Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, being the contemporary African American women writers, seem to have common aims in writing the novels. When one reads their novels, especially selected novels under study, one definitely realizes that both are writing about the plight of Black women in white America. The most striking feature of their writing is that Black women have comparably been more exploited, humiliated, hated and insulted by their own men, but one must not forget it is racism, sexism, classism and capitalism that have already broken the Black people both physically and psychologically.

Throughout the world, in all cultures and in all ages, motherhood has been glorified. Mother has been called the “second God”. The story of motherhood has been sung in almost all languages. But when the time comes of singing the motherhood of African American enslaved women, the story takes many turns and twists. Langston Hughes very beautifully captures the idea that the life for black mother is not easy, even though, she tells her son that she is coming to help him. His poem *Mother to Son* (1959) is as under:

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Well, son, I’ll tell you:
Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.
It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor –
Bare.
But all the time
I’se been a-climbin’ on,
And reaching landin’s,
And turning corners,
And sometimes going in the dark
Where there ain’t been no light.
So, boy, don’t you turn back.
Don’t you set down on the steps
’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.
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Don’t you fall now –
For I’se still goin’, honey,
I’se still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair

[Hughes 1959:96]

Besides, when one reads the following account of a black mother recorded by Robert Coles in his book *Children of Crisis* (1967), one really realizes that the Black mother is definitely great in every sense of the term. The Black mother says: “To me, having a baby inside me is the only time I’m really alive. I know I can make something, do something, no matter what color my skin is, and what names people call me” [Coles 1967:368]. No one can forget the agony, the troubles the Black mother has to face in her life.

While studying the select novels of both women writers, the researcher categories the Black mothers in two groups – enslaved and free black mothers. The researcher has also noticed certain problems that generally Black enslaved mothers face. The first problem is that the husband of the black mother abandons the family, after producing children in the house. The father or the husband leaves the family due to some reasons. Due to the prevalent white racism and capitalism, the black man does not get regular work. On the other hand, the black woman easily gets the work in the house of white American of washing the clothes and utensils. The black man has to go in search of work far in the city or in the mines. For example, the husband of Nel of Morrison’s *Sula*, does not get work of building roads. He has to work as a waiter in one of the hotels. The other reasons behind the missing father are – many of the black men are drunkards, because their wives are employed, and they have no work and in a state of frustration, they are suspicious of their wives. On the contrary, some of them become womanizer, want to enjoy life. Eva’s husband named BoyBoy of *Sula* is the best example.
The narrator describes the reasons behind his leaving Eva and three children. She observes: “He (BoyBoy) did whatever he could that he liked and he liked womanizing best, drinking second, and abusing Eva third. When he left in November, Eva had $1.65, five eggs, three beets and no idea of what or how to feel” [S: 32].

The fathers or the husbands, who do not leave the family, create problems for black mothers. They take pleasure in beating, abusing their wives and children. These black fathers are the victims of white racism, sexism and capitalism. They follow their masters blindly and want to overpower their women. In fact, it is their negative socialization, but they do not understand that they are destroying their own lives. Brownfield of Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is the best example. He starts hating his wife because she is educated and refined. His friends tease him that his wife is very modern and superior to him. He then beats her without any reason. The narrator writes:

Brownfield beat his once lovely wife now, regularly, because it made him feel, briefly, good. Every Saturday night he beat her, trying to pin the blame for his failure on her by imprinting it on her face; and she, inevitably, repaid him by becoming a haggard automatous witch, beside whom even Josie looked well-preserved [TLGC:74].

In this way, the domestic violence plays havoc in the lives of Black enslaved mother. In this context, Barbara Bannon points out:

The Black woman is one of America’s greatest heroines. The cruelty of the Black man to his wife and family is one of the great tragedies. It has mutilated the spirit and body of the black family and of most black mothers [Bannon 1970:195].

The study reveals that the black enslaved mothers become habituated to regular beatings and are so sick of daily abuse and character assassination
that they start keeping relations with other men as doubted by their husbands. In Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Mrs. Pauline Breedlove is so used to with the regular beatings that she herself starts taking interest in fighting with her husband. The narrator observes: “To deprive her of these fights was to deprive her of all the zest and reasonableness of life” [TBE: 31]. The couple Grange Copeland and Margaret go one step ahead, they start fighting on roads. Margaret gives an account of their fighting to her son Brownfield thus:

> “Your daddy and me had another fight”, she said, sinking down on the bed. “Oh, we had us a rip-rowing, knock-down, drag-out fight. With that fat yellow bitch of his calling the punches [TLGC: 19].

Margaret starts sleeping with other men. One of the reasons behind her whoring is Grange’s continuous doubting her character and his own relations with Josie. The son Brownfield holds his father Grange responsible for his mother’s changed behavior.

In fact, white racism, sexism and capitalism are the root reasons behind the destruction of black family life, particularly the Black mother. The abject poverty, drunkard husband, directionless and fearful children is the reality of black mother’s life. Her life is unsafe, inside and outside the house. If she is in the house, the drunkard, jobless and angry husband wants to kill her and her children every time. If she goes out of her house to earn something to fill the bellies of her children, the white master is ready to catch her. She seems to be greatly confused and alarmed. The best example is of Vashti from Morrison’s *Beloved*, she is captured by her master and her husband waits for a year for her. In almost every novel, there is a description of racism, which makes the life of black people very frustrated and unhappy. In Morrison’s *Sula*, the black mother Helene becomes the victim of white racism. When she along
with her daughter Nel goes to meet her dying grandmother by train, she in great confusion climbs on the wrong compartment. The white conductor scolds her and makes fun of her. But Helene takes this insult very lightly and smiles foolishly. This incident scars the mind of Nel. The narrator reveals her thinking: “It was on that train, shuffling toward Cincinnati, that she resolved to be on guard-always. She wanted to make certain that no man ever looked at her that way. That no midnight eyes or marbled flesh would ever accost her and turn her into jelly”[S: 22]. But Toni Morrison in her novel *The Bluest Eye*, paints the protagonist Miss. Pecola Breedlove, as the great victim of negative socialization. The black girl is hated, insulted and humiliated at every stage of her life. She realizes that due to her black color and ugliness, she is hated and so she prays to God: “Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed” [TBE: 35]. She madly falls in love with the beauty standards of American life and really becomes mad in the end of the novel. It is not only Pecola, but her mother Pauline also falls in love with the luxury, power and glory of American households, and destroys her own married life.

The problems of free mothers are quite different than that of enslaved mothers. Being born and married in the age of choice, they, first of all, want to discard all the rules and regulations set by the Black patriarchy. They want to live individual and free life. Toni Morrison’s Sula of *Sula* is the best example. She does not want to marry with anybody and not want to become mother of any child. Her answer to her grandmother Eva is very telling: “I don’t want to make somebody else. I want to make myself” [S: 92]. Alice Walker’s Meridian of *Meridian* is another good example. Meridian, like Sula, being born in the age of choice, thinks motherhood as slavery. She also wants to live her own life.
without any responsibility of children. Poonam Minocha in her doctoral thesis “The Problematics of Motherhood in Twentieth Century Women’s Fiction: A Select Study”, rightly talks about the protagonists who revolt against their mothers and the motherhood imposed on them. She puts it:

Feminist motherhood, therefore, leaves the choice to women, whether to mother or not. It is in exercising this choice that women actually experience unconditioned freedom: those with an aptitude for mothering take it up while those without it are also deemed ‘normal’ in every way. The other extreme of resenting child-bearing and child-rearing, viewing motherhood from a purely antagonistic stance… As mothering begins to be viewed as one choice among many, feminism and motherhood are no in diametrical opposition. Feminists do not attack family or mothering, except as defined and restricted under patriarchy, they do not denigrate motherhood, but remove the pressures from it, making it truly voluntary [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/802 (04.11.2011)].

The researcher, keeping in mind the social, economical and familial conditions of Black mothers, has attempted to find out the various manifestations of maternal archetype as enunciated by Carl Jung. While writing about the positive traits that are generally found in mothers, he says:

Maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magical transformation and rebirth…are presided over by the mother [Jung 1967: 82]

The researcher finds out one or more than one good or loving mothers in each and every selected novel of both the writers—Toni Morrison and
Alice Walker. In the context of negative characteristics, Jung writes: “anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate” [Ibid]. It is shocking that there are more bad mothers than the good ones. Except Morrison’s *Beloved* and Alice Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar*, every novel under study has two or more than two mothers, who have these negative traits in them. But the researcher locates these negative traits in their negative socialization. Unlike good mothers, they cannot come out of their directionless conditions. Mrs Pauline Breedlove of Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* can be taken as a good example. Due to prevalent social, economical and familial conditions, she cannot realize that day after day she is becoming the victim of socialization. Like every average mother, she has too a maternal heart and knows well that what happens if one does not get love of her own mother, as she herself did not get. In spite of it, she does not love her own daughter only because of Pecola’s black color and ugliness. She forgets her own black identity and loses in the power, luxury and glory of American households and showers her motherly love on a white girl. Josie of Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is also one of the victims. Through her fatal mistake of becoming unwed mother, she does not take a lesson. On the other hand, her daughter Lorene goes a step ahead. It happens in her life because she fails in coming out of her helpless situation and wants to be rich to get whatever she desired in life. Thus, they are all put in the category of bad mothers. But Carl Jung is of the opinion that the characteristics either positive or negative are ambivalent. Though, he identifies the figure as “loving or terrible” [Ibid], there is archetype neither wholly positive nor negative but both.

The researcher, while studying the mother-characters of the novels under study, comes across some of the mother-characters, who
interact with both the positive and negative manifestations of maternal archetype. They, on one hand, are good mothers, but at the same time, bad mothers too. Eva Peace of Morrison’s *Sula* is the best example of it. Eva Peace is undoubtedly a good mother. After her husband’s leaving her, she sells one of her legs to buy the happiness for her children. She saves the life of her son Plum, when he badly suffers from bowel problem. She jumps through the window with her wagon in order to save her burning daughter Hannah. She also does many things; a good mother generally does for her children. But Eva, at the same time, sets her son Plum on fire in order to relieve him from the troubles of drug addiction. She is also accused of killing her daughter Hannah. So, she is both loving and terrible mother at the same time. Margaret of Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is another example. She is also a good mother. She nurtures and loves her son Brownfield whenever she gets time. She is concerned of his education. But it is because of her husband, she commits the crimes of debauchery and infanticide. The birth of her son Star is itself the proof of her infidelity. Carolyn Ann Wayne defends her in the following way:

Neither murder nor suicide is recognized as a positive response to the role of motherhood. Margaret in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is guilty of both misdeeds. She decided that life no longer held any value for her after Grange left her. She knew that her baby would not have anyone to take care of it after she committed suicide so she murdered him as an act of mercy. Her role as wife and mother had become more than she could bear [http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi/wayne%20carolyn.pdf/osu1130780485(03.03.2011)].

Jung writes that mother archetype appears in an infinite number of ways. According him, “any woman with whom a relation exists—for example, a nurse or governess or perhaps a remote ancestress” [Jung 1967: 81] is a
mother archetype. In other words he is talking about ‘othermother’. The feminist Collins in her book “Black Women and Motherhood: Black Feminist Thought” (2000) also talks about the ‘community othermothers’. She writes that community othermothers have made dramatic contributions by creating a new type of community in often hostile political and economic situations. Collins concludes by stating that othermothers’ participation in activist mothering demonstrates a rejection of individualism and adapts a different value system where ethics of caring and personal accountability move communities forward.

Alice Walker’s The Color Purple is full of othermothers. Though, they are originally ‘biological or personal mothers’, but under some circumstances or out of helplessness, they have to love and nurture other women’s children. Corrine is the only exceptional bad othermother of the novel. In Toni Morrison’s novels, the researcher also finds othermothers. Mrs Suggs of Sula is the best example. Eva Peace before going to earn money puts her children in the custody of Mrs Suggs. She nurtures and loves Eva’s children for eighteen months without any complaint or wrath.

The researcher has also tried to find out the friendships in the novels under study are maternal and loving. In each selected novel, there are one or more than one friendships. Almost all the friendships are certainly maternal. The love between the two friends is really intimate. The friendship between Miss Pecola and the MacTeer sisters is very loving. When Pecola starts menstruation, both the sisters decide to wash her blood themselves without letting know their mother. Frieda’s fighting with her fellow students for Pecola is another proof of their intimacy. But in the end of the novel their making of Pecola a scape-goat is shocking to the readers. The same type of intimacy is found in the friendship between Celie and Shug of Walker’s The Color Purple. Both the friends when take care of each other, make the readers think whether they are friends.
or mothers of each other. This type of friendship between black women is called sisterhood and is considered as one of the important features of Black womanhood. But the same type of friendship is also found between two male characters, for example, the friendship between Milkman and Guitar of Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*. When Milkman becomes helpless and restless, he wants to meet Guitar as early as possible. Milkman shares all his sorrows and pleasures with Guitar and vice versa. Thus, almost all friendships depicted in the novels under study are maternal and loving ones.

The mother-daughter relationship is also one of the recurring themes of the novels. But with very few exceptions of mother-daughter relationships between-- Mrs MacTeer and her daughters; and Mem and her daughters, almost all relationships are not sound, maternal and loving. The mother-daughter relationship between Sethe and Beloved of Morrison’s *Beloved* is the best example. Sethe knows well that the girl who has come to her house is not her Beloved but it is the ghost of Beloved in flesh. In spite of it, she continues to nurture and love her. She does so because she wants to convince Beloved that she was murdered by her in a helpless situation. So, this relationship becomes unnatural and abnormal. The mother-daughter relationship between Josie and Lorene of Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* is also not loving and maternal. They are rivals and fight in the street as two dogs for snatching away the customers of each other.

While talking about the possibilities of future studies in the field of African American literature, especially of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker’s novels, one can easily start his or her research on the status or place of child in Black Family. A serious reading of the novels by both the writers could reveal the difficult life of a child in a Black Family.
Abject poverty, either missing or drunkard father, mother is already negatively socialized, dirty and unhygienic surrounding atmosphere, almost broken relationship between father and mother etc. are some of the problems and difficulties the child has to face in his or her Black family. So, it can be a good topic for research. Besides, one can also explore the social condition of Black people. They are, undoubtedly, the victims of white racism, capitalism and sexism. But, as one of the consequences of brutal socialization, they seem to be blindly and ignorantly following their white masters. One definitely finds the intra-racial conflicts, hatred and prejudice among them. Thus, the intra-racial prejudice -- could also be a good subject for research.