

African American Familial Relationships: An
Undiscovered History of African American Women in
Kansas Beginning in 1930

Rymonda Davis
Fall 2008/Spring 2009

Over the years, Manhattan, Kansas has become a city full of rich African American history waiting to be discovered. Coming as early as 1860 during the Great Kansas Exodus, African American families migrated to Kansas because they felt there was an opportunity to provide a better life not only for themselves, but for future generations. Some senior citizens living in the Manhattan community can trace their roots in Manhattan back to 1880, and are aware of their family's presence in slavery. Segregation, which came at a later date, mainly occurred because of the large African American population that settled in the northwest part of Manhattan.¹ Most African Americans in Manhattan worked as laborers or in domestic positions; very few African Americans during this time owned their own businesses. They mostly had to look to white businesses to get everything they needed. The few African American businesses that did exist were the stepping stone for businesses in Manhattan today. This is further explored by Geraldine Baker Walton, a long time resident of Manhattan, in her book *140 Years of Soul: A History of African Americans in Manhattan, Kansas 1865-2005*. She describes not only the breakdown of businesses in Manhattan then and now, but also many generations of African American families and when they came to Kansas.² As pointed out by Walton in her compelling book about the African American history of Manhattan, Kansas, Manhattan was founded in 1855 and African Americans have been living in Manhattan since 1865, only 4 years after Kansas became a state. One of the first nine African Americans living in Manhattan was a

1

Chaudhuri, Nupur. "We All Seem Like Brothers and Sisters: The African-American Community in Manhattan, Kansas, 1865-1940." 275-277.

2

Walton, Geraldine B. *140 Years of Soul: A History of African Americans in Manhattan, Kansas 1865-2005*.

boy who went by J. Henry. Of course he is an ancient memory now but he was the start of a strong African American community in Manhattan. Over time, the separation lines dissolved and in her book, Walton discusses these changes and how they affected the Black community.

As far as the experiences of the African Americans during this time, historians have mostly gathered information from census data, school records, and newspapers—pretty much anything that was a valid account of what was going on during this time. The main problem was collecting earlier information because those records weren't kept. But I think that in order for the African American experience to be truly understood, one must take into account their real experiences, feelings, lifestyles, and hard times. Their unrecorded history is the single most important concept in understanding what happened during that time. The importance of oral history is evident; people can tell their experiences better than anyone else which is why talking to African Americans about their experiences is so important in gaining an understanding of how they lived.

Starting at what may have seemed like a disadvantage, African Americans in the Manhattan community built themselves a better lifestyle by learning how to utilize all of their resources, no matter how limited. The *1865 Kansas Agricultural Census* reveals that of the 328 people living in Manhattan during that time period, only nine were African American. This reveals that there wasn't a real sense of community for African Americans at this time because they were so few in number and they didn't have the resources available to them. The African American population did start to increase rapidly after 1865; the 1880 census shows that about 15 percent of the population was in fact African American.³ Based on the small number of African Americans living in Manhattan at this time, it was a wonder how they could build a whole community from the limited number of resources available to them. African Americans

³ All the Census Data used are in the Kansas State Historical Society.

not only had to deal with discrimination, they also had to deal with barely having enough to make ends meet. Their innovative ways to make something out of practically nothing established what people now consider a sense of strength and ongoing faith that in the end, everything will be okay. The early importance of religion in the African American culture itself is therefore inevitable and causes religion to be important to many African Americans. Both of these concepts were also something that I hoped to explore in my research since they are so important to the African American culture.

Today, the African American community in Manhattan is not only present, but they play an important role in establishing a sense of identity for Manhattan, specifically Yuma Street. The Yuma Street community has very close relationships with one another, which is proven by past interviews with its residents. Roberta Starnes described her neighborhood on Yuma Street, “Everybody was kin around us . . . my grandmother's sister lived next door to us.” The African-American families depended on each other for help and support in their struggles in order to make a life for themselves.⁴ Starnes’ quotation exemplifies the closeness of the Yuma Street community, and how they are a support system for one another. I gathered a firsthand account of this closeness when conducting some of my earlier interviews and although it was apparent, it definitely was not typical. The women of Yuma Street carry themselves with dignity and they respect one another, first and foremost. They speak highly of one another, as if they know that life is way too short to talk down on neighbors and friends. They seem to share an unbreakable bond that isn’t like one I have ever seen before. Although the typical friendship requires daily visits and late night telephone calls, the women of Yuma Street know what the others have been

4

Chaudhuri, Nupur. "We All Seem Like Brothers and Sisters: The African-American Community in Manhattan, Kansas, 1865-1940." 275-277.

through and they not only respect them for that, but they admire them for being able to endure such hardships. They all come from different places but somehow, they all ended up living on Yuma Street in Manhattan, Kansas.

My research was started in order to learn more about African American history by talking to people that lived during very significant periods in our history. My focus on women came from my admiration for African American women. My main assumption was that beginning in around 1930, African American women were sometimes referred to as strong because they had to overcome some sort of difficult situation. I believe that over time, the idea of being strong has sort of stuck with African American women today and they are often referred to as strong because they are African American and not because of what they have overcome. I was curious to find out where this idea came from and how it made the women that I was interviewing feel about their own lives.

Throughout my research, I initially hoped to discover some new, fascinating facts that had not been discovered before. But the stories that these women have are all fascinating and a part of America's lost history. It seems as if people are so caught up in what they read in books, that they don't stop and listen to the people that lived through those same events that are in books. I want to make these women known for their bravery and determination in living their lives, as well as their courage in telling me their stories. Through interviews with African American women living in the Manhattan community, I uncovered in my research lives that were ordinary to them but fascinating and full of rich history.

My research focuses on the elderly African American women in the Manhattan community and their role in the family because they can provide insight into their family life, as well as what life was like in the Manhattan community. Women were not only the primary

caregivers in the African American family. Women were expected to take care of the family as well as do household duties.⁵ Their roles were difficult because the women were supposed to stay positive and determined even though their life was not exactly easy. This instilled the ability to never give up in African American women in that time period.

African American familial relationships have changed significantly since the early 1900's. The relationships in the family were especially different because they were more formal. Adults were respected, just like today, but it was at a distance. Children couldn't openly talk to their parents about anything and grandmothers were symbols of wisdom. Their authority could never be questioned and the amount of respect that they received was more direct in that children just didn't talk to their grandmothers. A child had to be a child and not question the adults about anything. As one of my interviewees informed me, in the past, children were expected to stay in their place and were not supposed to ask questions.⁶ This is very different from my own relationship with the adults in my family; I share a very open relationship with both my mother and grandmother. Due to changes in the way my generation views familial relationships, it is more common for children to be more comfortable with talking to their grandmothers. The boundaries between the elderly and the young don't exist today because of a lack of fear that was present then. The relationships between children and adults were mostly based on fear and respect as opposed to open communication because of relation. The biggest difference between relationships then and now is obviously the communication. Communication, a key factor in

Kane, Connie M. "African American Family Dynamics As Perceived by Family Members." *Journal Of Black Studies*, 2000: 691-702..

6

Cole, Ms. Arlene, interview by Rymonda Davis. (October 20, 2008).

establishing a sense of culture within a family, did not exist back then because of the boundaries that came with relationships.

However, many of the roles in African American families today are very similar to how they were throughout history. A common occurrence in African American families is fictive kin, a tendency to treat non-family members as if they are related.⁷ Fictive kin is a common occurrence in African American families because of the general caring and nurturing ways among African American communities. Like with the Yuma Street community, many African Americans treat their neighbors like family members and that often results in a sort of extended family, i.e. fictive kin.

Today, there is also more flexibility in the roles of men and women in the family, especially with women not having traditional “housewife” roles. Women in African American families aren’t assuming the housewife role anymore because they are more likely to balance work and take care of their children instead of not working at all. I wanted to explore gender roles in my interviews, especially since women’s roles are so significant. Women had to work very hard to take care of the family, and they had to learn how to use all of their limited resources to the best of their abilities. I was interested in learning about how that worked, as well as women’s roles compared to the men in the family. Family is very important in the African American culture as a whole, and the ever-changing structure of African American family is an important part of understanding family dynamics.

In the past, African Americans were not represented; they were not looked at as important or even significant to our history. Their valuable insight into a time in history that is

7

Mosley-Howard, Susan, and Cheryl B. Evans. "Relationships and Contemporary Experiences of the African American Family: An Ethnographic Case Study." *Journal of Black Studies*, 2000: 428-452.

often overlooked is very valuable today. People look to books to find out about this time in history but often tend to forget the fact that what can't be learned in textbooks can be learned by talking to people. Neighbors, grandparents, church members, and maybe even parents can provide knowledge that cannot be learned anywhere else. All of the knowledge that can be gained from talking to the elderly is infinitely valuable to us.

Interview #1: Ms. Arlene Cole

Anticipation built as my first interview approached. I had an afternoon interview set with Ms. Arlene Cole, who lives on Yuma Street, which was a sign that she was involved with the Manhattan African American community. I was anxious to get started but mostly nervous because it was my first interview. Naturally, I wanted everything to go smoothly. The drive down Yuma Street was very historical; most of the houses were quite old, but I could tell that the people who lived in them took pride in what they owned, simply because all of the houses were very well taken care of. It felt great to finally be doing what I had dreamed of—becoming a part of history and learning so much about the African American culture in Manhattan. I felt pride in what I was about to do and I couldn't wait to get started.

I stood outside of Ms. Cole's house and took in everything around me. The cheerful sounds of the people in the community filled my ears as I looked up the walkway to Ms. Cole's green and white house, as seen in Figure 1. Kids running around in her yard smiled warmly at me and told me to walk on up to the front door. My nerves calmed down a bit as I thought about what I was doing. I had my interview questions ready and I was ready to learn.



Figure 1: 527 Yuma Street, residence of Ms. Arlene Cole, December 2008. Picture taken by Rymonda Davis

I walked up the steps of 527 Yuma Street, and was warmly greeted by Ms. Arlene Cole, a caring African American woman in her 80's. She quietly introduced herself and invited me into her home. She was very unsure of her contribution to my project but she immediately let me know that she would help in any way that she could. I reassured her that this was just a time for us to meet and learn about one another, which seemed to put Ms. Cole at ease.

At first, it was very hard to get Ms. Cole to talk to me; she seemed kind of shy and she talked very quietly. In order to get her to open up a little, I asked her if there was anything that she would like to know about me before we started the interview. She seemed interested, and started asking me all sorts of questions. Why did I choose K-State? What was my family like? Where was I from? Apparently, I said something that she liked, because when I started to tell her about my relationship with my grandmother, she started to talk to me about her own childhood in

Ellsworth, Kansas where she was raised by her grandmother for a little while. She talked of her grandmother with little enthusiasm, but the amount of respect that she had for her grandmother was very apparent in her voice. I looked into Ms. Cole's reminiscent eyes and her vivid memories stirred up memories in my mind as well. The distinct sound of her grandmother brushing her hair and the smells of food coming from the kitchen are all very strong sensory memories that she will never forget.

Ms. Cole lived in Ellsworth, KS with her grandmother, along with her aunt, uncle, and cousin after her parents moved to Fort Riley since her father was in the Army. Ellsworth, KS around 1930 was a very different experience than what would have been experienced in a bigger city. There was an obvious difference in the amount of people in Ellsworth, KS; Ms. Cole only remembers three other African American families that lived near her. The amount of racism was very little, and segregation was not really present since the African American children were in the same classrooms as the white children.⁸ Ms. Cole's house already wasn't the traditional two parent household, and she experienced many differences in being raised by her grandmother. Young children were always respectful to the elderly, no matter if they were related or not. Children knew when to stay in their place, and Ms. Cole's relationship with her own grandmother was reflective of that. She described her grandmother as very family oriented but also very private. The relationships among grandmothers and their grandchildren have definitely changed over time because in today's family, grandmothers are respected but they are more open in talking with their grandchildren. The popularity of the three generation household is a direct result of the change in relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren because it utilizes

8

Cole, Ms. Arlene, interview by Rymonda Davis. (October 20, 2008).

the resources of the young and the elderly, as well as promotes an openness and closeness that might not be there otherwise. Many African American families consider the three generation household beneficial to maintaining good relationships because the grandparents are living with their children and grandchildren, keeping all lines of communication open.⁹

Ms. Cole's grandmother passed away when she was about six years old and the lack of communication between the two of them made it hard for Ms. Cole to even understand why her grandmother was sick. Even though Ms. Cole's grandmother was not alive for most of her life, the impact that her grandmother made on her life is undeniable. A sense of strength, pride, and respect for people are all lessons that Ms. Cole's grandmother instilled in her. After graduating from Ellsworth High School and going to college for a year, Ms. Cole moved with her then husband, James, to Manhattan, KS. After moving to Manhattan, Ms. Cole says that she would not trade her experiences for anything. Ms. Cole, a respected member of the Yuma community, said that there has always been a strong sense of pride in the African American Yuma Street community, whether it is pride in their children or pride in their homes.

Ms. Cole is a very strong, positive African American woman. Her good spirit throughout the interview made me realize how privileged I am to receive many of the opportunities that I have received in my life. I initially thought that all African American families were close, just like my family. I never realized how rare my relationship is with my mother and grandmother. Ms. Cole takes pride in her community, and the wisdom she offered me taught me the true meaning of family, values, and being proud of who I am.

9

Kane, Connie M. "African American Family Dynamics As Perceived by Family Members." *Journal Of Black Studies*, 2000: 691-702.

Interview #2: Ms. Rosa Hickman

About two weeks later, I received a call from Ms. Rosa Hickman, one of the oldest and most well known members of the Manhattan Yuma Street community. She informed me that she had been very busy but she would be happy to meet with me and tell me whatever I needed to know. Her exuberant personality was evident in her voice; I could tell that Ms. Hickman was the type of woman that would never let her age determine her attitude.

I arrived at 816 Yuma Street and Ms. Hickman greeted me at the doorstep. She smiled and introduced herself. We proceeded to the car and made our way to The Manhattan Public Library. There was never a dull moment with Ms. Rosa Hickman. Her bright personality radiated throughout the interview; her laughs filled the library as she recalled many of her childhood events. She beamed with pride as she told me about her house on Yuma Street, which she has lived in for 65 years. She moved into her house on Yuma Street when her daughter, who is now 65 years old, was a newborn baby. Ms. Hickman has fond memories of holding her child and standing in front of her house, filled with satisfaction. Ms. Hickman says that most elderly people want to own something in their lifetime, only because they know how difficult it was for African Americans in the past to have something that they could call their own.

Ms. Hickman's experiences in Manhattan were very similar to Ms. Cole's experiences. The women in the community always helped one another and often considered each other family.¹⁰ Fictive kin is very common in the Manhattan Yuma Street community, especially among the women. It was not uncommon for women in the community to take care of one another's children and provide support throughout difficult times. All the children in the

¹⁰

Hickman, Ms. Rosa, interview by Rymonda Davis. (November 11, 2008).

community were looked after by not only their parents, but all of the adults in the community. Ms. Hickman even recalls a time that her daughter's teacher brushed her daughter's hair, since Ms. Hickman didn't do so well with brushing hair. This even further exemplifies the relationships among the women in the community; the teachers even helped out when they felt necessary. The unbreakable bonds that the women in the community formed were clearly helpful in their survival of such a rough period of time. Being able to bring out the positive in any situation is a quality found in African American women that has persisted throughout the years.

Ms. Hickman, born and raised during segregation in Manhattan, Kansas, was at first raised by both her parents, until her mother passed away when she was nine years old. Although she does not remember much about her mother, she recalls vivid memories of the time she did spend with her mother. A common occurrence, it seems, is that many of the influential women in the African American family passed away before they had a chance to see their children and grandchildren grow up. The relationships among women and the children in the family were directly affected by the roles that each had to take. Children could not ask for much from adults and this resulted in a part of their own history being taken away from them. Today, children more commonly go to their parents or grandparents to ask about their history but back then, this was very uncommon. Ms. Hickman doesn't even know why her own mother died because she couldn't ask questions at such a young age. Today, this might seem odd, but during that time, the amount of respect that children had for their elders was undeniable; it was a sign of respect to only speak when spoken to and stay out of the way of the adults. Ms. Hickman laughed as she told me all the memories of having to go and play outside without being able to come inside if company came over for either of her parents.

The role of women was somewhat traditional in Ms. Hickman's family, but also very flexible. Women took care of the family, and were responsible for all household duties. Ms. Hickman learned to cook at a young age and after her mother's death, she took the role of woman of the house. She was expected to assume the role of her mother and take care of the house. Of course, she had the help of many women in the community, who taught her many valuable life lessons. Ms. Hickman learned from the women in the community; although many of the women lacked an education, they had common sense. Ms. Hickman says "...old folks didn't have education but they knew what to do... [They knew] the right way to live and treat people..." which proves that the elderly had non-traditional knowledge to offer even though they lacked a formal education.

Ms. Hickman's outgoing personality and upbeat attitude all contribute to her outlook on living in Manhattan all of her life. Her involvement in the community, as well as at Pilgrim Baptist Church, makes her a well known and respected member of the Yuma Street Community.¹¹ Ms. Hickman is an honorable African American woman with not only the strength to make it through whatever life throws her way, but an ability to smile and light up an entire room.

Ms. Arlene Cole and Ms. Rosa Hickman are both strong, admirable women in the Manhattan community. Although they had different experiences growing up, both women are appreciative of the Yuma Street community. The women are one big family, according to Ms. Hickman, and they always help each other out, no matter what happens. Fictive kin defines what the Yuma Street community is all about, and it shows in the relationships among these women

11

Ellis, Sheila. "Rosa: The Face of Yuma Street." *The Manhattan Mercury*, November 25, 2007: A1, A8.

and their families. Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman, despite their significant differences in personalities, are the epitome of strong willed African American women. Their involvement and commitment to the Yuma Street community is remarkable and their attitudes about living are what I someday hope to possess. Not only do Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman serve as role models to their community, they have both become role models of mine. I immensely respect them as not only women, but African Americans that have made it through harsh times and still smile with dignity at the end of each day.

Interview #3: Mrs. Joyce Grigsby

Unlike some of the patterns found in both Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman's lives, after interviewing a middle aged African American woman that currently lives in Topeka, Kansas, I found that their lives weren't as typical as my earlier interviews suggested. I received the change to interview Mrs. Joyce Grigsby, a 50 something year old African American woman whose light seemed to shine through the telephone during our short phone interview. I wasn't as nervous about interviewing her and I also knew exactly what I wanted to find out. What role did church play in her family? Was she close to her grandmother? I was eager to find patterns and make connections between the three women and church was definitely a key component in both Ms. Hickman and Ms. Cole's lives. Mrs. Grigsby was born in Eskridge, Kansas and lived with her grandmother while her dad and sisters were in Paxico. Her grandmother instilled in her respect for her elders and appreciation for her culture. She was closer to her grandmother than the other women I interviewed, primarily because she was raised by her grandmother. The most important connection I made was her grandmother's role in the church. Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Grigsby's grandmother, played a key role in the church. She attended church regularly and was often in

charge of putting together many of the church functions. This was not a surprising fact since both of my previous interviewees informed me of their own grandmothers' involvement in the church. During that time, church was considered a healing place for older women and they often took their grandchildren with them in order to teach the importance of religion.¹² Church was not only a place for people to put all of their faith in the Lord. Women gathered at the church for social events and also to catch up with one another's lives. As a child, Mrs. Grigsby learned the importance of church and religion early on, especially when times were tough for her and her grandmother.

When asked about the symbolic nature of African American women and their strength, Mrs. Grigsby merely laughed. She considered her grandmother to be a very strong woman because of what she had to endure but according to her, she would never tell her own grandmother that. Mrs. Grigsby agreed that yes, there are "strong Black women" but most of the time, they don't think about it like that because they are just doing what they are supposed to do. This shed light on that stereotype for me because being able to endure hard times wasn't really a choice for African Americans. They had to deal with everything that they did because that was their only option. Mrs. Grigsby helped me make connections with most of what I had been reading in journals and online articles because I never thought of strength in an African American woman a stereotype. I just figured that it was more of a compliment than a stereotype. After talking with Mrs. Grigsby I realized that sometimes African Americans were just faced with harder situations and they dealt with them because they had to, not because they were necessarily stronger than any other race. I think that this stereotype still exists today because so many people fail to realize that it is a stereotype. The media also helps in keeping it going because of movies and TV shows that portray African American women as strong, tough, and

¹² Grigsby, Mrs. Joyce, Interview by Rymonda Davis. (23 March 2009).

able to endure anything. I believe that many African American women wouldn't mind being stereotyped as strong because of its positive annotation but I think that it has definitely become a word that is just thrown around.

Although our interview was over the phone, Mrs. Grigsby and I shared a very special connection. She helped me make connections among the women I had interviewed before her and she also helped me realize that I had been stereotyping African American women, along with everybody else. I considered this a definite breakthrough in my research because it taught me about myself and also my motives in doing my research.

Making Connections: African American Women and Church

After reoccurring stories about the importance of churches and the role of African American women in the church, I decided to do more research on church mothers. Women in African American churches are usually designated as church mothers around the age of seventy. They are considered "Good Soldiers" for the Lord and they meet the expectation that a woman participate in a lifelong process of spiritual development known as "trying to grow in grace". As the pastor preaches the sermon, the church mother leads the congregation's response by hand clapping, standing, swaying, and etc.¹³. The church is centered around women and prestige in the church is based upon descent, age, religious commitment and gender. Usually the eldest women who have never left the church have the highest statuses. Since there is often a male dominance in African American churches, it is suggested that African American women rarely compete with

¹³ Brown, Audrey Lawson. "Afro-Baptist Women's Church and Family Roles: Transmitting Afrocentric Cultural Values." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 1994: 173-186.

men for leadership roles in churches in order to make African American men feel elevated, as if they play a greater role in society. I found this concept a little different because just from prior knowledge, in African American culture it seems as if everything is male dominated. I started to wonder why in the church, women had higher statuses than men. After reading more from that online journal, I found that women often served as church founders, which led to my understanding of the role of African American women in the church. Since they founded churches, it was more likely for them to lead churches. In order to learn more about the structural component of the church, I researched in the *Anthropological Quarterly* and began studying an ethnohistoric and ethnographic study done on a Florida Zion church. I was informed by Ms. Cole that African Methodist and Zion churches were common in African American culture so I decided that the case study would suffice in helping me gain an understanding. My key findings were:

The Zion family organization is centered around the mother but prestige in this community is given by relationship with the founders of the community. People are introduced by their relationship to Zion women. The elderly are honored and motherhood is cherished. Mothers and daughters have a very intimate relationship; daughters care for their mothers as they get older. Most people live in multi-generational homes and some live with their extended families (which may include fictive kin). Women (mothers in particular) are key to family continuity and the men are considered the heads of households. Men are responsible for maintaining the house for the women. Women are responsible for meeting all family physical and spiritual needs. They manage the family's health care and elderly women provide child care while younger women work. Zion women also work outside the home.

Most of these facts were surprising but the main theme that I pulled from this research was that women were considered very important in the Zion community and they were respected and honored by the men. I think that this relates to the role of women in the churches because of the huge impact of the Zion church on African American culture. I think that some of the ideas from the Zion community carried over to the African American communities and churches in terms of the respect for elders and church mothers. This was a key part in making a connection in my research because it answered many questions that I had after interviewing all three women.

Case Study: The Hammond Family

After learning so much new information from Mrs. Grigsby, I decided to go to the Geary County Historical Society in Junction City, Kansas after hearing about a grandmother, Mary Hammond, who was considered a healer. I found this intriguing because although many of my interviewees told me about home remedies that they encountered while growing up, none of them had grandmothers who were known for being healers. I went to the museum and found that Mary Hammond ministered to many through the gift of healing. She and her husband were prominent members of the Church of God. One of the things that characterized the Church of God was the active participation of women in the ministry as well as deaconship.¹⁴ The Church of God also did missionary work on East Ninth Street right in front of the bars and clubs. The practices of the Hammond's church weren't typical but they were very notable.

¹⁴ Franzen, Susan Lloyd. "Junction City's Early African American Churches." In *Set in Stone: Stories of People and Events that Shaped Junction City and Geary County, Kansas*, by The Geary County Historical Society. Junction City, 2008.

The Hammond family began with Alex Johnson, a former slave, and Pascal Hammond, a freed Black man from South Carolina. Both of them moved to Junction City shortly after the Civil War. But, the marriage of Mary Johnson and Joseph Hammond marks the real beginning of the Hammond family in Junction City, Kansas. They had fourteen children, eleven of them sons who lived to adulthood. They were very well known around town because of the size of their family as well as their involvement in the church. Their sons had various jobs, including singing in a quartet, working for doctors and lawyers around town, and being on the radio.¹⁵ They were respected by everyone in the town and were known for being hard workers, business people, talented musicians, and athletes. The Hammond family was a large family and although they were very involved in the community, Mary Hammond was famous for her healing. She was known throughout the Midwest for her gift and was also very respected by the church.

The case study that I conducted on the Hammond family helped me draw conclusions about African Americans and their involvement in the church. Church was a very important aspect of the African American lifestyle and although the relationships among women weren't always there, church definitely was. I think that church served as a symbol of stability and continuity in the African American culture because when everything wasn't always going the way the families expected, Sunday morning would come around and the family would be in church singing, praising, and enjoying one another's time.

Throughout history, African Americans have been symbols of strength and strong will. They have endured many periods of time that could have made them a weaker race, but instead has made them stronger. The bonds and emotional ties among women in the African American

¹⁵ Childs, Gaylynn. "The Hammond and Johnson Families--Up From Slavery." In *Set in Stone: Stories of People and Events that Shaped Junction City and Geary County, Kansas*, by The Geary County Historical Society. Junction City, 2008.

family are inevitable; the women in the family represent determination and carry many responsibilities. Although African American women's roles in the family have changed over time, women in the family play a pivotal role in keeping the family together.

My initial research on African American women in Manhattan, Kansas resulted in a strong curiosity about why African American women all over have been looked to as symbols of strength. This semester, my research expanded to Junction City as well as Topeka, KS in order to establish connections between my first interviewees, Ms. Arlene Cole and Ms. Rosa Hickman, with other African American women in different parts of Kansas. My main questions arose from the patterns in both Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman's lives, including the weak bonds that they both had with their grandmothers. I started my research last semester with the main assumption that African American women have strong intrapersonal and familial relationships, especially with the women in their families. When my oral history research with Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman suggested otherwise, I was forced to examine other patterns among African American women throughout history. I discovered that despite those similarities in those women, other women's experiences would be different and before I could make any major inferences, I had to do more research. My findings on African American churches and the role of church mothers as well as the suggestion that Ms. Cole and Ms. Hickman's experiences weren't typical led me to conduct my interview with Mrs. Grigsby as well as travel to Junction City to learn about the Hammond family. Of course, my research isn't done. I hope to interview more middle aged and younger African American women in order to learn about how the difference in generations affects the relationships among African American women in the family. I don't know what I will discover next. I only hope to make my research an important part of history.

Works Cited

- Brown, Audrey Lawson. "Afro-Baptist Women's Church and Family Roles: Transmitting Afrocentric Cultural Values." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 1994: 173-186.
- Chaudhuri, Nupur. "We All Seem Like Brothers and Sisters: The African-American Community in Manhattan, Kansas, 1865-1940." 1991-1992: 275-277.
- Childs, Gaylynn. "The Hammond and Johnson Families--Up From Slavery." In *Set in Stone: Stories of People and Events that Shaped Junction City and Geary County, Kansas*, by The Geary County Historical Society. Junction City, 2008.
- Cole, Ms. Arlene, interview by Rymonda Davis. (October 20, 2008).
- Ellis, Sheila. "Rosa: The Face of Yuma Street." *The Manhattan Mercury*, November 25, 2007: A1, A8.
- Franzen, Susan Lloyd. "Junction City's Early African American Churches." In *Set in Stone: Stories of People and Events that Shaped Junction City and Geary County, Kansas*, by The Geary County Historical Society. Junction City, 2008.
- Grigsby, Mrs. Joyce, interview by Rymonda Davis. (March 23, 2009).
- Hickman, Ms. Rosa, interview by Rymonda Davis. (November 11, 2008).
- Kane, Connie M. "African American Family Dynamics As Perceived by Family Members." *Journal Of Black Studies*, 2000: 691-702.
- Mosley-Howard, Susan, and Cheryl B. Evans. "Relationships and Contemporary Experiences of the African American Family: An Ethnographic Case Study." *Journal of Black Studies*, 2000: 428-452.
- Walton, Geraldine B. *140 Years of Soul: A History of African Americans in Manhattan, Kansas 1865-2005*.