more than women, and sought entertainment information on the web while women looked for recreational information. Pew (2005) reported more young women engaged in online activities (86%) than young men (80%). Not an astonishing difference, but this suggests that young women are outpacing young men in using the web. The differences between African American men and women, previously discussed, showed 60% of women and 50% of men use the Internet.

None of the participants, from which this information was obtained, indicated access to computers or the Internet was a problem despite their economic status. Rather, as in Eleanor's case, she found using email at work was just as convenient as from home, and felt using an internet service provider was an unnecessary expense. Nikki managed to find a free ISP, Greg still used the Austin Free Net computers in the public library since he did not have home internet access. Zora did not have a computer at home either, but used a very up-to-date computer at work to produce documents and graphics and write articles for a community newspaper. Regardless, whether having a home computer or not, all participants used computers and the Internet. Several participants indicated they used email to communicate with family and friends, and send or receive documents.

Greg was the only participant who ran a listserv distributed to persons who subscribed to it.

Table 5. Participant Computer and Online Activities

Participant	Activities
Anna	Look up websites, seek employment information, complete employment applications, online entertainment, play educational software for children
Coach	Seek small business information, complete small business forms with government agencies, produce documents (word processing, Power Point), purchases (airline tickets)
Eleanor	Email (from work), computer-based games, produce work-related documents, search and track legislation, search employment-related documents & information while at work
Evelyn	Email (personal contact with family and friends), produce computer documents (letters, flyers, certificates)
Fatima	Email, work-related information, seek information for hobbies, create documents
Gladys	Email, seek work-related information, produce documents for work, use software for hobbies
Greg	Email, distribute information through listserv
Ida	Email, produce documents, write poetry, produce website featuring poetry
Maya †	Not applicable
Nate	Email, seek school-related information, write books and produce graphic arts
Nikki	Email, work-related tasks, seek information, online dating, chatrooms, entertainment, computer and online games, pay bills online, purchase airline tickets
Robin	Email, seek information, write newspaper articles
Terri	Email, perform work-related tasks, seek information of personal interest
Toni	no information provided
Zora	Email, newspaper articles, produce documents and graphics

Table 6 summarizes participant responses to the following items concerning the value of technology to society, the community, personally or to their families.

Q21: There has been a lot of talk about technology, computers, digital this and digital that. What do you think about all this?

Q22: Do you think all this technology is helpful? How so?

Q23: Which people can technology help the most?

Q24: Do you think technology could help you or your family? How so?

Twelve of the participants who responded to whether technology was helpful indicated they found technology helpful. Seven of the participants said technology could help minorities, only 4 participants singled out a specific minority such as African American or Hispanic. Of the four responses about technology helping racial groups, three specifically stated African American or Black. Only three participants mentioned that technology could help children or education. However, five participants suggested that technology could help low-income groups. Thirteen participants responded to the item about technology as personally helpful. Each of the 13 found technology helpful then they described how technology could help. Again, communication through email, a listserv or website arose as personally helpful, but there were suggestions that technology could assist entrepreneurial endeavors as well as assist with research and education.

Table 6. Participant Responses to Whether Technology is Helpful

Participant	Technology Helpful	Helps Which People	Personally Helpful
Anna	Helpful for education.	School children, minorities	Help create promotional materials for parents. Children with their school projects and papers.
Coach	Technology is helpful and hurtful. Convenience of paying bills online. Technology fails and disrupts transactions. It's easier to make decisions without consequences. Help children with homework. Find a better job or education.	Black people, African Americans, Hispanics	Email helps maintain family and social contact. Helps with employment, research and paying bills. Research for child's homework.
Eleanor	Technology only helpful is used for a beneficial purpose, not for fraud or prurient intent.	All people	Helpful with governmental information and variety of news sources. Email contact with family and friends.
Evelyn	Technology is great.	Teachers, school children, elderly, everyone	Email helps communication with family.
Fatima	Helps communication with family.	Low income people, children.	Email helps communication with family.
Gladys	Helpful in storing vast amounts of information.	People at low socioeconomic level.	Helps in creating documents.
Greg	Helpful if put to good use.	Low income minorities	Listserv keeps his community informed about community issues
Ida	Helpful, but overwhelming	African Americans	Disseminate information about her poetry and projects
Maya	No response	No response	No response
Nate	Helpful in careers	Minorities, African Americans	Helps with producing and illustrating and publishing books
Nikki	Helpful in careers and business	Low income and minorities	Helpful in email, entrepreneurship
Robin	No response	No response	No response
Terri	Helpful in careers and communication		Helpful in family communication
Toni	No response	No response	Helpful for children in school work
Zora	Helpful in producing documents	Low income and minorities	Helpful in improving income

Anna responded that technology would help to better educate children and provide more information on world issues. She also said that technology could help minorities. “Not a lot of minorities are familiar with the new technology, or they may know about the new technology, but they don’t have a lot of time to explore the new technology.…If they had to write a paper and didn’t know how to spell a word, they could go to the thesaurus and look that up.…They would have all those things there.” Anna mentioned she helped her grandmother create a resume. Despite her education level and employment skills, Anna’s narrative suggests that she possessed enough computer skills to produce documents, and complete Internet searches for information and employment. Nevertheless, she seemed stymied in adapting these abilities to a better-paying job.

Coach believed technology will replace workers, leading to an increase in crime due to unemployment. Although she speculated that obtaining technology training would qualify some for better-paying jobs, she added that not everyone likes technology, particularly people such as her father, an older adult, near retirement and content with a remote control and VCR. “If my father saw a computer, he wouldn’t even have a clue. He wouldn’t even know how to turn it on.…He doesn’t have foundation of technology.” Nevertheless, she mentioned that people wanting to learn could use a number of technology training programs open to the public through the library, community organizations and school.

Coach said even Church's Chicken, grocery stories and Wal-Mart require the use of technology for input at the cash register. More than just information technology, Coach was concerned about the potential to increase global conflict and nuclear war by simply, "pushing the button, if we had a rocket take off from somewhere – that's not a good thing." Coach's observation, while simplistic, conveys her underlying fear that technological efficiency and precision eradicates humanistic, ethical and social responsibility to exercise restraint in its use.

Coach felt technology could help African Americans the most because as a population, Blacks don't have enough computers in the home nor do they have the income that would allow them to purchase computers. As an educator, Coach reported that her Black and Hispanic students do not have computers in the home. Students who wanted to share email addresses with her were "all Whites." Beyond having access to technology, Coach's students often just had basic needs including having enough money to buy gym clothes that cost $25. Coach created scholarships to assist her students in obtaining school supplies. There are several school supply programs in Austin, but Coach did not mention whether students benefited from those programs. Often families, such as Toni's, are excluded from community assistance programs because their salaries are too high to qualify, but insufficient to cover the daily expenses. Minority parents often implied to her they just did not have the money for extra expenses. "Technology is good for the upper-class, White person or Black person. Technology is good for the lower class, White person, Hispanic person or Black person."

Coach had not fully embraced technology, but indicated that it could help her son with school work, but said he could also use library books to assist him with his research.

Eleanor, meanwhile, saw technology as useful, if people use it for a worthwhile purpose and not just as a fad or simply entertainment. She believed that people should put basic necessities of life before acquiring technology, "Cell phones are very useful, if your car breaks down on the road.…People who don't have jobs and get aid for the state or federal government; they have a cell phone. Child might be looking like little ragamuffins, but you go to their homes and they're missing some items, but they have a cell phone! That's my take on cell phones." Of course, Eleanor's opinion is based on her personal view of the choices these families make. It is just as likely that the cell phone was their primary phone service or the phone may have been a pay-as-you-go service. How these families make choices about cell phones and their usage would require further investigation. She also commented that the youth of today are geniuses in using computers and technology, but seem to have low literacy rate – inexcusable in this era since educational opportunities are more widely available than in past generations. "If you want to move up…at some point you're going to have to read."

Eleanor saw technology as good, if used for a good purpose. "It allows people to learn a lot of things, there's a lot of information, if you desire, but there's a seedy sides…a lot of people use information that is not going to be helpful to anybody…as pornographic stuff…voyeurism, people go into chat rooms and lie about themselves…It's good if it's used as what it was created for – an information highways…But, some of us

have taken it further than that. They want the information, but they want to use it in ways that are going to be detrimental instead of helpful." Again, Eleanor found computers and the Internet helpful in maintaining contact with family and her social circle.

Evelyn found technology a useful time-saver, "I think it's (technology) great! Every time they get something new it's just a way to get more money. Every time the market is saturated, they come out with something else." She would rather use the computer and Internet to create documents or research a topic instead of going outside the home to obtain what she needs. "Say if I was looking for 3 or 4 things, I could get that in 2 or 3 minutes."

In Fatima's opinion, computers and the Internet offer opportunity for everyone to learn or seek opportunities for employment advancement. Unlike Cathy, Fatima thought of the library as a valuable resource for using computers and the Internet as well as obtaining training in technology use. Fatima confided she was initially intimidated by the shift to computer technology at work, but the staff at the library was most helpful in assisting her. She mentioned email was an excellent way to stay in touch with her relatives since she did not travel, but still wanted know about her relatives' travels.

While Gladys and Ida used computers and the Internet, they were less enthusiastic about technology as a resource and indicated they preferred having a tangible document in their possession rather than an electronic version. Like Coach, they seemed to believe that more traditional means of collecting information, like a physical library search, were still effective. In addition, Gladys and Ida both felt the seemingly endless amount of

information and Web links were overwhelming, so they became confused by information overload. Ida said she felt she needed to print all the information for future use, although she never really referred back to information she printed. Gladys said, "Some people may think technology creates easier lives, but for some people they get all encumbered with this crap – check their email, type up a letter, take dictation, spellcheck – in the meantime, they could have just did it themselves." Gladys suggested that if she were in her 20s she might feel different about using computer technology since younger people grew up on technology. She expressed concern that technology displaced some elements of human interaction and self-reliance in being resourceful without technology. Ultimately, Gladys saw computers and information technology helpful, but cautioned that information in the wrong hands was detrimental; mentioning the potential for invasion of privacy and demographic profiling that would be used by Internet marketers. An entrepreneur, Gladys discussed starting a Web site when she launches her business.

FUTURE VIEWS

The "Future Views" items concluded the ethnographic interviews. These items were selected to determine if this group of Austin residents could envision a distant future for African Americans. In historical chronology, it would only take two generations to leap 100 years into the future. Nikki reported that her grandfather had been a slave although she was only approaching age 50. He died, however, before she was born.

The questions were as follows:

Q25: So much has happened in the last few years. What are some of the major things affecting Black people right now?

Q26: Considering all the things that you have just said, do you feel that Black people will come out OK in the future?

Q27: What do you think Blacks need to make it in the future?

Q28: Blacks who were slaves in America have only been free for about 138 * years. If you could look into the future about 100 years, what do you think life would be like for Black people?

Q29: If you could look into the future 100 years, what do you think your family or descendents will be doing?

Q30: Lastly, I would like you to complete a short survey on media use. **(Interviewer: distribute media use survey, allow time for responses then collect the survey.)**

(*This number of years reflects the near period when the original interviews took place.)

The participants had an overall positive outlook for the future of African Americans. Where this study becomes of value is in the further scholarship on the added element of "hope" for a good future for African Americans. The participants indicated African Americans were still in the process of "catching-up" to the rest of society. Many felt the lag in social advancement was related to the past (i.e., slavery, then segregation).

The Travis County Slave Narratives of the 1930s were informative in capturing the fading memories of former slaves who were of advanced age, usually older than 80 years of age, and at the end of life. This study describes the lives of African Americans in East Austin who range in age from mid-20s to early 50s. Fourteen of the participants had produced another generation of family, given the opportunity to share their aspiration for subsequent generations of family and African-Americans in general; they looked to a

future in which Black people could be successful and unified in a common goal for progressive social advancement of the African-American community.

Several participants sensed African-Americans had a loss of Black leadership. Gladys mentioned that leadership had declined since the deaths of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Eleanor was of the same opinion.

Gladys said her greatest frustration with the Black community was the need for self-determination and efficacy in taking advantage of programs designed to assist employment and economic advancement, e.g., small businesses. "I think our self-sufficiency was taken away from us, and now that we have been forced to self-sufficiency, like either getting off welfare or just being downsized from your job, if you weren't on welfare; you need to realize that being self-sufficient is a good thing.…No one is born deserving a free hand-out.…If you are a 16-year-old and you end up getting pregnant, if you can finish high school, and you decide, 'Well, I'm not really going to go to college.…' you end up being the person who everybody dumps their kids on because you had friends who also got pregnant, but you're complaining about not having enough money.…Make yourself go to college, get some child care classes under your belt, then apply to have that certification.…You can get grant money to open that daycare, then you've got a business going…I know it's harder when you're a teenager and you have children, but if there's a program there – take advantage of it."

This chapter gives only a brief glimpse into the lives of 14 of the 15 people who agreed to take part in this ethnographic study. Their input gives insight into the events

surrounding the lives of ordinary people living in Austin and their experiences in East Austin. This ethnography intentionally selected everyday people since their input is often marginalized into an aggregate statistic, but rarely evaluates the individual. In addition, there was an interest in replicating the efforts by the WPA to capture the narratives of Blacks, freedmen and freedwomen who settled in East Austin after emancipation. Like the WPA narratives, this study documented the contemporary lives of African Americans of East Austin and the Austin community.

Further exploration of the slave narrative volume and the residential locations described in the narratives led to the discovery of another direct descendant of one of the slaves featured in Travis County WPA recordings. Patricia Bedford, pictured below, is the great-granddaughter of Fannie McCullough-Driver. Ms. Bedford still lived on the property owned by her great-grandmother and said the property had remained in the family ever since. The original home had been replaced, but it was the same address as listed in the WPA narratives. Meeting Ms. Bedford was as exciting as discovering a new tomb in Egypt, although this discovery did not span thousands of years. Ms. Bedford was unaware of her great-grandmother's contribution to history and was elated to read a portion of Fannie Driver's narrative. Remnants of the East Austin past surrounded Driver property while other old homes were being raised to make way for new residential construction. Ms. Bedford was proud to say the family owned all the property in her block. The next street over, the former residence of freedwoman Rosina Slaughter Hoard, had been replaced by a small cottage. The remainder of the block was dotted with

new cottages. The home on Hoard's lot was a rental, according to a neighbor. When the neighbor, a young, White professional, was asked if she knew the site had been the home of a former slave, she was astounded by the information and never fathomed the area had such history.

Like the changes in the Driver and Slaughter neighborhood, the people of East Austin are changing as well. Perhaps a small neighborhood in East Austin would not appear significant today, but could be of significance in the future. If not for the WPA narratives, it would have been difficult to trace the lives of the freedmen and freedwomen. This study also provided an account of people in East Austin as they transition into the 21st century.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND CONCLUSION

Summary and Analysis

The intent of this ethnographic inquiry was to learn about the lives and social conditions of African Americans in East Austin, Texas, during the early 21st century and their access to information technology. Qualitative, ethnographic interviews were conducted with 15 African-Americans who lived or had community ties with the East Austin community. Interviews were tape recorded, then transcribed for analysis. Fourteen of the participants completed the study. Transcribed narratives of former slaves who migrated to Travis County, specifically, East Austin, upon emancipation, and a contemporary ethnographic inquiry concerning the digital divide influenced the methodology for this study.

The research employed grounded theory in an effort to develop constructs about the experiences of the African American community in East Austin. An early ethnography indicated socioeconomic advancement and access to information technology are seemingly impeded by multitudinous life events as in the case of Cathy and her family. The Cathy ethnography suggested the probability there were other members of the East Austin community living under similar constraints. While society may have an awareness of persons living under these social conditions, that awareness may be limited to what they hear from a government statistical report. This study attempted to give identity to this population and its community. Certainly, this brief observation cannot fully describe or immediately correct the social ills that continue to plague minority

communities in Austin and elsewhere, but it could further the discourse on populations that remain marginalized in the 21st century and the seemingly ongoing, intractable challenges faces by this population and its community.

The theoretical constructs for this research included the continued discourse on the information society, relevance of information and digital literacy and availability of technology that makes information access possible. Social science concepts were relevant to this study in its attempt to ascertain the socioeconomic and cultural factors that influence the social progress of this population Afrocentric and Eurocentric concepts were considered as well in an effort to evaluate whether existing theoretical constructs best describe what was observed in the field. These constructs included Bourdieu's theory of practice, social learning theory, critical race theory, post-traumatic stress disorder, and post-traumatic slave syndrome. In addition, this research looked heavily to the policy-driven discussion of a digital divide and the implied exigency for migrating society to use of information technology (ICTs). This study relied heavily on historical events and accounts of the experiences of Africans in America in an effort to describe and explain the lives of contemporary African Americans. Discovery of WPA slave narratives on emancipated men and women who lived in East Austin, was an exceptional treasure as a foundation for understanding the people in present day East Austin.

The 21st century society increasingly depends upon information technology for the most basic of everyday transactions, banking, communication, education and

employment. Paraphrasing Peter Drucker (1994), people must be prepared to participate in the social migration into an information age where knowledge has become an electronic commodity that is the economic, social and political capital of the 21st century. The digital divide among this group of participants has narrowed. The computer technology ownership has narrowed as the price of computers and Internet service become more affordable. In addition, the City of Austin implemented a plan to provide free, wireless Internet access to the city, including East Austin (personal conversation, Russ Rumney, City of Austin, 2006). Austin is in the process of resolving technical and the legal aspects of full deployment, but as the wireless mesh is propagated through the community, major economic barriers to access will be alleviated. The narratives in this study, however, suggest that deeper socioeconomic divides remain.

The research questions for this study asked the following,

R1: What is the quality of life for African Americans living in East Austin today?

R2: What intervening factors associated with class, race, ethnicity, and gender have prevented this group from fully participating in the information society?

R3: How important is it that the African American population gains a level of digital literacy in information technology?

R4: If they have access to computers and information online, does it contribute to a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy in this population?

General Findings

R1: What is the quality of life for African Americans living in East Austin today?

The question concerning quality-of-life (QOL) was timely since during the course of this study, the City of Austin elected to conduct a QOL study following an incident in which members of the Austin Police Department (APD) were recorded making derogatory remarks, via text messaging, when Midtown Live, a local Black-owned night club, caught fire. Midtown Live was a community gathering place, not for just club-goers, but was a space for local politics and business. An APD internal investigation revealed officers made text message comments including, "Disco Inferno, I have some extra gasoline, if they need it and burn baby burn" (Plohetski, 2005). The comments suggested the officers were insensitive to the significance of Midtown Live to the African American community. Midtown Live, while a commercial establishment, gave the community a sense of pride and was a point of social contact although it was a neighborhood night club. According to Nesbitt (1972), "The teaching of Black pride is of greatest importance to the very young," (p. 308), but it is just as likely that adults have their own form of pride in their community icons. In addition, Midtown Live held an extended longevity as a small, Black-owned business in northeast Austin. The Midtown

incident seemed to create a backlash of criticism about treatment of Blacks in Austin and African-American quality-of-life.

The highlights of the Austin QOL survey, discussed in Chapter 2, illustrated the social distance between the Austin noted for its recreational areas, state government and education, and Austin as described in the "African American Quality of Life" (City of Austin, 2004, 2005) report, which underscores the qualitative inquiry employed in this study.

The participants perceived a need for greater investment in developing the community such as educational and employment assistance, neighborhood improvements, reduction in crime, increased community services to assist low-income families in housing and home ownership, transportation services, and small business development. Participants expressed concern about the deteriorating conditions in their communities as residents, some elderly, are unable to maintain their property or properties that fall into disrepair because of abandonment and absentee ownership. They also observed the gentrification of their neighborhoods as young, urban professionals remodel or replace older homes with new bungalows. The addition of new homes redefined the tax valuation of properties for the entire community, thus increasing the tax burden for families at affixed incomes. Terri commented that new homes in her neighborhood increased the value of the family homestead from approximately $70,000 to $140,000. She was concerned about her ability to continue paying taxes if the values continued to increase. Terri has since moved to an apartment.

While Nikki had a favorable opinion about the new homes in her community, she too was concerned about the increased property values. Urban renewal and community revitalization present a conundrum as the historic residents cling to their community, while new urban dwellers take advantage of affordable housing within the city. Of concern is the preservation of the community's character while improving the environment.

Then there are young families such as Anna's. She would like to become a home owner, but concedes her income may be insufficient to qualify for a home loan. Anna was aware of programs to assist first-time, low-income buyers, but expressed the process for obtaining low-interest financing was too complex.

Greg, Anna, Ida and Zora had the lowest income level of the participants. Greg, however, had the ability to increase his income at any time since he had a long military career and a skilled occupation as an LVN. Anna, Ida and Zora had compromised earning potential because of low employment skills, low wages, single-parenthood, and in Ida's case -- poor health. None of this women indicated they had very much external financial or emotional support from family. Access to social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) perhaps is an important factor in improving the social condition for women like Anna, Ida and Zora. It has been suggested that access to social, economic and cultural capital assists social mobility (Bourdieu, 1984). Lin (2000) observed that "women and minorities" often have minimal social capital, but the limited research literature on social capital, gender and ethnicity makes it difficult to define the meaning of social capital in

their lives. The other participants in this study who maintained family ties, and who were marginally satisfied with their lifestyle, did not overly express insurmountable obstacles in their daily lives.

Another recurring theme was crime. Anna, Eleanor, Nikki and Fatima observed that crime was ongoing, but Fatima felt crime was escalating as homeowners move out of the community and renters move in, principally in the Rosewood area near 11th and 12th streets. All of the women reported observing drug dealing or drug raids in the neighborhood, but rather than take major issue with it, they seemed to acquiesce that it was a routine occurrence. City of Austin crime statistics for 2006 reported higher incidence of crime in many other parts of the city, but the report did not specify drug and prostitution arrests. In addition, crime may go unreported or under reported in the East Austin community.

R2: What intervening factors associated with class, race, ethnicity, and gender have prevented this group from fully participating in the information society?

This group of participants represented persons with incomes less than $40,000 a year. The group was comprised of 12 women and 2 men and all were African American, nevertheless, it was determined that every participant actively used the Internet and computers at home or in the library. When participants accessed the Internet, they used email most often to communicate with family and friends, and all of the participants

adapted computer and Internet use to their lifestyle and personal interests as described in Tables 4 and 5.

Several of the participants had entrepreneurial interest including Coach, Gladys, Ida, Nate, and Nikki. Of this group, only Nate had actually begun to use his computer to earn an income. As a graphic artist and writer, it was easy to create and produce his art work and books on the computer. The women were searching for a profitable business model, but had not implemented an actual plan. Coach, however, had tried operating a concession stand and selling fashion accessories, but she had not considered operating a web-based business that could potentially increase her marketing and distribution of her merchandise. Gladys thought that she could possibly sell her crafts through a Web site. Greg and Ida were primarily interested in community outreach, Greg through his listserv, and Ida through her poetic Web site.

In one regard, the participants in this study transcended the digital divide, they advanced beyond simple ICT access and they knew how to use the technology. They adapted the use of the internet and computer technology to their personal interests and for experiences the found personally gratifying. In this respect, ICT was another communication tool whether for work or personal use. But, having ICT access did not significantly contribute to the social or economic advancement of the participants. Their socioeconomic status remained relatively unchanged by the technology.

Anna and Zora were the most under-employed. While they had computer skills, neither indicated an interest in adapting those skills to better-paying positions. Early

arguments for computer literacy touted the computer technology as a means for socioeconomic advancement through better paying jobs. As Kvasny (2006) learned, use of ICT must go beyond simple access to improve social and financial status. Kvasny suggests that it takes training that is of value to a potential employer. In addition, it takes an interest in technology as a career choice. Neither of these women expressed a deep interest in technology-related employment. As single parents, Anna and Zora indicated they found it hard to work and attend school to improve their skills. They were also concerned about college tuition as an added expense. Determinism, motivation, self-efficacy, self-confidence perhaps were factors affecting their ability to envision themselves in a different occupation or lifestyle. These women, however, possessed some of these traits, as exhibited by their participation in various civic and community related services. Zora wrote a community news column for a Black newspaper and Anna took part in political campaigns. But they also lacked the social capital of a family support structure. Further, limited income could detrimentally affect the quality of life and academic performance of their children. Morris, Gennetian and Duncan (2005) reported that pre-school children seemed to perform better in school when low-income parent wages were supplemented and the children attended a special child care program. Anna's children attended a child care center for low-income families, but no information was provided on the quality of the program.

R3: How important is it that the African American population gains a level of digital literacy in information technology?

Every participant was proficient in digital and information literacy as exemplified by their reported use of computers and the Internet. Several of the participants used computers and the Internet at home, school and/or work. The two male participants, Nate and Greg, seemed more directed in their use of information technology. They very clearly indicated a specific application of the technology -- Nate with his publishing, and Greg with his community listserv. The women participants, as suggested by Pew Internet (2005), were more involved in using the Internet for entertainment, hobbies, creating documents for their families, church, and other organizations. The majority of the participants reported using email to communicate with family and friends.

The digital divide was not a factor for these participants in their use of ICTs. They were actively engaged with technology use and each participant had adapted the technology to their individual needs as indicated in Table 5.

R4: If they have access to computers and information online, does it contribute to a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy in this population?

Since this group had bridged the digital divide, did they possess a sense of digital empowerment (Fetterman, et al., 1996) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Zimmerman, et al. 1992)? Of the participants, Greg perhaps exhibited the greatest sense of empowerment as the Web allowed him to disseminate information to a broad audience through his listserv. He still operates the listserv, but less frequently than when he first began the list. With the introduction of weblogs and video blogs, nearly everyone who

has the motivation has the opportunity to reach millions of people. As technology becomes more user-friendly, and computer applications become simplistic and intuitive, perhaps everyone will engage in activities they find empowering or gratifying. The Internet provided Ida, a lesbian, with a physical space for open expression that was limited in the physical world. According to psychologist Sherry Turkle (1995), the Internet and cyberspace allow persons to explore aspects of their personality that would be too inhibiting in the physical world. However, as further commercialization of free blog sites and Internet marketing may soon restrict access to the Internet as a place for equitable public discourse and public expression therefore constructing a new form of digital divide – one where you must pay, if you want to have your say in cyberspace.

Fatima also expressed a sense of empowerment by her ability to remain abreast of family news as other family members traveled to other parts of the country. Since Fatima did not like to travel, the Internet gave her another channel through which she could "virtually" accompany her family on their travels through electronic communication.

During the course of the interviews, participants expressed observations that were in many instances common to the group. The similarities in their observations represent emergent themes beyond the initial inquiry about the digital divide. The themes in this ethnography suggest a need for continued community assistance and programs that support social welfare, judicial affairs, health and education. The participants felt a need for community unification and Black leadership.

The aggregate emergent themes from a grounded theory approach suggest that another construct – Diaspora – is the underlying context in the lives of the East Austin participants. Many Blacks, as a Diaspora (Segal, 1995), share a common heritage as enslaved, marginalized or oppressed people. A larger investigation would be necessary in order to bring cohesion to such a bold construct, but such an investigation would be worth undertaking. Perhaps the legal, social and economic inequities of the past, as described in Chapter 2, create this common-bond as is presented by these participants and evidenced in this research. It would be worthwhile to continue ethnographies on this topic, but on a larger-scale, to compare the experiences of other marginalized groups of people.

This study determined these participants were active users of computers and the Internet. Therefore, there was no digital divide in terms of access to computer technology and Internet use. Technology, however, did not serve the socioeconomic advancement of these participants. Other socioeconomic disparities, unrelated to technology access, remain. For these participants information technology access and use are tools to facilitate communication and gather information. But these participants have yet to fully adapt its use in ways that could increase their incomes or minimize the complex social issues that surround their daily lives and their community. This study suggests the social chasm between African Americans and the rest of society have not been adequately addressed.

Certainly this study has limitations. The qualitative nature of the study prevents any generalizations about how a larger population of African Americans might describe their lives in East Austin, however, the study purposefully sought African Americans in this demographic and community since an earlier study revealed the dire social conditions in which Cathy lived. Perhaps another group of persons within the same demographic would yield much different results. Nevertheless, this study proved informative in ascertaining the early 21st lives of these participants. Other studies conducted by the City of Austin underscored the results of this study – not only do African Americans associated with East Austin have socioeconomic disparities, but a larger population of Austin Blacks have many of the same socioeconomic disparities.

Further, this study rudimentarily suggests that the city and its people make sustained reinvest in its people and communities. The outcome of that investment might result in economic growth for the community, reduced strain on municipal, state and federal resources foster a sense community well-being.

The participants in this study also saw a future for themselves, family members and African American in making social progress as they transition into the 21st century. Several of the participants, while cognizant of the past heritage of slavery, felt the legacy of slavery remained, but that legacy was not something that should impede their social migration in the new century.

It would be worthwhile to document the early 21st century experiences of African Americans throughout the State and other communities as a record of history like the

work of the WPA. The ordinary lives of African Americans can prove a rich resource for understanding community, culture and the social conditions at the beginning of the century and provide fertile ground for research, document and preservation of this population by a 21st century generation of scholars.

Footnote:

Saturday, October 29, 2005 at 2:45p.m., John Hope Franklin, a noted Black scholar, spoke in the chambers of the Texas House of Representatives during the Texas Book Festival. As former CBS television anchor, Dan Rather, moderated, Franklin fielded questions from the audience about his life, American history and civil rights. One innocent, yet naïve, audience participant asked Dr. Hope Franklin whether he felt there was a need for further civil rights protections. Dr. Hope Franklin pondered the question for a moment, then responded that in his early teaching career a student wrote, "Dr. Hope Franklin, this course has really open my eye." He said he was critical of the student's grammar. But later, he said the student had a point, if you want to see it (the need for civil rights, "you have to open yo' eye!" Likewise, you only have to observe the surroundings to understand people which was the purpose of this study.

After listening to John Hope Franklin in the Texas legislative chambers, I rushed out to the book tent to purchase a copy of his latest book, Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin with the expectation that I would meet the distinguished scholar and obtain his autograph for my copy of the book. As I approached the author, I recognized a friend who was his escort for the day. After a few social

exchanges, I informed Dr. Hope Franklin I was completing my doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Hope Franklin gave me a puzzling look and asked, "You're finishing a doctorate here?" I can only ponder the intent of Dr. Hope Franklin's question - whether he was surprised to find a person of color completing a doctorate at UT Austin post-Hopwood era or just that I happen to be someone who took a Saturday afternoon to attend the Book Festival.

African Americans in the Information Society

Interviewer Questionnaire

Case ID: _____Date(s): _____

I am about to ask you some questions about your life, how you feel about things affecting your life and what you think about black people, technology and society. There is no right or wrong answer; I just want to hear your thoughts on these things.

Life Histories (Social and Cultural Capital)

Q1: Often our life experiences affect how we feel about ourselves. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Q2: Tell me about your family and your relationship with the family.

Q2a: Tell me about the family members. How many are there?

Q2b: Where do you fit within the family (family structure, e.g. head-of-household, single parent, two parent household, extended family, etc.)?

Q3: Have you lived in Austin very long? **(If not native, ask, "What brought you to Austin?")**

Q4: What is it like living here in Austin and your neighborhood?

Q4a: Have you ever thought of living somewhere else? Why/why not?

Q5: What are some of the things that make life easy for you?

Q5a: What makes your life difficult?

Q6: Where did your family come from?

Q6a: Do you recall any family stories about your ancestors, things they did, where they worked?

Q7: Do you think slavery had any lasting effect on your family? How so?

LITERACY/EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL

Q8: Tell me about school. Did you graduate from high school? **(If no, go to Q9a.)**

Q8a: Any advanced study?

Q9a: What happened that you didn't finish high school?

Q9b: Do you think finishing high school or maybe going to college would have made a difference in your life?

Economic Capital

Q10: What kind of work do you do? **(If unemployed, skip to Q10a. If yes, skip to Q10c)**

Q10a: Tell me why you are not working right now. **(Go to Q10b)**

Q10b: How do you support yourself/family when you are not working?

Q11: What kind of training or education did you need to perform the job?

SELF-EFFICACY INDICATORS

Q12: What were some of the most memorable things you did growing up?

Q13: Did you ever take part in community activities? **(If yes, skip to Q13a. If no, skip to Q14.)**

Q13a: What kinds of community things have you done?

Q14: Have you ever had any problems with companies, social or governmental agencies? What were they about? **(If no, skip to Q15.)**

Q14a: What did you have to do to resolve or clear-up these problems?

Q15: If you could change your life in anyway, how would you change it?

POLITICAL CAPITAL

Q16: Have you ever done any political work, election campaigns or rallies?
Q16a: Why/Why not?

Q17: Have you ever represented your family or community to bring attention to the needs of the community?
Q17a: Why/Why not?

VIEWS ABOUT THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Q18: When people talk about technology, what comes to your mind?

Q19: How did you learn about these technologies?

Q20a: Have you ever had any experiences with things like-

10. telephones (telephone service in the home)
11. televisions/VCR/DVD
12. radios
13. cell phones
14. CDs
15. cable TV
16. computers (computer used in the home)
17. Internet (Internet access at home)
18. others

Q20b: How do you use these technologies?

Q20c: Have you ever used the Internet to get information, look up government information, renew driver's license, fill-out an application or complete some other task?

Q20d: Do you ever create anything using technology **(refer to items 1-9)? (If don't use, skip to Q20e).**

Q20e: What keeps you from using **(ask about the technologies they don't use,**

items 1-9)

Q21: There has been a lot of talk about technology, computers, digital this and digital that. What do you think about all this?

Q22: Do you think all this technology is helpful? How so?

Q23: Which people can technology help the most?

Q24: Do you think technology could help you or your family? How so?

FUTURE VIEWS

Q25: So much has happened in the last few years. What are some of the major things affecting Black people right now?

Q26: Considering all the things that you have just said, do you feel that Black people will come out OK in the future?

Q27: What do you think Blacks need to make it in the future?

Q28: Blacks who were slaves in America have only been free for about 138 years. If you could look into the future about 100 years, what do you think life would be like for Black people?

Q29: If you could look into the future 100 years, what do you think your family or descendents will be doing?

Q30: Lastly, I would like you to complete a short survey on media use. **(Interviewer: distribute media use survey, allow time for responses then collect the survey.)**

Thank you for participating. When we complete all our interviews, you will receive $10 per interview with a maximum of $50 depending on the number of sessions you complete.

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Vita

Carol Lynnette Adams-Means was born in San Antonio, Texas, the daughter of Rev. Julius and Mrs. Bertha M. Adams. While completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre in 1978, she worked at Texas Southern University tutoring Vietnam veterans in mathematics, as a promotion assistant for KHOU-TV, freelance television director for "Together with The People" at KUHT-TV, and as a news announcer and public affairs producer for two Houston radio stations. She was actively engaged in Houston community theater where she acted and produced plays. Adams-Means left broadcasting upon the birth of her daughter, Alyssa Anne. She then completed a post-baccalaureate certificate in Biomedical Communication at The University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston in 1981. She also worked as a substitute teacher for the Houston Independent School District while attending UTHSC. Upon graduation she joined Control Data Corporation as a Learning Center administrator.

In 1982, she was recruited to teach in the Department of Communication at Prairie View A & M University. She obtained the rank of Assistant Professor and served as News Director for KPVU-FM, an NPR affiliate. During that time, she entered The University of Texas at Austin where she obtained a Master of Arts degree in Journalism in 1991. Adams-Means returned to Prairie View A & M University where she continued to teach, mentor students and manage technology development for the department. She also worked with the Atlanta Olympic Host Broadcast Training Program for the 1996 International Olympics.

In 1999, Adams-Means returned to The University of Texas at Austin to complete her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Journalism. At UT she taught data communication for the McCombs School of Business, managed digital media projects for the School of Journalism, and taught Advertising, Public Relations, Media Management and Production at St. Edward's University. She is presently an instructor in the Department of Communication at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) where she teaches Communication Technology, Multicultural Reporting, Professional Presentation and Research Methods. She is actively involved in university service and community outreach. Her research interests address minority populations, information technology, and information policy. In 2005, she received a first-place faculty award from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) for her paper titled, "Agenda-Setting: The hip hop factor in decision 2004," with Ms. Maria Flores and Dr. Maxwell McCombs, currently under publication review. Her research has been accepted for presentation to the International Communication Association, National Communication Association and Latin American Federation of Social Communication Schools (FELAFACS in Spanish), and the American Public Health Association. She has received fellowships including the KPMG Foundation – PhD Project, National Association of Television Program Executives Faculty Fellowship, National Cable Television Association Faculty Fellowship, New York University Faculty Resource Network, University of Iowa Russia & Ukraine Fellowship, Aspen Institute, Freedom Forum, Poynter Institute, Georgia Institute of Technology Focus Fellows, Women in Cable and Telecommunications Foundation, and Ada Frances Miller Scholarship, Reader's Digest Excellence in Journalism Fellowship through UT Austin.

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