FORMER INMATES' PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT

THE VALUE OF EARNING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on correctional education have focused on recidivism. There is limited research from a qualitative perspective on the perceptions of education prior to incarceration. This constructivist narratological case study sought to explore the lived experiences of six former inmates, four African American and two Mexican American from a Midwest Correctional Facility who entered prison without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. Data sources involved a Likert scale questionnaire, documents, and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Analysis involved descriptive statistical analysis of the Likert scale items, and content analysis for documents, and indepth interviews with narratives of the cases developed using a three-dimensional analysis process and socio-cultural analysis followed by within case and cross case analyses. Major themes were: (a) making ends meet; (b) influences within the community; (c) family dynamics; (d school environment; and (e) school-to-prison pipeline. Findings indicated that participants placed a greater value on education post incarceration.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined

a dissertation titled "Former Inmates' Perceptions and Beliefs About The Value of Earning a

High School Diploma," presented by Michael Thomas, candidate for the Doctor of

Philosophy degree , and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to a special woman in my life who will always be remembered: my wife, who passed away prior to seeing this process come to an end. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Loyce Caruthers for her endless support, her patience, direction, motivation, enthusiasm, and mostly for keeping me from coming unglued. I could not have imagined having a better Committee Chair for this process. Next, I would like to thank my parents. They have always kept me grounded and believed that I could accomplish anything in life. Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many others who believed in me. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Juan Gonzalez who encouraged me to pursue a Doctorate. Dr. Linwwood Tauheed, Dr. Donna Russell, and Dr. Donna Davis, thank you for your unwavering dedication to seeing me through this process. I owe each of you a debt of gratitude for your devoted time and professional expertise on my behalf.

PREFACE

MY EVOLUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

From my perspective, the purpose of education is to provide students the academic tools necessary to prepare them for life. As a Black man, education has always been important in my plight to gain relief from a segment of society, which in my opinion, has devalued, the socially marginalized, and questioned the intelligence of the Black community. Nothing makes me more annoyed than people that suggest people of color have a biological predisposition that renders them less intelligent than other races (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Thompson, 2004). Thus, pursuing a Doctorate is my personal testament to the skewed perception that Black males are uneducated (Cramer, 2010; Hall, Phillips, & Townsend, 2015). While my pursuit of a doctorate is connected to resilience and perseverance, it does not ignore the long history of covert and sometimes blatant exclusion (by those on top) from economic opportunities that I have experienced despite educational attainment. Nonetheless, the blatant exclusion of economic opportunities for African Americans and other people of color has done nothing but cultivate racial resentment, anger, and a justified perception that the "American Dream" may not be achievable for everyone which confirms the ugly truth that explicit bias against people of color remains in America. Moreover, it confirms the ugly truth that race is often more significant than educational background for people of color (Freire, 1971/2000; Noguera, 2003a; Tyack, 1974).

The terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. In addition, Latinx is defined as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin. According to Google trend data, "Latinx" came into widespread use in the U.S in October of 2014. The U.S. federal

government described this population using both "Latino" and "Hispanic." In addition, several other organizations use the terms interchangeably. The terms will also be used interchangeably in this proposed study.

As the first black Naval Intelligence Specialist at Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Eleven, I can personally testify to blatant discrimination by a predominately-homogenous White command during my naval career. I found that it was incomprehensive for some to believe that I had anything intelligent to offer as a person of color. There was a certain amount of white arrogance that existed in the military unit as a whole. Although, I am retired, my time in the Navy was one of the most memorable and discriminatory times of my lived experiences. In essence, to some degree, it compelled me to use my voice to advocate for other men of color who have not been as fortunate. Britzman (1990) depicted voice as:

> meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community....The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process....Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of his/her experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other. (p.14)

I have always believed the crisis individuals face in their lives help to shape their views of the world and sense of voice. Thus far, I have seen a lot of crises and instances of racism in my lifetime, which are reflected in my values, beliefs, and assumptions about educational attainment.

Participating as a member of a broader community and bringing voice to that community are often allusive goals for many Black males. The quality of schools they attend, neighborhoods where they reside, availability of jobs, and discriminating employers

are all factors that Black and Latino males often do not control, but that have a great impact on the quality of their lives (Noguera, 2003; Foxen & Mather, 2016). They each have a life, a story to tell, but their voices have often been silenced, ignored, and devalued. Their silence represents an environment of transition, struggle, and inadequate opportunities for growth and development.

Despite educational attainment at varying levels, African Americans have the highest unemployment rate of any ethnic group (Morrison, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). "The national unemployment rate for African-Americans dipped below 10% in the second quarter of 2015, according to the Labor Department. Despite that improvement, at 9.5%, it's still nearly twice the national average of 5.3%, and more than double the 4.6% rate for whites" (Sussman, 2015, p. 1). I personally believe this economic inequality is a by-product of "White privilege." Eonomic oppression of people of color, is not by accident. These denials of economic opportunity have created an atmosphere in which a person of color is more likely to live in poverty, drop out of high school, or engage in unlawful activity (Hill, 2005; Street, 2007). We live in a society in which "White Privilege" has become a topic for analysis by researchers and theorists. White privilege is defined as:

> a combination of exclusive standards and opinions that are supported by Whites in a way that continually reinforces social distance between groups on the basis of power, access, advantage, majority status, control, choice, autonomy, authority, possessions, wealth, opportunity, materialistic acquisition, connection, access, preferential treatment, entitlement, and social standing. (Hays & Chang, 2003; Manning & Baruth, 2009)

National economics correspondent, Michael Fletcher (2015), states:

> Maybe no economic statistic captures the continuing impact of the nation's history of inequality better than the racial wealth gap. It has left a yawning gulf that separates whites from blacks and Hispanics. And it persists across income and educational levels in ways that have left whites who are high school dropouts with a higher

median new worth greater than blacks and Hispanics who are college graduates. (2015, p. 1)

I often feel a sense of frustration in knowing that I live in a country in which people of non-color may feel obligated to give preference to other non-people of color with regard to job opportunities. There is a sense of frustration because we are losing job opportunities that we are more than capable of performing; therefore, widening the economic gap (Halley, Eshleman, & Vijaya, 2011; Western, 2006).

Although, I am gainfully employed, there were many times I chose to omit my ethnicity from job applications purely out of fear I would not be given an equal opportunity to interview. In addition, there have been many times that White people made it clear to me that their ceiling for opportunities was much higher than my own. This is my perception and my reality. I was never taught to be a victim and refuse to become a statistic. Nevertheless, as I move forward in my career, I have internalized the risk of becoming less receptive by discussing my perceptions of racism because most people are uncomfortable discussing race. However, my perceptions of the world would be incomplete if I failed to mention those experiences that have become the impetus of my passion, including racism. My evolution of knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions regarding the value of education are constructed from the communities I grew up in and the schools I attended. I believe that the lack of positive supported families, lack of responsibility, unemployment, poor education, and poor community involvement may lead to detrimental consequences for many youth, regardless of race/ethnicity or gender. Hence, limited support of youth in these aspects of life may create a propensity for failure.

During my formative years, I attended Sumner Academy of Arts and Science in Kansas City, Kansas. Sumner Academy allowed me to grow socially and provided a sense of social mobility. Cooper and Jordan (2005) suggested, "Schools need to provide a vehicle of social mobility for disadvantaged and minority students. Middle-class students are given the skills to reproduce –to leverage-their social status in the classroom" (p. 14). Furthermore, I had the advantage of having two parents. They were the primary source of my motivation. "Motivation is relevant to learning because learning is an active process requiring conscious and deliberate activity" (Stipek, 2002, p. ix). Moreover, "a motivated person, therefore, is conceptualized as someone with cognitions or beliefs that are associated with constructive achievement behavior" (p. 11). Due to motivation, I developed an intimate affinity for education and a drive to pursue a doctorate. As a Black man, my lived experiences have taken me down many roads and have helped me understand the sensitivity to the personal history of people of color. I have been profiled, stereotyped, and falsely accused of a crime. I would go so far to say that I have teetered on the edge of insanity. I have also beaten the odds simply by graduating from high school. Unfortunately, many of my peers did not graduate and ended up in the school-to-prison pipeline. Yet, they too have a story – one that I intend to hear. Hearing the stories of failed youth, especially youth of color was the core of my project. Chapter 1 of dissertation begins with a "big picture" of my research; Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of critical race theory, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and the literature review, the foundation knowledge of the study; and Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the proposed study followed by Chapter 4 with a focus on the findings of the study. Implications of findings and future research are discussed

in Chapter 5. I conclude with reflections on my journey to story the experiences of six

former inmates, the focus of the case study approach.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Prisons are populated with individuals who have not completed a high school

diploma (Rumberger, 2011; Wise, 2008) and unless they complete the prison-based

education program; they are likely to return to society the same way they entered,

academically and financially deficient. Dropout is defined as "a pupil who leaves school, for

any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and

without transferring to another school" (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971, p. 5). The

term formal education is defined by the text as the education one receives at a private

school, parochial school, or private college. Every 29 seconds, a student drops out of school,

resulting in more than a million American dropouts a year or 7,000 every day (National

Center for Educational Statistics, 2015, p. 3). In 2012, over 2.2 million Americans were

incarcerated, with almost seven million individuals (1 in 35 adults) under some form of

court mandated correctional supervision (Glaze & Herberman, 2013). As of October 2013,

the incarceration rate was 716 per 100,000 of the national population (Walmsley, 2013, p. 1)

and many of these individuals are poorly educated or have not completed a high school

diploma. On the average, state inmates in the United States have a 10th grade education

(Western & Pettit, 2010).

Given the statistical data in the previous paragraph, quantitative research on dropouts

and inmates is not new. Correlational, descriptive, developmental, action and historical

studies have all been used to explore reasons students drop out of school (Dalton, Glennie,

Ingels, & Wirt, 2009; Kearney & Harris, 2014; Lee & Breen, 2007; Morales, 2010;

Noguera, 2003a). To date, a variety of quantitative studies and mixed-methods case research

indicate a strong correlation between dropping out of high school and ending up on welfare or some other type of state assistance (Arum & Beattie, 1999; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Gaustad, 1992; Stephens & Repa, 1992; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013). Furthermore,

> few research studies have attempted to model dropout behavior in a comprehensive fashion, simultaneously accounting for the effects of individual, family, and school factors, and distinguishing between truly independent factors, such as ethnicity and family background, and such intervening factors as school behavior and academic achievement (Rumberger, 1995, p. 585).

Previous studies on high school dropouts, incarceration, and correctional education have limited their theoretical discussion to post-prison recidivism. For example, Cronin (2011) found that inmates who earned their GED in Missouri prisons were significantly more likely to find a job after prison and less likely to recidivate than inmates who did not. In a similar study, Hollmen and Staley (2003) found that inmates who earned their GED diplomas in prison had less of a possibility of returning to prison within three years. Both studies suggest that education is an effective way to reduce the chances of going to prison or returning to prison. Yet, eradicating the school to prison pipeline must also entail providing school cultures that engage students in learning in ways that value their cultural precepts and interests. Delpit (2003) wrote:

> we can educate all children if we truly want to. To do so, we must first stop attempting to determine their capacity. We must be convinced of their inherent intellectual capability, humanity, and spiritual character. We must fight the foolishness proliferated by those who believe that one number can measure the worth and drive the education of human beings, or that predetermined scripts can make for good teaching. Finally, we must learn who our children are – their lived culture, their interests, and their intellectual, political and historical legacies. (p. 20)

Schools through their very structure form the foundation that influences students' decisions to drop out. Michelle Fine (1991) noted, "If youth who drop out are portrayed as

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unreasonable and academically inferior, then the structure, ideologies and practices that exile them systematically are rendered invisible and the critique they voiced is institutionally silenced" (p. 3). Schools become less beneficial in the quest of many students to complete school.

Statement of the Problem

Dropping out of school is one of the most serious and pervasive problems facing public education programs nationally (Balfanz, Fox, Bridgeland & McNaught, 2009; Haycock & Huang, 2001; Lehr, Hanson, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2003) and for individuals that have been imprisoned the problem is even more daunting. Current research of the U.S. National Research Council (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014) noted many people enter prison with educational shortfalls. Black and Latinx dropouts tend to fail core subjects in the first year of high school, which in turn causes them to repeat one or more grade levels (Meade, Gaytan, Fergus, & Noguera, 2009, p. 4). These students drop out of school at unequal rates compared to other ethnic groups in our society (Coleman &Yeh, 2008). There is a direct correlation between the decline in high school dropouts and the increase in incarceration (Ferguson, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) reported the following:

> The dropout rate for black youth reached an historic low of eight percent in 2011(and was at eight percent in 2013), while rates among Hispanic youth also reached an historic low of 12 percent in 2013. However, the long-term decline is at least in part related to increased incarceration rates among young black and Hispanic males (disproportionately affecting dropouts), which more than doubled between 1980 and 1999. (p. 1)

Black and Latino men make up a disproportionate segment of the U.S. prison population (Mauer & King, 2007; Travis et al., 2014; Ulmer, Painter-Davis, & Tinik, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014); they make up nearly 60% of prisoners yet represent just over a third

of the U.S. population (Collins, 2015, p. 185). The disproportionality of incarceration for Black and Latino may be related to the exploitation of people of color by the state apparatus (DuVernay, 2016). There are a number of ways imprisoned youth are impacted by the socio-political factors of dropping out including being victims of the state apparatus of prison industries, unemployment, and the stigma of being an inmate. Dropping out of school is not a new phenomenon. A rich body of literature can be found that addresses the high school dropout crisis. The impact of dropping out of high school increases the chances of reduced employment opportunities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Social problems related to dropping out of school include criminal activity, drug abuse, and incarceration. Bruce Western (2006) discussed how the disparities in arrests and sentencing has disproportionately affected Black communities. The Census data from 2014 revealed there are more young Black high school dropouts in prison than have jobs. Michelle Alexander (2010) argued that the mass confinement of Black men since the 1980s has replaced Jim Crow as American society's primary method to control Black men. Similarly, Pollard (2012) viewed the over-incarceration of Black males by the state apparatus as a continuance of capitalistic practices looking to exploit Black labor. One of the biggest obstacles for most ex-inmates is the challenge of finding long-term employment due to the stigma of being previously incarcerated. For this study, stigma was defined as an attribute that extensively discredited individuals, reducing them "from a whole and usual person to a tainted discounted one" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). Inmate stigma has predominantly been studied through the lens of the Labeling Theory (Scheff, 1966; Lemert, 1974; Link & Phelan, 2001; Shoemaker, 2005). Labeling theory in criminology purported that being formally labeled as an offender (e.g. being incarcerated, receiving a felony conviction) causes one to internalize

stigmatizing attitudes, withdraw from conventional society, and conform to a deviant identity (Lemert, 1974). According to Link and Phelan (2001), stigma transpired when "elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur together in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold" (p. 367). Michelle Alexander (2010) pointed out how the stigma of incarceration damages the culture and psychology of Black communities, making it difficult to perform as a political power, to demand equality and human rights. A number of studies have examined the effect that prison record has on employment. Moreover, research has shown that Whites receive less of a stigma from having a prison record than Blacks or Hispanics (Pager, 2003). Arizona State University conducted a three-year study regarding the impact that having a criminal record has on employment-related outcomes. The study consisted of two separate experiments and facilitated an employer survey. The researchers organized pairs of different applicants, including Black men, Black women, Hispanic men, Hispanic women, white men, and white women. One person with a criminal recorded was placed in each pair of applicants. Employers were sent resumes with matching job skills and qualifications. More than 6,000 online applications for entry-level jobs in three job sectors (customer service, general/manual labor, and restaurant/food service) were submitted in Maricopa County, Arizona between 2011 and 2012. In the second experiment, individuals applied to 60 jobs in-person. The survey of hiring managers was conducted with 49 employers who were included in the in-person job application experiment. The study determined:

- Both Black and Hispanic men were less likely to receive a positive response from employers—including a call back or email for an interview or a job offer— compared with white men.

- Men with criminal records were more likely than women with criminal records to receive a negative response from employers.

- White men with a criminal record had more positive responses than Black men with no criminal record. (Decker, Spohn, Ortiz, & Hedberg, 2014, pp. 56–60).

I will argue that there is a direct correlation between the reluctance of employers to hire Blacks and Hispanics and falling victim to the state apparatus (prison). Prison Industries is a prime example of a state apparatus that uses people of color for the purpose of profit. "The state in this view is not an association of autonomous individuals. It is itself an individual, a mystic person that swallows up the citizens and transcends them, an independent, self-sustaining organism, made of human beings, with a will and purpose of its own" (Peikoff, 1982, p. 96). Althusser (1971) and Foucault (1977) provide views of the state apparatus and its power to control lives. Althusser pointed out that the "State is a machine" (p. 137) of repression, which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class and includes the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, and other institutions (p. 143).

Thinking back as an adolescent, I recall being stopped by the police in a case of mistaken identity and being a victim of the state apparatus. I was facing fifteen years for a crime that I did not commit. For the sake of brevity, I am not going to discuss the whole story here. The perpetrator was later apprehended after committing another crime a few days later. The police provided no apology and stated, "That's too bad, at least we had someone." My own personal experience is a profound example of criminalization of people of color through aggressive police tactics. This mentality is not new. Noguera (2008) notes:

> Most often, black men have been regarded as individuals who should be feared because of their uncontrolled and unrefined masculinity. And their very presence, particularly when they are encountered in groups, has been regarded as a menace to

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innocents (particularly white women) and a potential danger to the social order. They are a threat that must be policed, controlled, and contained. (p. xi)

In March 2015, the Justice Department concluded that "a culture of systemic racial bias" permeated the Ferguson, Missouri police department. I make this point solely because my experience may well have placed me in a position of being penal labor of the state apparatus merely for the sake of profit. Foucault (1977) made a relatively bold analysis of penal labor:

> Penal labour […] is intrinsically useful, not as an activity of production, but by virtue of the effect is has on the human mechanism. It is a principle of order and regularity; […]. Penal labour must be seen as the very machinery that transforms the violent, agitated, unreflective convict into a part that plays its role with perfect regularity […]. If, in the final analysis, the work of the prison has an economic effect, it is by producing individuals mechanized according to the general norms of an industrial society […]. (p. 242)

In other words, the prison system is new form of legal slavery currently for the sake of capitalistic gain. "Jim Crow and slavery were caste systems. So is our current system of mass incarceration" (Alexander, 2010, p. 12). Simply stated, a caste system is a process of placing individuals into occupational groups. Put in this context, Prison Industries merely highlights the gross capitalistic mindset of the state apparatus. Having worked in government for over 25 years, I can personally attest to civilian jobs that were transitioned to inmate jobs purely for monetary profit. Pelaez (2008/2019) provided a view of the profit making inside correctional facilities. She stated:

> Human rights organizations, as well as political and social ones, are condemning what they are calling a new form of inhumane exploitation in the United States, where they say a prison population of up to 2 million – mostly black and Hispanic – are working for various industries for a pittance. For the tycoons who have invested in the prison industry, it has been like finding a pot of gold. They do not have to worry about strikes or paying unemployment insurance, vacations or comp time. All of their workers are full-time, and never arrive late or are absent because of family problems; moreover, if they don't like the pay of 25 cents an hour and refuse to work, they are locked up in isolation cells. (p. 1)

I notice that it has become increasingly clear that the caste system was never eradicated but merely redesigned to a system of mass incarceration for people of color. "There are more African Americans under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began" (Alexander, 2010, p. 180). I will expand on prison exploitation in the Literature Review.

Researchers and theorists have highlighted that leaving school early is not a sudden occurrence, but a process that occurs over time and results from certain interactions between students, families, and schools (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). These interactions can be separated into two categories, internal and external factors. "Internal factors include individual factors, such as temperament, social and emotional skill development, family conflict, and domestic violence. External factors include environmental influences, such as traumatic events, bullying, socioeconomic disadvantage, family instability or breakup" (Fertman, Delgado, & Tarasevich, 2014, p. 72). A multivariate discriminate analysis conducted by Wehlage (1987) that utilized a California high school database determined that truancy, discipline problems, lateness, and hours worked were all forecasters that contributed to students' decisions to leave school. These factors suggest that reasons students dropped out of school were not always connected to the school. A longitudinal study conducted by Baumer and Lutz (2003) examining over 1,100 students, concluded the socioeconomic status of a student's neighborhood was more of a factor connected with the probability of dropping out than delinquent behavior, student attachment to school and parents, and parental control over their behaviors.

Similar to Baumer and Lutz's (2003) findings, Lee and Breen (2007) conducted a phenomenological study to explore the reason students left school. The participants of the

study were seven participants of a General Education Diploma (GED) program, who engaged in individual and small group interviews. The reasons reported for dropping out were compared among participants and existing research. The themes that emerged from the data were peer influence, parental influence and family, pregnancy, and connection with adults at school as reasons that students dropped out of school. Both studies noted that factors other than internal school problems were instrumental in students' decisions to leave school. For me external factors were somewhat difference because I grew up in the era of "it takes a village to raise a child." In my neighborhood there was a collective mindset that valued education. Although it was never spoken among neighborhood parents, it was understood that homework was a number one priority. Thus, parental influence represented one of the greatest external factors in my upbringing.

The most widespread explanation for the dropout-delinquency relationship originates from social control theory. Social Control Theory "asserts that the strength of social bonds is directly and negatively related to the strength of motivation towards delinquency" (Yu, 2007, p. 23). Growing up as a high school teenager, I had a very strong bond with several of my teachers, which provided a sense of motivation for my academic achievement. Several studies also found that some social background indicators influence students' decisions to drop out (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999). Jerald (2006) concluded that changing schools prior to eighth grade increases the likelihood of dropping out, but changing schools during early high school can be advantageous, especially in there is dissatisfaction with the culture of the school. A survey conducted by Civic Enterprises (2007) examined the views of diverse youth, ages 16–25, who had dropped out of high school. The dropouts in the study identified five major reasons for leaving school. "They

were bored with school; had missed too many days and could not catch up; spent time with people who were not interested in school; had too much freedom and not enough rules in their lives; and were failing" (Azzam, 2007, p. 91). A similar study that incorporated a longitudinal survey involved a group of tenth-graders whose educational progress was tracked at two-year intervals (Kelly, 1993). At the end of what would have been their senior year, students that failed to graduate listed the following reasons for dropping out: did not like school; had unsatisfactory grades; were employed, offered a job or made a decision to pursue employment; were getting married; not able to gong with teachers or other school personnel; had to help support their families or had other home responsibilities; became pregnant; and were expelled or suspended (Kelly).

During my seventh-grade year, I had several classmates that fell into several of the categories listed above. Many were not able to get along with other classmates or teachers., They were often expelled as depicted in a Chicago Tribune study that revealed

> that nationally, black students are being suspended in numbers greater than would be expected from their proportion of the student population. Rates of suspension and expulsion for Latino/as are somewhat higher than expected but black students bear the brunt of these policies. In 21 states that disproportionality is so pronounced that the percentage of black suspensions is more than double their percentage of the student body. (Heitzeg , 2009, pp. 11–12)

Suspension and expulsion often expose youth to the lure of the streets and illegal activities. In 2011-2012, Black youth represented 16% of the juvenile population, but 34% of the students expelled from U.S. schools (Hanson & Stipek, 2015). Brooking's Institution's Hamilton Project posits there is a 70% chance that a Black male without a high school diploma will end up in jail by his mid-30s (Wells, 2014). I make this point purely because I am a Black male that grew up in a low-socio-economic environment. Although, I

had both parents, many of my friends did not. As a result, a few were not able to avoid the prison pipeline. Statistically, children faced with economic deprivation or living in single-mother homes, have a greater chance of dropping out of school (Pong & Ju, 2000). However, a critical examination of high numbers of incarcerated Black and Latino youth reveals a much deeper issue related to economic profit through exploitation.

I aimed to study the lives of young men of color that have been victims of the state apparatus. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that the prison pipeline has an endless capacity for not exculpating people of color. In essence, prison industry has become an institution of power that celebrates self-absorption and gratification with the incarceration of people of color.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this constructivist narratological case study was to explore the lived experiences of previous inmates at a Midwest Correctional Facility who entered prison without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. Boylorn (2008) defined "lived experience, as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, [as] is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge " (pp. 490–491). In inquiry, people's individual life stories become the primary emphasis (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Individuals may enter prison with certain perceptions about education due to their socially constructed experiences. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the impact of culture and social environment on learning. His theory of sociocultural learning suggests that children's cognitive development is dependent upon their environment as well as their social contact with others. Social constructivism emphasizes education for social

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transformation. Hence, individuals construct knowledge by interacting with the

environment. Although there have been copious studies regarding correctional education,

very few research has been conducted to investigate rather or not correctional education

plays a role in inmates' perceptions of education (Case & Fasenfest, 2004; Gerber & Fritsch,

1995; Linden & Perry, 1983; National Institute of Corrections, 2007; Oswald, 2005; Visher,

Debus-Sherill, & Yahner, 2010). The units of analysis, which Patton (2002) described as

what I wanted to have something to say about at the end of this inquiry, were the lived

experiences through stories of previous inmates of the Midwest Correctional Facility

perceptions of correctional education. These individuals often entered prison without a high

school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. Therefore, the research questions served as

crucial tools to elicit insight into their perceptions regarding correctional education.

Research Questions

According to Maxwell (2005, p. 75), "qualitative research questions tend to fall into

three categories: questions about meaning, or how people make sense of the world;

questions that illuminate context; and questions that investigate processes." In addition,

> the relevance of the design and construction of the research question are critical to
> the research as they are the scaffolding for the investigation and the cornerstone for
> the data analysis. It is through the research question(s) that the researcher finds out
> exactly what he/she wants to know. (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 31)

In an effort to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of previous inmates at Midwest

Correctional Facility the following central questions and sub-questions were:

1. How do previous inmates in at Midwest Correctional Facility perceive their
   educational experiences?

   a. What were their perceptions of education prior to incarceration?

   b. What were their perceptions upon release from prison?

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2. How do previous inmates perceive employability inside and outside the prison system?

    a. What perceptions do previous inmates have of prison industries?

    b. How did previous inmates perceive their opportunities for employment upon release from prison?

The research questions served as the structure of the proposed study and supported its rationale. In other words, clearly defined research questions communicate the researcher's line of inquiry, the platform for the investigation, and the basis for making meaning of data.

Overview of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, the foundation knowledge of the study, is aligned to the research questions and consists of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). The literature review topics are socio-political foundation for forming dropping-outs, correctional education, and prison Industries. Both critical race theories are combined with the literature review used to make meaning of the data that formed the participants' experiences. As I identified the themes in the data and framed the case for each participant through narrative analysis, empirical literature, theories and concepts from the theoretical framework, specifically critical race theory, and relevant literature supported the use of the socio-cultural process of narrative analysis which incorporates cultural, ideological, and socialization in stories. For a clear and viable study, the problem, purpose, research questions and theoretical framework are aligned and led to the design of the study. An overview of the methodology follows the theoretical framework and literature review with a more indepth discussion in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Maxwell (2005) defines conceptual framework (theoretical framework) as "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs research" (p. 33). In addition, Miles and Huberman (1994) define theoretical framework as "a tentative structure of the main constructs to be studied and the relationships between them" (p. 262). Having defined theoretical framework, I now turn to a discussion of the assumptions I brought to this narrative case study through the lens of constructivism.

As a person taught the value of education from an early age, I assume that learning occurs in school, home, and the community. Parental support plays a significant role in what I term "academic conditioning." In other words, I see family as the first influence towards the positive or negative value placed on education. In keeping with this train of thought, Noel, Stark, and Redford (2013), posited there is a direct link between school success and parental involvement. Furthermore, child development theories propose that nature and nurture interactively form individual development (French, 2003). Secondly, I believe most schools have an "one size fits all" teaching mentality that serves as an academic derailment to students who have difficulty learning in a traditional classroom. From the time I was in kindergarten, I can recall learning within a structured traditional classroom environment; where I sat with fellow classmates, completed coursework and tests at my desks, and raised my hand to address the teacher. In addition, the majority of my childhood education involved extrinsic motivation, such as grades. In my opinion, more democratic settings are needed that encourages empowering students for decision making and choice. Last and foremost, I make the assumption that failing to earn a high school diploma serves as an entryway to a diminished quality of life (Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting, Deffenbacher, & Cornell, 1996; Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004; Mauer & King, 2007; Meade et al., 2009;

Morales & Trotman, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Travis et al., 2014; Ulmer et al., 2014). Growing up in the 1970s, I always found there to be an abundance of jobs. However, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. To date, without a high school diploma job opportunities are very limited. In fact, the education level and skills required for the majority of occupations has increased over time with many of the low-skilled manual labor jobs either outsourced or automated (Fleming, 2015).

Having identified my preconceived assumptions, I offer a brief discussion of the Critical Race theory and topics of the literature review which are the focus of Chapter 2. The intent here is to provide a glimpse of content and contextual knowledge, empirical literature, theories, and concepts that are the bedrock of this study.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory began as a theoretical movement within American law schools in the in the 1970s and '80s as a response to critical legal studies (CLS). In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) introduced CRT to the field of education. Since then other scholars in education, social sciences, and humanities have become cognizant of the critical race movement. Ladson-Billings (1998) noted that the essence of "CLS ideology emanates from the work of Gramsci (1971) and depends on the Gramscian notion of hegemony, to describe the continued legitimacy of oppressive structures in American society" (p. 212). Scholars such as Derrick Bell commended the focus of civil rights scholarship on race, but pointed out that Whites continued to exercise unequal power and enjoy higher standards of living. This unequal power, I would argue, is also embedded in traditional public education. As a student of color, I can recall assimilating into classrooms that failed to acknowledge the culture of people of color. "Culturally, the

common school movement attempted to ensure that the Protestant Anglo-American culture remained dominant, as large groups with differing religious and cultural values entered American life" (Spring, 1997, p. 102). Delpit (1995) referred to this as the "culture of power." The culture of power represents a set of values, beliefs, ways of acting that unfairly and unequally privilege groups of people to positions of power based on aspects of their cultural identities. Traditional public schools have not been effective for high poverty students of color; negative experiences often coupled with internal and external school factors have shaped their beliefs and perceptions about school often leading to dropping out (Balanz et al., 2009; Delpit, 1995; Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013; Foucault, 1977; Freire, 1971/2000; Morales & Trotman, 2004; Noguera, 2003a; Spring, 1997; Steinberg, 2014). From a CRT perspective, the lack of opportunities for quality schooling for students of color are not a coincidence but I believe can be attributed to the confluence of several social and economic forces. My rationale for the inclusion of CRT in my study evolved from the demographics of the participants who were people of color that dropped out of high school. I wondered what was done to enhance their racial identity or academic resiliency? According to Perry, Steele & Hilliard (2003),

> a child's belief in the power and importance of schooling and intellectual work can be interrupted by teachers and others who explicitly or subtly convey a disbelief in the child's ability for high academic achievement, as well as the child having a rightful place in the larger society-unless a counter narrative about the child's identity as an intellectual being is intentionally passed on to him or her. (p. 79)

For this reason, I believe CRT was appropriate for understanding the history of empowerment and oppression as it relates to the participants of this study. CRT in education contests the dominant discourse of race and racism by exposing how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to undermine certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano,

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1998). The primary purpose of CRT scholarship is to make workings of racial privilege visible. Legal scholar Mari Matsuda (1993) and colleagues outlined six unifying themes within CRT:

- CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.

- CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.

- CRT challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law. . . . Critical race theorists . . . adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.

- CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.

- CRT is interdisciplinary.

- CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (Matsuda, Lawrence III, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6)

One of the primary criticisms of traditional school curriculum has been the bias toward teaching a European history and culture while failing to provide students of color with a sense of the culture and history. I believe curriculum has always served as the common denominator that connects society together through the ideological underpinnings of a Protestant Anglo-American culture and remains this way today. Ladson-Billings (1998) stated, "if we look at the way that public education is currently configured, it is possible to see the ways that CRT can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience" (p. 18).

Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), which stemmed from Critical Race theory, are further examined in Chapter 2. Additionally, I examined a

major element of imperialism, the hidden curriculum used to support the ideology of Critical Race Theory. The socio-political foundation for forming dropping-out evolves from the hidden curriculum and other structures of schooling.

Socio-political Foundation for Forming Dropping-out

For me, education is a simply a convergence of my lived experiences. Fortunately, I have been guided by positive parental involvement in my schooling experiences, which evoked a desire to succeed academically and instilled resiliency strategies for overcoming adversity. Moreover, I possess forms of cultural capital and linguistic competence through family, church, and community. Throsby (2001) defines cultural capital as "an asset which embodies stores or provides cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess" (p. 46). Sadly, many people of color are deprived of cultural capital and have simply become victimized by oppressive school environments that consist of deficit theories about achievement (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011; Ford, 2012; Freire, 1971/2000; Noguera, 2003a; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), tracking and ability grouping (Hallinan, 2000; McNamee & Miller, 2013; Slavin, 1990), higher discipline and expulsion rates (Losen, 2014; Noguera, 2004), and low self-expectations regarding achievement (Balanz et al., 2009; Doll et al., 2013; Foucault, 1977; Freire, 1971/2000; Morales & Trotman, 2004; Steinberg, 2014). I make this point because I consider oppression part of the socio-political system that forms dropping out. he The notion of the socio-political touches on a broad set of problems concerning politics and society. Rose (1991) stated, "The public-school system, the police, and the popular media perceive and construct them (Blacks) as a dangerous internal element in urban America" (p. 279). Students of color and those who live in decaying cities often fall victim to a culturally deprived educational system and unjust criminal justice and unfair

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employment systems (Clinton, 2015; Obama, 2008; Pager, 2003; Pew Research Center,

2013). Goodlan, Soder, and Daniel (2015) stated:

> Our schools should not be primarily about conforming to rigid standards or even about classes. School should be about becoming part of a community ¦a community where everyone is valued for the gifts they bring, a community relentlessly dedicated to the continuous growth of all, a community that both expects and produces personal engagement, a community where failure is not an option. (p. 215)

The experiences of Black and White Americans differ in more ways than socio-

economic status. As a Black American, I know the challenges that people of color face and

how many perceive the world around them. I understand the sensitivity to the historical

legacy of and oppression of Black men. Freire (1971/2000) writes:

> Knowledge is constructed from experience. Students bring prior knowledge into a learning situation, which in turn forms the basis for their construction of new knowledge. Upon encountering something new, learners must first reconcile it in some way with their previous ideas and experiences. This may mean changing what they believe, expanding their understanding, or disregarding the new information as irrelevant. (p. 72)

Freire stressed the essential need of raising consciousness of oppressed people. In essence,

he contended that teachers should utilize practices of discussing classroom material that tie

the student, curriculum, and school experience to a broader social and political

understanding of the world. Freire (1971/2000) believed this was crucial if students were to

become capable social players within a viable democratic system. Furthermore, he wrote:

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 16)

Irvine (2003) suggested that students do not succeed in school because teachers fail

to make connections between subject-area content and their students' prevailing mental

schemes, prior knowledge, and cultural viewpoints. This was in line with Delpit (1995) who posited that many liberal educators embrace that the principal goal for education is for children to become self-sufficient, an develop to mature students without having subjective, external values forced upon them.

I assert that the pervasive ideology that was prevalent during the 1900s did little to purport equal access to learning opportunities for Blacks, Native Americans, or other people of color. In essence, it opened the door for other types of education to include mandatory correctional education. Thus, one of the cornerstones of this proposed study will be mandatory education that occurs as a result of dropping out of high school.

Correctional Education

Given the problem of high school dropouts across the nation, the Federal Bureau of Prisons established its first mandatory literacy program in 1982. All inmates were required to enroll unless they could demonstrate a sixth-grade level of reading and writing. In 1986 the standard was increased to an eighth-grade level, and in 1991 the current requirements of a high school equivalency (GED) were established (Bosworth, 2005). In 2014, the U.S. National Research Council Report clarified that correctional education programs were mandatory in 24 states for adult inmates without a high school diploma or GED and mandatory in 15 states for those inmates below a certain grade level, producing varied outcomes from state to state (Travis et al., 2014). For example, a higher percentage of Oklahoma prisoners received their GEDs. Approximately 3,882 inmates statewide attended classes in the 2012-13 school year. Of that number more than 80% received their credentials (Willert, 2013).

Missouri also has mandatory education programs for high school dropouts. Missouri Statute 217.355 requires all offenders to acquire a high school diploma or its equivalent to be considered for parole (Cronin, 2011). In accordance with this Statute, all inmates not possessing a high school diploma must participate in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. The term "adult education" refers to services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals: a) who have attained 16 years of age; and b) who lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society. Messemer and Valentine (2004) noted that correctional education gives inmates a chance to gain employment by enriching their level of knowledge and skills. In addition, it increases their ability to think more responsibly which in turn diminishes their odds of returning to prison. Correctional education includes three general categories of educational programs that are found in correctional institutions: adult basic education (ABE), general educational development (GED), and postsecondary programs. For the purposes of this proposed study, I will define each of these categories.

Adult Basic Education (ABE). In its simplest term, ABE is defined as the education of juveniles and adults in reading, writing, and arithmetic (equivalent to grade levels K–8; Kansas opportunity to learn basic literacy skills that may make them marketable within the prison environment. ABE classes are inmates first step toward *earning a high school diploma.*

The General Educational Development (GED). The GED program is designed for those offenders without a high school or equivalency diploma and directed toward completion of the requirements for a general education diploma. The GED program consists of four content areas: reasoning through language arts, mathematical reasoning, science, and

social studies. To achieve the GED certificate, inmates/students must achieve a minimum score of 150 in each section and a total score of 600. Inmates/students must meet test requirements based upon their Tests of Adult Basic Education (Kansas Department of Corrections, 2015).

Postsecondary programs. For this study, postsecondary education "refers to any education, vocational or academic, taken for college credit, that occurs after an inmate has received a GED or high school diploma" (Contardo & Tolbert, 2009, p. 3). Vocational/Industry Programs provide inmates the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a variety of marketable job skills. K-9 Companion Program, Food Service and Welding are three of the services offered at the Midwest Correctional Facility.

A study published by RAND Corporation in 2014 submitted that "correctional education has a positive and statistically significant effect on three domains that are key for reinsertion into society: recidivism (going back to prison because of additional crimes), post-release employment, and reading and math scores" (Davis et al., 2014, p. XV). The RAND research, referred to as a "meta-analysis" study, critically analyzed results across 267 empirical studies. On the average, inmates who partook in correctional education programs decreased their odds of recidivating by 43% over inmates who did not participate. This decrease indicated that correctional education is an effective approach for reducing recidivism (Davis et al., 2014).

Prison Industries

Midwest Correctional Facility is a government corporation, which employs inmates within the prison. A prison industry may serve as a tool for reshaping inmates' perceptions of education and employment (Saylor & Gaes, 1997; Smith, Bechtel, Patrick, Smith, &

Wilson-Gentry, 2006). The goal of prison industries is to provide inmates with skills and

experience necessary to attain employment upon release from prison. The downside of

prison industry within a capitalistic society is that inmates are often victims of the state

apparatus where their lives are controlled for profit without standard civilian work benefits

(Focault, 1977). According to the Code of Federal Regulations of the United States, the

Federal Prison Industries, Inc. (FPI) was established as a program to provide meaningful

work for inmates. This work is designed to allow inmates the opportunity to acquire the

knowledge, skills, and work habits that will be useful upon release from the institution

(Purpose and Scope, 2013, p, 438). As Pai, Adler, and Shadiow (2006) pointed out:

> In industrial societies, the positions requiring complex knowledge and skills lead to greater rewards than those roles that demand simpler and, more routine competencies. Because the primary functions of the school are to transmit knowledge, develop special skills, and cultivate attitudes that are consonant with societal norms, the amount of reward (monetary reward and/or status) a person receives depends on the individual's ability in these areas and on his or her level of schooling. (p. 131)

The state of Kansas has two types of industry programs. The first industry program is

operated by the Department of Corrections. The second program, owned and operated by

private companies, has factories within correctional facilities. Inmates must compete with

other offenders for available limited private industry jobs. Selection is based on resume

submission and interview performance (Kansas Department of Corrections, 2015).

Therefore, education may become a necessary reality for inmates seeking higher paying

jobs. Midwest Correctional Facility is a self-supporting program of the Kansas Department

of Corrections, which is composed of state and private prison industries. As of 2009, the

Midwest Correctional Facility has five industry divisions; Chemical Products, Data Entry,

Metal Products, Agri-Business, and Main Warehouse and Distribution Hub. To date there

has been limited qualitative research regarding inmates' perceptions of education within prison industries (Richmond, 2009). "Yet much can be gleaned from obtaining an inmate's perspective about a program, as they are the ones who are impacted by it and can speak to the ways in which the program may be influencing their lives" (Miller, Tillyer, & Miller, 2012, p. 274)

Richmond (2014) conducted a qualitative study involving 70 male and female inmates from four correctional industries programs in Pennsylvania. Inmates discussed their perceptions of prison industries and the effects on their behaviors. In addition, they discussed whether they believed the training and skills were transferable. As for the results, inmates believed that prison industries employment would be more valued if it included professional development training, such as locating employment assistance, resume and interview instruction, and financial guidance. The ability to work while incarcerated was also perceived as more relevant for male inmates than female inmates as it gave them the chance to not only stay out of trouble, but to feel productive and autonomous. In an earlier case study at the State Prison of Southern Michigan (Gleason, 1986), inmates responded to a question regarding vocational training experiences. Findings suggested that personal development, learning responsibility, and self-discipline were all positive outcomes of working in prison industries.

The topics of the framework will assist in understanding the lived experience of previous inmates as they attempt to transition back into the civilian world. Traditional education has failed many of these youth who often encounter a curriculum of inclusion in schools. The methodology of the proposed study is the focus of Chapter 3. Here, I provide a brief overview of the proposed methodology.

Overview of the Methodology

Creswell (2003) defines methodology as the "strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes" (2003, p. 5). Further, a qualitative design presented the best approach for understanding former inmates' educational experiences. According to Creswell (2014), "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Polkinghorne (2005) asserted one of the many purposes of qualitative research is to describe and clarify the experience. My research design consisted of a constructivist (interpretive) narratological case inquiry. Yin (2014) described a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 16). I wanted to use case study design for its use of detailed, in-depth data collection from multiple sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that would allow me to view participants' experiences from various perspectives. For my purpose, a good fit was the collective case, the selection of multiple cases in an instrumental case study which best represented the interests of my six participants (Stake, 2005).

The rationale for narratology is the use of stories that supported the telling of inmate's experiences within correctional education with constructivism used to support their worldviews or realities. "Narrative inquiry is a comprehensive research methodology referring both to a method of inquiry and to the phenomena studied" (Kridel, 2010, p. 595). Narrative inquiry added to the fit the study's design because the approach permits readers to hear the voices of former inmates, in their own words, as they share their personal stories regarding their educational experiences.

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The constructivist school of thought "is built on the thesis of ontological relativity, which holds that all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data about the world" (Patton, 1990, p. 97). I am a social constructivist by nature, which places me in the position of valuing the subjective including the knowledge I bring to the inquiry as well as the knowledge of participants. As an epistemology, constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Choosing a constructivist tradition allowed me to enter their worlds without imposing my realities on their views.

The research was conducted with a sample of previous inmates from a Midwest Correctional Facility. Sampling involves selecting cases that met some predetermined condition of importance (Patton, 2001). Participation in the study was on a purely voluntary basis. Within this constructivist narratological case study, the unit of analysis was the perceptions of previous inmates who had not completed a high school diploma and participated in Midwest Correctional Facility mandatory prison-based education programs. Rubin and Babbie (2001) pointed out that unit of analysis "are units that we initially describe for the ultimate purpose of aggregating their characteristics in order to describe some larger group or explain some abstract phenomenon" (p. 130). Patton (2002) asserted the number of participants in a qualitative study should be suitable to the purpose and goals of the study; the "sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). A combined use of snowball and criterion

sampling was used to identify four African American males and two Latino males that met the criteria of the study. "Snowball, chain, or network sampling is perhaps the most common form of purposeful sampling" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 98). By asking several individuals who else to talk with, the snowball increases as the researcher accrues information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). A Likert scale questionnaire was given to each participant prior to interviews to collect personal information such as age, race, job, grade level at the time of incarceration, and grade level upon release from confinement. Participants ranged from the ages of 35 to 55 and entered prison without a high school diploma. All of the participants worked in prison industry.

Criterion sampling was used to ensure recruitment of six information rich participants. Patton (2002) explained, "the logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 238), The structured questionnaire constituted the first data source, followed by in-depth interviews with six participants. I also planned to obtain the documents of the participants completion of education and training certificates from prison academic records provided to inmates upon completion of sentence. Unfortunately, only one participant was able to produce an educational document. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012, p. 125), gathering data from multiple sources and by multiple methods will yield a fuller and richer picture of the phenomenon under review.

Analysis of data involved descriptive statistical analysis of the Likert scale items, content analysis of documents, and enumerative and thematic coding for indepth semi-structured interviews. Narratives of each case was developed using the three-dimensional

narrative process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and the socio-cultural narrative proccess (Grbich, 2013).

The analysis process entailed "an interactive cyclical process" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2013, p. 14) that allowed me to move back and forth between the various data sources for constructing meaning and verifying interpretations throughout the study. The intent was to produce thick description that will allow readers to be present with the participants as they tell their stories. The significance of the study was illuminated through these interactions for the intended audience of the study which may include policy makers, educators, federal and state prison officials, community members, youth, and other interested stakeholders. More importantly, I contend that it is through developing our youth that our society can hope to reduce what has become known as the school-to-prison pipeline (Heitzeg, 2009; Walmsley, 2013; Wells, 2014).

Significance of the Study

Basic correctional education programs have been improved at both the state and federal levels in response to "mandatory education laws." As a future educator, my interest in education lies in studying the connection between social constructivism, traditional education, and correctional education. This constructivist narratological case study explored the lived experiences of previous inmates of a Midwest Correctional Facility who entered without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. Studies on dropout tend to place emphasis on factors intrinsic in the student and therefore fail to take into consideration the student and edifice of the school (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). This study is important because given the scantiness of research in this area, it will add to the limited qualitative data existing on reasons students drop out of school. The inquiry may help structure a

framework from which to expand future research. The qualitative data collected in this study might be used to help determine the common threads of perceptions of education for not just race but also gender. Students of color have not performed as well as other students in regard to academic achievement (Stearns & Glennie, 2007; Cramer, 2010; Hall et al., 2015; Kleiman, 2009; Noguera, 2008; Steele, 2004). Perhaps the findings of this study will allow educators and parents some insight into practices that will contribute to a greater understanding of both external and internal factors that influence students to leave school. The majority of studies are quantitative in nature, with a focus towards recidivism. I began this study with the hope that the stories of the six men will provide an understanding of the "lens" dropouts of color use to view education.

Moreover, an understanding of inmates' perceptions of education may provide insights that will support school-directed efforts to contribute to decreasing the number of high school dropouts. The insights gained from their stories may lead to the development of more use of tools, techniques, and strategies to enhance effective teaching strategies. Immigration and ethnic diversity are significant characteristics of the American experience. Qualitative studies are needed that call attention to the lack of academic, social, and emotional benefits for students from different cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Haynes (2012) asserted,

> Minority students who come from a low socioeconomic status are disproportionately taught by less qualified teachers and attend deteriorated schools that are racially and socioeconomically isolated. Minority students' academic performance is rooted in various societal ills such as poverty, social class biases and institutional racism. (p. 44)

All are factors that contribute to reasons that influence students to drop out and may provide potential dropouts from diverse backgrounds with a deeper appreciation for the benefits that

come with achieving an education. In addition, the voice of these former inmates may help teachers examine their beliefs related to their perceptions of education in regard to people of color. This in turn, may lend itself to positive change that transcends correctional facilities.

Additionally, the significance of the study also lies in the extent to which it may provide insights about how social constructivist learning environments can lead to change within the education system as a whole through the integration of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, developed by psychologist Lev Vygotsky, as it applies to adult learners (1978). The concept is based on the idea that development is defined both by what a child can do independently and by what the child can do when assisted by an adult or more competent peer (Vygotsky). The concept of a zone of proximal development, in my view, can be adapted to inmates who have enough self-awareness to recognize their current education potential. Moreover, this study represents a crucial step in adding to the literature regarding the school-to-prison pipeline. As I previously stated, most of the literature surrounding correctional education focuses on recidivism. I believe a need exists to provide research related to other factors, such as working in Prison Industries, which may influence the value placed on education. The existing body of literature on teacher student interaction centers on classroom observation. In light of previous research, the teaching-learning process primarily was more of an empirical approach for analyzing teacher and student behavior in the classroom. In other words, exploring classroom interaction patterns became the norm for the analysis of teaching and learning. Emerging research suggests a connection to employment retention and reduced recidivism. Although there have been numerous studies on aspects of correctional education; one neglected area in corrections continues to be inmates' attitudes toward their perceptions of employability upon release. Poor

employment histories and job skills of returning ex-offenders make it difficult to find stable employment and decent wages upon release (Travis, 2000). In my opinion, this validates the need for qualitative research in this area. Results from this study can assist correctional administration in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs geared towards employability.

The following chapter provides a discussion of the theoretical frameworks of critical race theory and Latino Critical Race Theory; both suggest that racial injustices are often encountered by people of color. The literature discussed in this chapter is connected to experiences students of color often encounter in American institutions and presents several other topics related to the lived experiences of the six adult men, who are the focus of this constructivist narrative case study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> We all have memories of school: The games we played. The friends we met. The teachers who nurtured us and the ones who imposed strict discipline. We learned how to spell, to read, to add and subtract. From generation to generation, for each era and individual, school has defined the shape of our young lives. … In school, we became aware of something larger than ourselves and our families. We became part of one nation. … But school is also the place where we have fought important battles, not only about education, but about the meaning and practice of democracy itself. Born out of centuries of conflict, innovation, and experimentation, the American system of public schools is one of the nation's most significant, and still unfinished, achievements. (Archung, 2001, p. 2)

The incarcerated population in the U.S. has been called the "most educationally disadvantaged population in the United States" (Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek, 2004, p. 1). Studies regarding correctional education and training programs for prison inmates have primarily focused on post prison release employment and recidivism. Moreover, the majority of the research has been quantitative and consisting of meta-analysis and correlation studies. Relatively limited attention has been given to the effects of education during inmates' incarceration time. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of former inmates. Specifically, this study explored their perception(s) with regards to participation in mandatory correctional education programs during their incarceration. To explore issues that may affect prior inmate's perception of public education, it is necessary to understand the plight of people of color and their experiences within American educational institutions. Therefore, this chapter is divided into four sections.

First, I discuss Critical Race Theory and its offspring of Latino Critical Race Theory; both are embedded in social interactions that expose racial injustices encountered by people

of color. Under this umbrella, the dynamics of Anglo-American school ideology and school segregation will be examined with a focus on a review of legal court cases deemed crucial to opening the door for school integration. Further, the notion of hidden curriculum that often contributes to disparities related to academic outcomes and behavior expectations will be explored. This discussion is followed by culture responsive teaching and multicultural education, responses to a dominant Eurocentric ideology and a hidden curriculum. The dynamics of the hidden curriculum are often entangled with a culture of power, also key to CRT and LatCrit which permeates school cultures and impacts the relationships between teachers and students. Secondly, the socio-political foundation for forming dropping-out of high school is described in this chapter which will include a critical analysis as to why students leave schools early without graduation as well as predicators associated with dropping out of school. Third, an historical overview of correctional education will be presented. There is a long history of incarceration of people of color that cannot be fully addressed in this proposed study. However, it has been well documented that students of color who drop out of school are at a high risk of ending up in the prison pipeline. I conclude the review of the literature with a discussion of Prison Industries and inmate employment. Former inmates are a highly stigmatized group which often limits employment opportunities.

According to Gash (2000), a literature search is "'a systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature in order to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to a particular topic" (p. 1). In an effort to ascertain a consistent truth, I performed a search to identify several related books, journal articles, and dissertations. I began my literature search by using both offline and online sources. The following words and terms

were used in different combinations: *critical race theory, Latino/a critical race theory, correctional education, prison education, high school dropouts, prison industries, prison employment, culture of power, culturally responsive teaching, prison stigma, and school-to-prison pipeline.* I primarily used the data bases of Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Digital Commons, and Google Scholar. A weekly Google Scholar alert was utilized using the same key words to ensure that the latest publications matching the search criteria were utilized. No time period was specified, and the search yielded 2,470 publications. Having completed an initial search of the literature, the results were narrowed further by adding the terms *school segregation, hidden curriculum, multicultural education* and by using only texts published in English. Inevitably, in a review of this nature, technical terms will arise that I have chosen to address within the body of the text. In the next section, I will discuss critical race theory in education and its offspring, Latino Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theories in Education

The common school ideology was framed from the dominance of Anglo-American school ideology where issues of race/ethnicity, gender and other differences were excluded. The aim of the common school ideology was to promote Anglo-Protestant American culture which led to the segregation of schools and a hidden curriculum "designed to maintain a White supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). For purposes of this research, master script is defined as the philosophical, economic, and political underpinnings that serve to maintain the dominant and relative superior group position of those recognized as White over people of color.

CRT and LatCrit questioned how power operated in traditional educational institutions and failed to recognize the culture of African American and Latinx students.

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Culturally relevant pedagoy (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995),

culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002, 2010), and multicultural education (Banks, 2007;

Banks & Banks, 2004) were approaches to provide an inclusionary curriculum with a social

justice emphasis. All three approaches called for an equal and unbias education for all

students regardless of their social economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, and other

differences. Yosso (2005) defined critical race theory in education as "a theoretical and

analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational

structures, practices, and discourses. This methodology was conceived as a social justice

project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling" (p. 74).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory came into existence during the 1970s as several legal scholars

(Derrick Bell, Jr., Alan Freeman, Charles, Lawrence, Lani Guinier, Richard Delgado, Mai

Matsuda, Patricia Williams, and Kimberle Crenshaw) began to examine racism in America

and the absence of racial reform in civil rights legislation. Delgado and Stefancic (2012)

defined critical race theory as "a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying

and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). Tyson (2015)

clarified that critical race theory examines the ways that our everyday lives are affected by

racism due to complex beliefs that underline assumptions about race. CRT emphases the

continuing adverse impact of discrimination and how the ideological state apparatus in the

form of schools privileges Whites in education while disadvantaging students of color.

CRT is based on five prominent tenets: (a) counter-storytelling, (b) the permanence

of racism, (c) whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) the critique of

liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). In their article entitled, "Toward a Critical Race

Theory of Education," Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) discussed critical race perspectives in education based on three propositions: (a) race remains a significant aspect of U.S. society; (b) U.S. society is based on property rights and not human rights; and (c) the intersectionality of race and property establishes an analytical tool for understanding both social and educational inequity (p. 47). CRT offers a framework for understanding the inequalities in education that result largely from race and racism. The framework is crucial for helping educators recognize how racism from the larger society affects the outcomes and practices of schools and other public institutions, but first educators accept that racism is still real, common and endemic in education. (Rector-Arranda, 2016, p. 3)

Latino Critical Race Theory

Latino Critical Race Theory can be described as an offshoot of CRT which addresses issues often overlooked by critical race theorists that may not be addressed in the Black-White paradigm which include language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Sólorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Villalpando, 2004; Yosso & Sólorzano, 2007). LatCrit consists of four principal goals: "(1) the production of knowledge, (2) the advancement of social transformation, (3) the expansion and connection of antisubordination struggles, and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition" (Montoya & Valdés, 2008, p. 1219). For example, Rivas-Drake (2008) conducted a study that explored factors that contribute to Latinx students' school success. The purpose of this study was to identify and understand variation in perceived opportunity among ten Latinx students who had already succeeded in school. Concepts of "achievement motivations, social barriers or social inequity and feelings of alienation" (p. 113) were the focus of the study. Explored were perceptions of opportunity, ethnic identity beliefs, and motivation orientations among

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Latinx students. The participants were divided into three different separate categories. Category one, labeled "Justifiers," attributed their success exclusively to their own merit. Category two, labeled "Critically Conscious" endorsed a strong sense of ethnic identity and was driven by the potential to improve their families and communities. Lastly, category three, labeled "Accommodators," stressed the importance of placing their own individual goals first. This group conveyed a positive sense of identity that suggested being Latinx was a meaningful, if not essential, facet of their lives (Rivas-Drake, 2008).

Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) used a CRT framework to examine the experiences of Latinx on college campuses. By conducting a series of focus groups on several campuses, they were able to gain a better understanding of their experiences. Yosso, et al., concluded that participants encountered microaggressive racial incidents that proved to have potentially harmful effects which was the direct opposite of the positive perceptions of being Latinx portrayed by Rivas-Drake (2008). For purposes of his proposed study, "Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or groups" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). In keeping with the aforementioned studies, LatCrit provides an appropriate lens by which to better understand the perceptions that former Latino inmates hold with regards to their educational experiences.

Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory were both conceived as reactions to the dominant discourse on race and racism by exposing how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to undermine certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, 1998). These were both the results of a racial ideology that pervaded public education

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beginning with the common school movement. The next section will explore the ideology

underlying the common school which set the tone for the development of public education

in America.

School ideology. The mechanism for understanding the intellectual landscape of

CRT as it applies to education began with the common school ideology during the

progressive era. Giroux (2001) defined ideology as "the production, consumption and

representation of ideas which can either distort or illuminate behavior" (p. 143). The

ideology of the progressive era in education stemmed from an Anglo-Protestant American

culture. The progressive movement upheld the primary focus of schools was to prepare

students for the realities of the day (Moore, 2015). During the progressive era, most states

established a legal system of segregation which required African Americans to attend

separate schools. CRT and LatCrit refuted the enduring ideology connected to the common

school. Safa (1971) noted, "the school provides a framework through which a national

ideology can be shaped and formulated, and then taught to a large segment" (p. 209). This

ideology is closely aligned with Althusser's viewpoint that education is part of the

ideological state apparatus. Althusser (1971) argued the ideological state apparatuses

(ISAs)—institutions such as education—instill in us values, desires, and preferences through

ideological practices. Moreover, Arons (1983) stated, "the ideology of schooling holds that

our most local political institution should reflect the existing consensus of values and should

be a social instrument for the reform of those values and the perfection of national and

personal character" (p. 16). In other words, innate in this vision was the belief that the

common school could be used as an instrument to force individuals to conform to long

standing political, social, and economic ideas. In keeping with this frame of thought, Joel

Spring (2005) indicated:

> One reason for the nineteenth-century development of public schools was to ensure dominance of Anglo-American values that were being challenged by Irish immigration, Native Americans, and African Americans. Public schools became defenders of Anglo-American values with each new wave of immigrants. (p. 3)

This early history of racist ideology exemplified the ambivalent attitudes of many whites

regarding the education of African Americans (Spring, 2001). Recently, using the Implicit

Association Test, Morin (2015) surveyed 100 people from different categories of racial

identification with the intent to measure unconscious bias by evaluating how fast individuals

associate positive and negative words with different ethnic groups. The study found that

about half of all Whites automatically preferred Whites over Blacks (48%), including about

a third (35%) who favored Whites moderately to strongly . The implications of these

findings are many Whites continue to maintain negative perceptions of people of color. CRT

and LatCrit rejects dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and

concentrating on the experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2005). In 1933, Woodson wrote:

> The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies. [The Negro is taught] that he has no worth-while past, that his race has done nothing significant since the beginning of time, and that there is no evidence that he will ever achieve anything great. [However], if you teach the Negro that he has accomplished as much good as any other race, he will achieve and aspire to equality and justice without regard to race. (p. 2)

The above quote represents, in my opinion, an on-going ideology that has its roots in school

segregation of two different types: de jure segregation and de facto segregation. De jure

segregation is separation enforced by law, while de facto segregation is segregation that

exists by practice and costume. Defining the terms is crucial in understanding the plight of school segregation as it applies to African Americans and Latinx in America.

School segregation. In 1848, the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty ended the Mexican-American War and made a significant portion of land belonging to Mexico part of the United States. The territory acquired by the U.S. included what is now Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, most of New Mexico and Arizona, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans were given the option of returning to Mexico within a year or becoming a U.S. citizen. This point is relevant because Mexican-Americans were declared White by citizenship. There were no state statutes that sanctioned the segregation of Mexican Americans. Although Mexican-Americans were considered White they were discriminated through de facto segregation (San Miguel, 1987). "The signing of the Treaty and the U.S. annexation, by conquest, of the current Southwest signaled the beginning of decades of persistent, pervasive prejudice and discrimination against people of Mexican origin who reside in the United States''(San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 353). Mexican children were frequently segregated in "Mexican schools" and experienced Jim Crow discrimination equivalent to that experienced by Blacks (De León & Calvert, 2013). Spring (2008) explained their segregation and the process of deculturalization:

> Mexican children attending segregated schools were put through a deculturalization program. Similar to that of the Indians isolated in Indian Territory and boarding schools, the deculturalization program was designed to strip away Mexican values and culture and replace that use of Spanish with English. (p. 238)

Between 1940 and 1975, Mexican Americans and African Americans fought several battles in court and through street protests to eradicate segregation and state-imposed racism. Although both groups were involved in civil rights struggles, they were seldom united.

The legal struggle for Mexican American school desegregation began with a series of state court cases in Arizona , Texas, and California. I have limited the discussion to *Mendez versus Westminster*. In 1945, Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez attempted to enroll their three children (dark skinned) in the local all-white Westminster Elementary School. School officials refused. In response, the Mendezes and other distressed parents filed a class action suit in federal court against segregated schools in Orange County, CA. They argued that separate schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Educator Marie H. Hughes testified that:

> segregation, by its very nature, is a reminder constantly of inferiority, of not being wanted, of not being a part of the community. Such an experience cannot possibly build the best personality or the sort of person who is atmost home in the world, and able to contribute and live well. (Reporter's Transcript Proceeding, p. 691, Mendez v. Westminster, 64 F. Supp. 544 [S.D. Cal. 1946]).

The defense contended that Mexican American children possessed contagious diseases, had poor moral habits, were inferior in their personal hygiene, spoke only Spanish and lacked English speaking skills. Therefore, they were unqualified to attend white schools. The court ruled that "segregation prevalent in the defendant school districts foster antagonisms in the children and suggest inferiority among them where none exists" and that the equal protection clause had been violated. *Mendez v. Westminster School District* was the first case in which segregation in education was effectively confronted in federal court.

Following the footsteps of Mendez, in February 1951, Oliver Brown filed suit against the Topeka Board of Education after his daughter was denied admission to an all-

White public school in Topeka, Kansas. Brown believed that his daughter was entitled to receive the same education as White children. Kenneth Clark and Mamie Phipps Clark were called to be expert witnesses. This was significant as the Clarks were African American psychologists, who were influential in the Civil Rights movement. Just three years prior, the Clarks conducted a study in which children ages six to nine were shown two dolls, one Black and one White. They were asked several questions about them: who was good and bad, who was pretty and ugly, who the children themselves most wanted to be like. The Clarks found that the children consistently chose White dolls. Their research supported the argument that many Black children developed a racial inferiority complex along with self-hatred which was a by-product of "prejudice, discrimination and segregation" (Clark, 1955, p. 11). The study was replicated in 2006 by high school student Kiri Davis and again in 2010 by Cable News Network's (CNN) Anderson Cooper in 2010 with essentially the same results.

On May 17, 1954, the Court unanimously ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal. Chief Justice Earl Warren stated:

> To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone…Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system. (*Brown v. Board of Education,* 347 U.S. 483 [1954])

The Brown decision marked the beginning of educational and social reforms and essentially served as a springboard for launching the Civil Rights Movement. Gay (2004b) argued that

although the decision of the court was a huge step towards ending these educational

problems, it was not enough to bring African-American students to an equal playing field. In

1957 Little Rock, Arkansas became the face of state resistance to school desegregation. In

the fight to resist segregation, the Governor directed National Guard troops to block the

admittance of nine Black students from entering all-white Central High School. The hatred

for integration was so strong that on September 24, 1957 President Eisenhower ordered the

101st airborne to Central High School to protect the students. He also federalized the

Arkansas National Guard, thereby stripping the governor of his power over the process of

school integration. In 1958, the Commonwealth refused the U.S. Supreme Court's mandate

to integrate and "locked down" or closed their public schools. Other schools followed suite.

Both the Little Rock deployment of the National Guard and Virginia's massive resistance

laws demonstrated the institutional and cultural prejudices showcased by many White

Americans to deprive Black students of equal educational opportunities. Consequently,

defacto segregation remained a common practice until the 1970s. Holmes (1986) wrote:

> In desegregated schools, many Black children encountered white teachers for the
> first time in their educational experience. White teachers generally found black
> students to be lacking in some academic skills; however, instead of attributing their
> deficiency to lack of exposure to a more rigorous curriculum, they instead opted to
> blame students and their families. It was easier to adopt the belief that black students
> were inherently inferior and unable to learn, instead of considering that black
> students needed additional supports to make the transition between the segregated
> and desegregated school systems. (p. 336)

Although significant strides have been made since schools were desegregated, racial

re-segregation and a reappearance of neighborhood schools have increased since early 1990s

(Brown, 2016; Smith, 2016). A report by the Government Accountability Office (2016)

found a large increase in schools that were predominately isolated by poverty and race.

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of schools the report deemed "high poverty" and comprised of mostly Black and Hispanic students, rose from 7,009 to 15,089. This is significant because attending racially and economically isolated schools has often resulted in several negative educational outcomes to include higher dropout rates (Harris, 2006; Mickelson, 2003; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). This surge in re-segregation may be attributed to three primary court cases: *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell* (1991), *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992), and most recently, the *Jefferson County Board of Education vs. Gardendale City Board of Education* (2017). Without going into great detail in the *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, the Supreme Court created the notion of "unitary status"—a term that could be given to school districts found to have complied with desegregation orders "in good faith." Unitary status meant districts could be freed from court oversight, even if re-segregation was expected. In *Freeman v. Pitts*, the school board in DeKalb, Ga., had been forcibly integrated from 1969 to 1986. As a result, White people moved out of certain neighborhoods to guarantee their kids would not attend integrated schools. The district court held that continuing racial segregation in the school district was a result of population shifts and not by the local government. Therefore, the school district was under no obligation to remedy a disproportion of racial segregation caused by Whites moving out of inner cities.

In *Jefferson County Board of Education vs. Gardendale City Board of Education*, the court ruled that Gardendale, a Birmingham, Alabama suburb composed of largely middle-class white residents could succeed from Jefferson County school district (predominately Black). Residents of Gardendale established their own Board of Education and argued that the move would allow them to have more say over education decisions and how their tax

dollars would be spent. According to Alabama law, cities with more than 5,000 residents can form independent school systems. Judge Madeline Haikala of the U.S. District Court in Birmingham ruled that the city of Gardendale's determination to secede was motivated by race and sent messages of racial inferiority and exclusion that "assail the dignity of Black schoolchildren" (Stout v. Gardendale City Board of Education, p. 29).

Racism has not disappeared, but instead reshaped itself into segregationally ideological court rulings that serve as nothing more than a tool to keep low income children, most often children of color, out of wealthy (predominately White) public schools. They contributed to the sustained educational oppression and pervasive racism faced by students of color. Jonathan Kozol (1991) wrote, "they (whites) see the poorer children as a tide of mediocrity that threatens to engulf them" (p. 61). In addition, he described the great disparities that exist between the schooling experiences of White middle-class students compared to African-American and Latinx students. He portrayed the socioeconomic division of schools as:

> A system where some children are given the better opportunities, while others are left in the dark. Children in districts having relatively low assessable property values are receiving no public education; rather, it is that they are receiving poorer quality education than that available to children in districts having more assessable wealth. (p. 215)

For example, the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools have a history of being disproportionately comprised of students of color and students living in poverty, as compared with a number of neighboring and surrounding schools and districts. In November 2015, Alejandro Cruz-Guzman along with six other families and one community-based organization filed a lawsuit against the state of Minnesota. The plaintiffs alleged state policies enabled and encouraged segregation along poverty lines in the Minneapolis-St. Paul

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cities thereby denying students of color their constitutional right to an "adequate" education. A Court of Appeals panel dismissed the case in March 2017 with the argument that whether students of color are getting an "adequate education" is a matter for the Legislature, not the courts (Cruz-Guzman v. State, 2017). Plaintiffs appealed to the state Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments on January 9th, 2018. This case is still under litigation.

In a similar court case, in September 2016, seven Detroit students from four of the lowest-performing schools at Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD) filed a lawsuit against the Governor and other state education officials. The students represented schools which served almost exclusively low-income students of color. The lawsuit requested the court should order the state to provide "appropriate, evidence-based literacy" instruction (Civil Action No: 16-CV-13292, 2017, p. 3) at all grade levels and to remedy problems associated with the physical conditions of the schools that impair access to literacy. Among the adverse conditions described in the Complaint were:

- Inadequate Instructional Materials: Plaintiffs' classrooms have grossly insufficient numbers of textbooks or no textbooks, and the books available are "decades out of date, defaced, and missing pages. Schools lack not only books, but also basic supplies such as chairs, desks, pens, pencils, and toilet paper, and teachers either purchase these items themselves or depend on affluent schools to donate materials.

- Dangerous and Unsanitary School Conditions: Plaintiffs' schools subject students to unsafe and unsanitary physical conditions that can make learning impossible. The school buildings are decrepit and unsafe, subjecting students to leaking roofs, broken windows, falling ceiling tiles, black mold, contaminated drinking water, vermin, and dangerously overcrowded classrooms, Extreme and unsafe temperatures in the classroom—students frequently can see their breath in the winter and are subjected to 90-degree heat in the summer—disrupt or preclude learning and often require school closures and early dismissals.

- Insufficient or Unqualified Staff: Plaintiffs' schools lack sufficient certificated, properly trained, and appropriately assigned teachers; vacancies are covered by adults lacking teaching credentials, by students, or, in some cases, by no one at

all. In the 2015-16 school year, there were about 170 teaching vacancies in DPSCD. (Civil Action No. 16-CV-13292, 2016, pp. 5–6).

On December 17, 2016, attorneys representing Governor Snyder filed a motion to dismiss the suit in U.S. District Court in Detroit, arguing that "there is no fundamental right to literacy" (Civil Action No. 2:16-CV-13292-SJM-APP, 2016, p. 5) in the constitution. This case is still under litigation.

The Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota and the Gary B. v. Snyder Case in Detroit brings to the forefront the quality of education students receive when school districts are segregated by poverty and housing. History has shown that housing discrimination was motivated by school segregation which was legal until *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, many cities continue the practice of housing separation based on affluence with the intent of excluding students of color from privileged white neighborhoods (Liebe, 2017). Students of color who attend poor, segregated schools have fewer educational opportunities than their White peers. Critical Race Theory attempts to shed light on the overt and covert ways racial inequity is well-maintained in the present-day climate of public schooling. The physical conditions of low-income schools contribute to low achievement and increases the possibilities that students will drop out of school.

A study by the Brookings Institution found that economic segregation between school districts increased nearly 20% from 1990 to 2010, while segregation between schools within a district increased 40% from 1991 to 2012 (Owens, Reardon, & Jencks, 2016). Edbuild (2016), is a nonprofit organization focused on bringing light to the way states fund public schools by using data to show funding and opportunity inequalities in education. The group examined 33,500 individual school district boundaries and compared the child

poverty rates of neighboring districts to determine the levels of economically segregated

districts. From the report, the following conclusions were reported:

> Socioeconomic segregation is rising in America's schools, in part because of the
> structure of education funding. The over reliance on locally raised property taxes to
> fund public schools gives wealthier communities the permission to keep their
> resources away from the neediest schools. This creates a system of school district
> borders that trap low-income children in high concentrations of poverty, while more
> privileged peers live in better-resourced communities, often right next door.
> (Edbuild, p. 3)

The implications of this study are that more explicit policies need to be implemented to

prevent the splintering of schools from integrated school districts. Some states continue the

practice of defacto segregation by implementing plans and policies that preserve institutional

inequalities and hinder educational success for children of color. School integration has been

linked to a wide array of positive education results to include improved achievement in

math, science, language and reading (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016;

Mickelson, 2015; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). This resurgence in school segregation

serves to guarantee that the education gap between White students and students of color will

continue to widen (Brown-Jeffy, 2006; Mickelson, 2015). Moreover, more funding needs to

be allocated to low-income schools to ensure schools have equitable resources (U.S.

Government Accountability Office, 2016; Mosenki, 2014). "The lack of funding for students

of color is seen as the biggest cause of racial disparities in education, and racism has risen to

become the second biggest driver among both Black and Latinx parents and families"

(Anzalone Liszt Grove Research, 2017). Without equitable sources students may drop out of

school to avoid, in many cases, the deplorable conditions often associated with low-income

schools. In essence, a combination of poor schools, institutionalized segregation, and

minimal funding are reminders that people of color continued to be affected by racialized

policies and practices. The concept of "interest convergence theory' offers a counter solution to these racialized issues.

The "interest convergence theory" coined by Bell (2004) suggested poor schooling conditions will only be eradicated when Whites are subjected to the same conditions. Bell explains:

> The interests of blacks and achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when the interest convergence with the interest of whites in policymaking positions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief to the degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character of proof offered to prove that harm. The effect of post-racial theory on education even when interest convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policymakers fear the remedial policy is threatening to superior societal status of whites, particularly those in the middle and upper classes. (p. 69)

The dynamics of U.S. education continues to be driven by ideologies that support economic inequality, class struggle, and social stratification. This lethal combination increases the chances of students of color dropping out of school and places them in the pathway to prison (Noguera, 2003a). One way to support oppressive ideology is through the hidden curriculum.

Hidden curriculum. The term hidden curriculum was coined by sociologist Phillip Jackson in 1968 to describe the non-academic and less overt socialization purposes of schooling. In terms of public education, there appears to be limited research dedicated to historical and educational development of school curriculum as it pertains to people of color. According to Tezcan (2003), the hidden curriculum consists of factors such as behaviors of teachers and administrators, attitudes, approaches, beliefs, values, quality of the school's atmosphere, and interaction patterns that provide students with non-written rules in school-environment, routines, discipline, and obedience to authority. In the early 1900s, the primary

textbook used to teach children to read was known as the *McGuffey Reader*. Textbooks were

the dominant definition of the curriculum in schools and represented the political, cultural,

economic and political pulse of the dominant society (Apple, 1993). The *McGuffey Reader*

uplifted a Protestant work ethic and revered Anglo-Saxon heritage that stressed the

individual's duty in moral virtue and patriotism (Leicester, Modgil, & Modgil, 2000). The

majority of teachers use textbooks as their principal curriculum guide and source of lessons.

This point is made for two reasons. First, only a small percentage of textbooks are realistic

in their portrayal of African-Americans, Latinx, and other of people of color (Dagbovie,

2010; Donnor & Brown, 2012; Flake, 2008). Second, through hidden curriculum African

Americans and other students of color have been constantly told that they are substandard

and incapable of high academic attainment (DeGruy Leary, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000;

Webb, 2015). The following quotation was 'noted in a 19th century primary grade school

textbook:

> God is the creative process: He first made the black man, realized He had done
> badly, and then created successively lighter races, improving as He went along. To
> the white man He gave a box of books and papers, to the black a box of tools so that
> he could "work for the white and red man, which he continued to do. (Elson, 1964,
> p. 88)

Although the times have changed, to some degree, this still holds true today. The following

passage was found in a chapter of a World Geography school textbook titled *Patterns of*

Immigration. The text book, published by McGraw-Hill in 2015 reads: "The Atlantic Slave

Trade between the 1500s and 1800s brought millions of 'workers' from Africa to the

southern United States to work on agricultural plantations" (Boehm, 2015, p. 126). This

clearly undermines and attempts to whitewash the cruelty of American slavery and sends the

message that Black people are uneducated, inferior, and only needed for manual labor jobs.

Another textbook, *Journey Across the Life Span: Human Development and Health Promotion* (Poland & Taylor, 2015) attempts to talk about race and ethnicity from an anthropological viewpoint. A passage on giving medical care to African-Americans reads: "A loud voice can be interpreted as either jest or anger. More emphasis is placed on nonverbal than verbal behavior. Direct contact in this culture can be considered a form of aggression" (Poland & Taylor, 2015, p. 25). In addition, the authors also suggested that nurses avoided eye contact with Latinx, too, since it was interpreted as giving the "evil eye" (Poland & Taylor, 2015, p. 24). In yet another textbook, *Mexican American Heritage,* Riddle and Angle (2016) depicted Latinx workers as lazy. The authors described Latinx laborers in the following manner:

> Industrialists were very driven, competitive men who were always on the clock and continually concerned about efficiency. They were used to their workers putting in a full day's work, quiet-ly and obediently, and respecting rules, authority, and property. In contrast, Mexican laborers were not reared to put in a full day's work so vigorously. There was a cultural attitude of "mañana," or "tomorrow," when it came to high-gear production. It was also traditional to skip work on Mondays, and drinking on the job could be a problem. (p. 248)

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained how images were used to portray people of color:

> Popular images and stereotypes of various minority groups shift over time…in one era, a group of color may be depicted as happy-go-lucky, simpleminded, and content to serve white folks. A little later, when conditions change, that very same group may appear in cartoons, movies, and other cultural scripts as menacing, brutish, and out of control, requiring close monitoring and repression. (p. 8)

Martins and Harrison (2012) conducted a longitudinal panel survey on the television viewing of young Black and White children. The researchers surveyed a group of 396 Black and White preadolescent students Midwest communities over a year-long period. The results of the study showed that Black boys were often depicted as criminals in many television programs. In contrary, White boys were portrayed in a positive light with a sense of

entitlement. Similarly, the National Hispanic Media Coalition and Latino Decisions (2012) conducted a survey that involved nine hundred non-Latinx people. The respondents answered over 90 questions that pertained to how Latinx and immigrants were portrayed with regards to news and entertainment. The goal of the study was to investigate if media narratives and stereotypes influenced people's opinions and attitudes towards Latinx and immigrants. The results of the survey showed the majority of the respondents viewed Latinx as family oriented, hardworking, churchgoing, religious, and honest. In contrast, one-third to half of the respondents associated Latinx with receiving welfare, less educated, having too many children, refusing to learn English and taking jobs from Americans (National Hispanic Media Coalition and Latino Decisions, 2012, p. 34). In addition, respondents believed that television and films often portrayed Latinx as criminal or gang members, gardeners or landscapers, and maids or housekeepers (National Hispanic Media Coalition & Latino Decisions, 2012, p. 4).

Both Martins and Harrison's (2012) and the National Hispanic Media Coalition and the Latino Decisions' (2012) surveys reflect how news and entertainment media often perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes about Black and Latinx people. In addition, the media feeds into the hidden curriculum that Black and Latinx people are inferior. Moreover, I would argue that news and entertainment media contribute to deficit thinking with regards to perceived deficiencies associated with Black and Latinx students. In essence, it may also contribute to a lack of positive identity for these students as they attempt to fit into a white society.

Ferguson (2001) discussed the impact the hidden curriculum had on Black children. She conducted a three-year study in Rosa Parks Elementary School to explore the

connections between how boys performed and were treated in school and where they would likely end up in the future in regard to life in general. While African American boys accounted for one-quarter of the student body at Rosa Parks, they accounted for four-fifths of those suspended in 1991-1992. She concluded the study by stating:

> In the course of my study, it became clear that school labeling practices and the exercise of rules operated as part of a hidden curriculum to marginalize and isolate black male youth in disciplinary spaces and brand them as criminally inclined. (p. 581)

A year later, using an ethnographic qualitative study, Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined school suspensions in a high school with a predominately Latinx and African American student population. The researchers specifically examined the sociocultural reasons that influenced a teacher's decision to remove a student from the class. The results indicated that suspensions most often occurred as a result of teachers' perceptions that students were questioning established classroom practices or undermining their authority. The implications of both studies indicate that White teachers may have "cultural deprivation tunnel vision" that limits their focus of deficit thinking and disciplinary inequity to students of color. I would argue that their perceptions of Black students fed into the culture of power that sends out the subliminal message to Blacks students that they are oppositional and better off outside the classroom.

The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania found that during the 2011-12 school year, 1.2 million Black students were suspended from K-12 public schools in a single academic year. Over half of those suspensions (55%) occurred in 13 Southern states. In addition, 50% of Black student expulsions also occurred in districts in the South (Smith & Harper, 2015).

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Furthermore, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Arizona reviewed discipline data (most current) from 46 district and charter high schools in Maricopa County, AZ for the 2013-2014 school year. The study concluded that Black students are eight times more likely to be suspended from charter high schools than their White counterparts. Latinx students are six times more likely to be suspended than White students in charter high schools.

Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) examined the attitudes of 204 teachers toward Black and White students, who displayed disruptive behaviors, recruited from school district websites throughout the country. Student demographics by race and ethnicity included 16 White, 17 Black, ten Asian, six Latinx, two other, and three unknown individuals. The teachers were requested to verbally make disciplinary recommendations based on a referral slip they received describing the students' disruptive behaviors. Each referral slip included the name of a student who represented traditional African American names, such as DeAndre or Marquis, or a European American name, such as Scott or Tanner. The results of the study showed that teachers felt more troubled by minor school infractions that were committed by Black students when compared to White students with the same infractions. Teachers were also more likely to view Black students' infractions as a pattern of behavior and were more likely to suspend Black students for the same infractions committed by White students. Findings implied that more needs to be done to educate teachers regarding the excessive disciplinary actions encountered by students of color, often due to teachers' unconscious bias based on racial stereotypes. Trepagnier (2017) wrote, "Many well-meaning White people know little of the history of racism in the United States, and most are not aware of institutional racism. Fewer still are aware that their own silent racism shapes what

they do, often without their knowing, and that racist practice, silent and everyday racism, and passivity hold the racial formation in place" (pp. 83–84). In other words, teachers' unaddressed stereotypes and discriminatory practices permit the continuation of deficit thinking in American classrooms (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Manning & Baruth, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and contribute to systematic pushing out of Black and Latinx students from schools and into the criminal justice system. In a similar fashion, Noguera (2003b) also discussed how schools participate in practices that send hidden messages to students. He wrote:

> As schools sort children by perceived measures of their ability and as they single out certain children for discipline, implicit and explicit messages about racial and gender identities are conveyed. To the degree that White or Asian children are disproportionately placed in gifted and honors classes, the idea that such children are inherently smarter may be inadvertently reinforced. Similarly, when African American and Latino children are overrepresented in remedial classes, special education programs, or on the lists for suspension or expulsion, the idea that these children are not as smart or as well behaved is also reinforced. (p. 445)

The disproportionately racial separation of students of color in remedial classes may also be viewed as a component of the hidden curriculum. A curriculum that teaches certain students what they may or may not be able to accomplish because of who they are (Lucas & Berend, 2002). One could argue that the disproportionately punished are at the highest risk of dropping out of school. The hidden curriculum also serves as tool to empower teachers to maintain the behaviors and practices that are barriers to the success of students of color. Many find it very easy to not question the traditional ideologies associated with the precepts and values of the common school which serve to maintain a Eurocentric curriculum. These master narratives have been challenged by theories and concepts related to culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education.

Culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education. The purpose of
teaching reading and writing was to ensure that not only could individuals read the Bible and
religious tracks, but also that they become good workers and obey the laws of the
community (Spring, 1997). The first compulsory attendance laws were enacted in 1918.
However, prior to the 1900s the source for education resided with private institutions,
private homes, and churches. Compulsory attendance laws essentially put an end to part time
schooling that was a direct result of child labor. Specifically, many compulsory school laws
state "that any parent, guardian or other person having custody or control of a child between
the ages of seven (7) and sixteen (16), must ensure that the child is enrolled in and regularly
attends public, private, parochial school, home school or a combination of schools for the
full term of the school year" (Missouri Code of State Regulations, Chapter 167, section
167.031). This is significant as the ideological state apparatus (ISA) has the power to
enforce the deculturalization of students of color through compulsory education. In other
words, the principles embodied in compulsory education reflect ideologies that fail to
acknowledge the cultural landscape of people of color. Milner (2007) noted that people of
color have historically been "misrepresented, exploited, silenced, and taken for granted"
(p. 388) and that many educational researchers "have given privileged status to dominant
beliefs, ideologies and views over the voices of people of color" (pp. 388–389).

Joel Spring (2004) referred to the concept of "cultural genocide," which he defined
as "the attempt to destroy other cultures" (p. 3) through forced compliance and assimilation
to dominate and rule, cultural and religious standards. This was in line with Freire (1998),
who years earlier made the point that the dominant culture had the power to reject
differences from other cultures. Both CRT and LatCrit acknowledge an evaluation of power

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that traditional educational institutions fail to recognize. These dynamics of power are

aligned to Delpit's (2006) analysis of how the culture of power is often enacted during

literacy instruction but can be applied to schools and classrooms in the following ways:

- Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.

- There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power."

  The rules of that culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.

- If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.

- Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. (p. 24)

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) conducted a meta-

analysis of 213 school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs which involved

270,034 kindergarten through high school students from urban, suburban, and rural

elementary and secondary schools. The results of the study submitted that students who

participated in social and emotional learning programs increase social/emotional skills and

gain positive attitudes toward oneself and others. In addition, SEL programs appear to

reduce behavior problems and emotional distress (Durlak et al.). I would argue that SEL

programs contribute to making students aware and accustomed to rules associated with ways

of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting. Delpit (2006) refers to

such rules as the presentation of self (p. 25). Olson and Land (2007) conducted a quasi-

experimental study that looked at cognitive strategies used to teach reading and writing to

English language learners (ELL). The study, known as California Project Pathway, was

conducted over an eight-year period (1996–2004) and involved teachers and 2000 students

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from nine middle schools and four high schools. Latinx students made up the majority of the participants. Ninety-three percent spoke English as a second language and 69% were designated as Limited English Proficient according to the California English Language Development Test. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data involved pre-and post- writing assessments, standardized measures of reading, language scores, and English placement rates. Teacher and student discussions of the quality of their experiences, metacognitive learning logs, and written reflections from 700 students consisted of qualitative data. Students who received cognitive strategies instruction significantly outperformed their peers on standardized tests and writing assessments.

Without going into great detail, reading and writing are fundamentally similar processes of meaning construction involving the use of cognitive strategies. Delpit (2006) insisted that a culture of power mirrors the practices of those in power and subsequently reflects mainstream culture. Further, she pointed out that enhancing English language literacy skills is critical with regards to closing the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots." The implications of both studies (Durak et al., 2011; Olson & Land, 2007) are the emphasis on practices/strategies that help dismantle the barriers surrounding the culture of power. In addition, the studies revealed that teachers have the capability to optimize students' educational experience by making the rules for the culture of power explicit. While Delpit (2006) focused on power dynamics in the classroom that often impede the academic success of students, culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education are also viewed as opposition narratives to Eurocentric ideologies that failed to acknowledge the cultural landscape of people of color.

Culturally relevant pedagogy. More than 20 years ago, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) proposed culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20) as a way to meet the learning needs of culturally diverse students. Paris (2012), due to the growing diversity of the English language learners (ELL) population, expanded on Ladson-Billings' original theory. Moreover, he questioned whether or not the terms relevant and responsive "go far enough in their orientation to the languages and literacies and other cultural practices of communities marginalized by systemic inequalities to ensure the valuing and maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society" (p. 93). Paris posited the term "culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP)" is a more suitable phrase because it encompasses a cultural pluralism that moves beyond race and ethnic lines. Ladson-Billings (2014) stated, "culturally sustaining pedagogy uses culturally relevant pedagogy as the place where the beat drops," it does "not imply that the original was deficient" but rather speaks "to the changing and evolving needs of dynamic systems" (p. 76). She called for a "remix" of her original theory. She recommended reevaluating the way we think about and teach students, especially those that are often disregarded by society as a whole. Ladson-Billings advocated acknowledging their cultural richness.

Although CSP is the latest embodiment of CRP, this study will continue to use CRP as its theoretical foundation. In my opinion, CSP is a relatively new theoretical approach and the body of knowledge needs more time to be extensively researched or evaluated. Ladson-Billings (2009) maintained that CRP embraces both individual and collective empowerment. In addition, she theorized that CRP requires three propositions: "(a) students must

experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural

competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they

challenge the current status quo of the social order" (1995, p. 160). She provided an example

of culturally relevant pedagogy by using the following example:

> A class of African American middle school students in Dallas identified the problem
> of their school being surrounded by liquor stores (Robinson, 1993). Zoning
> regulations in the city made some areas dry while the students' school was in a wet
> area. The students identified the fact that schools serving white, upper middle-class
> students were located in dry areas while schools in poor communities were in wet
> areas. The students, assisted by their teacher, planned a strategy for exposing this
> inequity. By using mathematics, literacy, social, and political skills, the students
> were able to prove their points with reports, editorials, charts, maps, and
> graphs…students' learning became a form of cultural critique. (Ladson-Billings &
> Tate, 1995, p. 477)

In a similar manner to Ladson-Billings' CRP, Rychly and Graves (2012) identified four

characteristics that are essential for culturally responsive pedagogy to succeed: caring and

empathy, personal reflection about attitudes and beliefs, personal reflection about one's own

cultural frames of reference, and teacher knowledge about other cultures. Rychly and Graves

place significant emphasis on traditions, values, language and communication, learning

styles, and relationship norms of the students to improve their academic achievement. Gay

(2002) refers to Rychly and Graves's emphasis on students' cultural backgrounds as cultural

scaffolding; while Herrera (2016), refers to such phenomena as Biography-Driven Culturally

Responsive Teaching.

Educators have the challenge of teaching culturally diverse students which includes

using their experiences and culture as a tool to enhance their learning. Good teachers

understand that each of their students are motivated differently and know how to inspire

them accordingly. For example, Hastie, Martin, and Buchanan (2006) conducted an

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ethnographic study which consisted of 42 sixth grade black students in a physical education (PE) classroom taught by two white teachers. The teachers noted the class was deemed unruly at times which made getting through an entire lesson difficult. The goal of the study was to examine the teachers' understanding of their praxis in their attempt to facilitate a culturally-relevant dance curriculum. The teachers implemented Step—a traditional dance form performed by Blacks as a way to improve motor skill development. While stepping was not viewed as noteworthy from a literacy standpoint, it provided a historical context. Step, rooted in the days of slavery, was used as a tool to communicate through various stomps that created collection of rhythms (Hinson & Ferris, 2010). In similar fashion, Hubert (2013) conducted a case study at an alternative high school in the south which involved 37 black students, labeled at-risk for academic failure. The researchers examined African American students' viewpoints on the effects of culturally relevant mathematics instruction on their attitudes and interests toward math. Pre- and post-assessment interviews on quadratic and exponential functions were given to five students who attended class on a regular basis. The researchers taught math lessons related to problems that students often face within their lives (teen pregnancy, perinatal HIV, teen smoking, football and soccer, money management). The results of the study showed that students increased their math performance by at least one letter grade because they were able to acquire mathematical concepts through real life problems.

In both studies, Hastie et al. (2006) and Hubert (2013), the students were labeled as either "unruly" or "at risk"; however, both efforts demonstrated how teachers' cultural competence can heighten students' motivations and engagement to learn the curriculum being taught. This was in line with Ladson-Billings (2006) insisted that culturally responsive

teaching is intended to prepare educators to provide students with answers to questions that emerge as they attempt to make sense of the curriculum.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) postulated that culturally responsive teachers must develop a "sociocultural consciousness" and recognize the impact that race, class, and culture background play in making learning more advantageous for diverse students. This is closely aligned with Gay (2010) who described culturally responsive teaching "as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). Expanding on Villegas and Lucas's characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, Gay's (2010) list of culturally responsive teachers consisted of the following:

- Culturally responsive teachers are *socially and academically empowering* by setting high expectations for students with a commitment to every student's success;
- Culturally responsive teachers are *multidimensional* because they engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives;
- Culturally responsive teachers *validate every student's culture*, bridging gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula;
- Culturally responsive teachers are *socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive* as they seek to educate the whole child;
- Culturally responsive teachers are *transformative of schools and societies* by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design;
- Culturally responsive teachers are *emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies* as they lift "the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools. (p. 38)

These six elements are important as they prepare preservice teachers to become culturally responsive to the needs of ethnically diverse students through instruction and provide opportunities for preservice teachers to address these needs from the cultural frames

of reference of diverse students. Edwards (2011) found eight dispositions common in effective culturally responsive teachers that build upon Gay's list:

- Use culturally responsive educational materials and content
- Knowledgeable about all aspects of multicultural education
- Implement multi-culturally supportive learning environments
- Utilize culturally responsive assessment batteries
- Support Ongoing family and community communication and involvement
- Implement ethnically and culturally responsive curriculum
- Integrate cultural responsiveness throughout all academic areas
- Incorporate personnel knowledge of culturally responsive behavior management practices (p. 210)

Preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching coupled with dispositions are significant for valuing and integrating the cultural backgrounds and values that students bring to school.

Many African American and Latino males have strong ties to their culture. Both groups' successes are often dependent on the social support and encouragement they receive from teachers (Garza, 2008; Nieto, 2004; Noguera, 2003b). Somers, Owens, and Piliawsky (2008) shepherded a quasi-experimental study in a large Midwest urban high school to examine factors associated with the academic success of 118 low income African American ninth-graders, male and female, (experimental n = 69; comparison n = 49). The purpose was to examine the role of various sources of social support in the educational attitudes and behaviors and academic achievement among these students. The study examined the effectiveness of a combined tutoring and mentoring intervention during the transition to high school. At the conclusion of seven months, students in the experimental group exhibited noteworthy improvement in grade point average, perceived support for educational commitment and attainment, and perceived support from school. The results of the study

supported the argument that social support from teachers correlate to academic success for Black students.

The social support that is needed for students of color is linked to the extent to which educators can honor and acknowledge the cultural backgrounds of students of color. Scholars in the field of multicultural education have come to the conclusion that the underachievement of people of color is due to the absence of culturally responsive teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching methods provide educators with a blueprint of how the history of students' cultural, linguistic, and racial identities impact academic achievement. Delpit (2003) asserts:

> we can educate all children if we truly want to. To do so, we must first stop attempting to determine their capacity. We must be convinced of their inherent intellectual capability, humanity, and spiritual character. We must fight the foolishness proliferated by those who believe that one number can measure the worth and drive the education of human beings, or that predetermined scripts can make for good teaching. Finally, we must learn who our children are – their lived culture, their interests, and their intellectual, political and historical legacies. (p. 20)

The achievement gap between African Americans and Latinx students compared to their white counterparts is well documented (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum, 2006; Campbell, Hombo, & Mazzeo, 2000; Hill, 2011). According to Hill (2011), an achievement gap exists when "roughly one standard deviation difference in scores on standardized and/or norm-referenced tests and the quantifiable differences in grades and other academic outcomes that is evident between racial groups in the American education system" (p. 13). As the number of students of color increase, so will the challenges for teachers who teach student populations whose culture contrasts from their own. If white teachers are not adequately equipped to teach diverse students, their classroom teaching methods may be a

detriment to the academic success of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Levin, 2004; Rector-Arranda, 2016). CRT and LatCrit necessitate that teachers create a learning atmosphere where all students feel received, supported, and provided with the greatest opportunities to learn irrespective of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Knowing students' cultural backgrounds and pronunciation of their names contribute to the learning environment, communicating to students they are valued and respected for who they are.

Kohli and Solórzano (2012) used a CRT framework through questionnaires and interviews to examine the racial microaggressions and internalized racial microaggressions of former K-12 students of color with regards to the mispronunciation of their names. African American, Latinx, Asian American, American Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and mixed-race participants were solicited through five education related electronic mail lists (150 to 1000 members). The protocol consisted of ten short answer questions. Narratives were collected through individual interviews and electronic mail short answer questionnaires. Thirty-one women and ten men matched the criterion for participation. The age of the participants ranged from late teens to late forties with the majority being Asian American and Latinx. The results indicated that students perceived teachers that mispronounced their names devalued their cultural heritage. The implication of this study is that something as simple as correct name pronunciation can contribute to teachers fostering a positive learning environment. In addition, the mispronunciation may contribute to students' perceptions of the school's culture as a whole.

Additionally, teachers can contribute to reducing the achievement gap by being culturally competent (Dickson, Chun, & Fernandez, 2015; Sleeter, 2012). According to Ladson-Billings (2014), "Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students

appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in

at least one other culture" (p. 75). A culturally responsive approach to education may be the

best avenue to addresses the academic needs of a growing diverse student population.

Multicultural education. Multicultural educational gained momentum in the 1960s

with the end of segregation. Nieto (2000) described multicultural education as:

> a pervasive pedagogical process that is antiracist, egalitarian, and inclusive. Furthermore, it permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. (p. 305)

Banks (2016) argued the necessity for all students to experience multicultural education. He

identified five dimensions of multicultural education which were: the knowledge

construction process, prejudice reduction, an empowering school culture and social

structure, an equity pedagogy, and content integration. The knowledge construction process

involved students evaluating the social arranging of groups through the ways that knowledge

is presented. Prejudice reduction entailed lessons and activities that teachers device to

emphasize positive images of ethnic groups and to advance intergroup relations.

Empowering school culture referred to the analysis of the school culture and organization by

all members of school staff for making modifications to institutional practices (Banks).

Equity pedagogy involved transforming teaching styles and approaches in a manner

beneficial to academic achievement for all students. Content integration encompassed the

mixture of various cultures, ethnicities, and other identities to be embodied in the

curriculum.

Gorski and Swallwell (2015) stressed that by understanding equity literacy White

teachers can began to see race. Equity literacy is an approach that requires educators to

recognize the factors that contribute to inequities and try to redress them. Gorksi and

Swalwell proposed developing four equity literacy skills including:

> recognizing subtle forms of bias, discrimination, and inequities; responding to bias, discrimination, and inequities in a thoughtful way; redress bias, discrimination, and inequities by studying the ways in which bigger social change happens; and cultivate and sustain bias-free and discrimination-free communities. (p. 37)

The exclusion of equity literacy was reflected in Houchen's (2013) small-scale study of

remedial reading class designed to improve Florida State Standardized Reading test scores

of predominately Black students, ranging from ninth through twelfth grade. Houchen

established that by introducing culturally relevant curriculum and reading materials in the

classroom she was able to get students more involved in the coursework. In addition, she

incorporated reflective writing and classroom discussion. As a result, students had a higher

pass rate on the re-take exam than the state average. Houchen (2013) concluded that the

students' academic success was linked to implementing culturally responsive pedagogy.

Furthermore, Houchen recognized that the lack of culturally related material contributed to

inequity literacy. She supported the benefits of multicultural approaches as a tool to engage

students in learning and decrease their chances of dropping out.

Prison Industries

For purposes of this proposed study, a dropout is defined as a student who leaves

school before completion. Public high schools in the United States reported that 3,030,000

students dropped out in 2016 (Statistic Brain Research Institute, 2017) which equates to

approximately 8,300 students per day. This section of the literature review focuses on the

volume of research associated with factors that contribute to dropping out of school. In this

section, relevant theories and predictors of why students dropout are discussed. Both Latinx

and blacks share a history of being victims of racial discrimination to include inequities in education. These students have cultural differences as well as the similarities that affect how they relate and adapt to their life circumstances to include reasons for dropping out. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss them separately in this literature review. First, I share what the literature supports as to reasons for why they leave school before graduation.

Theories and Predictors of Why Students Drop Out

Dropout rates for Latinx and Black youth reached a peak in the 1980s (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). As a result, "the late 1980s and 1990s brought concerted efforts to develop intervention programs designed to prevent at-risk students from dropping out" (Hauser & Koenig, 2011, p. 62). During this period theories of why students dropped out began to emerge.

In his seminal theory on school dropouts, Finn (1989) identified two models of student behavior that may result in students' decisions to drop out of school. The *frustration-self-esteem model* hypothesis proposed that students who experience negative school outcomes over time, such as low grades, develop an impaired self-view (e.g., low self-esteem, self-concept An impaired self-view is a by-product of frustration or embarrassment. A lessened self-perception, Finn contended, may display behaviors such as truancy, absenteeism, or eventually dropping out. Similarly, a more recent study conducted by Barfield, Hartman, and Knight (2012) posited early warning signs of dropping out included low attendance rates and poor classroom performance. A year later, Doll, Eslami, and Walters (2013) expanded on reasons students drop out after reviewing data from seven nationally representative studies that covered a span of 50 years (1955 to 2004). The researchers concluded that the risk factors for dropping out could be categorized into push

and pull factors. Push factors were described as adverse circumstances within the school environment (e.g., fear of falling behind, being expelled, not getting along with teachers or classmates). Pull out factors were described as external factors (e.g. getting a job) that divert students from completing school. Their findings are consistent with the *The Dropout Prediction Scale* developed by J. M. Weber in 1989. Weber reviewed 13 dropout identification procedures from various states and concluded that reasons for dropping out could be broken down into three categories: (1) school related factors (e.g. attendance, grades, academic achievement, reading skills and interest in school and work); (2) personal factors (e.g. age relative to classmates, disciplinary problems, and extenuating circumstances such as pregnancy); and (3) home and family factors (economic disadvantage, and divorced or single parent home). Furthermore, numerous sources related to dropouts all agreed on four early warning signs: poor attendance, frequent behavior problems, failing math, and English (Bowers, 2010; Doll et al., 2013); Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

A second model of dropping out, which Finn (1989) referred to as *participation-identification*, hypothesizes that students who participate in school activities (e.g. classroom participation, participating in extracurricular activities) gain a sense of identification with the school's culture as a whole. Identification in this context can be understood as having an internalized conception of belongingness and valuing accomplishment in school-related goals. Failure to develop a sense of identification increases the chances that students will disengage emotionally and physically from school. Boatwright (2009) conducted a study to examine the effects of high school extracurricular activity on a student's grade point average and a school's drop-out rate. Boatwright collected data from several high schools in the Southwest region of Missouri. He noted that students who participated in Missouri State

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High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) sponsored activities displayed higher grade point averages than non-participants. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that students who participated in extracurricular activities were less likely to drop out of high school. Boatwright's study supports Finn's (1989) participation model.

Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989), in a similar seminal theory to Finn's (1989), proposed a model (Theory of Dropout Prevention) in which educational engagement and social bonding were required components for successful school completion. Wehlage et al defined engagement as "the psychological investment required to comprehend and master knowledge and skills explicitly taught in schools" (p. 17). Social bonding is understood to encompass a feeling of belonging to the institution, having an individual stake in its activities and being involved.

> Students who feel a sense of social bonding to school or teachers are less likely to reject school and more likely to conform to certain otherwise unappealing rules and procedures associated with schooling. Students who exhibit a high degree of social bonding tend to identify with the institution, its actors or norms and see themselves as having a role or a stake in the outcome of the institution's or the individual's efforts. (Wehlage et al., 1989, p. 156)

Social bonding also increases academic achievement as seen in the following correlational study. Chun and Dickson (2011) carried out a cross-sectional correlational study that examined the relationships between proximal factors and psychological factor that affect academic self-efficacy and academic performance. Parental involvement and culturally responsive teaching were both considered to be proximal factors. The participants of the study were 478 Hispanic seventh grade students. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the researchers created a model of Latino academic performance through a series of questionnaires using Likert-type scales that pertained to parental involvement (5

items), perceptions of culturally responsive teaching (21 items), sense of school belonging (18 items), and academic self-efficacy (8 items). In addition, to answering the questionnaire, students' self-reported their academic performance using their last recorded math, science, and English grade. Using a structural equation modeling analysis the researchers found that parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, and sense of school belonging increase academic performance by improving academic self-efficacy.

Chun and Dickson's study supports the notion that a student's sense of belonging has a direct impact on their academic performance. Finn's (1989) theory of why students dropout (frustration self-esteem mod el/participation-identification model) and Wehlage et al.'s (1989) dropout prevention theory view the phenomena of dropping out as a process of slow withdrawal influenced by several factors, including individual actions (behaviors), psychological attitudes toward schooling, and social involvement in the school as a whole. While several studies have identified predictors associated with dropping out, most of the literature refers back to the seminal work of Wehlage et al. and Finn, 1989.

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education concluded that were ten significant markers of risk or reasons teens drop out of high school. I deem the following five markers for dropping as relevant to this proposed study:

- Lack of educational support. Many students decided to drop out of high school due to lack of sufficient parental support and educational encouragement.

- Outside influences. Never underestimate the power of peer and/or family pressure. Family and other outside relationships weigh heavily in a teen's decision to leave school before graduating, often to join gangs or seek acceptance in other peer groups and/or street communities.

- Financial problems. Dropping out to help support the family financially is another reason given by teens.

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- Lack of interest. This is a leading reason many teens give for dropping out. They simply do not see the value in gaining a high school diploma. Many teens state they are simply bored with the coursework because they find it uninteresting or not challenging.

- Drug and alcohol abuse. This is one of the top three reasons why students fail to complete high school. (p. 2)

As stated, the reasons African American and Latinx students dropout vary; some of these reasons relate to the previously discussed markers. Both groups have similarities and differences related to the phenomenon of dropping out in that they different world views and adapt to circumstances of life in unique ways. A discussion of the phenomenon of dropping out follows for Latinx youth followed by African American Youth. I discuss the dropout studies for youth in general, both male and female students.

Latinx Students and the Phenomenon of Dropping Out

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) estimated that one out of every four students will be Latinx by 2021; and despite having the biggest decline in high school dropouts among any racial or ethnic group in 2016, the phenomena of dropping out remain higher for these students (Krogstad, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2017). In 2009, Latinx high school dropout rates were almost triple that of white students and double the number for black students (Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends, 2009). Further, Latinos are more likely to drop out of high school, seek employment rather than attend college, and to leave college before graduating (Scott, Zhang, & Koball, 2015; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso & Solórzano, 2006).

Latinx students' academic achievement and dropout rates can be compounded by unique challenges many of their communities face. Most of the schools Latinx attend are limited in resources which can hinder their learning opportunities (Chun & Dickson, 2011;

Goldenberg, 2001; Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). This problem is compounded by

Latinx families having to move to find work which often results in the frequent change of

schools (Hirschman & Pharris-Ciurej; 2008). The Pew Research Center (Hispanic Trends,

2011) indicated that one third of all Latinx children in the United States live in poverty. This

level of poverty is more than any other racial/ethnic group. According to the Census Bureau

(2014), the poverty rate for Latinx people was 23.6 % higher when compared to American

households as a whole. The impact of poverty on Latinx children and families is far reaching

and has been found to be detrimental to school readiness. Socioeconomically disadvantaged

families are unlikely to have the resources needed to promote school readiness. Goldenberg

(2001) asserted "a low SES child attending a low-income school and living in a low-income

community is at far greater risk for reading difficulties than the same child attending and

living in a middle or high-income school and community (p. 217). Research pointed to

Black and Latinx children enter kindergarten with fewer of the academic skills required to

succeed in school compared to White children (Gándara, 2010). Latinx children whose only

or native language spoken at home is Spanish enter kindergarten with less than adequate

skills in math and reading when compared to children whose primary language at home is

English (Burkam & Lee, 2002; Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). In 2012, 27% of Latinx

children, three to six-year-old, failed to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet. This was in

comparison to 41% and 44 % of White and Black children (Child Trends Databank, 2015).

In his seminal work in 1955, Albert Cohen formulated the *School Failure Theory*. His

theory proposed that crime and deviance are due to the inability of those in the lower classes

to achieve mainstream achievement goals through legitimate means such as educational

achievement. Although Cohen's theory was never proven, research indicates a link between

low literacy and behavior problems (Barr & Parrett, 2007; Gest & Gest, 2005; Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005; Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003; Pierce, Wechsler-Zimring, Noam, Wolf, & Katzir, 2013). This is significant as the absence of reading skills may place Black and Latinx students on a trajectory towards special education programs.

Latinx students are frequently over-referred and labeled for special education. This is primarily due to teachers' absence of cultural understanding and sensitivity necessary to meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) or culturally diverse students (Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011; Ford, 2012; Guiberson, 2009; Perez, Skiba, & Chung, 2008; Sanchez, Parker, Akbayin,, & McTigue, 2010; Sullivan & Bal, 2013; Zhang, Katsiyannis, Ju, & Roberts, 2014). DeCohen, Deterding, and Clewell (2005) examined the characteristics of teachers who teach in schools with a high concentration of bilingual students. Their findings indicated that teachers and principals at schools with large numbers of emergent bilinguals tended to be less experienced and also have fewer credentials than those at schools with few or no emergent bilinguals. An indicator of this is the highest degree held by the teachers. In schools with high numbers of emergent bilinguals, 33% of teachers hold masters degrees compared to 45% of teachers in schools with low number or no emergent bilinguals (DeCohen et al., 2005). Overrepresentation is defined as the identification and placement of students from a certain ethnicity in a special education program at a rate greater than the percentage the ethnicity is represented in the general student population (Meyer & Patton, 2001).

Data published by the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), at the national level, indicate Latinx students account for 11.8% of the population enrolled in special

education. The majority of these students were identified as having a specific learning disability (42.4%) or a speech or language impairment (21.9%). The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142), which is now known as Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act or IDEA, mandated that diagnoses of learning disability not be associated with cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantage, or being of limited English proficiency. In addition, IDEA also required the disaggregation of special education data by race/ethnicity (ERIC/OSEP, 2000). According to Blanchett (2006), special education has become the "new legalized form of structural segregation and racism" (p. 25). Likewise, Curtis, Miller, and Shippen (2009) proclaim:

> disproportional identification with a learning disability occurs among groups that are already socially disadvantaged – racial/ethnic minorities, language minorities and students of low socioeconomic status. Disproportionality raises concerns about the validity and reliability of the label learning disabled and/or suggests that placement in special education may function as a tool of discrimination. (p. 246)

Although special education is meant to allocate appropriate and essential services to students with learning deficiencies, in may also lead to stigmatization, segregation, diminished expectations, water-downed curriculum, and limited of postschool outcomes (Sullivan & Ball, 2013). All which may serve as a recipe for dropping out of school.

More Latinx students leave school before reaching eighth grade than any other ethnic group in the United States (Olatunji, 2005). Collins (2006) reported that many Latinx chose to drop out of school, rather than be labeled as academic failures, challenges, or Special Education students. This in line with Social Identity Theory which suggests the degree to which a person's self-concept is influenced by group membership is directly related to the "value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). A sense of belonging is significant in academic success for students and important in avoiding

school dropouts (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). Latinx and Black students are often viewed through a deficit lens with regards to their cultural background and abilities (Brown & Donnor, 2011; Dávila, 2015; Fletcher & Navarrete, 2011; Ford, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Zyngier (2012), using a mixed-method study, concluded that student teachers who hold deficit attitudes towards students of color may be incapable or subconsciously reluctant to affect change in the system and subsequently, in the lives of their students. Latinx students, by default, must develop a sense of social identity in the context of stigmatization and oppression. When individuals do not gain a positive social identity from a particular group membership, they will strive to leave the group and/or act to make their group more positively separate (Tajfel, 1981). Cabrera and Padilla (2004) found that it is critical for Latinx students to maintain the linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of their culture as they adapt to the values of the dominant culture. Furthermore, Walton and Cohen (2007) posited students connected with stigmatized groups, such as Latinx, may question whether they belong in school and consider dropping out. Lopez found over 70% of Hispanic dropouts stated the lack of support from their parents, poor English skills, and a disinterest in school led them to drop out (2009). Clewell, Puma, and McKay (2005) reviewed the mathematics and reading test scores of Latinx and Black fourth and sixth grade students who were taught by same-race teachers. The researchers found that Latinx students achieved higher test scores in math when taught by same race teachers when compared to teachers of a different ethnic/racial background.

In another study (qualitative phenomenological), Clayton-Molina (2015) interviewed eight Latinx high school dropouts, ages 18 to 24, that attended school in one of M Public School Districts (pseudonym) to determine contributing factors that led them to drop out of

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high school. Results indicated that Latinx students' decisions to drop out of school were: (1) the lack of involvement in school activities, (2) loss of interest, teenage pregnancy, (3) lack of parental support, (4) and non-inspiring/non-supportive teachers. This was some somewhat consistent with a nearly identical study conducted by (Azzam, 2007) that examined the views of diverse youth, ages 16–25, who had dropped out of high school. The study identified five major reasons for leaving school. "They were bored with school (47 %); missed too many days (43%); spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%); too much freedom and not enough rules in their lives (38%); and were failing (35%)" (Azzam, p. 91).

The Clayton-Molina (2005) and Azzam (2007) studies were consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's (2008) previously discussed ten significant markers of risk or reasons teens drop out of school. Although parental support has not been consistently mentioned as an early predicator of dropping out, Clayton-Molina's (2015) study supported the need for parents to be more engaged in students' academic performances. Establishing a connection between parents' educational abilities in the context of academic involvement may lead to strategies to improve parental performance with regards to school readiness. In addition, more strategies need to be implemented to help Latinx students integrate into schools. Finally, the majority of America's teachers are white. However, America's classrooms are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Clewell, Puma, and McKay's (2005) study support the need for schools to implement culturally relevant policies. Introducing culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education curriculum may be avenues to introduce multiethnic content into the classroom.

African American Students and the Phenomenon of Dropping Out

According to the 2016 United States Census Bureau, single mothers account for 80 % of single parent families with children under the age of 18. This is significant as single female-headed household are often limited to economic deprivation and impoverished neighborhoods. Statistically, black males who live in a single female-headed households have an increased chance of dropping out of school (Madyun & Lee, 2010; Pong & Ju, 2000). In addition, because many Black youth are raised in households branded as low socioeconomic status they have many obstacles to overcome. These obstacles include high rates of infant mortality, low life expectancy, less employment opportunities, greater chances of being labeled as mentally retarded or being placed in special education courses, decreased chances of being placed in advanced placement courses, and higher chances of school suspensions or expulsions, (Noguera, 2003a). Research has shown that, in general, low-income children of color show deficiencies in with regards to receptive language abilities and vocabulary due to economic hardship experienced by their families (Champion, Hyter, McCabe, & Bland-Stewart, 2003). "When Black children fail in school, so often there are no raised eyebrows, there is little outrage and there is no handwringing. It is expected and it is normal. Yet when especially poor black children do well in school, it is met with surprise" (Cabrera, 2013, p. 17).

In an effort to explore the potential role of preschool educators' implicit biases with regards to preschool expulsions, Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, and Shic (2016) conducted a study involving 135 teachers. The teachers were recruited at a large conference of early childhood educators and were shown videos of children in a classroom setting. Each

video had a Black boy and girl, and a White boy and girl. The video consisted of twelve 30-second clips displayed in semi randomized order. The teachers were told the following:

> We are interested in learning about how teachers detect challenging behavior in the classroom. Sometimes this involves seeing behavior before it becomes problematic. The video segments you are about to view are of preschoolers engaging in various activities. Some clips may or may not contain challenging behaviors. Your job is to press the enter key on the external keypad every time you see a behavior that could become a potential challenge. (p. 6)

The children in the videos were actors and exhibited no challenging behaviors. The teachers were seated facing a 15" laptop computer screen in front of a large blue tarp. Headphones were used to limit distractions. Using eye-tracking technology the researcher was able to track the trajectory of the teacher's gaze. "Gaze trajectories were recorded at a sampling rate of 60 Hz using a SensoMotoric Instruments (SMI) iView REDn device, with eye tracking data processed and analyzed using SMI BeGaze 3.5" (Gilliam et al., p. 7). The results of the study showed that 42% of the teachers identified Black boys as the students that needed the most attention. This was in comparison to 34% of White boys.

In part two of the study, a one-paragraph vignette was given to teachers to read describing a child disrupting a class (hitting, scratching, toy-throwing). Stereotypical Black and White names (DeShawn, Latoya, Jake, Emily) were assigned to children in the vignette. Teachers were asked to rate the severity of the behavior on a five-point scale ranging from one (not at all severe) to five (very severe). The findings from the study indicate that teachers appear to expect challenging behaviors from Black children, and specifically Black boys. Providing family background information resulted in lowered severity ratings when teacher and child race were the same. However, severity ratings increased when their race

were different. Findings also showed that white teachers have lower behavioral standards for

Black children, but Black teachers have relatively high standards for Black children.

Gilliam et al.'s (2016) study is unique and in that eye-tracking technology was used as an

instrument to enhance educational research. The implication of Gillam et al.'s, study is that

some teachers have implicit bias against Black boys as early as preschool. The goal of early

education programs is to prepare children for school. However, for Back boys, early

education programs may serve as the gateway to the school to prison pipeline. The harmful

effects of removing Black boys from school rather than engaging in more effective

disciplinary interventions needs to be brought to the forefront of educators. Ferguson (2001),

stated:

> There are serious long-term effects of being labeled a 'troublemaker' that substantially increases one's chances of ending up in jail. In the daily experience of being so named, regulated and surveyed, access to the full resources of the school are increasingly denied as the boys are isolated in non-academic spaces in school or banished to lounging at home or loitering in the streets…When removal from classroom life begins at an early age, it is even more devastating, as human possibilities are stunted at a crucial formative period of life. (p. 230)

Gilliam et al.'s (2016) study supported the need for teachers to become better educated with

regards to stereotypes and perceptions of Black boys that they may bring into the classroom.

To address the low achievement of Black males, Rashid (2013) identified seven markers of

quality education that should be addressed when assessing and supporting educators

involved in providing early childhood, preschool and early elementary education to young

Black boys:

- Teachers should display a willingness to take responsibility for the learning of all the young black boys in his or her classroom.

- They should hold high expectations for the success of young boys.

- Teachers should display a willingness and capacity to highlight the assets of young black boys.

- Teachers should recognize and demonstrate knowledge that warmth and control are dimensions of effective socialization for young black boys.

- They should be willing to engage in a proactive racial socialization of young black boys.

- Teachers should be willing to engage young black boys in early literacy activities that include individualization.

- Teachers should recognize and allow for the fact that high levels of vigorous activity are good for young black boys and rooted in their culture. (pp. 30–31)

Moving from early education, the Schott Foundation has been instrumental in efforts to gather, disaggregate and publish data pertaining to the high school graduation outcomes for black males. The Schott Foundation began reporting biennial data from 35 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia in 2004. According to the latest Schott Foundation 50-state Biennial Report (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015), 59% of Black male students graduated from high school in four years during the 2012–2013 school year. This was in comparison to 65% for Latino males and 80% for White males. The report also documented Black males experience a disproportionate number of school suspensions and expulsions. "Nationally, 15% of black males received out-of-school suspensions, compared to 7% of Latino males and 5% of white males. The average expulsion rate for Black males nationally was 0.61%, compared to 0.29% for Latino males and 0.21% for White males" (pp. 31–32). Moreover, Black students were more likely to be classified as students with disabilities. The report also noted that Black students lag behind in math and reading skills when compared to their White peers. "Nationally, 38% of White males scored at or above proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in

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reading, as did 17% of Latino males and 12% of Black males (p. 37). Furthermore, "13% of black males scored at or above proficient on the 2013 NAEP grade eight math assessment, as did 21% of Latino males and 45% of white males" (p. 38). Lastly, Black and Latino students continue to be underrepresented in Advanced Placement classes and in Gifted and Talented programming (Schott Foundation, 2015). Summarily, the Schott Foundation report illustrated the disparities Black male students face with regards to an inequitable public education system.

Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, and Papageorge (2018) reviewed the academic records (longitudinal administrative data) of 100,000 Black elementary school students who entered third grade in North Carolina Public Schools between 2001 and 2005. Specifically, the researchers matched their high school performance with whether or not they had at least one Black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade. The researchers sought to determine if having a Black teacher contributed to their academic success in later years. Researchers found that for low-income Black male student's the chances of dropping out were reduced by 39% and their expectations of going to college increased 29% when they were assigned at least one Black teacher. This study supported the findings of a similar study conducted more than a decade ago. Dee (2001) conducted a large-scale analysis of the effect of a teacher's ethnicity on student performance. Black teachers were paired with black children that were randomly selected. The results of the study showed Black students taught by Black teachers scores in math and reading increased by three to four percentage points when compared to being taught by White teachers. This coincides with perceptions of racial disparities found in a survey conducted by Anzalone Liszt Grove Research (ALGR) (2017). The survey, known as the "New Education Majority Poll," consisted of 600 black and

Latinx parents or family members involved in raising a child between the ages 5-18. The survey was conducted by telephone using bilingual professional interviewers in both English and Spanish. Researchers found that "parents and family members of color whose child's teachers are mostly white are more likely to believe schools are 'not really trying' to educate students of color than those with mostly black or mostly Latinx teachers" (p. 4).

The findings from Gershenson's et al. (2017) and Dee's (2001) studies are paralleled to the previously mentioned Clewell, Puma, and McKay (2005) study which involved the math and reading of Latinx students taught by the same race teachers. The impact of teachers that share unique cultural and racial dynamics of their students revealed that people that look like them are capable of achieving. This is important as research has shown that White teachers have often viewed Black students in a less than positive light when compared to White and Asian students (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). Gershenson's et al. and Dee's studies suggest that for Black students having same race teachers may reduce cultural incongruence which is often associated with negative perceptions, deficit thinking, implicit bias, and exclusionary discipline. Inequitable practices stemming from negative beliefs about students increase the likelihood that Black students will fall victim to the school-to-prison pipeline and become recipients of correctional education (Skiba, Arrendondo, & Williams, 2014).

Taking a different approach, Rolland (2011) interviewed three junior and three senior Black high school males attending a rural high school in Georgia. The purpose of the interview was to explore their perceptions of factors contributing to academic success. Each participant was asked 16 questions to include solutions and challenges they perceived essential for achieving academic success. The following factors were noted as influencing

student success: "(a) supportive parents, (b) caring teachers, (c) positive school environment, (d) peer support, and (e) community initiatives" (p. 1). In addition, such factors as "(a) lack of after school community activities, (b) negative stereotypes, (c) lack of self-initiative, (d) negative images, and (e) lack of belief in self " (p. 2) were challenges perceived by participants. Solutions to academic success were: "(a) self-motivation, (b) role-models, and (c) mentors" (p. 2). Rolland's qualitative study was consistent with Chun and Dickson's (2010) previously discussed cross-sectional correlational study. While Chun and Dickson utilized questionnaires and a larger number of participants, both studies had the common denominators of parental involvement and a sense of school belonging as factors that foster academic success.

Parents, educators, and community members need to work together to increase Black student's chances of achieving academic success in K-12 public schools. More will be said about this area in Chapter five related to the discussion of the findings regarding participants' stories. I have suggested ways for schools, parents, and community members to work together. The alternative, correctional education, should never become an option.

Correctional Education

> Education should never take a back seat. Prison does not have to be the end. Sometimes it is not where you have been but where you are going. Prison can become a dyslexic experience. Just because you are in the "State Pen" does not mean you cannot go to Penn State. (personal communication, October 3, 2012)

As a starting point, for the purposes of this research, the term "correctional education" is synonymous with the term "prison education." The U.S. Department of Education defined correctional education as "that part of the total correctional process that focuses on changing the behavior of offenders through planned learning experiences and

learning environments" (Tolbert, 2002. Correctional education seeks to develop or enhance

knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of incarcerated youth and adults. I find it impossible

to discuss correctional education without identifying its underlying ideological origins.

Contemporary approaches to Correctional Education are a simple reflection of ideas that

prevailed during the Age of Enlightenment (1700s to 1800s). "In its simplest sense the

Enlightenment was the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature,

which challenged existing conceptions rooted in traditional world views, dominated by

Christianity" (Hamilton, 1992, p. 23). In particular, during this period people begin to see a

paradigm shift in American penology. The concept of the correctional education was

founded within the religious framework of Quaker and Puritan ideology. Therefore, it was

necessary to examine the comingling of these two religious ideologies. In its simplest form,

Quakers believed that children were born innocent (pure), a clean slate until they commit

their first sin (Eden & Eden, 2017; Frost, 1973). Individuals who had been convicted of

wrong doing needed to be made to realize the error of their ways. In essence, they needed to

become penitent before they could be helped (Magnani, 2015). Penitence is viewed in this

project as the state of having regret for doing something wrong. In essence, monks sought

spiritual transformation through solitude and meditation. In this context, correctional

education can be viewed purely as a by-product of religious spiritual ideology. This

"spiritual mentality" formed the foundation of Quaker ideology and opened the gateway to a

shift away from imprisonment being strictly punitive. Hence, Quaker ideology viewed

Biblical Doctrine as the gateway to penitence. In other words, the Bible served as the first

form of curriculum and marked the foundation in which correctional education would begin

to emerge. Gehring (1995) explained, "The Bible served as a spelling book and grammar,

history and geography text, in addition to its religious purpose" (p. 52). The early prison education programs were often referred to as the "Sabbath School." Conceptually, the Bible served as a bridge of reformation that allowed inmates to repent for their sins. In contrast to Quaker ideology, Puritans believed that all men [people] were conceived in sin and born inherently evil (Lundskow, 2008; Shatzman, 2013). However, absolute truth could be obtained through religious study. Puritans believed the purpose of prison education was to change the heart of the inmate toward a more moral and value member of society. Adding to this viewpoint, Wolford (1989) proposed the purpose of correctional education could be classified into six main factors:

- provide inmates with basic academic and vocational skills;

- provide inmates with an opportunity to change their personal behaviors and values;

- reduce recidivism;

- provide passive control of inmate behavior;

- support the operational needs of the correctional institution; and

- provide institutional work assignments. (pp. 358–359)

Likewise, Messemer and Valentine (2004) resolved that correctional education serves three purposes: increase inmates' opportunities for employment upon release from prison by elevating their level of knowledge and skills; enhance inmates' capability to think more responsibly; and reduce the inmates' chances of returning to prison by being more suitable for employed and making better decisions.

By the 1870s, education became a major factor in the rehabilitative process. Zebulon Brockway, the superintendent of Elmira Reformatory established mandatory education

programs in order to "discipline the mind and fit it to receive....the thoughts and principles that constitute their possessors good citizen" (Marsh, 1973, p. 140). Elmira was a true representation of all institutions. Yet, it was not until the 1930s that education programs became a standard offering in most prisons. A quarter century later, many people entered prison with educational deficits. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), 70% of all incarcerated adults could not read at a fourth grade level. The percentage of inmates that graduated from high school at the time of their incarceration varied between approximately one-quarter and more than one-third for state inmates with higher rates for those housed in federal facilities (Travis et al., 2014). Basic correctional education programs have been improved in response to "mandatory education laws" which require inmates who fail to meet a required score on the Test of Adult Basic Education to participate in education while in prison. The Federal Bureau of Prisons established the first mandatory literacy program in 1982. The program started with the sixth grade as the literacy threshold and a mandatory enrollment period of 90 days. In 1986 the threshold was increased to the eighth grade. The 90-day enrollment period remained the same. In 1991, a high school diploma or its equivalent, the General Educational Development certificate or GED became the standard literacy requirement and the enrollment period was increased to 120 days. In addition, each facility was required to meet the following standards:

- All promotions in institution-based and prison industry jobs above the entry level were contingent on meeting the literacy standard.

- All institutions were required to employ a special education instructor to work with students with special needs.

- Instructional materials were multimedia and computer-based whenever possible to assist the instructors, particularly in drill and practice.

- Most important, each institution's education department was required to establish incentive programs to motivate and recognize student accomplishments. (McCollum, 1990)

The above standards remain a requirement today and have led to increased literacy proficiency among inmates. In 2016 the Department of Corrections reported over 400 inmates learned to read at an eighth-grade level. Over 600 received a basic education, and over 1,200 inmates were handed their GEDs.

Correctional Studies

There is a preponderance of literature exploring topics on correctional education. Studies of correctional education have incorporated analyses of Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) preparation and certification, college coursework, different forms of vocational training, and apprenticeship training. Based on research, the two greatest factors that dictate whether an individual will become a criminal are the deficit of education and a lack of employment opportunities (Davis et al., 2014; Steurer & Smith, 2003). Although there is significant evaluative research on correctional education, the majority of literature focuses on the impact of correctional education (post release) on recidivism. Unfortunately, there has not been a similarly intense focus on the impact of correctional education pre-release from prison. There is an absence of comprehensive studies that address any in-depth exploration of whether working marketable jobs inside prison spawns a greater appreciation for education.

Inmates who work in higher paying jobs must compete with each other for available jobs by submitting resumes and undergoing job interviews for available positions. The wages they earn reflect rankings provided by the Department of Labor's dictionary of occupation titles. So, as is in society, education often equated to better earning potential for

inmates inside the prison walls. The research on correctional education prior to an inmate's

release is not only limited in number and quality but in scope. In my opinion, this breach in

literature dictates the need for research that will serve as a catalyst for cultivating a mindset

that fosters an entirely new era of research. Marion (2002) noted, "a review of literature in

both adult education and corrections education has failed to produce scholarly peer-reviewed

research related to the experience of adult students in mandatory education programs in a

community corrections setting" (pp. 478–497). Very little is known about inmates'

perceptions of education and the influence it has on their lives while incarcerated. A number

of studies focus on the philosophical underpinnings of recidivism but few studies endeavor

to gain the perspective of the inmates that have utilized and benefited from education prior

to release from confinement. There is no doubt that empirical studies provide strong support

that educational achievement decreases recidivism.

> Research on the prison environment started in the early 1930s, with the work of Hans
> Reimer who voluntarily served three months in prison as a participant-observer in an
> effort to examine the prison environment. Since then a number of studies have been
> conducted trying to understand the prison environment. (Smith-Kea, 2009, p. 16)

However, since the 1930s, only a few studies have focused on the impact prison education

has during incarceration.

Harer (1994) conducted a study of inmates released from the Bureau of Prisons

(BOP) from January to June of 1987. Information was gained utilizing the Interstate

Identification Index (Triple-I) for 21 US states and by searching the FBI's National Criminal

Information Center (NCIC). The purpose of the study was to, "update our understanding of

recidivism among Federal prison releases by examining the association between pre-prison,

prison, and post-release characteristics and experience and recidivism rates" (p. 1). The

result of the study indicated recidivism rates were directly related to educational program participation while in prison. The more educational programs successfully completed the lower the recidivism rate. After reviewing 97 recidivism studies, Ryan and Mauldin (1994) concluded that education had a positive impact on recidivism. Harer's (1994) and Ryan and Mauldin's (1994) studies support the argument that inmates are less likely to recidivate if they participate in education programs. However, Ryan and Mauldin's study did not look at external variables, such as the capacity to gain employment, presence or absence of a family support, and several other factors which are linked to recidivism.

On a much larger scale, a more recent study by RAND Corporation (Davis et al., 2014), reviewed more than 30 years of previous research across 267 empirical studies. The overall analysis concluded that correctional education has a positive and statistically noteworthy effect on three areas that are key for reintegration into society: recidivism, post-release employment, and reading and math scores.

The implications of the RAND study is that more research is needed that explores the benefits of education for inmates during their incarceration. According to a report by the Sentencing Project (2017), 161,957 inmates are serving life sentences (as of 2016). In addition, 44,311 individuals are serving "virtual life" sentences (50 years or longer). More empirical studies are needed to explore what are the educational benefits for this segment of the prison population.

Taking a different approach, the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) officials worked with the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) and Pathfinders of Oregon in 2003 to develop the "Parenting Inside Out" (PIO) curriculum (Wison, 2016). The purpose of PIO is to teach inmates effective parenting skills. In addition, PIO was designed with the

intention of inmates promoting closer relationships with their children. The program has three objectives: 1) provide inmates with skills needed to parent during and upon release 2) improve family connections, and 3) reduce intergenerational criminality (Eddy, Martinez, & Burraston; 2013). Eddy et al. (2013) conducted a five-year study that tracked 359 PIO graduates one year after release. Inmates who were schedule for release within nine months and had children between three and eleven years were recruited for the study. Fifty-nine percent of participants were White, 13% Black, 11% multi-racial, 8% Native American, and 8% Latinx. All participants had some past or expected future parenting role. The actual study took place at four releasing institutions with minimum to medium security level. The researchers compared the program graduates to a control group that received little or no prison parenting education. The study examined PIO impact on recidivism, substance abuse, parental participation and attitude. The results of the study showed that female PIO graduates were 48% less likely than the control group to have been rearrested one year after release. However, male graduates were 27% less likely to have been rearrested. All graduates were 91% less likely than non-graduates to report having engaged in criminal behavior one year after release and 66% less likely to report substance abuse during the same period. The implication of the PIO study is that Correctional Education is moving beyond the traditional recidivism type studies that focused on post release employment. Parenting Inside Out provided incarcerated parents the opportunity to gain parenting skills while inside the prison. The program also set the stage for correctional institutions to implement policies that help inmates develop positive family relationships prior to release.

Policies that Affect Correctional Education

In 1965, Congress passed Title IV of the Higher Education Act permitting inmates to apply for Pell Grants to finance their college education. Title IV provided a significant source of higher education funding for prisoners, many of whom were eligible for federal need-based financial aid (Wright, 2001). However, in the 1980s, the War on Drugs led to enormous increases in the prison population which reduced the available funds for prison programs (Spangenberg, 2004). Pell grants for inmates ended in 1994 with the signing of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. This Act resulted in over 350 college programs shut down throughout the nation. Under this Act no person incarcerated in a state or federal correctional facility could receive a Pell Grant.

In 1998, Congress reestablished funding for correctional postsecondary education under the Incarcerated Youthful Offender (IYO) block grant initiative. The Incarcerated Youthful Offender Program was designed to provide postsecondary education and vocational training to inmates under the age of 25 who qualified for release or parole within five years (Erisman & Contardo, 2005).

The Department of Education under President Obama established the Second Chance Pell Pilot program in 2015. The program allows incarcerated individuals to receive Pell Grants to pursue educational opportunities while still in prison. The program is available to inmates at 141 state and federal correctional institutions and corporates 67 approved colleges and universities.

Post-Secondary Education

In general, Post-Secondary Education refers to education, vocational or academic, taken for college credit, that occurs after an inmate has received a GED or high school

diploma. The first-degree program for inmates occurred with 25 inmates from Menard State Prison (Illinois) in 1953. The inmates took courses at the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Illinois. In addition, Illinois offered two other degree programs that were funded by state aid and university grants. The first at Vienna State Prison and the second at Graham Correctional Center (Silva, 1994). In 1967 and 1968, the Office of Economic Opportunity funded five college programs in selected prisons in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Kentucky, New Mexico and Colorado. Known as *Project Newgate*, the objective of this initiative was to establish "as nearly as possible, a campus experience within the prison walls" (Silva, 1994, p. 26). Inmates were released from work assignments and occasionally provided with special living quarters and library facilities. In addition, the project had a post release component, which encouraged and financially supported inmates who started their degree program in prison and continued on the campus of the cooperating colleges. Lessened recidivism, achievement of stability, and realization of life were considered three primary measures of success (Silva, 1994).

In 2005, 640 prison facilities offered college courses in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) is a program of Bard College that offers college programs within a maximum-security prison in upstate New York State (Karpowitz, 2005). Bard College has provided free college courses to prisoners within a maximum-security prison in upstate New York since 1995 (Karpowitz, 2005). BPI enrolls nearly 300 incarcerated men and women across a full spectrum of academic disciplines, and offers over 60 courses each semester (Bard Prison Initiative, 2017). What follows are other colleges that are worth mentioning.

Similar to BPI, the Adams State University's Prison College Program offers several certificates, associates and bachelor's degrees, all of which are available through correspondence education. Each course costs approximately $500 and prisoners have 12 months to complete each. Currently certificates are available in paralegal studies and associates and bachelor's degrees are offered in business, business administration, English/liberal arts, history, interdisciplinary studies, political science, and sociology (Zoukis, 2017).

Upper Iowa University Self-Paced Degree Program is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The university offers a large number of certificates, associates and bachelor degrees. Many of their courses can be completed entirely through the mail. However, the courses cost just under of $1,000 each. Incarcerated students have six months to complete each course, but can request a free six-month extension if needed. Certificates are offered in management and psychology. Associates and bachelor's degrees are available in business, liberal arts, psychology, business administration, management, public administration, and social sciences (Zoukis, 2017).

Colorado State University's Distance Education Program is regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The university offers bachelor's degrees in social sciences and sociology. Each course cost approximately $500 and students have six months to complete each. While the offerings are not as extensive as Adams State University's, Colorado State University is a much-respected institution of higher education for prisoners (Zoukis, 2017)

Ohio University's Correctional Education Program is also a great provider of correspondence courses for prisoners. Regionally accredited by the North Central

Association of Colleges and Schools, Ohio University offers several associates and bachelor's degrees. Courses cost approximately $1,000 each and students have eight months to complete each (Zoukis, 2017).

California Coast University is not regionally accredited, which means that their courses might not transfer to other colleges and universities. The university offers a wide range of certificates, associates, bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees through the mail. Courses cost approximately $500 each (Zoukis, 2017).

Torre and Fine (2005) conducted a four-year study of a college prison program at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF). The BHCF is a maximum-security women's prison in New York State. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact that the BHCF's college program had on the prisoners, their children, the prison environment, recidivism rates, tax expenditures, and prisoners' post-release outcomes (Torre & Fine, 2005). The data were collected from 65 inmates enrolled in the program, 20 former participants of the program, nine adolescents whose mothers were program participants, two prison administrators and four correctional officers. The method of collection included participant observations, focus groups, and individual interviews; faculty surveys; and a quantitative analysis of recidivism rates (Torre & Fine, 2005). The evaluation results of BHCF's college program divulged that women who participated in BHCF's college program had a 7.7% rate of recidivism, compared to a 29.9% rate among those who did not participate in the program. Those who failed to participate in the college education at BHCF were usually back in custody within 36 months after their release. In addition they were four times more likely to return to custody; twice as likely to be rearrested for a new offense, and 18 times more likely to violate their parole (Torre & Fine, 2005). A survey conducted by an

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Indiana prison showed that prisoners enrolled in college classes committed 75% fewer

violations when compared to the average inmate (Taylor, 1994). In addition,

> participation in educational programs yields a positive influence on the
> psychological well-being of inmates, reduces rule infractions, and enrolled inmates
> serve as role models to other inmates. These positive influences also facilitate a
> culture of respect that allow prisoners to develop personal motivations for
> enrichment. (Tewksbury & Stengel as cited in Gendron & Cavan, 1990).

In spite of an abundance of research outlining numerous positive effects of correctional

education programs, a major argument against the funding of educational programs is the

excessive cost resulting from the programs. The following section provides existing

empirical literature that reflects the challenges related to employment opportunities due to

prison stigma.

Post-release Employment Opportunities and Prison Stigma

Upon release from incarceration former inmates face the problem of finding

employment due to their history of incarceration (Denney, Tewksbury, & Jones, 2014;

Murphy, Fuleihan, Richards, & Jones, 2011; Raskin, 2015; Skardhamar, 2014). A 2015

survey conducted by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights found that 76% of former

inmates said gaining employment after being released was difficult or nearly impossible.

Approximately two-thirds of the more than 1,000 respondents were unemployed or

underemployed five years after being released from prison. Career jobs are often out of

reach for former inmates due to the level of trust, skills, and credentials that are required

(Western, 2007). Giguere and Dundes (2002) surveyed 62 employers in the area of

Baltimore, Maryland to study employers' willingness to hire former inmates. Results

indicated 53% of the employers were willing to hire ex-offenders in theory, but they were

apprehensive in regards to their personalities and skills. Their highest concerns (82%

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reported) was that ex-offenders would not have the required people skills to perform the jobs they applied for (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). In addition, many employers believed that customers would feel uneasy if they had knowledge that an ex-offender was employed at their place of work (Giguere & Dundes). These studies may serve as an impetus for more inmate comprehensive services/training programs to address the discrimination and stigma associated with being a former inmate. A 2010 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) showed that a majority of employers (92%) conducted criminal records checks on some job candidates; while 73% conducted criminal records checks on all candidates. In 2004, the grassroots civil rights organization *All of Us or None*, advocated for implementation of Ban-the-Box policies in an effort to combat the stigma of having a criminal record. These laws prohibited employers from requiring applicants to check a box on a job application indicating they were criminal workers. To date, more than 150 cities and counties have implemented Ban-the-Box polices.

However, the Ban-the-Box policy is not without criticism. Agan and Starr (2016), sent fictitious job applications to 4,300 business locations in New Jersey and New York, both before and after each state adopted its ban-the-box law in 2015. The fictitious applicants (21–22 years old) were given first and last names to denote race—for example, Terrell Jackson for black men and Patrick Scott for white men. The resumes were identical with regards to educational backgrounds and employment experience. Callback rates decreased for Black applicants and increased for whites. The results suggest that, in the absence of the box, employers make hiring decision based on their perceptions of Black men associated with criminal behaviors. This study highlights the need for laws that protect former inmates against employment discrimination. In addition, it necessitates a need for

legislation that hold employers accountable for discriminatory hiring practices. In 2016, former President Obama launched the *Take the Fair Chance Pledge Initiative*, an informal commitment made by more than 100 companies to not discriminate against ex-offenders during the hiring process, in an effort to improve employment opportunities for former inmates. The following section presents policies that have affected correctional education over the years to ensure a way to continue the slavery tradition.

Prison Industries

Prison labor dates back to the days of slavery. "In 1865 the penal system was viewed as the paramount means of responding to crime, and the same is believed today. Consequently, overcrowded prison populations have historically plagued the American prison system and continue to be the greatest challenge facing the institution today" (O'Connor, 2014, p. 25). After the 1861–1865 Civil War, a system of "hiring out prisoners" was established as a way to continue the slavery tradition. Freed slaves were charged with failing to carry out their sharecropping obligations or thievery without evidence. Subsequently, they were hired out for manual labor (farming, mining, railroad). The farms were meant to discipline and reform prisoners through hard labor, after abolition the farms became a way to patrol the bodies of recently liberated blacks. Political and economic recovery became the number one priority of the South as it was being replaced by a capitalist mode of production. As the end of slavery left a void in the southern labor market, the White ruling class began a system of caste rule that would replace slavery and maintain the systematic oppression of blacks (Shelden, 1980). The practice of forcing prisoners to work outdoors on difficult tasks was officially declared legal with the passing of the Penal Servitude Act by Congress in the 1850s. Thus, the sharecropping system replaced slavery as

a "legal" way of controlling African-American labor. Jiler (2006) explained that due to the disappearance of local farming infrastructures, prison farms had vanished. Prior independent farms became prisons. In this environment agriculture was born in farm prisons and the American prison system became a self-sustaining institution.

A system of agricultural (and eventually industrial) "debt servitude" emerged and was sustained by such informal methods as vigilantism, intimidation, and Jim Crow laws (Weiss, 1987). In addition,

> When slavery was legally abolished, a new set of Laws called the Black Codes emerged to criminalize legal activity for African Americans. Through the enforcement of these laws, acts such as standing in one area of town or walking at night, for example, became the criminal acts of "loitering" or "breaking curfew," for which African Americans were imprisoned. As a result of Black Codes, the percentage of African Americans in prison grew exponentially, surpassing whites for the first time. (Brown, 2010, p. 43)

The Black codes ended with the passing of the 14th Amendment. The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States," to include former slaves. Moreover, the 14th Amendment also forbids states from denying any person "life, liberty or property, without due process of law" or to "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 2).

Despite the guarantees of the 14th Amendment, legal scholar Michelle Alexander writes that many of the achievements of the civil rights movement have been weakened by the mass incarceration of Black Americans in the war on drugs. The anti-drug war resulted in a wider definition of illegal drugs, more arrests, more prosecutions, and longer mandatory sentences for those convicted of selling or using drugs. Moreover, this increased the number of Latinx and Blacks in prison (Mauer, 1999).

Today people of color continue to be disproportionately incarcerated, policed, and sentenced to death at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts. Further, racial disparities in the criminal-justice system threaten communities of color—disenfranchising thousands by limiting voting rights and denying equal access to employment, housing, public benefits, and education to millions more. (Kerby, 2012, p. 1)

In the early decades of the nineteenth century two competing models of prison discipline emerged in the United States: The Pennsylvania system and the Auburn system. The Pennsylvania system focused on Quaker principles. Solitary was a key factor in the Pennsylvania system. Prisoners spent the entire day in their cells. This included eating alone and working alone. There was a belief that solitary confinement would encourage prisoners to look at their lives and study the Bible. In the second system (Auburn) inmates were assigned separate cells to sleep in, but ate and worked with others during the day. The Auburn Prison of New York opened in 1816 with a viewpoint of rehabilitating prisoners through communal work environments and solitary confinement instead of capital punishment and torture. Today, there are two prevailing school of thoughts on prison labor. The first views penal work programs as rehabilitative. The second views prison labor as an exploitation or simply an incarnation of slavery (Bosworth, 2004; Foucault, 1995; Gilligan, 2001; Rodriguez, 2011).

The 19th century saw the emergence of prison reform. The belief that punishment would deter criminals began to change towards a philosophy of training and education to reform criminal behavior. "The move toward real rehabilitation, however, came during the progressive era. Reformation efforts were in full swing again and the materialization of developments in the area of behavioral science propelled prison reform to the forefront of politics" (O'Connor, 2014, p. 23). In 1918, Congress authorized the Attorney General:

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[t]o establish, equip, maintain, and operate at the United States Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, a factory or factories for the manufacture of cotton fabrics to supply the requirements of the War and Navy Departments, the Shipping for mail sacks and for the manufacture of mail sacks and other similar mail carrying equipment for the use of the United States Government. (Coalition for Government Procurement v. Fed. Prison Industries)

Kansas followed in 1924 with the authorization for construction of a factory to manufacture "shoes, brooms and brushes" (Coalition for Government Procurement v. Fed. Prison Industries, 2004). In 1930, Congress passed legislation which expanded prison labor to all federal prisons. The Federal Prison Industries (FPI) was officially created in 1934 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 6917 (James, 2013). In response to an Act of Congress, the order was created to establish a government-owned corporation. The Federal Prison Industries (also known as UNICOR) began to operate on January 1st, 1935. Current businesses operated by the Federal Prison Industries were reported by UNICOR:

In fiscal year 2017, FPI operated in six business segments: Agribusiness, Clothing and Textiles, Electronics, Office Furniture, Recycling, and Services. FPI has agricultural, industrial and service operations at 59 factories and three farms located at 51 prison facilities as of September 30, 2017. (UNICOR, 2017, p. 28)

The research on prison industries is very limited (Iowa Governor's Task Force, 2001; Lahm, 2009; MacKenzie, 2006; Saylor & Gaes, 1997). Employment in prison industries, unlike vocational training programs, offers male offenders meaningful work and a chance to earn money to help provide for his family or cushion his transition back into the community (Richmond, 2014). Former Supreme Court Justice Warren E. Burger (1985) stated, "if we place these inmates in factories, making ball-point pens, hosiery, cases for watches, parts for automobiles, lawn mowers, computers, or other machinery…we will stand a better chance to release from prison persons able to secure gainful employment" (p. 755).

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Daniel Glaser's study on federal prisoners in 1964 was the first study that was conducted which explored correctional work programs and post-release outcomes (Richmond, 2009). Glaser tracked inmates for over five years after their release from prison and discovered that individuals who did not violate their parole were twice as likely to use the vocational skills learned in prison in their current employment. In a separate study, The Post-Release Employment Project (PREP), created in 1983 (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 1985), was formed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) correctional work programs. Data from PREP was released in 1991. The data consisted of post-release outcomes for over 7,000 inmates released from prison between 1983 and 1987. The participants were evaluated over a two-year period.

> The study found that those offenders who received training and work experience while in prison had fewer conduct problems and were less likely to be arrested the first year after release. The study also found that upon release prison workers were 24% more likely to obtain a full-time or day-labor job during this time. Moreover, by the end of the first year of release year, 10.1% of the comparison group inmates had been re-arrested or had their conditional release revoked, compared with 6.6% of the program participants. Further, 72% of the program participants found and maintained employment during this period, compared with just 63% of the comparison group inmates. (Atkinson & Rostad, 2003, p. 7)

In a similar study, the National Institute of Justice revealed that inmates who worked in open-market jobs under the Prison Industries Enhancement Certification Program were found to be more successful after release (Smith et al., 2006). Flanagan, Thornberry, Maguire and McGarrell (1988) compared 511 inmates who participated in prison industry work programs to 566 inmates who had not participated in industry work programs. The data for this research were drawn from a larger study examining the effectiveness of prison industry in New York. Inmates randomly selected for the study had been employed in the industry program for a minimum so six consecutive months during 1981–1982. There were

no significant differences between the two groups with regards to race, marital status, area of residence, employment, drug and alcohol use, offence type, prior arrests and time served. However, prison industry inmates did have lower educational levels, were serving longer sentences and were approximately one year older (on average) than the non-participants at the time of incarceration. The study determined that participation in industry positively affected inmates' conduct within the prison environment; they were less involved with altercations and misconduct. Flanagan et al.'s (1988) study was replicated in a similar study conducted by DeRosia in 1998 with a comparison of 30 New York educated inmates with occupations and social positions to 30 non-advantaged inmates in regard to their adjustment to prison life. Information about their prison experience was gathered through the use of detailed interviews. The study determined that advantaged offenders seldom became involved in misconduct and were often involved in positive institutional programs. The Post-Release Employment Project (PREP) and comparison with the Flanagan et al. study is significant because the findings suggested that working in prison industries may affect inmates cognitively by alleviating stressors associated with misconduct and providing them with meaningful employment. In addition, both prepare inmates to reenter society with real-life skills and viable work ethics.

Economic Impact of Prison Industries

Prisoner work has two direct economic benefits for the economy. First, prison industries are required to purchase materials from businesses outside the prison industries. This in turn creates a demand for services of workers within the community. For example (Reynolds, 1997, p. 1) identified several economic benefits:

- Prisoners involved in information services such as travel reservations, telemarketing and data entry need computers for their jobs.

- Those involved in manufacturing require sheet metal, cloth and other raw materials.

- Others involved in assembly jobs rely on manufactured goods such as electronic circuit boards, cables and cable harnesses.

Second, consumers want to buy goods that inmates are capable of producing. In addition, many Prison Industry jobs are directly transferable to the private sector. Examples include welding, soldering, printing, data entry, computer scanning and digitizing, furniture manufacture and refinishing, upholstery, metal fabrication, apparel manufacturing, and vehicle repair. Several of these programs are connected to a state certified vocational or apprenticeship program. In order to move past the entry level jobs, inmates are also required to complete their GED. Requiring such an achievement increases an inmate's employment chances which have a direct impact on the economy. Another important benefit of the FPI program is its ability to make available inmates wages that can be used to provide restitution to victims. The FPI program mandates that 50% of inmate wages be used to pay fines, victim restitution, and child support obligations, which has an economic impact on those affected by inmates' conduct (Chambliss, 2011). In addition, state or federal government gain low cost labor which can be contracted out to private companies. This in turn, will reduce their operating expenses and increase profits.

Types of Prison Industries

The organizational structures for the prison work force are numerous, but there were six traditionally established models, identified by Jackson in 1927, and these have not changed, however, several have been abolished. These included the following: the public

account system; the contract system and its variant; the piece-price system; the lease system; the state use system; and the works and ways system (Jackson).

The public accounts system. Under the "public-account" system, the prison carries on productive enterprise by purchasing materials and equipment. The warden oversees the manufacture, marketing, and sale of prison-made items.

> The public account system has been in operation from the very beginning of the prison system in this country. The industries that usually have been carried on under this system have been the production of twine, bags, boots and shoes, brooms, brushes, furniture, and other industries that do not require a heavy outlay for machinery. In Minnesota and Wisconsin it is used in manufacturing binding twine and farm machinery and has proved to be a great success. These products are sold in the open market. (Jackson, 1927, p. 225)

This systems currently remains in prison industries, giving inmates employment while incarcerated.

The contract system. A second form of prison labor was the contract system. In this system private businesses paid to use inmate labor. They provided raw materials and supervised the manufacturing process inside prison facilities. Contracts usually were awarded to the highest responsible bidder. The state received a fixed fee per prisoner per day. "The desire to increase profits for the prison and the private contractor often led to exploitation of the prisoners under this system" (Schmalleger & Smykla, 2004). This system ended due to corruption.

Piece-price system. A third system is the piece-price, which is basically a modification of the contract system. In this system the state directs the labor of the inmates, turning over a finished product to a contractor at a specified price per piece. As with the contract system, the state houses, feeds, clothes, and guards the prisoners. The difference between this system and the contract system is that the contractor no longer employs the

inmates but furnishes the raw material and pays the state so much for each product

produced.

>This system was used in Pennsylvania at the beginning of the nineteenth century and in New Jersey from 1789 to 1838 in connection with the public account system. But except for a few temporary trials it had its greatest development in the decades of the, eighties and nineties, when the agitation against the contract system broke out. (Sutherland & Cressey, 1992, p. 505)

>**Lease system**. Convict leasing began in 1865. Under this system, inmates are leased

to private contractors, who are then responsible for transportation, supervision, discipline,

and all other custodial concerns. By adopting the convict lease system, southern states were

able to create revenue. The majority of this revenue came at the expense of Black labor.

Mancini (1978) stated:

>Convict leasing, in fact, is best understood not as part of the history of prisons but as part of the elaborate social system of racial subordination which had previously been assured by the practice of slavery. That is, the lease system was a component of that larger web of law and custom which effectively insured the South's racial hierarchy. Seen in this light, the brutality of convict leasing fits clearly into a more comprehensive pattern of intimidation and violence, and it can be seen as an intrinsic part of that system rather than an aberration. (p. 339)

Out of the termination of convict leasing emerged the chain gang. Today, prison farms still

exist in Arizona, Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia,

Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio and other states where prisoners are required to labor

in agriculture, logging, quarrying and mining.

The state use system. This system is the most common form of prison industry.

Goods and services are produced by prison labor inside the institution and purchased

exclusively by state agencies and tax-supported institutions. According to Clear, Cole, and

Reisig (2016), one of the many advantages of the state use system is that it is not allowed to

compete with other labor pools in the open market. It allows state agencies the opportunity

to optimize purchasing power by buying a great variety of prison-produced products. In contrast, the state use system is not without fault. Many of the products produced within the system, such as —license plates, may not be skills needed beyond prison industries. for example—have no close equivalents outside, so skills that the inmates acquire in prison often do not transfer to outside industries.

Public works and ways system. This was a version of the state-use system. Under this system prisoners worked on maintaining on public construction and maintenance projects: filling potholes, repairing buildings, repairing public roadways, and repair bridges.

> This approach was introduced in the 1920s, when on public construction and maintenance projects. surfaced roads were needed. There has been renewed interest in this approach to prison labor because some state officials believe that the costs of some state goods and services can be vastly reduced if they are provided by people who are incarcerated. (Clear et al., 2017, p. 372).

Criticisms of Prison Industries

The number one criticism of Prison Industries is it undercuts private companies by lower operating costs and swaying laws to require federal agencies to use inmate-produced products. Although Prison Industries is not allowed to sell to the private sector, the law generally requires federal agencies to buy its products. Public employee groups object to prison labor jobs stating that it amounts to inmates' taking over jobs that once belonged to government workers. Another criticism is that forcing prisoners to work for less than minimum wage and in situations without the health and safety guidelines of their outside counterparts is akin to slavery.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of the literature. Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory are the theoretical frameworks of this study with Socio-political

Foundation for Forming Dropping-outs, Correctional Education, and Prison Industries as the foundational literature. Critical Race Theory continues to emerge as the backbone in the fight for social justice with regards to academic equality for Black, Latinx, and other students of color. Disparities continue to exist in the form of exclusionary punishment, teacher bias, and the overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students in remedial programs. Such practices are not conducive to keeping students in school and often contribute to African American and Latinx students' decisions to drop out. In contrast, research suggests that culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural curriculum positively affect the academic performance of students of color.

In this chapter, the review also explored the history of correctional education to include adult basic education (ABE), general educational development (GED), and postsecondary programs offered under correctional supervision. There is a lack of empirical research that explores former inmates perceptions of correctional education. This study attempted to address this limitation. In addition, prison industries within correctional facilities offer professional work experience to inmates. Research on its success focuses largely on post-release employment opportunities and recidivism outcomes. However, research is limited with regards to pre-release perceptions of working in prison industries. This study may offer insight into former inmates perceptions of employment within prison industries as well as post release employment expectations. The design of the study follows, the focus of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As I stated in Chapter 1, prisons are populated with individuals who have not

completed a high school diploma. Wagner and Rabuy (2016) described the number of

incarcerated individuals in America:

> The disparate systems of confinement in this country hold more than 2.3 million
> people in 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 942 juvenile correctional facilities,
> 3,283 local jails, and 79 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons,
> immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, and prisons in the U.S.
> territories. (p. 1)

These numbers increase the need to investigate factors that exist in the methods and criteria

associated with the high school retention for people of color. The problem also

acknowledges the critical importance of being able to explore how the phenomenon of

dropping out of school affects people of color. In chapter 1, I discussed reasons students

drop out of school. Other reasons cited for the school to prison pipeline included disparities

in punishment, education, and employment. Qualitative research was the most appropriate

approach for this study because it allowed me to hear former inmates' stories regarding

education and employment. Furthermore, inductive analysis, the methodology utilized

throughout this study, worked well with qualitative inquiry. Inductive analysis involves

"immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes,

and interrelationships" (Patton, 2015, p. 47).

Hence, this narrative case study, based in the constructivist paradigm, was two-fold.

First, a case study approach was used to explore the perceptions of and beliefs that underpin

former inmates' experiences regarding how they view the importance of earning a high

school diploma. Secondly, I wanted to explore how the dynamics of working in Prison

Industries were perceived by the inmates' conceptions about employment opportunities upon completion of their sentences. The units of analyses were the perceptions of inmates who had not completed a high school diploma and were participating in Midwest Correctional Facility's mandatory prison-based education program. According to Rubin and Babbie (2001), unit of analysis "are units that we initially describe for the ultimate purpose of aggregating their characteristics in order to describe some larger group or explain some abstract phenomenon" (p. 130). With the case study approach in mind, I used narrative to story their experiences drawing on their authentic voices using the constructivist paradigm that allowed former inmates to construct their own understanding of their lived experiences with perceptions of education before and after incarceration and prison industries.

Research Questions

With the aforementioned purposes in mind, the study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do former inmates perceive their education experiences?

   a. What were their perceptions of education prior to incarceration?

   b. What are their perceptions upon release from prison?

2. How do previous inmates perceive employability inside and outside the prison system?

   a. What are their perceptions of prison industries?

   b. How do they perceive opportunities for employment upon release from prison?

By using open ended questions, my goal was to encourage participants to provide personal experiences that may be outside or beyond those identified in close-ended questions.

The purpose of this chapter is to communicate the nature of the qualitative paradigm that guided the methodology of the study and determined how I interacted with participants to collect data, make interpretations, determine aspects of validity, and report on findings. In this chapter, I describe the research methodology and rationale for the proposed study; (2) explain the sample selection and participants; (3) describe the data sources; (4) explicate the data analysis process; and (5) delineate the limitations of the study, validity and reliability, as well as ethical considerations.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, broadly defined, refers to "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). The rationale for using a qualitative approach in this research was to explore and describe the perceptions of former inmates that worked in Prison Industries. A qualitative approach was appropriate to capture the opinions of former inmates regarding correctional education and employability upon their release from prison. Creswell (2007) posited,

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions on inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports details of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

The rationale for this qualitative study grew out of my desire to learn about former inmates of color and their experiences at Midwest Correctional Facility. This insight may in turn serve as a starting point for new research that may further support and expand the findings. Drawing on previous correctional studies, this study represented a move away from a focus on recidivism toward a new paradigm that studied the relationship between mandatory

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education and Prison Industries. Specifically, it served to fill a gap in the knowledge base regarding the experiences of inmates within the correctional system. Furthermore, there was essentially no information in the literature that I could find related to people of color working in Prison Industries. I found that it is not clear to what extent cultural values and beliefs are related to an inmate's perceptions of education. Therefore, my aim was to construct understanding and discover meaning that will be useful to public and correctional educators. By using an interpretative framework I hoped to gain a greater understanding of how inmates constructed their epistemological beliefs about education. Patton (2015) clarified, "interpretation means attaching significance to what was found offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world" (p. 570). In this inquiry, my plan was to explore the ties between inmate's stories using a subjective interpretation.

Case Study

Case study methodology, one of the first types of research to be used in the field of qualitative research, was the major technique for this study. "Much of what we know today about the empirical world has been produced by case study research, and many of the most treasured classics in each discipline are case studies" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 302). The case-study method was first introduced into social science by Frederic Le Play in 1829 in his studies of family budgets (Singh, 2015).

Yin (2014) asserted, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 16).

Thus, I selected a case study design because it involves detailed, in-depth data collection

from several sources (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Stake (2005) identified three types of case

study: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study.

- An intrinsic case study occurs when the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case.

- An instrumental case study occurs when we need to understand the case in order to understand the bigger research question at hand. The purpose of this case study is to understand something else by understanding it.

- A collective case study is the selection of multiple cases in an instrumental case study. The cases in a collective case study require coordination among them. (pp. 444–451)

In line with Stakes' point of view, this study utilized a collective case study design. I

elected to use this type of design because it fits within the parameters of a collective case

study and best represented the interests of the six participants. Collective case studies

"involves collecting and analysing data from several cases that can be distinguished from the

single case study that may have subunits or sub-cases embedded within" (Merriam, 2009,

p. 49). In addition, case-study research can mean single and multiple case studies. An

embedded case study with more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin, 2014) was used with six

purposefully selected participants. The units of analyses was a sample of four African

American and two Latino males from a population of former inmates at a Midwest

Correctional Facility.

> According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when:
> (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot
> manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover
> contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon
> under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and
> context. (p. 8)

I asked how and why questions and allowed participants to express their experiences drawing on their lived experiences, not my own. This study was particularly suitable for a case study design because it is a bounded system. This case study was bounded by the experiences of former inmates at a Midwest Correctional Facility, a mixture of phenomena connected to the context of prison life.

Further, Yin (2014) identified five central components of case study research: "a study's questions; its propositions, if any; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings" (p. 29). In addition, Yin (2014) suggested there are six probable sources of evidence for case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. This study included interviews, questionnaires, and documents to story the lives of former inmates. I explored and gained an understanding of these six cases that involved participants' beliefs, values, and perceptions about education through narrative and constructivist perspectives.

Narratology

The term "narrative" comes from the Greek word "narros", which means to know (Emihovich, 1995). Narratology evolved from the philosophy and theory of many critical theorists. However, inquiry as a method of analysis developed out of Russian formalists' study of fairy tales and Levi-Strauss's analysis of myths (Bal, 2004). "In structuralism, the defining characteristic of narration is not a feature of discourse or communication but rather a feature of what is narrated" (Kindt & Müller, 2003, p. 18). The study of narratology underwent changes in 1960s and 1970s when it emerged as a particular way of studying written narrative texts (Bal, 2004). Narrative research can be considered both a research

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method in itself but also the phenomenon under study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain this approach as:

> Inquiry into narrative. By this we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction, we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative." Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories by those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 2)

Narratology has its roots in constructivist theories in that it uses storytelling as a way of assigning meaning to a person or social group being studied. Narratology was chosen for this narratological case qualitative case study because I believe it is the best avenue to examine participants' beliefs and perceptions during and after confinement. My research is important because it represents a dialogue and perspectives of historically silenced dismissed, and disregarded individuals; giving people of color the opportunity to tell their own stories that may be counter to the dominant narrative heard about people of color. As a form of qualitative research methodology, narrative research has some advantages with regards to other qualitative research approaches. Narrative research can offer a holistic picture of a single individual or the lives of a small numbers of individuals with detailed information (Creswell, 2013, p. 73) and may make known information that is not easily recognized on the surface.

Harrison (2014) carried out a narrative inquiry study, using open-ended interviews and focus group procedures, to understand the experiences of 14 successful Black male students from a Southeast community college about factors that contributed to their college success. Open and axial coding was used to identify recurring themes of student organization membership, community service, advising, and mentorship engagement.

Intrinsic motivation and ethnicity were also emergent themes that had an impact on students'

college success. In a similar study, Watson (2014) conducted narrative inquiry to provide an

in-depth exploration of the perceptions of two students who graduated from an alternative

education program (AEP). Perceptions of the students were focused on what they attributed

as contributing reasons for their graduation from the program. The findings suggested time

management, focused attention, and balancing work and academic responsibilities were

skills participants were able to utilize in the AEP while attending community colleges.

Those same findings can be applied to participants in correctional education. The narratives

of the participants for this inquiry are open to interpretation and through the use of

constructivism can be reexamined over time. Creswell's (2013) remarks regarding what is

needed for a constructivist approach are aligned with the intent of the study. He noted:

> The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual's lives. (p. 24–25)

As a social constructivist by nature, I acknowledged my own lived experiences and

attempted to identify with the participants throughout the data collection and analysis

process with the intent to gain insight into their lived experiences. In general, growing up as

an African American male in America is difficult given the injustices and inequalities that

have been placed upon people of color and continue to plaque our communities. I believe

that the six participants constructed their meanings of the value they placed on education

through their interactions with others; hence, they socially constructed their perceptions

about education.

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Constructivism

As epistemology, constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). The view that knowledge is constructed from social context is a faucet of constructivism called social constructivism.

In this proposed study, I draw from both Piaget's cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky's social constructivism. Constructivism is fundamentally a philosophical viewpoint about how people learn. The view purports that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing events and reflecting on those experiences. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are two prominent tenets in the development of constructivist theories. Vygotsky considered social interaction a critical component to cognitive development. Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that humans cannot immediately understand and use information they are given. Instead, they must construct their own knowledge through experience. Primary assumptions of constructivism are:

- Reality is constructed by human interaction.

- Learning is perceived as an active process. Knowledge is not acquired but constructed.

- Phenomena can only be understood within the framework in which they are studied.

- Data derived from constructivist investigation has no special status but merely represent another construction to be considered in the move toward unanimity. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989)

A constructivist paradigm helped me to make meaning of inmates' experiences and realities regarding education. In this study, narratives formed using the data sources of questionnaires, documents, and interviews. Through indepth interviews participants were given a chance to tell their stories. Narratives supported the use of voice to produce "thick description" of the values, beliefs, aspirations, attitudes, and cultural milieu that may influence how former inmates constructed their views of the world.

Boekaerts and Minnaert (2006) conducted a study of 95 university sophomores in the Netherlands. The study was aimed at examining how levels of interest in the content material related to three psychological need states: perceived autonomy, competence and social relatedness. All three psychological needs varied over the course of the study, typically ebbing during the middle of a course but resurging nearer to the end. Boekaerts and Minnaert found that if a student felt satisfied in any two of the three psychological need areas that student had the tendency to translate satisfaction into an overall positive learning experience. A different study conducted by Kim (2005) investigated the effects of the Constructivist Learning Model on the academic achievement and self-concept among sixth grade students in Korea. The study sample consisted of 76 students distributed into two groups. The first group (experimental group) was taught using a constructivist approach, while the second group (control group) was taught using the traditional approach. The instruments used were as follows; mathematics tests administered by the teacher, two inventories, self-concept and learning strategies, and a classroom environment survey. The results yielded the following (Kim, 2005):

- Constructivist teaching is more effective than traditional teaching in terms of academic achievement.
- Constructivist teaching is not effective in relation to self-concept and learning strategy, but had some effect upon motivation, anxiety towards learning and self-monitoring.
- A constructivist environment was preferred to a traditional classroom. (p. 1)

The authors' findings can contribute to developing a constructivist approach to learning that can possibly be applied to correctional education participants as well as other groups.

The Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to be actively involved with the research process. I did not only act as an instrument of data collection and analysis, but also as the most interested person on understanding and making sense of phenomena. According to Patton (2002), the role of the researcher is "to understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence with regard to any conclusion offered" (p. 51). As the researcher, I developed a sense of trustworthiness of the research. Trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data dependability (Yin, 2014). In an effort to establish credibility I used multiple sources of data. Furthermore, having worked in a correctional facility, I realized the threat to creditability includes my own researcher bias. Researcher bias is when the researcher fails to preserve neutrality and so their beliefs affect the outcome of the study. To manage such bias, I engaged in reflexivity. Reflexivity is defined by Horsburgh (2003) as "active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation" (p. 308). As a researcher, I reflected on upon my personal beliefs, assumptions, research agenda, and other areas that impacted the outcome of the study. Miles

and Huberman (1994) emphasized four markers of a good qualitative researcher-as-instrument are (p. 38):

1. Some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study.

2. Strong conceptual interests.

3. A multidisciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or focus in a single discipline.

4. Good 'investigative skills,' including doggedness, the ability to draw people out, and the ability to ward off premature closure.

As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, I incorporated open-ended questions as a way to help eliminate research bias. My role as a researcher was "much more than a sponge that simply absorbs [absorbing] data" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 117). I worked to establish the trust of the participants and acknowledged that it was critical to develop rapport with them. Building rapport is a significant step to conducting effective interviews. I established rapport by introducing myself, briefly explaining the study, and explaining how the interview will be conducted. According to Kvale,

> The researcher determines the time, initiates the interview, decides the topic, poses the questions and critically follows up on the answers, and also closes the conversation.
>
> The research interview is not a dominance-free dialogue between equal partners.
>
> The interviewer's research project and knowledge interest set the agenda and rule the conversation. (2006, p. 484)

As a researcher I was also aware of the power I had as the interviewer. I listened intently and refrained from judgement. I was also careful not to interrupt the six participants as they relayed their stories.

The Design of the Study

Setting

The location for this proposed research was an important element and took place at a neutral site, a Midwest public library. I chose the Midwest public library because of its feasibility of location for the participants. Patton (2002) said,

> Firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting allows an inquirer to be open, discovery oriented and inductive because, by being on-site, the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations of the setting, whether those prior conceptualizations are from written documents or verbal reports (p. 262).

Thus, I believe the participants felt free to openly share and discuss their lived experiences. Meeting with them during face-to-face interviews the first time around, enabled me to share my experience wrongfully identified with a crime and escaping incarceration when the suspect was finally captured. "Understanding what people value and the meaning they attach to experiences from their own personal and cultural perspective are major inquiry arenas for qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 147). The sampling procedures and participants for the proposed study, within this unique setting, follow.

Sampling Procedures and Participants

The participants for this study were former inmates of a Midwest Correctional Facility who were selected based on their race, prison work history, and highest grade completed prior to incarceration. Participation in this proposed study was purely voluntary. Moreover, all participants had entered a Midwest Correctional Facility without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. All inmates had a home plan in a Midwest community. A recruitment flyer (see Appendix B), methodology of the study, and the purpose of the study were emailed to a Midwest Correctional Facility Director of Research.

After approval, the recruitment flyer was placed in all inmates' release paperwork. In addition, recruitment flyers were posted within a Midwest parole office.

Snowball and criterion sampling techniques were the primary purposeful sampling techniques used for this proposed study. Patton (2015) wrote:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry…Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding (p. 264).

Snowball sampling is a recruitment technique in which research participants are asked to assist researchers in identifying other potential subjects. The term "snowball" stems from the analogy of a snowball, which begins small, but becomes bigger and bigger as it rolls downhill. The snowball process allows the researcher to reach populations that are difficult to sample when using other sampling methods. The snowball sample of a Midwest Correctional Facility was open to inmates of any age. The study was initially open to a criterion sample of four black males and four Latino males, ages 18-24, but I found the age group too challenging to recruit. Additionally, it was difficult to recruit Latino males. At the point, where I was about to give up I was able to recruit two Mexican brothers. The second sampling technique used was criterion sampling to identify the most appropriate individuals from the snowball sample of participants.

Patton (2015) stated that criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined condition of importance. The criteria for the final sampling in this study was that the participant must be: (1) a high school dropout, (2) Black or Latino male, (3) of any age, and (4) worked in Prison Industries. The age range of the participants was 35–55. As Creswell (2013) stated, "it is essential that all participants have experience of the

phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling works when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 155). Each prospective participant was given a packet, including a description of the study and an informed consent form (see Appendix C). I verbally reviewed each section of the packet with participants and offered an opportunity for each to ask questions and receive clarification about the study.

Data Collection

Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers. The purpose is to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest (Patton, 2002). In addition, Merriam and Tisdale (2016) stated "In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. This factor is usually perceived as an advantage, because humans are both responsive and adaptive" (p. 187). Three modes of data collection was used for this study: (1) a questionnaire that requested demographic information; (2) documents related to education and training related certificates earned during incarceration, and (3) semi-structured interviews. This decision was made because " no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective on the program" (Patton, 2002, p. 306).

Likert questionnaire. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisting of demographic requests and 11 Likert scale items was completed by the six participants prior to their interviews. The demographic section asked for information regarding their race, ethnicity, and age. In addition, I asked for socio-demographic data, such as prison job and highest level of education achieved. I chose to use a Likert-like rating scale because this method is most appropriate for my study. Four choices was provided for every question or statement:

Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree. The choices signified the amount of

agreement or disagreement relevant to the question asked. In my opinion, the Likert scale is

easily understood and allows for a response other than a yes or no answer. It allowed the

participant to have a degree of opinion.

My intention was also to collect data through participant documents. For purposes

of this proposed study, a document is defined as any symbolic representation and meaning

that can be recorded and/or retrieved for study (Given, 2008). By using a combination of

questionnaires, documents, and interviews, I was able to use different data sources to

validate and cross-check findings.

Documents. According to Triad 3 (2016), there are three primary types of

documents:

Public Records: The official, ongoing records of an organization's activities.
Examples include student transcripts, mission statements, annual reports, policy
manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.

Personal Documents: First-person accounts of an individual's actions, experiences,
and beliefs. Examples include calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts,
duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers.

Physical Evidence: Physical objects found within the study setting (often called
artifacts). Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training
materials. (as cited in O'Leary, 2014)

Participants had the opportunity to submit their prison transcripts and certifications relevant

and applicable to the research questions. I looked for transcripts that provided a list of

subjects, the grades received, and the units each course is worth. A certificate is a

qualification that indicates that the participant has reached a standard of knowledge about a

specific vocational or professional subject. These were also possible documents the former

inmates could present. Vocational education can be offered in various trade industries,

including barbering, building maintenance, carpentry, electrical trades, painting, plumbing, food service/culinary arts, horticulture, custodial maintenance, upholstery, auto detailing, masonry, welding, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. Awards that the participants received in school or in college were also useful to the study. A rich source of information can be gained via documents and artifacts (Patton, 2002). One of the advantages of using documents in this proposed study is that they are a stable source of information. Furthermore, Dvora Yanow (2007) explains:

> Documents can provide background information prior to designing the research project, for example prior to conducting interviews. They may corroborate observational and interview data, or they may refute them, in which case the researcher is 'armed' with evidence that can be used to clarify, or perhaps, to challenge what is being told, a role that the observational data may also play (p. 411).

Through documents and interviews, I hoped to discover and explore the nature of what has transpired and helped former inmates become academically successful. Through listening to the stories of the participants as well as reviewing the documents, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of what their environment was like, as well as the characteristics that nurtured academic resiliency in their lives.

Interviews. From the social scientific perspective, interviews are a method of data collection that involves two or more people exchanging information through a series of questions and answers. Narratives were gathered from the inmates through the use of semi-structured interviews. Each interview was planned to be approximately 30 to 90 minutes in length. According to Patton (2002), an interview guide lists the questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of the interview. The interview guide provides topics or subjects areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will

elucidate and illuminate a particular subject. DeMarrais (2004) suggested three steps for the

qualitative researcher to follow when constructing an interview guide:

1. Short, clear questions lead to detailed responses from participants.
2. Questions that ask participants to recall specific events or experiences in detail encourage fuller narratives.
3. A few broad, open-ended questions work better than a long series of closed ended questions. (pp. 61–62)

The disadvantage to an informal type of interview is that it requires an interviewer with

strong interpersonal skills. Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder, with the

permission of the participant, and transcribed as soon as possible so that coding could begin

early in the process. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, "The digital recorder misses the

sights, smells, impressions, and extra remarks said before and after the interview" (p. 119).

The recordings were kept in a locked cabinet when not in use. I developed five interview

questions with the purpose of eliciting "a narrative" response. Open ended questions served

as a venue for inmates to tell their stories and give voice to their experiences. I designed the

questions with the research questions in mind to elicit information from interview

participant(s) relevant to topics aligned to research questions. The initial interviews were all

be face-to-face with follow-up interviews over the phone for clarifying information and

conducting member checking.

> The advantages of face-to-face interviews are: interviewers can probe fully for responses and clarify any ambiguities; more complicated and detailed questions can be asked; more information, of greater depth, can be obtained; inconsistencies and misinterpretations can be checked; there are no literacy requirements for respondents; and questions in structured schedules can be asked in a predetermined order, minimizing any question order bias. (Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005, p. 206)

I also believe face-to-face interviews allowed me to establish rapport with the participants

and therefore increase the chance of gaining information rich stories. The voices of the

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researched should be heard in their own words, and possession of narratives should be

shared between the interviewer and participants in an unrestricted manner (Grbich, 2007).

Patton (2015) asserted,

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe
> and to understand what we've observed. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and
> intentions. We cannot observe the behaviors that took place at some previous point
> in time. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other
> person's perspective. (p. 426)

I considered my interviewees to be elite individuals, well informed about their topic.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted,

> An elite interview is a specialized case of interviewing that focuses on a particular
> type of interviewee. Elite individuals are those considered to be influential,
> prominent, and/or well-informed people in an organization or community; they are
> selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research.
> (p. 113)

Participants for this proposed study worked in Prison Industries and were considered to be

experts in their jobs. Six types of questions (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016) were employed

during the interview process for this case study research: (1) experience/behavior, (2)

opinion/belief, (3) feeling, (4) knowledge, (5) sensory, and (6) background/demographic.

Through systematic noting and recording, I captured inmates' expressions and body

language as they told their stories. Based on a concern that some inmates may respond to the

research questions according to what they perceive I may want to hear; the research

questions were designed to enable inmates to "tell their stories." I selected open-ended

questions as a way to guide the interview towards being more descriptive. Semi-structured

interviews comprised some planning, but there is liberty to vary the course of the interview

based on the participants' responses. Unstructured interviews are the least unyielding, and

involve little to no preplanning. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Why did you drop out of school?

2. How would you describe your perception of education prior to incarceration?

3. How would you describe your perception of mandatory prison education?

4. How do you perceive employability inside the prison system?

   a. What is your perception of prison industries?

   b. How do you perceive your opportunities for employment upon release from prison?

5. What other factors, if any, have influenced your perception of education?

The interview process allowed each interview participant to tell their story without imposing my beliefs or interpretation.

Field Notes

According to Morse and Field (1995), "field notes are written accounts of the things a researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting or reflecting on the data obtained during a study" (p. 112). In keeping with Field and Morse, my field notes focused on participant appearance, mannerisms, and style of talking and acting within the course of the interview. Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997) recommended a list of what should be included in all fieldnotes:

1. Date, time, and place of observation
2. Specific facts, numbers, details of what happens at the site
3. Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, taste
4. Personal responses to the fact of recording fieldnotes
5. Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language
6. Questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation
7. Page numbers to help keep observations in order. (p. 73)

In keeping with Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein, my fieldnotes were descriptive and reflective regarding participants' mannerisms during the course of the interview. In organizing my

fieldnotes, I expected to see patterns and themes. My field notes were always kept on a password-protected file on my laptop computer in a locked office.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the most significant factors to consider when conducting qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined "analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 10). However, Creswell (2009) expanded on the definition by stating that, "data analysis is a process that involves making sense out of text and image data. The researcher moves deeper into understanding the data and making an interpretation of its wider meaning" (p. 183). In general, qualitative data analysis involves coding data and looking for themes and concepts. Data analysis involves "the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 202).

Analysis of Questionnaire

The Likert scale was developed by psychologist Rensist Likert in 1932. The object of the scale was to measure a respondent's opinion or attitude towards any given subject. Both Likert-type and Likert scale data have unique data analysis procedures. Statisticians have generally grouped data collected from these surveys into a hierarchy of four levels of measurement:

1. Nominal data: The weakest level of measurement representing categories without numerical representation.

2. Ordinal data: Data in which an ordering or ranking of responses is possible but no measure of distance is possible.

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3. Interval data: Generally integer data in which ordering and distance measurement are possible.

4. Ratio data: Data in which meaningful ordering, distance, decimals and fractions between variables are possible. (Allen & Seaman, 2007, p. 64)

To properly analyze Likert data, one must understand the measurement scale represented by each. The questionnaire for this study made use of the ordinal measurement scale. I used descriptive statistics to summarize the data. For example, Likert scale variables (strongly disagree, disagree, agree to strongly agree) are ordinal variables. Frequencies and proportions or percentages, medians, modes, inter-quartile ranges are several types of descriptive statistics that can be calculated for these types of variables (see questionnaire, Appendix A). The advantage of using a Likert Scale is that is one of the most universal methods for survey collection. The responses are straightforward and subjective to computation to mathematical analysis. Because it does not require the participant to provide a yes or no answer, it does require the participant to take a stand on a particular topic, but allows them to respond in a degree of agreement; this makes question answering easier on the participant. In addition, the responses presented allow for neutral or undecided feelings.

The Likert scale is not without its disadvantages. The Likert Scale is uni-dimensional and only gives 5-7 options of choice. The space between each choice is not an equidistant. Therefore, it fails to measure the true attitudes of participants. In other words, there is no way to ensure that participants view the difference between "agree" and "strongly agree" the same as they might view the difference between "agree" and "neutral." Trochim and Donnelly (2007) stated:

It is also possible to use a forced-choice response scale with an even number of responses and no middle neutral or undecided choice. In this situation, respondents

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are forced to decide whether they lean more toward the "agree" or "disagree" end of the scale for each item. (p. 137)

For this study, I used a 5-point scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

According to Patton (2002), qualitative data analysis involved "detailed, thick description; inquiry in depth; direct quotations capturing people's personal perspectives and experiences; case studies; and careful document review" (p. 40). Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis of the documents and responses from the semi-structured interview questions. An advantage of content analysis is that it is a more hands on approach than quantitative content analysis (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Krippendorf (2004) defined content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). Content analysis was carried out through descriptive and interpretive coding patterns. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note: "Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs" (p. 56).

Furthermore, Saldaña (2013) defined descriptive coding as coding that "assigns labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase…the basic topic of the passage…" (p. 262); subcoding is defined as "a second-order tag assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry" (p. 267). Nvivo analysis software was used to code, organize, and analyze the data. Some of the benefits of using analysis software include: managing large quantities of data, convenient coding and retrieving, and comprehensive and accurate text searches (Peace & Van Hoven, 2010). Content analysis helped me code or cluster the

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responses by grouping responses. The major themes identified from the responses are discussed as the findings of the study.

Narrative Analysis

Stories told by participants are the focus of narrative analysis. Socio-linguistic and socio-cultural represent the two descriptions of narrative analysis. Sociolinguistic refers to the study of the connection between language and society; it center on how language is used by the individual speaker and groups of speakers in its social setting (Wardhaugh, 2006). This study incorporated socio-cultural analysis as it provides a broader interpretative framework that people use to make sense of how they see the world (Grbich, 2013). Socio-cultural goes beyond the linguistic approach by incorporating cultural, ideological, and socialization in stories. Furthermore, historical, political, and cultural perspectives climates may be interweaved to way provide a better understanding of the dynamics of former inmates' stories. Making note of political, historical, and cultural perspectives is significant, as the conceptual frameworks that grounded this study included Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory. Through the use of storytelling, these forms of CRT offered a context for understanding the inequalities in education that affect Black, Latinx, and other students of color.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) viewed narrative inquiry from a three-dimensional approach that consisted of personal and social (Interaction); past, present, future (Continuity); and place (Situation). The personal and social (interaction) occur when the researcher analyzes the personal experiences of the person telling the story along with other individuals. Continuity or Temporality can best be described as the researcher looking at past and present actions of the storyteller when analyzing a story. In terms of place or

situation, the researcher looks for precise locations in the storyteller's setting that give meaning to the narrative. In other words, "Stories are told by someone, to someone else, at one or more points in time, and in a specific historical and cultural context" (Wells, 2014, p. 23).

As someone who grew up in the same or similar communities as the participants of this study, I found it important to combine the socio-cultural process (Grbich, 2013) with the three-dimensional approach described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This included looking at the temporal facet of community effects on the participants' perceptions of education. All of the participants grew up in low-income communities. Their stories represented the "place where the action occurs, where the characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 8). As a constructivist researcher, I wanted to go back in time and capture the evolution of their stories. In keeping with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative approach, I wanted to know what was connected to the history of their stories that gave them meaning. This is significant in that not all of the participants viewed their experiences from the same lens. The participants of this study were Black and Latino males. Although, their temporal and spatial community comparisons were similar, their school experiences were quite different. Therefore, I found it necessary to "explore the content and context of the story" (Grbich, 2013).

Grbich (2013), identified the process of socio-cultural process in the following steps:

- *Process Identify the boundaries of the narrative segments in the interview transcript.* These may be entire life stories or specific life episodes recorded in interactive talk or interviews Identify the boundaries of the narrative segments in the interview transcript. These may be entire life stories or specific life episodes

recorded in interactive talk or interviews Explore the content and context of the story.

- *Explore the content and context of the story*. How do people make sense of events? What emotions and feelings are displayed? Compare different peoples stories

- *Compare different people's stories*. Link stories to relevant political structures and cultural locations Link stories to relevant political structures and cultural locations Interpret stories being aware of your own positions and reactions and how these shape the final text Interpret stories being aware of your own positions and reactions and how these shape the final text.

- *Link Stories.* It is important to link the stories we hear as researchers to relevant political structures and cultural locations and our own opinions on these.

- *Interpret Stories.* This step reminds the researcher to be aware of other potential interpretations of the narrative beyond their own personal bias, position and reaction. How might these shape an understanding of the narrative? (p. xxx)

Furthermore, a three-dimensional approach allowed me to interject my own thoughts and feelings. As a Black man, I understand the trail and tribulations noted within the context of the participants' narratives. Their stories spoke to a variety of issues to include a lack of cultural relevant school curriculum. Therefore, it was important to pay attention to the "significance of place" in conjunction with the "socio-cultural" aspects of their stories. Additionally, responses to the Likert questionnaire and presentation of the transcripts helped to shape their stories and to thoroughly describe the details of inmates' educational experiences.

Within-case and Cross-case Analysis

Within-case and cross-case analyses are processes generic to case study research. The first process supported the construction of an analysis of each case; whereas, the second process focused on identifying common themes and patterns across the cases. As noted above the cases were constructed using the three-dimensional process of narrative analysis

combined with the socio-cultural process. This step constitute the within-case analysis related to former inmates' perceptions and beliefs regarding how they view the importance of earning a high school diploma. I also took note of their perceptions of the dynamics of working in Prison Industries and their thoughts about employment opportunities upon completion of their sentences. I searched for unique attributes, codes, patterns, and themes help me clearly understand each case. "Analysis of individual cases enables the researcher to understand those aspects of experience that occur not as individual 'units of meaning' but as part of the pattern formed by the confluence of meanings within individual accounts" (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003, p. 873). I also sought to do as Stake suggested to "understand both the commonality and differences across cases in the quintain" (Stake, 2006, p. 40). This entailed identifying similarities and differences across the individual cases through conducting cross-case analysis to acquire a deeper analysis of the former inmates' experiences. Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008) clarified the process:

> cross-case analysis enables case study researchers to delineate the combination of factors that may have contributed to the outcomes of the case, seek or construct an explanation as to why one case is different or the same as others, make sense of puzzling or unique findings, or further articulate the concepts, hypotheses, or theories discovered or constructed from the original case. (p. 1)

The cross-case analysis was employed to answer the research questions and will provide readers "a more holistic impression of what a certain experience is like in all it facets. A case description takes all the emerged themes into account and brings them together to provide an overview" (Boeije, 2010, p. 202).

Limitations — Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

There are several limitations to this qualitative project. Creswell (2003) defined limitations as "potential weaknesses of the study" (p. 110). As with prior studies involving

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inmates, the main limitation of this study was I could not guarantee the participants were completely honest. In other words, there was no way to control for truthfulness. In addition, participants have a variety of ideas, perceptions, and background knowledge when referring to prison. This prior knowledge may have affected the way participants viewed and responded to the interview questions. Another limitation was the limited existence of equivalent studies that would provide data for comparison. As discussed in Chapter 1, there has been relatively limited research in the area of Prison Industry programs in correctional facilities with inmates. An abundance of anecdotal articles and stories are available; however, quality research is lacking in this area. Furthermore, a possible limitation is my personal involvement in the setting. Having worked at a Correctional facility for a few years, I attempted to be fully conscious of any biases or influences that I brought to this study. I found that from time to time my biases would enter my analysis and talking to a critical friend, my dissertation advisor, helped to guard again these.

Despite these limitations, this proposed study has practical significance and may be of value to both civilian educators as well as correctional educators. Additionally, audio recording may have created anxiety for some participants which may have affected their responses and self-disclosure.

Validity and Reliability

To increase validity, reliability, and authentication, the participants were selected through snowball sampling. This in essence alleviated recruitment bias on the part of the researcher. In addition, other steps that were taken to avoid or reduce interviewer bias included dressing inconspicuously and appropriately for the environment, interviewing in a private setting, and maintaining an informal interview process (Connaway & Powell, 2010).

In broad terms, reliability refers to the extent in which research findings can be replicated. Denscombe (2002) emphasized that in social research two main questions need to be addressed when determining reliability: Are the data valid? Are the methods reliable? Validity in qualitative research refers to the degree to which observations actually measure or record what they claim to measure (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Some qualitative researchers dismiss the term validity and instead use trustworthiness, authenticity and quality (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). According to Patton (2015), "The trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of who is collecting and analyzing the data and their demonstrated competence" (p. 706). The following section will describe the validity concepts of the study.

Validity concepts. The following four research validity concepts are commonly accepted as evaluative principles for judging qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability.

Credibility. Guba and Lincoln (1985) define credibility as "the degree of confidence in the 'truth' that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subjects with which—and the context within which—the inquiry was carried out" (p. 290). Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1985) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that research results be examined according to three basic questions: (a) Do the conclusions make sense? (b) Do the conclusions adequately describe research participants' perspectives? and (c) Do conclusions authentically represent the phenomena under study? In terms of credibility, I used the technique of member checking after each interview. This allowed the participants to determine the accuracy of the interviews. Each participant was asked to verify or review his

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statements for accuracy and completeness. Despite having prior knowledge of the research topic, I was cautious to not divulge any preconceived ideas or bias on the topic.

Transferability. Transferability is defined as "the extent to which [an inquiry's] findings can be applied to other contexts or with other respondents" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 290). In keeping with Guba and Lincoln I enhanced transferability by doing a thorough job of describing assumptions, the research context, and processes that were central to the study.

Dependability. Dependability includes consistency, predictability, stability, accuracy, and ability to repeat the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). I kept a running account of the research process through my field notes. In qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), one of the methods mentioned in validating the accuracy of a researcher's findings is by the use of an external audit. An audit trail is simply a description of the research steps taken from the start of a research study to the development and reporting of findings.

Confirmability. Finally, confirmability is "the degree to which [an inquiry's] findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 290). After the study, I reviewed data collection and analysis procedures and made judgements concerning the potential for bias or distortion. The confirmability audit can be conducted in conjunction with the dependability audit. The auditor asks if the data and interpretations made by the inquirer are reinforced by material in the audit trail, are internally logical, and represent more than "figments of the [inquirer's] imagination" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243).

Triangulation and Crystallization

Methodological triangulation uses more than one technique to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents. The data sources utilized for this proposed study were questionnaires, official documents such as prison job certifications, academic transcripts, and individual interviews. According to Creswell (2009), "Triangulation is the process of examining evidence from different sources or data collection methods and using it to corroborate themes" (p. 191). Crystallization is an alternative to triangulation. Crystallization refers to the practice of "validating" results by using several methods of data collection and analysis (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2009). The term crystallization was created by Laurel Richardson as a means of analysis. The method, as detailed by Richardson, uses crystals as an analogy to describe crystallization. Richardson (2000) states: "Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose" (p. 934). Ellingson (2009), in keeping with Richardson, asserted that crystallization occurs through:

> The compilation not only of many details but also of different forms of representing, organizing, and analyzing those details. Strong themes or patterns supported by examples provide a wide-angle view of the setting or phenomenon; stories or poems highlight individual experiences, emotions, and expression; critiques shed light on relevant cultural assumptions and constructions; and so on…crystallization provides one effective approach to richly describing our findings to marking both overt and subtle manifestations of power in analytic, narrative/artistic, critical genres. (pp. 10–11)

I used documents, observation notes and interviews to understand the issue from different perspectives. The emergence of multiple data collection methods allowed meaning by way

of thick description. In addition, by combining multiple data sources my intentions were to protect against threats to validity. I also use crystallization of data sources and methods to decrease any significant influence of my own biases.

Ethical Considerations

As the primary researcher it is my ethical responsibility to protect the rights of the participants and to ensure that the research does not have any unacceptable negative impacts on them. Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is an administrative body within UMKC, established by appointment from the Provost of the University, to protect the rights and welfare of human participants in research who are recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of UMKC. The Belmont Report is a report created by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The 1979 Belmont Report (HHS Office for Human Research Protections, 2016) establishes three key ethical principles all proposals must adhere to:

- *Respect for Persons*: Every human being has the right to self-determination thus must be assured the opportunity to make informed decisions about participation in research projects. Those who are unable to make fully informed decisions by virtue of age, disability, or other circumstances of disadvantage that may limit self-determination are entitled to more stringent oversight of researchers' projects.

- *Beneficence*: Research should do no harm and be likely to provide benefits to both the individuals participating and broader sectors of society.

- *Justice*: Those most likely to benefit from the research should bear the burden of any potential risks involved in the research.

In keeping with the Belmont Report, individuals for this proposed were given a letter of informed consent. The informed consent letter discussed all known risks or benefits to

participation in the study. In addition, participants were advised that the study will be confidential, anonymous, and strictly voluntary. In research, a study can benefit the community, the individual participant, or both. Participants may receive information that can be useful in other areas of their life. Participation will give the six men a chance to give something back to society. Participants also have an opportunity to direct research into areas that they feel are most important. Given that the subjects are former inmates—a vulnerable population—the UMKC IRB had strict and careful guidelines for the research. Every precaution was undertaken to safeguard the participant's confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used to protect the names of the participants and the facility involved. All transcripts, field notes and tape-recorded data were coded to ensure the anonymity of the participants. This was conducted with the intent that it would promote trust between the researcher and the participants. All electronically stored files were password protected with data from the study are securely stored in a locked cabinet. Audio recorded information was erased following the analysis of the data. Information will be kept for a minimum of seven years following the collection of the data.

In this chapter, I described the approaches, methods, and procedures used to carry out this constructivist narrative case study. Based on intimate narratives that formed the cases, this study focused on the epistemological beliefs and perceptions of individuals who entered Midwest Correctional Facility without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and tells the stories of the six former inmates regarding how they viewed the importance of earning a high school diploma, their perceptions of working in Prison Industries, and conceptions about employment opportunities upon completion of their sentences.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There is no secret that racial disparities exit within prisons. According to research, Blacks and Latinos make up the majority of the prison population. The focus of this constructivist narratological case study was to explore the lived experiences of previous inmates at a Midwest Correctional Facility who entered prison without a high school diploma and worked in Prison Industries. The passion for conducting this research originated from my own experience with the state apparatus. However, my rationale for conducting this research stemmed from the need to address the gap in the literature that focuses on something other than recidivism. I chose a qualitative methodology for this research, because I needed to capture an all-inclusive, descriptive picture, of former inmates' educational experiences. Furthermore, as a social constructivist, I wanted to explore through case study and narratives how former inmates make meaning in relation to the interaction between their educational experiences and their perceptions of the value of education. I elected to use a collective case study design because it best represented the interests of the participants. A collective case study "involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases that can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or sub-cases embedded within" (Merriam, 2009, p. 49). Further, narratives of the former inmates were storied using multiple data of questionnaires, documents, and indepth interviews. Cases of each participant were presented through their narratives, bringing all the data together to tell their stories. The central questions that guided this study were:

- How do former inmates perceive their education experiences?

- How do previous inmates perceive employability inside and outside of prison?

Therefore, a constructivist (interpretive) narrative case study was the best approach to describe their perceptions of education before and after incarceration. The notion of stories is a significant feature of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The stories participants "lived by" were crucial to answering the research questions.

Due to the fact that I was familiar with many schools and neighborhoods mentioned in the case descriptions, I was able to easily establish rapport with the participants. In a short time, I gained the trust of each participant. In an effort to gain more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) prior to the interview that identified their race and ethnicity, prison job, and highest education obtained prior to incarceration. The questionnaire also included 11 questions using a 5-point Likert scale, where one represents strongly agree, and five represents strongly disagree. An interview guide was created with the goal of collecting "thick description" (Patton, 2002, p. 40) of each participant's story. The use of direct quotes, content and context provided thick description to capture the participants' experiences and to transport readers to the scene of the experience. When I reflect about the process, analyzing the questionnaire before conducting the interviews would have provided an opportunity to probe the participants more about their responses. For example, when Harry and Bruce strongly agree and agree that the material (curriculum and instruction) was relevant to their culture, I needed a better understanding of what was meant by their statements. While it was fairly easy to provide trust during the interview, I had a difficult time getting back in touch with some of the participants for a second interview, so that I could clarify responses to the questionnaire and the interview. Harry was one of the participants that I could not reach.

Each interview (30–90 minutes) was conducted at a Midwest community public library in a soundproof room that provided a certain level of comfort – ensuring participants of privacy and lessening the fear of being heard by others. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identity, as well as, locations in an effort to maintain anonymity. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed word for word. I planned to ask each participant to verify or review his interview transcript for accuracy and completeness through member checking. To prepare for this process, the interview data were transcribed within two days after each interview. However, any identifying information about the participants was omitted. Member checks (30 minutes) were performed with participants by phone to ensure accuracy of data which, in essence, helped to establish reliability. However, despite leaving several text messages and voicemails; I was only able to contact three of the six participants. Furthermore, participants were requested to provide prison transcripts and vocational certifications relevant and applicable to the research questions. However, only one participant provided a hard copy of his General Education Development (GED) for equivalency of the high school diploma. It is also worth noting that none of the participants received vocational certifications during their time in incarceration.

The Likert responses, questionnaires, academic transcripts, and individual interviews were intended to ensure crystallization of findings, as a form of validity. While each data source was analyzed separately, all forms of data were integrated to construct the cases. Despite having prior knowledge of the research topic relevant to this topic and acquiring additional knowledge through indepth study of the literature, I was cautious throughout this process to not divulge any preconceived ideas or bias on the topic. I begin a discussion of the findings by first examining the questionnaire data for all participants. The cases are

presented through narratives that incorporated the three-dimensional narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and the social cultural process of narrative analysis (Grbich, 2013). Finally, I answer the research questions by first discussing the cross-case analysis of common themes and sub-themes identified in participants' stories, followed by a discussion of each research question relevant to the cross-cases analysis. I conclude with a brief summary of the implications of the findings that are further explored in Chapter Five.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

As previously mentioned, participants were given a questionnaire to complete prior to the start of the interview. I wanted to assess each participant's opinion or attitude regarding their experiences before and after incarceration. The ordinal measurement scale required participants to take a stand on a particular topic or to understand areas for common agreement. I used descriptive statistics to summarize the data. The results of the survey (see Appendix A) are listed in Table 1.

Analysis of the data allowed me to collective measure the responses of participants as a group and to understand where they each stood individually. The lowest average resulting Likert score, with 1 being the highest and 4 the lowest (range was 1.3 to 3.3) on the survey was for question 4, which states: *I found the material relevant to my culture*. Harry and Bruce perceived this area as positive, while Carlos and Jesus, the two Mexican brothers strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively, Michael strongly disagreed, and John was

undecided. This finding supports the need for schools to incorporate culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education curriculum in the classroom. According to Lisa Delpit:

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Table 1

Likert Scale QuestionnaireStatistical Analysis of the Likert Scale Items:

Question	John	Carlos	Harry	Bruce	Michael	Jesus	Average
1	1	5	1	2	1	3	2.1
2	2	5	1	1	3	3	2.5
3	1	4	1	2	2	2	2.0
4	3	5	1	2	5	4	3.3
5	5	3	1	4	5	1	2.3
6	2	5	1	2	3	1	2.3
7	2	1	1	1	1	2	1.3
8	3	1	4	1	3	4	2.6
9	2	3	4	1	3	4	2.8
10	3	3	1	1	1	2	1.8
11	1	3	3	4	3	3	2.8

Note: Strongly Agree (1) Agree (2) Undecided (3) Disagree (4) Strongly Disagree (5)

In part, the problems we see exhibited in school by African-American children and children of other oppressed minorities can be traced to this lack of a curriculum in which they can find represented the intellectual achievements of people who look like themselves. Were that not the case, these children would not talk about doing well in school as 'acting white.' Our children of color need to see the brilliance of their legacy, too. (2006, p. 177)

The highest average score was question 7 (average of 1.3), which stated: *I value education.* The high Likert score was consistent across the data with four of the six participants strongly agreeing about the value of education and two agreed. While Michael strongly agreed about the value of education, one particular statement stands out from him: "I saw no one that made it. I saw no one that took these tools of school and got to

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something. Everybody in my neighborhood had the same type of living standards," The questionnaire also revealed that the majority (four of six) participants believed having an education would create better employment opportunities, as depicted in question 10 with an average rating of 1.8, two were undecided.

I began this research wanting to explore the lived experiences of former inmates who did not have a high school diploma before their incarceration and worked in Prison Industries. I was also able to glean from the data their perceptions of education prior to and after incarceration. The case descriptions of each participant follows. Their stories represented their lived experiences with the phenomena in their own words. The stories also give a sense of the congruency with data from the questionnaire relative to their past, present, and future perceptions about education. Where available, documents were also included.

Participants' Cases

As previously referenced, cases were develop and storied through participant interviews, Likert scale questionnaires, and documents. "Narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). I used the questionnaire to gain a snapshot of their perceptions of education. All participants were high school dropouts that were previously incarcerated at a Midwest Correctional Facility. Initially, I set out with the goal of interviewing four black and four Latino males, using the questionnaire to collect demographic data and measure their perceptions, and to analyze documents relevant to their educational experiences in schools and prison. However, this proved to be no easy task. A recruitment flyer for participation in this study was included in inmates' release paperwork from August to December 2018.

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However, no participants were gained through this process. In addition, flyers were placed

with the Parole Office. This resulted in one participant. The remaining participants were

identified with a snowball sampling, where participants are identified through the referral

process. I ended up with a participant sample of four African Americans and two Mexicans.

I later learned through the interview process that I offended them by calling them Latinos,

depicted in Carlos's story. The themes and supporting interpretative codes can be found in

the Cross-Case Analysis section of this chapter (see Table 2).

Case One: Harry

Harry enthusiastically sat down to talk with me in a soundproof glass room at a

Midwest Community Public Library. We sat opposite each other and I introduced myself.

He smiled and cordially greeted me. He was a Black man that stood about six feet with a

thin build. He then listened closely as I described the purpose of study and went over the

consent form. Once we began talking, I learned that Harry and I were the same age and grew

up in the same Midwest Community. Before describing his experiences related to education

before and after prison, we reminisced about how some of us (Black males) avoided jail and

made it out of poverty. Although the reminiscing was brief, it went a long way at putting

Harry at ease and establishing a rapport. The ability to create a rapport is often considered to

be one of the key ingredients needed for effective interviewing (Foucault, Aguilar, Cassell,

& Miller, 2008; Molden, 2011).

Harry has ten siblings and is the third youngest sibling. He was comfortable with

discussing the reasons he dropped out of school. Harry was raised by a single mother. "My

mom was both my mom and my dad," he said. *Family dynamics* was a major theme in

Harry's story, contextually explained as interrelationships between and among kinship

(related biologically) family members. Kinship generally implies a familial relationship, such as by blood or marriage; however, among African Americans and other people of color, fictive kinship is commonly used to describe others outside the family with whom individuals might have close ties with such as mentors, close friends, teachers, clergy or coaches (Alexakos, Jones, & Rodriguez, 2011).

For him, family dynamics were shaped by *raised by a single mother, family relationships,* and *physical abuse*. Harry described his mother's interactions with him, especially in supporting his school work. "She enjoyed sitting down watching us do our homework. She always made sure we did our homework." This description of help with homework was consistent with Harry's positive likert response: My parents/family members helped me with homework.

Another family dynamic may have been borderline *physical abuse*. "My mama was old school from the south. From me on down we got hit." Getting hit is often associated with the danger of physical abuse, stemming from a culture of spanking the child. I found it interesting that Harry connected "old school from the south" and getting hit" by his mother. Historical records from the south depicted the common practice of beating black slaves for any number of offenses (Logue, 1981). I wondered if being old school and from the south was connected to slave culture.

Harry described his neighborhood as predominately Black and poor. "We were poor and my mom got food stamps and assistance. I remember we did not have the proper nutrition, shoes, or clothing. No one in the neighborhood really had much." These conditions were aligned to the second theme to emerge in Harry's narrative as, *making ends meet,* interpreted in the analysis of indepth interviews as having just enough money to pay for

basic things needed to survive. Single mothers face many obstacles in making ends meet for their families. They are often the sole source of income, the sole primary care providers for families, and have fewer financial resources than two parent families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

I found in Harry's story instances of the *effects of poverty* due to *low income.* Low socioeconomic (SES) or income is defined by poverty guidelines established by the federal government according to the number of people in a household. For 2019, the poverty guideline for a household of four is 25, 750.00 (Poverty Guidelines, 2019). Living below certain income guidelines allow families to receiving food stamps and aid to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These families often report having problems with transportation, housing, medical care or food. Harry expressed his frustration with growing up in a low-income household and attributed dropping out of school with not having adequate clothing.

> One the biggest reasons I left school was clothing. I got my brother's hand-me-downs and clothes from secondhand stores. The first four kids got all the money. My older brothers played sports and got everything. They just took all the money and did not give us a chance.

His self-identity was connected to clothing. Further, Harry stated, "Clothing was a big deal for me. I was ashamed because I wanted to look good. I wanted to wear Nike and other name brand shoes and clothes." After a short pause, Harry said, "If people would reach back and into the community and donate shoes and clothing, I think it would make a big difference."

For Harry, wearing name brand clothing, was linked to the theme *school environment*, broadly characterized by its facilities, the curriculum and instruction of

classrooms, disciplinary policies and practices, and school-based health supports. *School environment* sets the stage for the external factors that affect students. Zais (2011) asserted that it means the extent to which school settings promote student safety health, which may involve elements of the physical plant, the academic environment, available physical, mental health supports and services, and the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures. *Social identity, sense of belonging, special education, diminished value of education, and disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior* certainly played a role in Harry's attachment to school.

Clothing represented a certain amount of aesthetic value that contributed to his concept of self *and social identity*. The development of identity is often negotiated through "complex interactions between race and class, gender and family status, region and generation, political and religious experiences" (Blanchett & Zion, 2011, p. 31) which influence the meanings individuals construct of the world around them. Harry did not perceive school as a place for him and his sense of belonging was compromised by not having name brand apparel like the "in crowd" kids. Matter of fact, he wanted to be part of the in crowd. According to Hatt (2012), "many poor students and students of color learn early on that school is not where they belong or worth investing in, so they begin to disengage" (p. 456).

Due to his difficulties with reading, Harry was placed in a Special Education class. Interestingly at young age, he felt that this was where he belonged.

> I was in *Special Ed* in grade school. It may have been the sixth or seventh grade. I also went to *Special Ed* in Junior High. I went to a couple of different schools. I would say that I belonged in *Special Ed*. I didn't really start understanding school until the eighth grade. That's when I really start reading. I was in a group home and that's when it all started. It was more people involved. Where you're in a group

home you have more monitors. Some of them will sit down with you and some of them don't. I try not to be hard on myself but I know I had every opportunity.

Special Education aligns to the theme of *School Environment*. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), *Special Education* is defined as: "Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2017). However, as a person that grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, *Special Education* was also a term used to describe teachers' efforts to deal with unruly kids. As I discussed in Chapter 2: The Literature Review, many teachers view Black and Latinx students through a deficit lens (Balanz et al., 2009; Doll et al., 2013; Morales & Trotman, 2004; Steinberg, 2014). As a result, Black and Latinx students are more likely to be placed in remedial reading classes, learning disabled or behavior disorder classrooms. Although, Harry's reading skills improved, he continued to struggle. In addition, as an adolescent, Harry recalled struggling with authority at home.

> The other thing, you know like when you are child, your parents teach you how to walk, talk, then when you get a certain age and your parents get on your nerve. They tell you to shut up, sit down, and be quiet. That is what I got caught up in.

Harry was beginning to view his *family dynamics* from a different viewpoint. He resisted the interactions with his mother and particularly did not want her telling him what to do or directing his life.

Harry described himself as a highly shy teenager. He conveyed that he felt overwhelmed when called upon by the teacher to solve problems at the blackboard.He believed his shyness was a detriment to his education, a *diminished view of education*, another contributing factor towards his decision to leave school. Harry shared that he decided to drop out of school in the tenth grade.

I started *skipping* school my ninth and tenth grade year. I did not feel like I belonged in school. It wasn't the teachers fault. I was ready to be out on my own. It was long after dropping out that I ended up in prison. Looking back, I wish I had stayed in school. I can tell you this on record and I can tell you this off record. A person who does not have his education, a high school diploma, or GED might as well consider themselves as having a felony. Because you are going to be treated with that same mentality.

Skipping school was suddenly an expression of *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior* which stemmed from not having a *sense of belonging* in school. Harry associated dropping out to the *school-to- prison pipeline* theme as revealed in *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior* and *diminished view of education*. Although, Harry did blame his teachers for his decision to leave school,

> Some research suggests that when African American males enter school their educational path is altered by situational variables. These situational variables include experiencing harsher discipline practices, being taught by unprepared teachers, being referred for special education, and a feeling of detachment from school. The combination of these factors within the education system have been purported to contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in prison. (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 2)

Dropping out appeared to be connected to academic success and *social identity*. Harry struggled academically, particularly with reading, in school with his lack of engagement in associated with social identity connected to his clothing. Moreover, the way he described his problems with reading may have been connected to anxiety regarding the fear of being ridicule.

> Although I was shy, I knew the answer. It's either going to throw your answer off or you take too long to do it. I wasn't afraid they were going to laugh at me. It had nothing to do with that. I lot of times I would be following in the book while the teacher was reading. When it got to me, when it was my turn, I would lose my place.

Contrary to his experiences with reading, Harry perceived that teachers cared about him as a student and that he was able to learn in school. Both of these elements were rated as highly agree in his questionnaire.

Four themes were prominent in Harry's story: *family dynamics, making ends meet, school environment*, and *school to prison pipeline*. His experiences in prison appeared to have changed his perception about education. A telling quote was, "I can tell you this on record and I can tell you this off record. A person who does not have his education, a high school diploma, or GED might as well consider themselves as having a felony. Because you are going to be treated with that same mentality. " When responding to the question -- I believe education will create better employment opportunities – Harry strongly agreed. In contrast to the other participants of this study, correctional education classes were not a requirement for Harry.

> It wasn't a requirement for me to participate in prison education. If they put you in the program, it's required. You either participate or lose all of your good time. When I got to prison, I tried to get my GED as soon as I got to prison. I went through tutoring and completed classes. I had exceeded and learned as much as I could learn. I didn't flunk out but I didn't pass either. I needed to score a fifty and scored in the thirties across the board.

Harry shared that he plans to retake the exam in the next few months. Lastly, Harry shared that he worked in Prison Industries.

> I worked with anything related to maintenance. If it was related to maintenance, we did it. There were two types of prison Industries. There was one where you could earn $1.05 an hour and another free you could make minimum wage. Either way it could be better. I think if they could monitor prison industries. They should work more with inmates that are 2-5 years out. Those ones that are really struggling.

Working in prison industry did not change his perception of education as reflected in his Likert response to the question: Prison Industries has changed my perception of education. He rated this question as disagree.

Since his incarceration and release from confinement, Harry declared a greater appreciation for education. "Now that I'm older I tend to look at education differently. I place a high value on education. As I mention earlier, you can't get anywhere in life without education." Harry's fears that he may return to criminal activity if he does not become educated. The current appreciation for education as viewed in his questionnaire responses indicated school to be valuable and a value of education. Both of these questions were rated as highly agree.

Case Two: Michael

Michael is a 35-year-old black male. He was neatly dressed in a black sweatshirt and black denim jeans. His demeanor was calm but serious. I could tell that Michael was very eager to talk with me. After discussing the purpose of the study and signing the consent forms. I quickly learned that we both grew up in similar neighborhoods in the Midwest. Although, we grew up in different times, it was obvious from his description that the neighborhood remained in a low socioeconomic status. Michael reported that growing up he placed a very low value on education. Michael explained,

> I saw no one that made it. I saw no one that took these tools of school and got to something. Everybody in my neighborhood had the same type of living standards. Everybody I knew had a couch with a coffee can for one leg or some bricks. I did not know anyone personally with a high school diploma except for my mother's boyfriend.

Influences within the community was the first theme in Michael's story, contextually explained as the external factors that pull students away from school. For Michael,

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Influences within the community were molded by the *diminished value of education.* Crowder and South (2003) found that neighborhood effects on dropping out among African Americans has increased over the past quarter century, perhaps tied to increasing concentration of poverty. Michael's *diminished value of education* was a by-product of exposure to disadvantaged neighborhoods. Michael stated, "I saw no one that took these tools of school and got to something." Children in poor communities face a number of challenges that may affect their perceptions of education, including the *lure of streets* associated with the theme *school- to- prison pipeline.*

> The lure of the street is compounded by peer pressure, and the need to be accepted by peers even if they have fallen prey to negative behaviors. Young people are very cognizant of the perceptions of their peers and being accepted by peers begins to be an overwhelming concern at the onset of adolescence. The peer group begins to shape their orientation toward achievement in high school; thus students begin to incorporate views from their peers about achievement and adapt their behaviors accordingly. (Caruthers & Friend, 2016, pp. 124–125)

Michael shared that he came from a large family and he was the seconded oldest of several siblings. He further relayed that his father was never in the picture. However, his mother described him as violently dangerous and a drunk.

> He broke my arm and leg when I was an infant. That was before I could even walk. From what I understand, he was a really nasty dude. With his disposition and my mother's depression, you never knew what came out. I see the depression that I have. I see it in my brothers and sisters too. It affected all of us. My little brother is in prison serving a long sentence. My little brother ran with some real street dudes. He was not a real street dude. He was dibbling and dabbling, trying to play hard. They committed a felony. Because he was with them, he got the time too. That's one of the biggest regrets of my life. I wasn't there. I was in jail myself.

Family dynamics was the second theme to emerge in Michael's story. As a recap, *family dynamics* is defined as interrelationships between and among individual family members. *Single mother, physical abuse, history of sibling dropouts, lack of positive male*

role model, and family relationships were all interpretative codes connected to *family*

dynamics for him. Michael stated, "My dad was never in the picture." In addition, Michael

shared that his mother had a boyfriend for several years that they referred to as "daddy." He

was also the father of some of his siblings. *Substance abuse* and *physical abuse* were both

interpretative codes that emerged under the theme *family dynamics*. Although, Michael

never knew his father, his mother described him a "violent drunk." As a retired navy

Veteran, I can personally attest to the fact that individuals react differently to alcohol. I

definitely have seen my share of "drunken sailors" that became violent after consuming too

much alcohol. Another code to emerge under *family dynamics* was lack of *positive male role*

model. Michael stated, "As children, we did not know any cousins, uncles, or aunties. My

mother had some distant brothers that we never saw." In addition, Michael recalls that his

mother's boyfriend was exceptionally smart but an alcoholic:

> When I was a little kid my mother's boyfriend would take us can hunting. We would
> go around to different dumpsters collecting aluminum cans. It was an adventure. I
> was a kid. He was an older guy. He never climbed inside the big green dumpsters
> behind the apartments. That is what us little kids were for. He would by us some
> "now-and-laters" candy and himself a bottle of whiskey. I did not know any different
> back then. However, I now realize that this was some low-class bullshit.

Michael referred to his mother's boyfriend activity of collecting aluminum cans to

support his alcohol habit as "low-class bullshit." Although this occurred years ago, Michael

now realizes that his mother's boyfriend did not represent a positive role model. According

to Kuang (2014), the lack of positive male role models can separate children from being

socialized into mainstream educational values. I also fine it noteworthy, that although the

sibling history of dropping out is linked to *family dynamics,* Michael's *diminished value of*

education, associated with the theme of *influences within the community* may have been

compounded by the phenomena of not seeing anyone in his family graduate. Michael stated, "My mother was a smart woman but she never graduated from high school. My brothers and sisters did not graduate. I did not have anyone that placed a value on education." The last subtheme to emerge under the theme *family dynamics* was *family relationships*. Michael reported that his mother suffered from severe depression, which may have contributed to the amount of school support she provided. Michael further stated,

> My mother wanted us to graduate. None of us graduated from high school. My mother also did not graduate. There was no real live push towards education. She wanted us to graduate but she did not push it that hard. We got punishment for getting kicked out of school. She disciplined us for those things. Now, looking back, I don't know if she really believed in education. My mother had severe depression. She was smart. She wasn't retarded or stupid because she handled her business. However, I don't think my mother believed she could be anything in this world. I don't think she had much faith in that. My mother did not do drugs or drink alcohol. She smoked Benson & Hedges cigarettes. I think depression was the thing that defined her. I would classify my upbringing as dark. It really was not much hope in it. It wasn't all bad. My mom would cook a full course meal every day. We got a Sunday meal every day.

According to Vanessa Harbin and Goldhagen (2013), "researchers have identified again and again: low-income parents, especially single mothers, have higher rates of depression and depressive symptoms than their higher-income counterparts" (p. 1). Michael shared that his mother did not work and that they received "food stamps and all that type of stuff." The fact that Michael's mother received government assistance is aligned to the theme of *making ends meet*. Although Harry and Michael shared the theme of *making ends meet*, nutrition was not a concern for Michael. Michael said, "My mom would cook a full course meal every day. We got a Sunday meal every day."

As the conversation continued, Michael made a noteworthy comment regarding public education and teachers; at this point, the fourth theme of *school environment* was

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identified. *Negative school climate*, *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior*, *sense of belonging*, played a role Michael's decision to leave school. As an interpretative code, negative school climate is a multilayered concept that involves several factors to include the lack of a supportive academic and cultural relevant learning environment. School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. (Cohen, McCage, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 180). Michael stated,

> I can't say that the regular school structure is the best. The schools need something besides just academics. If they want academics to stick they need to take the time to figure out what else is going on in a kid's life which will let them absorb everything.

As we continue our conversation, Michael shared that he was discouraged in school and believes he may have attention deficit disorder. Michael admitted that he had difficulty maintaining focus in school. He further stated,

> Teachers did not teach on an individual bases. They had a curriculum that they taught the masses. Somebody gets left out. Somebody may not understand. Somebody may not be able to do what they need to do based on the information given because they have ADD or some other type of problem. Some of us have different wavelengths. It is not stupidity. We have different signals and need a different approach.

Clearly, the one-size-fits all teaching approach created a negative school climate for Michael. Although, Michael strongly agreed in his Likert response that he was able to learn in school, he strongly disagreed that the school material was relevant to his culture. Michael was very expressive when speaking about the *school environment*. In some ways, his statement aligned with my own view regarding the "one size fits all" mentality that some schools embraced. The importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, 2009), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002, 2010), and multicultural education

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(Banks, 2007; Banks & Banks, 2004) have been embraced as approaches to combat the exclusionary curriculum that fails to recognize the culture of African American, Latinx, and other students of color.

Michael remembered being *suspended or expelled* from school on several occasion for fighting talking back to the teacher or being disruptive in class. He shared that he was never bullied in school. "I would have been the bully. They would mess with other people before they would mess with me. I wasn't the toughest but they knew that I would fight." In contrast to Harry, Michael never reported that he skipped school. However, for the purpose of these narrative case studies, skipping school falls within the interpretative code of *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior.* Skipping school, connected to a sense of belonging and engagement with schooling, is often a behavior students developed by the end of ninth grade (Schargel & Smink, 2013; Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Most of the Michael's sentiments regarding his middle school and high school teachers were positive. He credited a few of his elementary school teachers with going beyond and above. "They would pull up at your house and bring food. Some teachers would bring a washrag and soap to school and wash kids' faces." Surprisingly, he was undecided when responding to the statement: The teacher cared about me as a student.

Michael shared that he had very few teachers of color throughout middle school and high school. He stated, "as a kid I was a little leary of White people. His perceptions of white people was likely due to *racial attitudes* within the broader community. I was kind of leary of them because of things I had seen and heard." He described one experience:

> When I was a little boy I was going over my friend's house. I was walking up a hill. Some grown people started going 'ummm nigga, nigga, nigga. I was eight, nine, or ten. They chased me. I was quick though. I jumped over a big wooden fence. I didn't

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know that there were pitbulls and a chow behind the fence. When I jumped back over, the White men were waiting for me. They had bats and motorcycle chains wrapped with tape. They were going to get me. Just when they were about to get me a White man in a van pulled up with a gun and ordered them to get back. I had mixed feelings. As a youngster, I did not trust white people. After that, it was easier for me to trust a black teacher.

Michael was the first participant to speak of racial issues he faced growing up. His encounter with the group of White men, speaks to the racial divide that was very prevalent throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Although Michael gravitated towards Black teachers, he made it clear that there were no middle school or high school teachers that were an obstacle to his success in school. "I made it to the ninth grade. I barely ever had homework. The work was never hard. I just never did it." He went on to describe himself as "precocious."

> When asked if he believe teachers made an effort to keep him in school, Michael said, At first they tried. Looking back, in hindsight, teachers are human. The teachers would tell me that my life was going to get hard if I did not buckle down. Eventually, they gave up on me. They gave up on trying to discipline me in the correct way. I was always on point whenever they did call on me. They knew I had a lot of potential but gave up on me because of my character.

The last theme to emerge in Michael's story was *school-to-prison pipeline* which may begin with dropout phenomena eventually leading to jail confinement or incarceration.

> The risk of incarceration (jails, prisons, juvenile detention centers) for male dropouts is significant. In 2007, male dropouts aged 16–24 were 6.3 times more likely to be institutionalized than high school graduates and when compared with those with a bachelor degree or higher, their risk skyrocketed to 63 times more likely, according to the Center for Labor Market Studies. (2009, cited in APA, 2012, p. 7)

As the narrative continued, Michael shared that he was 18 or 19 when he first went to prison. He was incarcerated for several years. Michael verified that education was a requirement in prison. However, he referred to both public education and correctional education as "dead structures." He elaborated by saying:

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If the ultimate point of going to school is to prepare you for the job market or whatever. Then I call them dead structures in 2019. If you are trying to make a living and get to the big bread. It really only requires that you know how to work out an ideal. These school structures are not necessary to make finances in the world. The difference between prison schools and schools out here is that schools in the real world are more for real at trying to prepare you. Although, I think the public schools were somewhat outdated. They did try. Public schools taught to the masses. Some of us learn different. Prison schools, from my experience, just went through the motions. Prison schools had a certain thug element. I remember a teacher that wore a big-ole tall hat. He would pack the hat with cigarettes and tobacco. He was hoping that he could go have a sexual act with one of us in exchange for the cigarettes. He was a predator masquerading under the light of some type of schoolteacher. I also remember having a White teacher with a big booty. Sometimes, all we would do was sit in class and talk about her big-ole booty. She would engage with us in this conservation, which had no relevance to education.

While in prison, Michael worked in prison industries. However, his prison job will be withheld to help maintain confidentiality. Michael shared his thoughts concerning post prison employment. "I don't think prison prepares you for employment after you release. Sure, they have someone who will help with resumes. They need to ask inmates what they want to do when they are released. They need to tailor counseling to that." Despite his experiences with prison education, Michael was very enthusiastic about his future.

I have written two children's books. I am trying to get a grant so that I can get them published. My character is a seven -year-old hearing-impaired girl named Sara Giggle-Smiles. She has a dog-named Frito. Frito chips are her favorite food so naturally she named her dog Frito.

Michael shared that his plans include enrolling in an entrepreneur course. "I think working is for losers. I really do. I kind of cringe inside when I hear people say, 'I have a good job.' There is no fucking thing as a good job. I want to be my own boss." Although, Michael's response on the Likert questionnaire indicated he strongly agreed that education would create better opportunities, his response was neutral with the need of education to get a job.

Case Three: John

John is 39 years old. Upon meeting at a public library, I noticed that he was dressed in black pants, black boots, and a black hoodie. In the Midwest public library soundproof meeting room, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study. I began the research process by having John review and sign the consent forms. A short time into telling his story, John removed the hoodie hood and seemed to be generally relaxed. John began telling his story saying, "My mother was a crack addict" which led to my interpretation of *family dynamics* and the apparent *substance abuse*. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), defines substance abuse as:

> A maladaptive pattern of substance use manifested by recurrent and significant adverse consequences related to the repeated use of substances. A related diagnosis is substance dependence, defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress. (p. 483)

Noteworthy here is the temporality and situation of John's story. He grew up during the peak of the crack epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s. Many families were destroyed by drugs due to the financial burdens placed on families and fictive kinship arrangements often helped them survive (Adler, Adler, & O'Brien, 2012). Growing up as an adolescent in the 1980s, there was always this rumor that the government flooded Black communities with crack cocaine in an effort to kill or incarcerate us. Civil right activists often wrote about this conspiracy theory (CIA Linked to Crack Cocaine Epidemic, n.d.)

Although his mother was a drug addict, she attempted to help him with his homework. In essence, some level of *family relationships* was part of the *family dynamics* for John. When responding to the statement related to homework assistance from parents or

others, John strongly agreed. However, his mother's involvement was not enough to keep him in school. He shared:

> I had homework but most of the time I would not bring it home. I did not go to school half the time. I wanted to be in the streets. My home life played no part in his decision to drop out of school. The streets were the main thing that pulled me out of school.

Additionally, the *physical abuse* of *family dynamics* was viewed in the interactions with his father. "My dad was in the military and always gone. When he was in town, he tried to handle any situation that need handling. When he came home, he whooped tail, especially if I wasn't in school." For John, *family dynamics* were also shaped by the elements of *single mother, family relationships, and lack of positive male role models.* John shared that his mother's drug addiction affected the entire *family dynamics*. He recalled that his grandmother was the family's primary source of support. John spoke affectionately of his grandmother and stated: "My grandma was the only one who looked out for me. When she goes, I want to go with her. My grandmother was the one who kept the family together. She provided for everyone's needs." I found it blatantly clear that John's grandmother represented a strong *relationship* within the *kinship family.* Various reasons contribute to the phenomena of grandmothers stepping in to provide social and emotional support to families that in many instances may include substance abuse by parents or the absence of supportive fathers. As John described early in his story, his military father was often absent from the home. John stated,

> I believe if my father was home things might have turned out different. Because my mother was on drugs that led me to doing anything, I could to try to get her attention. I always had to fight for my mother's attention.

John's relationship with his mother was strained because of her *substance abuse.* As a youth, he did not place a high value on education, related to *diminished value of education* as expressed in the theme *School environment.* In high school, John said, "I did not put any value on education." However, today, he places great emphasis on the value of education as indicated by his Likert response to question seven. He agreed that school was valuable but was neutral regarding cultural relevancy of school material. "Instilling a positive learning environment entails getting to know students and inserting their backgrounds and interests in the school's curriculum which communicates to students that adults have their best interests at heart" (Caruthers & Friend, 2016, p. 111).

Similar, to the other participants in the study, John reported a *lack of positive male role models* which emerged in the themes of *family dynamics* and *influences within the community,* fueled by *gangs, substance abuse, and criminal ctivity.* Each represented an external factor that pulled John away from school. These themes and sub-themes are apparent in details related to his older brother's decision to sell drugs and other criminal activity for financial gain. John's brother was not a positive role model for him. He shared that his brother was a contributing factor in his decision to leave school. "I had an older brother but he was part of the reason I dropped out of school. I was seeing how he was living in the streets, gang banging, and selling drugs. I just followed his example and dropped out of school in the tenth grade." In contrast to the other participants, John's sibling and mother were connected to drugs either as a seller or user. This was the first case of a Mother and son both involved in substance abuse. Gang affiliation provides economically disadvantaged youth a sense of belonging, protection, and immediate access to gold jewelry, cash, and expensive sports clothing (Bloods, 2008).

John also conveyed interesting experiences with school. In middle school, John was assigned to what he labelled as a "special community class." He added, "It wasn't a special education class but a class for bad kids. We got more time to complete the homework." Although, John considered his class "a special community," I interpreted this class as likely to be behavior disorder which falls under the subtheme of *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior* for *school environment*. I find it interesting that John referred to this school-related assignments as the class for "bad kids." As someone who attended school in the 1980s and 90s, I recall the stigma associated with the alternative schooling arrangements within the school, especially for students who did not fit in. I make this point for two reasons. The first, John was fighting for attention at home. Second, John was given the label of "bad kid" at school. School labeling practices often operate as a part of a hidden curriculum to marginalize children of color (Ferguson, 2001). John also conversed about being a loner and often skipping school, another form of *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior*.

Both John and Michael attributed their decisions to leave school to "external factors." As discussed in the literature, external factors weaken and distract from the importance of school completion (Doll et al., 2013). In other words, *influences within the community,* such as *gangs*, *substance abuse*, and *criminal activity* contribute to disengagement with schooling and eventually segue to the *school-to- prison pipeline*. As noted on the questionnaire, John believed that his teachers cared about him as a student, rated as agree, and tried to keep him from dropping out. John continued to get into trouble after dropping out of school. "I served time in both state and federal prison. In prison, I settled down and focused. I got my GED. I started taking college courses." John reported

that attending education classes was a requirement in prison. In addition, he believes that his

job in prison industries was tied to his enrollment in college courses. Upon conclusion of the

research, John stated, "I place a lot of value on education now. I think that having an

education gives me better job opportunities and a better future." As previously discussed,

question 7 related to the value of education was rated positively. However, he was neutral

regarding the perceptions of the degree to which education leads to better employment

opportunity. I perceived that John was rather indecisive and possibly did believe that

education would benefit his future which may have been related to his prison record.

Case Four: Bruce

I met Bruce, a black male, at a Midwest community library, he looked older than his

stated age of 49. He was a thin man and had a scraggly unkempt patchy beard. At first

glance, I estimated Bruce to be in his mid-fifties or early sixties. His face appeared

weathered with an almost flat effect. His appearance reminded me of someone that had a

"hard life." However, his overall demeanor was calm and pleasant. His clothing was neat

and not displaced, yet looked aged and well worn. The conversation started by discussing

the purpose of the study. Bruce took a minute or two to read over the consent form. After a

moment, he looked up and stated. "Although, I didn't graduate from high school I am not a

dumb person." He informed me that he grew up in a poor community in another state.

However, he relocated to the Midwest site at age six with his mother. Bruce described his

community:

> I grew up in a rough part of town. The neighborhood was all black. Drugs and gangs
> was a common thing. In my neighborhood, everyone carried a gun. That is just how
> it was. A matter of fact, I did not even buy my first gun. Someone gave it to me. The
> side thing was that you could go four blocks and be in an all-White neighborhood
> that was much better. They stayed in their neighborhood and we stayed in ours.

Although the other participants described their community as poor, Bruce was the first

participant to describe his community as infested with *substance abuse* through drugs and

gangs both strongly linked to the theme, *influences of the community*. Similar, to the other

participants, Bruce grew up in a single-parent home with three other siblings and it was

obvious that *effects of poverty* centered on *making ends meet* and *family dynamics* as a result

of his mother trying to raise four children. He shared that only one of his siblings graduated

from high school. For Bruce, *single mother*, *history of sibling dropouts,* and *lack of positive*

male role models merged to create a system of *family dynamics* that generated a number of

factors that influenced his family life. Harry described the support he received from his

mother and grandmother and lack of attention he received from his father. He said,

> My mom worked to jobs to support my brothers and me. She would check my
> homework whenever she got home from work. She taught us the basics, math and
> reading. My grandma was the one that held things together. I didn't know my father.
> He was never in the picture. Every now and then I might bump into him at my
> grandma's house. He never gave us anything.

Involvement in homework was also rated as agreed on his questionnaire. He further

elaborated regarding *family dynamics,* "I didn't have any *positive male role models*. I only

had bad influences. One stepfather came along. He taught me a lot. He was military man. He

tried but ended up going to *drugs*." The effects of father-absence in the black community is

not a new problem. Buschlen, Chang, and Kniess (2018) reported on the number of boys

living in fatherless homes and the effects on their lives:

> According to the United States Census (2015), approximately 27% of boys under the
> age of 18 live without their biological fathers in the home. When compared to those
> living in a two-parent household, fatherless boys are at higher risk for psychological
> and social maladjustment (e.g., depression and identity confusion), academic
> maladjustment (e.g., low academic achievement and delinquency), health risk

behaviors (e.g., smoking, alcohol consumption, and having sexual intercourse), and externalizing behavior problems (e.g., weapon-related violence and fighting). (p. 5)

Although Bruce did not have both parents in the home, he shared that his grandmother provided a great deal of support. In the same manner as John, Bruce spoke affectionately of her saying, "My grandma was the only one who looked out for me. We would go to her house sometimes for dinner. She always tried to help us." Traditionally, grandmothers had many roles in the black community; they were child caretakers, financial support providers, nurses, and protectors (Bernstein, 2005; Jimenez, 2002).

As a middle and high school student, Bruce reported that he was an average student. "Back then I would put the value I place on education at zero." His current value of education reflected in the Likert scale items indicated the opposite. He agreed that he found school to be valuable and strongly agreed that he valued education. His past view of education signaled the theme *school environment.* As a recap, school environment, broadly characterized by facilities, classroom curriculum and instruction, disciplinary policies and practices, and school-based health supports, sets the stage for the external factors that affect the academic success of students. His response to the Likert scale item regarding help with homework at home was positive. He agreed that he received help with homework and that he learned in school. Bruce strongly agreed that teachers cared about him. However, for Bruce, *school environment* was tied to negative *school climate*, *social identity*, *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior,* and *diminished value of education..* Bruce described his school curriculum as basic math, reading, and White history. He said:

> the curriculum was not really relevant to Black history. I did not put a whole lot of effort into school. I started hanging with the bad boys when I was sixteen. The bad boys were the in crowd. They had money. It was better than being broke. Some sold

drugs and some did not. Some drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes. So, I started smoking cigarettes.

Similar to Michael, Bruce found the curriculum to be irrelevant to Black history. However, his Likert scale response indicated that he was undecided on whether or not school material was relevant to his culture. King (2006) provided an explanation for the limited attention to the heritage of Black and Latino students:

> Many white teachers (and scholars) who equate "equality" with assimilation and "color- blindness" dismiss the idea that Black (and Latino) students can benefit from educational experiences that connect them with their African heritage and identity. Nor do those holding this view, including some Black teachers, understand how U.S. society might benefit from Black people's development along these lines. (p. 343)

His decision to hang out with "bad boys" may have been fueled by a negative school climate." I find it relevant that Bruce used the term "White history" when referring to the curriculum taught at his school which appeared to be exclusionary of a multicultural emphasis. Additionally, the dynamics of the hidden curriculum are often intertwined with a culture of power, dominated by a White European perspective.

Bruce also stated that he wanted to be in the in-crowd. Belonging to social groups serves a significant role in shaping the social identities of adolescents (Blanchett & Zion, 2011). In contrast to Harry, who tied his *social identity* to name brand clothing, Bruce tied his sense of *social identity* to belonging to the "bad kids." Bruce shared that he was also a bully. "I was a bully. I had a reputation. I had followers. A reputation was important to me." This represents a major difference between Bruce and the rest of the participants who did not claim to be bullies. Bruce shared that he continued down the wrong road and was suspended several times for bullying and skipping school. He stated, "Eventually, I dropped out of school. My teachers did everything to reach me. I wanted to be in the streets making

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money." Teachers doing everything to reach him aligns with his perceptions that teachers cared, as indicated by his response on the questionnaire.

The theme *Influences within the community* combined with *disciplinary problems or disruptive behaviors* at school, and *lack of positive male role models,* fostered an environment that eventually put John on the path to prison. The fourth theme to appear in Bruce's story was *school-to-prison pipeline* contextually explained as the relationship between dropping out of school and going to prison. There is a direct correlation between the decline in high school dropouts and the increase in incarceration (Ferguson, 2001; U.S. Bureau of Census, 2013); Black and Latino men comprise a disproportionate segment of the U.S. prison population (Travis et al., 2014; Ulmer et al., 2016). *Criminal Activity,* and *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior*, and the *lure of the streets* were both interpretative codes for Bruce that emerged under the theme, *school-to-prison pipeline. Criminal activity* can be loosely defined as any conduct that violates a local, state or federal law. It was not long after dropping out of school that Bruce was arrested. "I wasn't a drug user. I sold drugs and got caught. I went from jail to prison. I was incarcerated for several years." Both Bruce and John were influenced by the immediate financial gains that could be made by *criminal activity.*

Bruce described his work in prison industries and getting his GED. He stated, "I worked as kitchen operator/cook in prison industries. It was one of the better paying prison jobs. I didn't not get any certifications. I just goT my GED." At this point Bruce provided a copy of his GED. He described his GED classes as medium size. "The course work was not that hard. It was basic high school stuff." Bruce was the only participant to bring his GED.

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Each GED subject test is scored on a scale of 100-200 points. To pass the GED, you must earn at least 145 on each of the four subject tests, for a total of at least 580 points (out of a possible 800). The GED test has four subject areas: Mathematical Reasoning, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA). The RLA section includes both reading and writing. In Mathematical Reasoning, Bruce scored 158 which was just above the passing score of 145. In Science and Social Studies Bruce scored in the mid 150s which was also just above the needed passing requirement. In Reading and Writing Bruce scored 180 which was 35 points above the requirement.

Bruce seemed to be very optimistic about the future. "You don't need a lot of education to be successful. I just started my own janitorial service. I only have one client, but it's a start." Bruce's statement was somewhat contradictory to his disagreement to the last question on the Likert questionnaire: I do not need education to get a job.

Case Five: Jesus

Jesus is a 55-year-old man Latino male. The first thing I noticed about Jesus was that he was short man at about 5" 5" tall. He had a round face with bushy eyebrows and rather large ears. He wore a black sleeveless button-down shirt. He greeted me with a firm handshake and a cordial smile. Jesus is also the older brother of Carlos (participant 6). I began the conversation by introducing myself and explaining the purpose of the study. After the formalities of signing the consent form, I learned that Jesus grew up in the projects in the Midwest community. The first theme that emerged in Jesus's story was *family dynamics*. The supporting subthemes were *substance abuse*, *physical abuse*, and *single parent*. Jesus began by sharing that he was the oldest of five siblings. His mother divorced his father at age 12. Jesus conveyed that his dad was very abusive and an alcoholic. He stated,

> My dad was a Vietnam vet and an alcoholic. He was a bad alcoholic and every time something happened, he would take it out on me. My mother's side of the family raised me and I think my dad hated that. My dad could never keep a job and when he did he would come home in a drunken stupor and beat my mom. He was gone by the time the cops showed up and they would not go look for him. One night he was there and the cops took him to jail. My mom got tired of the beatings and moved us out while he was in jail. She filed for divorce. I was twelve.

In contrast to the other participants, Jesus actually had a father in the home for a period of time. However, his father's alcoholism and abusive nature created a great deal of stress for the family. Brinson and Treanor (1984) served as Army officers in Vietnam and explained the nature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its effects on individuals later in their lives:

> Those veterans who experienced prolonged exposure to heavy combat are especially vulnerable. Discussed in DSM III (1980) as a delayed stress reaction which may occur years after the initial life-threatening trauma, such as combat, is experienced, PTSD is described as manifesting a variety of disruptive symptoms which impact upon the emotional responses, cognitive functioning, and interpersonal relationships of affected individuals. (p. 1)

Two points may be relevant here. First, Jesus's father made have suffered from PTSD. Secondly, many Vietnam veterans have a history of *physical abuse, substance abuse,* and violence. Statistics show "a child abused or neglected has a 59% increased likelihood of being arrested as a juvenile, a 28% increased likelihood of being arrested as an adult, and a 30% increased likelihood of being arrested for a violent crime" ("CASA on Front Line to Prevent Child Abuse," 2018). This is significant in that Jesus and his brother described being victims of physical and emotional abuse by their father. In listening to Harry, I could sense a of bitterness and resentment with regards to his father physical abuse and his mother's efforts to support the family. Jesus recalled his mother working 14-16 hours a day. He stated, "Me, my, brothers and sisters basically raised ourselves."

The second theme to emerge in Jesus's story was *school environment* with *negative school climate*, *substance abuse*, and *disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior.* In reflecting on his middle school and high school experiences, He said, "I was drinking alcohol at age 12. I skipped school so much and was told the number of days I missed equaled one year." Jesus continued by describing his experiences with reading and math in the following way:

> In in high school I was not a good reader. I would sit in the back of the class hoping that the teacher would not call on me. Sometimes, I was the only Mexican in my classes. Some of the other kids would make fun of me because of my reading. I was good in math. The teacher would give us math problems along with examples on how to solve the problem. I would do a weeks' worth of homework in one day. My math teacher always encouraged me.

On his questionnaire, Jesus agreed that he was able to learn as a student but was undecided about the teachers caring about him. He experienced success in Math and seem to be pretty sure that his math teacher cared about him because the teacher encouraged him. Unfortunately, he did not receive help from other teachers regarding his reading which communicated low expectations and a lack of caring. Most students in lower income urban communities have reading levels two to three years below grade level (Barr & Parrett, 2007; Pierce et al., 2013). Noguera (2003a) described the power of caring and expectations, "If students do not believe that their teachers care about them and are actively concerned about their academic performance, the likelihood that they will succeed is greatly reduced" (p. 449).

Jesus described a *negative school climate* in the context of being "made fun of" by other classmates. Furthermore, Jesus agreed in his Likert questionnaire that school material was not relevant to his culture. This, most likely, contributed to negative school climate.

Many Latinx students chose to drop out of school, rather than have the stigma associated with academic failures or Special Education placement (Collins, 2006). The label associated with Special Education placement, may create a negative social identity within the school environment (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004). Jesus recalled that he dropped out of school in eleventh grade. Although, at eleventh grade, he reported he had some ninth-grade classes which indicated that he was probably behind in credits. In addition, he shared that by the time his mother returned home from working two jobs, he was asleep. Therefore, she was not able to help him with his homework. This was opposite his response on the questionnaire where he agreed that he received help from parents with homework. When asked about his school experiences, he recollected,

> I started selling weed in the tenth grade. By the time I was in the eleventh grade I was making several hundred dollars a week. I started paying all the bills. Education was not a priority because I was making money. My mom thought I was making money from a part time job. I was selling up to 100 marijuana joints a day before lunch. I paid all the bills for seven years before I got busted.

Jesus's *criminal activity* started at a young age. His decision to sell weed would become the first step followed by dropping out in which led from *school-to-prison pipeline*. Jesus pointed out that he was expelled several times in high school.

> I got expelled a lot for fighting. My high school was mostly Black. They had a problem with me and I would not allow them to bully me. If I fought one, after that it was three to five at a time. I was out of school more than I was in. If I was in school for five days, I fought four of those days. One time they jumped me in the bathroom. It was about twelve of them. They beat me up pretty good but I fought back. That is how it was the whole three years I was in high school.

He strongly agreed on his questionnaire that he encountered bullying in school. When issues of safety or bullying surface, policies and practices must be in place to address students' concerns in order for all kids to feel safe within the school environment.

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As a person that was very familiar with the Midwest community in which Jesus was raised, I can personally attest to the racial tension that existed between some Blacks and Latinx communities. I recall, as a teenager, there were certain Latinx communities I avoided due to the racial tension that existed at that time. The racial violence experienced by Jesus denotes the first instance of *negative school climate* within the context of violence which compromises the safety of students. Côté-Lussier, Barnett, Kestens, Tu, and Séguin (2014) make the connection between high poverty neighborhoods and safety needs, noting that since high poverty youth are more likely to live in impoverished neighborhoods with signs of disorder and violence, they often carry a decreased feeling of safety within them to school.

Tensions between Blacks and Latinx is not a new phenomenon. Both ethnic groups have a strong ethnic identity and share a history of, segregation, discrimination, unequal access to education, poverty, lack of health care, and over-representation with regards to incarceration. Jesus attended high school in the 1980s and 1990s. The racial climate at that time is described in an article written by Jack Miles. In "Blacks vs. Browns," Miles (1992) wrote, "Latinos, even when they are foreign, seem native and safe, while blacks, who are native, seem foreign and dangerous. In saying this, I am saying something that I shrink from saying and grieve to say, but I think it's true." Fifteen years later, in "The Black-Latino Blame Game," Earl Ofari Hutchinson (2007) wrote,

> For years, Latino leaders have pointed the finger of blame at blacks when Latinos are robbed, beaten and even murdered. Blacks, in turn, have blamed Latinos for taking jobs, for colonizing neighborhoods, for gang violence. These days, the tension between the races is noticeable not only in prison life and in gang warfare (where it's been a staple of life for decades) but in politics, in schools, in housing, in the immigration debate. Conflicts today are just as likely—in some cases, more likely—to be between blacks and Latinos as between blacks and whites. (p. 1)

In 2017, comedian George Lopez told the following racially charged joke: "There are only two rules in the Latino family: Don't marry somebody Black, and don't park in front of our house." I think all three quotes speak to the gross cynicism and perceptions that existed back then and remain prominent today.

Although Jesus was never placed in a juvenile detention center, he is a textbook example of the school-to-prison pipeline. Jesus reported that he was sentenced to prison in his early 20s.

> I got in a fight and hurt someone bad. I was given several years but only served half of my time and was released. Eight months before my release, I was told I needed to have a GED. Somehow, they failed to inform me when I first entered prison. I worked in prison industries as a carpenter. I never thought about trying to get certified. I was pretty much a carpenter before I got locked up.

Upon entry to the Midwest Correctional Facility, each inmate is placed on a waiting list to take the General Education Development Test. Once their name appears on the list, they are assessed to determine their academic aptitudes, and placed in a class that matches their current level. Fearing he would not be released on his release date, Jesus began taking classes in basic reading, reading comprehension, writing, and math.

> The classes were not big. I was good at math so I didn't need to study much for it. The teachers provided examples. It was not that I could not read in school. I could not read fast. After two months of studying, I passed the test and got my GED. Since getting my GED I have a greater appreciation for education. That is something that I didn't have prior to being locked up. I'm not sure if prison prepared me for employment. They have basic classes that teach you how to interview. I did not get a certification but I can only blame myself for that.

Family dynamics, coupled with the school environment presented challenges for Jesus that he was not able to overcome. I sensed that the constant bullying in school exacerbated by

racial tensions between Blacks and Latino, academic difficulties and the draw of fast money from criminal activities led to his eventually dropping out.

Today, Jesus expresses a greater appreciation for education. The responses from his questionnaire indicated that he values school and education which are supported by his willingness to complete his GED. He did not discuss his involvement in Prison Industries, and disagreed when responding to the questionnaire statements related to prison industry. Question 8: Education played a part in working in Prison Industries. Question 9: Prison Industries has changed my perception of education. Jesus agreed that education would provide better employment opportunities, but was undecided is he needed education to get a job.

Case Six: Carlos

Carlos is a 49-year-old man and the younger brother of Jesus (fifth participant in the study). Carlos is a short, thick set Latino man with a large oval face and a somewhat guarded demeanor. I began my conversation with him by explaining the purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of education held by former Black and Latino inmates who had not completed a high school diploma prior to incarceration. A few minutes after reading the consent form, Carlos informed me that he considered himself Mexican-American instead of Latino. He elaborated by saying, "It's all bullshit. I am a Mexican. I don't know when they started calling all of us Latinos. They lump us all into one category when we have different cultures." This was not the first time I heard that comment. As a Black man, I could totally relate. To some, the terms Black and African American are interchangeable; to others, they are distinctly different and hold different connotations. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that some people in the Mexican-American community feel strongly about being referred to

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as Latino. As a side note, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (*Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity,* 1997) defined the ethnonym Hispanic or Latino to refer to "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race." What Carlos brought up for me was the importance of asking people how they liked to be referred to regarding their national origin, race or ethnicity.

Carlos conveyed he has been a lifelong resident of the community where the study was conducted. He said, "I grew up in the 70s and 80s." He recalled that his neighborhood was predominately a Mexican-American community with the exception of few Blacks and Whites. Carlos reported that he has several brothers and three sisters but did not recall any siblings graduating from high school. The interpretative code *history of sibling dropouts* speaks to the similarities of the communities of Black and Latinx participants in this study, linked to the first theme of *family dynamics* and also aligned to the meanings of *diminished value of education* for several of these participants. Similar to Jesus's story, *single mother*, *physical abuse*, *substance abuse*, and *lack of positive role models* supported the theme *family dynamics.*

Carlos recalled that his mother graduated from high school and completed a vocational school. Carlos was the only participant that mentioned a parent with education attainment beyond high school. Carlos also informed me that although he was Mexican he did not speak Spanish. "Sometimes people say I sound like a Mexican redneck. My mom worked two and three jobs and didn't have time to teach us Spanish." Carlos described his family as dysfunctional. He stated,

> I come from a jacked-up situation. My dad brought Vietnam home with him. We lived it every day with our mom. My mom got a divorce when I was about eight. My mom worked two jobs because my dad could not keep a job. As far as a childhood, I don't remember one because of all the drinking and beatings.

Carlos was much more descriptive than Jesus about his father's abusive nature. He revealed several incidents related to the impact of living with an abusive father.

> My dad was a lot of the reason I had so much anger as a child. My dad was always an asshole. When he went to the war he came back with more skills and a bigger drunk. Me and my older brother got hit with sticks, broomsticks, shovels, and whatever he could fine. He would make all us boys go outside in our underwear. We would have nothing on but our whitey-tighties. I can remember the incident that made me not give a shit about people. After the slapping the shit out of us, he would make us go outside to the curb and grab handfuls of sand. He would take the screen out of the window and sit it in the corner. He would have us throw the sand on top of the window screen and then kneel on that shit for 12-14 hours. We thought we would be slick and take all the screens out the window. What did this dude do? He took the covers of the fans and made us kneel on them. The covers were a quarter inch thick. Then the plastic covers came out and that was a half inch for you meat to go through. I remember when I was in Junior High. The class started reading about Vietnam. I was reading about my life. I got up and left.

Carlos was likely traumatized by the abuse in his life. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network explains that traumatic events can include a range of different experiences, including experiencing the death of someone else; witnessing domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse; and experiencing a robbery, shooting, beating, or some other personal conflict (Dierkhising, Ko, Woods-Jaeger, Briggs, Lee, & Pynoos, 2013). About one in four children experience traumatic events before their third birthday (Briggs-Gowan, Carter, Clark, Augustyn, McCarthy, & Ford, 2010). Hearing the reading about Vietnam and leaving the classroom was likely a flashback and result of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

Carlos never recalled his father receiving psychological help for domestic violence or alcohol abuse. I make this point for two reasons: (1) As a person who works in the mental health field, many Vietnam veterans that returned from the Vietnam War suffered from

substance abuse and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); and (2) PTSD was not an official psychiatric diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) until 1980 (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). It is highly possible that Carlos's father was never diagnosed or treated for PTSD.

Carlos described drinking beer at an early age. "My dad was a Vietnam vet and thought it was the manly thing to give kids a beer at a young age. I also had an uncle who would smoke weed and blow it in my face." As a result, Carlos's history of substance abuse began at an early age. This behavior also speaks to the possible consequences associated with the *lack of a positive male role model*, a sub-theme of *family dynamics*. For Carlos, marijuana became a gateway to using acid, speed, cocaine, and other drugs.

Carlos described the population of his middle school as being primarily of Hispanic. In addition, he recalled his teachers were also culturally diverse. *School environment* was the second theme that emerged and sets the stage for the external factors that affect students. *Disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior, substance abuse* were associated with Carlos's experiences in school. Carlos recollected that by middle school he was already drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana with his friends on a regular basis. Carlos admitted that he had difficulty in conforming to school rules.

He shared a history of school suspensions that dated as far back as the second grade. Fighting and criminal behavior soon became common place in his life which led to a juvenile detention sentence at the age of 13

> I was suspended several times for fighting and skipping school. Fighting one guy was boring. I would fight two guys at a time. I remember, one time I got in a fight with a guy. I beat him bad. They said if he had a couple of more hits to the head I would have killed him. I was on probation for the last two years of middle school. I

got in trouble for stealing and thieving cars because I was bored. I was sent to a
youth program (court mandated) when I was thirteen but got out in seven months.

The disciplinary problems or disruptive behavior appeared to be more than occasional

incidents, and had seemingly become a mental problem – Carlos was out of control. A

significant number of youth in detention or correctional settings have at least one

diagnosable mental health problem (Schubert & Mulvey 2014; Schubert, Mulvey &

Glasheen, 2011). Contrary to this reality, all youth that offend do not have mental problems,

as noted by Schubert and Mulvey:

> Although these two problems often go hand in hand, it is not clear that one causes
> the other. Many youths who offend do not have a mental health problem, and many
> youths who have a mental health problem do not offend. (2014, p. xx)

Carlos shared that while at the Youth Center he tested at the college level in reading

and writing. When asked about his experiences in school, Carlos's questionnaire responses

reflected negative responses regarding learning, and curriculum that matched his culture. In

both areas he strongly disagreed that he learned in school and the school culture was

supportive of his culture. Carlos also shared that he had no supervision at home. He

disagreed that he received help with homework from parents or family members. The

absence of Carlos's mother in the home due to working, created an environment in which

there was no accountability.

> If there was a problem in school, the school authorities relied on us to give a note to
> our parents. They did not call because they knew my mother worked. Sometimes
> they would mail a letter. We got the mail and would just throw it away.

This speaks volumes with regards to the theme *family dynamics.* Although Carlos endorsed

a positive relationship with his mother, he became his own governing body by default.

Many Black and Latinx students enter high school with academic knowledge below what is required to be academically successful (Barr & Parrett, 2007; Pierce et al., 2013). In contrast, Carlos reported that he excelled in reading and was above average in math. Several coaches tried to get him interested in sports. Carlos stated, "The coaches wanted me to try out for wrestling and football. They wanted me in there." None of the participants in this study participated in any extracurricular activities. This is significant, as research has shown that participating in extracurricular activities has a positive effect on school retention (Marshall, 2015; Merkel, 2013). His academic abilities and the interest coaches took in him was not enough to enough to keep him from leaving school. "I was not a dumb ass. I just didn't like school." His dislike of school aligned to the statement, I found school to be valuable. Carlos strongly disagreed with this statement.

The third theme in Carlos story was *influences within the community*, which emerged from *substance abuse* and *criminal activity*. As Carlos spoke of his disdain for school, he displayed a lot of emotion. At times, he appeared to wear his history of juvenile delinquency as a badge of honor. Carlos did not focus on the fact that he was often suspended, but chose to focus on the amount of fun he had hanging out with his friends.

> We were just a bunch of neighborhood kids that were bored as hell. Some people called us a gang but we were not a gang. It was about 20 to 30 of us. Every morning we would congregate at the park right before sunrise. We would slam some beers and just past joints around. Weed was around more than cigarettes. It was just drugs all the way around. We would drink and smoke until sunrise. From sunrise to the hottest part of the day we played baseball. After that, we would congregate over to the tennis court. Everybody would throw the money in. The ones that were of age would go to the store and come back with a box of bottles and five to six cases of beer. We would slam those. Now, we got our second wind and played football. It was probably 20 of us. I was the youngest and one of the smallest. I could hit anyone I wanted and did not have to worry about them crying. We played football until it was so dark that you could not see the football. After that, we would annie-up all the

speed, acid, and other drugs. We would get high for another and then someone would breakout and hacky sack.

I find it important to note that Carlos and his friends skipped school out of boredom. When asked if he believed teachers cared if he stayed in school, Carlos said, "I don't think the teachers cared one way or the other." His reply paralleled the response noted in the Likert questionnaire. Carlos strongly disagreed that teachers cared about him as a student. He decided to leave school within a month of entering the ninth grade. This behavior is consistent with previous research in which ninth graders reported that they disengage from the school when they believe that their teachers do not care about them (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Hyslop (2006) pointed to teachers having positive relationships with students and their effects on the culture of the school. He stated,

> Schools remain one of the best opportunities for connecting youth and adults in positive ways, giving students the sense that they are valued and cared for, and reinforcing the message that whether they succeed or fail actually matters to someone. (p. 34)

Yet, Carlos claimed, "I don't remember much about the ninth grade because of the drinking and drugging." Several years after dropping out of school, Carlos went to prison on drug related charges—following the *school to prison pipeline* trajectory through *disciplinary problems or disruptive behaviors* and *the lure of the streets*. As noted earlier, the lure of the streets began as early as the age of 13 for Carlos. "I got in trouble for stealing and thieving cars because I was bored. I was sent to a youth program (court mandated) when I was thirteen but got out in seven months." He recalled working in prison industries.

> I worked as a carpenter. I didn't tell them how good of a carpenter I was. They assumed I just had some basic carpentry skills. As far as education, I took a few classes for substance abuse but that was all. I took the test to get my GED and passed.

Carlos shared that he did not gain benefits from working in prison industries. "Prison Industries did not teach me anything I already didn't know." Analysis of his questionnaire for these elements showed that he strongly agreed that education played a part in working in Prison Industries, but he was undecided if it changed his perception of education. Lastly Carlos expressed a greater appreciation for education and wanted more for his boys.

I do feel like I value education more. I know that you can't get anywhere in life without a certain amount of education. I have boys of my own. I did everything I could to make sure they stayed in school and away from drugs.

His greater appreciation was consistent with the strongly agree response to the statement: I value education. Like the other men in this study, Carlos's life was railroaded by family dynamics, especially the child abuse and a lack of positive male role models in his life. Leaving school at such an early age appeared to guarantee the *school to prison pipeline*. (need to fill in the chart for Carlos – check the chart for all)

Summary

Within case analysis supported the development of individual cases using the three-dimensional process of narrative analysis combined with the socio-cultural process. As noted by Ayres, Kavanaugh, and Knafl (2003), within case analysis helps to understand individual meanings as well as those that become part of a pattern in the data. The participants' cases represent perceptions and beliefs regarding how they viewed the importance of earning a high school diploma. The case descriptions also describe their perceptions of the dynamics of working in Prison Industries and thoughts about employment opportunities upon completion of their sentences. Marked differences were identified in

their beliefs about education prior to incarceration and afterwards. The following section focuses on the second process of case study research, cross case analysis.

Findings to the Research Questions

Cross-case analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns across the cases. I searched for unique attributes, codes, patterns, and themes to help me clearly understand each case and then looked for common themes across the cases. In other words, it was important to "understand both the commonality and differences across cases in the quintain" (Stake, 2006, p. 40) which led to a deeper analysis of the former inmates' experiences. The process helped me to also see why one case was different than the other, to seek explanations as to why, and to understand unique findings (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). Table 2 depicts common themes across the cases for answering the research questions and provides "a more holistic impression of what a certain experience is like in all it facets" (Boeije, 2010, p. 202). As noted, two of the most prevalent sub-themes across all cases were *low income* aligned to the theme of *making ends meet* and *single mother,* a subtheme for *family dynamics.*

Table 2

Common Themes in Qualitative Data Sets - Interviews, Observations & Documents

Themes	Interpretive Codes	Ha	Mi	Br	Jo	Je	Ca
Making ends meet	Low Income	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Poor Nutrition	x					
	Effects of Poverty	x	x				
Influences within the	Gangs			x	x		
	Substance Abuse		x	x	x	x	x
Community	Criminal Activity			x	x		x
	Diminished Value of		x				
	Racial Attitudes		x				
Family Dynamics	Single Mother	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Physical Abuse	x	x			x	x
	Substance Abuse		x	x	x	x	x
	Lack of Positive Male Role		x	x	x	x	x
	History of Sibling Dropouts		x	x		x	x
	Family Relationships	x	x	x	x		
School Environment	Social Identify	x		x			
	Special Education	x	x				
	Disciplinary Problems or Disruptive Behavior	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Diminished Value of	x	x				
	Substance Abuse					x	x
	Negative School Climate		x	x		x	x
	Feeling of Not Belonging	x				x	
	Low Grades						
School-to-Prison Pipeline	Disciplinary problems or Disruptive Behavior	x		x			
	The Lure of the Streets		x				

Research Sub-Question #1: *What were their perceptions of education prior to incarceration?* All participants in the study placed a low value on education prior to incarceration. Several factors contributed to the participant's perception of education. All participants grew up in a low-income home in poor neighborhoods. Two of the six participants acknowledge that their perceptions of education were directly tied to the living standards of their community as a whole. It is also worth noting that only two of the

participants found the school curriculum relevant to their culture. Furthermore, it is worth noting that four out of five of the participants participated in criminal activity for financial gain. The instant gratification of financial gain outweighed the "long term prize" of earning a high school diploma. Last, all of the participants in the study report a history of several siblings that did not complete high school. It possible that their decision to leave school created an atmosphere that fostered diminished expectations that influenced their perception of education.

Research Sub-Question #2: *What were their perceptions upon release from prison?* All participants' endorsed a greater appreciation for education upon their release from prison. However, not all participants' attributed their appreciation for education to working in Prison Industries. However, within the liker scale responses, four of the participant believed that *they did not need education to get a job*.

Research Question #2. *How do previous inmates perceive employability inside and outside the prison system?* Each of the participants in this study worked in Prison Industries. However, some of their jobs were not discussed out of fear of breaching their confidentially. All participants acknowledged that they were required to maintain some form of employment throughout their incarceration. What I find interesting is that only two of the participants believed education was instrumental in gaining their specific prison job. Furthermore, one participant believed the stigma associated with being a former inmate would negatively impact his employment opportunities.

Research Sub-Question #1: *What perceptions do former inmates have of prison industries?* Two of participants described prison industries as corrupt and slanted. In addition, two participants found employment within prison to be a struggle due to the

inmate-to-job ratio. In addition, it should be noted that only two of the participants believed working in Prison Industries changed their perception of education. However, four of the participants believed education would create better employment opportunities.

Research Sub-Question #2: *How did previous inmates perceive their opportunities for employment upon release from prison?* One participant was very pessimistic due to the stigma associated with be a former inmate. In the Literature Review, I mentioned that one of the biggest problems former inmates face is finding long-term employment. It was noted that this is a bigger problem for blacks and Latinos (Pollard, 2012). Despite having a greater appreciation for education, responses to the Likert scale reveal that only one participant strongly agreed that education was necessary to gain employment. It is also worth mentioning that four of the participant's responses were neutral with regards to the Likert scale.

Summary

This research study was designed to examine former inmates' perceptions of education prior to incarceration. As a qualitative narrative study, it captured "thick descriptions" of former inmates education experiences via semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings in this study emerged from in-depth semi-structured interviews, descriptive statistical analysis of the likert scale items, and content analysis of the transcripts and artifacts. Analysis of the common themes were conducted to highlight some of the similarities and difference of the individual case studies. The responses given by the participants were coded and categorized into themes supported by interpretative codes. In keeping with Saldaña (2015) and Yin (2015), compiling and disassembling the data into codes, reassembling the data, interpreting the meaning, writing and reporting the themes

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were part of the data analysis process. Five dominant themes emerged from the data: (a) making ends meet; (b) influences within the community; (c) family dynamics; (d school environment; and (e) school-to-prison pipeline. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the implications of the findings including recommendations for decreasing the school-to-prison pipeline, and future research. I conclude with reflections regarding my research journey.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this constructivist narratological case study, I explored former inmates' perceptions of education with each case storied as a narrative which supported the authentic voices of participants. The focus of inquiry for this research project was guided by the following central questions:

1. How do former inmates perceive their education experiences?

2. How do previous inmates perceive employability inside and outside of prison?

In following sections, I share my interactions of the findings based on the five major themes, looking inward and outward; offer recommendations for change in schools and communities; suggest areas for future research; and conclude with final reflections regarding my research journey. Looking inward and outward, the third aspect of the three-dimensional space of *interaction* is organized by the findings: (a) *Making Ends Meet*; (b) *Family Dynamics*; (c) *Influences within the Community*; (d) *School Environment;* and (e) *School-to Prison Pipeline*.

Looking Inward and Outward

In view of findings from the six cases and the collective findings from the research questions based on cross-case analysis, the stories of former inmates reflected a three-dimensional milieu of time or *temporality*, context or *situation*, and relationship or *interaction*. I use the third dimension of relationship or *interaction* to examine, as the storyteller, my own inward and outward responses to the stories – a continuum that ranges from the personal to social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I interacted with the six former inmates and their stories through the third dimension of relationship or *interaction,*

looking inward and outward, allowed me to think about my "feelings, hopes, aesthetic

reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 50). What feelings came to the

surface when I thought about my own parents' struggles to make ends meet? These

renderings represented my inward thinking. I also look outward and recalled citing the

Moynihan Report to explain the plight of the Black family and became aware of his deficit

thinking. Scholars continue to debunk "Moynihan's declaration that African Americans are

caught in a 'tangle of pathology' caused by the "deteriorating" structure of the lower-income

family" (Logan, 2018, p. vii). I sought to explore their stories within historical, social, and

political perspectives, while at the same time reflecting on my own story. In a real sense, my

interactions revealed my secret stories. I compare these to the secret stories that Clandinin

and Connelly (1996) refer to as teachers' secret stories:

> Classrooms are, for the most part, safe places, generally free from scrutiny,
> where teachers are free to live stories of practice. These lived stories are
> essentially secret ones. Furthermore, when these secret lived stories are told,
> they are, for the most part, told to other teachers in other secret places.
> (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25)

My interactions with the stories of the participants and the first theme of *making ends meet*

are discussed in concert with my story and point to implications for change.

Making Ends Meet

As a Black man, I was eager to hear participants stories. Harry began his narrative by

stating, *"We were poor and my mom got food stamps and assistance. I remember we did not*

have the proper nutrition, shoes, or clothing. No one in the neighborhood really had much."

This was closely followed by Michael, who recalled, *"Everybody in my neighborhood had*

the same type of living standards. Everybody I knew had a couch with a coffee can for one

leg or some bricks." Harry and Michaels statements mirror a carbon copy of the other

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participants stories. All of the men were raised by single mothers who struggled to make ends meet.

As I reflected on their stories, I thought about my own parents' challenges with making ends meet from the 1960s throughout 1980. Although, we never went without the basic necessities of food and clothing, I recall sometimes living pay check-to-paycheck. My mother would clip coupons from the Sunday paper in an effort to "make ends meet." My father is a jack-of-all-trades and it was rare that he needed to call a repairman for anything. In all conscience, the 70s and early 80s was a rough time for many people in my community. That period of time centered on the back of the civil rights movement. I also think it is worth mentioning that in 1969, many black families were run by single (Pew Research Center, 2015). In comparison, among Mexican Americans, single-parent families increased from 14 percent in 1980 to 22 percent in 2001 (Creighton, Park, & Teruel, 2009).

Family Dynamics

In reading the participant's narratives, the lack of positive male role models was the first commonality I noted. Although, the dynamics of the family include support from mothers and grandmothers, in some families, the lack of positive male role models was evident. As their stories unfolded, it became clear to me how lucky I was to have both parents growing up. My formative years of education consisted of positive role modeling from both my mother and father. I make this point because each of the participants of were raised by single mothers during their formative years of schooling. As I listened to the participants, it became very clear; they were never provided the motivation, support, guidance or opportunities that come with having a positive father. Carlos stated,

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I come from a jacked-up situation. My dad brought Vietnam home with him. We lived it every day with our mom. My mom got a divorce when I was about eight. My mom worked two jobs because my dad could not keep a job. As far as a childhood, I do not remember one because of all the drinking and beatings.

While Bruce declared,

My mom worked to jobs to support my brothers and me. She would check my homework whenever she got home from work. She taught us the basics, math and reading. My grandma was the one that held things together. I didn't know my father. He was never in the picture. Every now and then I might bump into him at my grandma's house. He never gave us anything.

As I listened to the participants' stories, I pondered about what had been done to instill a sense of value and pride for their academic achievement. I wondered what had been done to instill a sense of self-worth or self-respect? What had been done to instill a sense of morality? How were they taught to deal with real or perceived injustices? As a Black man, I asked myself, have we merely become collaborators of our own demise? Maxine Greene (1998) came to a similar conclusion:

When oppression or exploitation or segregation or neglect is perceived as "natural" or a "given," there is little stirring in the name of freedom. When people cannot name alternatives imagine a better state of things, share with others a project of change, they are likely to remain anchored and submerged, even as they proudly assert their autonomy. (p. 9)

I recall the unrest that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. I watched in disappointment and embarrassment as looters ransacked and set fire to stores. Although, I am not an advocate of this type of behavior, I could empathize with their frustration. In many ways, Ferguson represented the poster child for urban decay and oppression in many poor black and brown communities.

Influences within the Community

The abandonment of "it takes a village to raise a child," although not a theme was something that did not go unnoticed. As far back as I can remember, the village was an upheld belief in my community. The community as a whole took on the responsibility raising its children. This "fictive community," as I knew it, no longer exist. Listening to the participants share their experiences, the lure of the streets became a link in the school-to-prison pipeline. Bruce stated,

> I grew up in a rough part of town. The neighborhood was all black. Drugs and gangs was a common thing. In my neighborhood, everyone carried a gun. That is just how it was. A matter of fact, I did not even buy my first gun. Someone gave it to me. The side thing was that you could go four blocks and be in an all-White neighborhood that was much better. They stayed in their neighborhood and we stayed in ours.

This lack of a fictive community was not limited to Black communities. Carlos stated,

> We were just a bunch of neighborhood kids that were bored as hell. Some people called us a gang but we were not a gang. It was about 20 to 30 of us. Every morning we would congregate at the park right before sunrise. We would slam some beers and just past joints around. Weed was around more than cigarettes. It was just drugs all the way around. We would drink and smoke until sunrise.

The lack of positive role models combined with a single mother working one to two jobs created an atmosphere that was not conducive to attending school.

School Environment

What I find interesting is that three of the participants strongly agreed or agreed in their Likert responses that school material was not relevant to their culture. Two of the three were Latino. One participant was undecided and the remaining two strongly agreed and agreed that the curriculum was relevant to their culture. Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory bring to light the recurring cycle of structural inequality that has permeated all aspects of Brown and Black life (Rector-Arranda, 2016; Yosso, 2005). This

structural inequality was echoed in participants shared experiences. Michael described his school curriculum as basic math, reading, and "*White history*." He added, "*the curriculum was not really relevant to black history. School had a curriculum that they taught the masses. Somebody gets left out. Some of us have different wavelengths. We have different signals and need a different approach.*" Michael's thoughts were very much in line with my own thoughts regarding curriculum. My immediate reaction was that the school system failed to provide the Jesus, Carlos, and Michael with culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2010) describes culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). Put in this light, I would argue, the challenge for teachers is not to bind their teaching approach to one methodology. I perceive educational development as a continual process that is constantly changing. In essence, I see it as an adaptive process that must mutate to avoid "educational staleness." I coined the term educational staleness as a way to refer to those factors that prevent students from engaging in the learning process. This study provides confirmation that there remains a need for a "culturally sustaining pedagogy" as noted in the literature. According to Gollnick and Chinn (2017), "the existence of nearly half the population is not validated in the curricula of most schools" (p. 81).

As a child my parents ensured that my education was not tainted or influenced by the hidden curriculum taught in school. I learned Black history at an early age. For instance, the man who really created the illumination and design of the light bulb was not Edison, but an African American by the name of Lewis Latimer.

Here, I would like to deviate for one moment. As a teenager, I recall playing

basketball in the "Mexican" part of town. As Jesus shared his experiences, it took me back

to my own experiences. The 1980s was also a time when music forshadowed the "sign of the

times." Growing up I was a big fan of rap music. In contrast to day's music, rap music often

carried a message. To some degree it spoke to the discernment of how some people of color

viewed a country controlled by a "White ideology." I make this point because I believe

music is culturally relevant, plays a significant role in socialization, and provides an avenue

into the mindset of a specific point in time. For me, it represented more than music. In my

experience, music represented the unfiltered voice of my community. This sentiment is

expressed in a song entitled "*Take The Power Back*":

> They present curriculum
> I put my fist in 'em
> Eurocentric every last one of 'em
> See right through the red, white and blue disguise
> With lecture I puncture the structure of lies
> Installed in our minds and attempting
> To hold us back
> We've got to take it back
> Holes in our spirit causin' tears and fears
> One-sided stories for years and years and years
> I'm inferior? Who's inferior?
> Yeah, we need to check the interior
> Of the system that cares about only one culture
> And that is why
> We gotta take the power back (Rage against the Machine, 1991)

This sentiment is mirrored in another song entitled "The Ghetto":

> Even though they put us down and call us animals
> We make real big banks and buy brand new clothes
> Drive fancy cars, make love to stars
> Never really saying just who we are
> We use alias names like TOO $HORT
> Sell you stuff you might kill for
> Young kids grow up and that's all they know

Didn't teach him in school now he's slangin' dope

As I mentally processed the lyrics, I thought about the participants. All had a history of incarceration tied to drug related charges. It is also worth mentioning that Jesus and Carlos, indicated by the Likert questionnaire, that they did not find school valuable. I think it is necessary to put this into context. The demographics of the school that Jesus and Carlos attended were predominately Black and low income. The racial tension between Blacks and Latinos was not in a good place. The lens through which Jesus and Carlos viewed their educational experience was different from the lens of the other participants. Carlos stated,

> I got expelled a lot for fighting. My high school was mostly black. They had a problem with me and I would not allow them to bully me. If I fought one, after that it was three to five at a time. I was out of school more than I was in. If I was in school for five days, I fought four of those days. One time they jumped me in the bathroom. It was about twelve of them. They beat me up pretty good but I fought back. That is how it was the whole three years I was in high school.

Carlos's recollection of high school really resonated with me. I shared earlier in this study, that in high school, Black girls did not want to date me. They considered me "too short" and "too dark." They said, "You don't have curly good hair." The emotional scar left from Black girls still affects me today. For them, my sense of value was connected to my hair texture, skin complexion, height, and athletic ability. To this day, I have very little to do with Black women. Looking back, I think of the racial inferiority complex in the context of the "good and bad" doll experiment conducted by the Clarks in the 1950s.

School-to-prison Pipeline

A common denominator noted between the participants were school expulsions and truancy. Both can serve as an entry point into the school-to-prison pipeline. A prime example is Jesus, who said,

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> I started selling weed in the tenth grade. By the time, I was in the eleventh grade I was making several hundred dollars a week. I started paying all the bills. Education was not a priority because I was making money. My mom thought I was making money from a part time job. I was selling up to 100 marijuana joints a day before lunch. I paid all the bills for seven years before I got busted.

Michael remembered being suspended or expelled from school on several occasion for fighting talking back to the teacher or being disruptive in class. He shared the following:

> My little brother is in prison serving a long sentence. My little brother ran with some real street dudes. He was not a real street dude. He was dibbling and dabbling, trying to play hard. They committed a felony. Because he was with them, he got the time too. That's one of the biggest regrets of my life. I wasn't there. I was in jail myself.

In the literature, I discussed how discriminatory practices in school discipline permit the continuation of deficit thinking in American classrooms (Douglas et al., 2008; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Manning & Baruth, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and contribute to systematic pushing out of Black and Latinx students from schools and into prison pipeline. Looking back, I learned at an early age that some teachers do not like to be challenged by students of color. They view this as undermining their authority.

Recommendations for School and Community Transformations

This study focused on the educational experiences of former inmates of a Midwest Correctional facility prior to incarceration. The implications of this study should further help teachers understand the importance of having a positive class environment. This can be accomplished by:

- Offering professional development in-services dedicated to addressing students' cultural differences through culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education. Additionally having courageous conversations about race should be a part of professional development.

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Several participants highlighted racial tensions within schools and communities.

- Teachers need to engage in more effective disciplinary interventions including restorative practices that allow teachers to build and maintain healthy relationships among students through participatory social discipline that engages communal learning and decision making (Mannozzi, 2017). Through restorative practices students become accountable for their actions and are assisted with maintained healthy relationship (Mannozzi).

- Legislation should be introduced within the local government that focuses on developing community mentorship programs with a goal of creating fictive communities.

- Peer helping models. Junior and Senior high school students, approved by school officials that have demonstrated the ability to help students, should be assigned to incoming eighth and ninth grade students. This would provide the opportunity for students to having a sense of belonging within the school environment.

- Increased opportunities for tutoring within the school and community through school and community partnership.

- Partnering with community medical and mental health services to provide assistance to students.

- Providing a broader range of extra-curricular activities that emphasize the arts and connects to the interests of students in schools and communities

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative constructivist narratological case study, the number of participants was reserved to six; therefore, the study could be expand to include a larger population.

This study should be replicated with former inmates that were previously incarcerated at Federal Correctional Institutions. This would solely be for the purposes of obtaining a larger recruitment of participants. Participants from this study were previously incarcerated at a state correctional facility. Therefore, the flyer inviting them to participate in the study was restricted to posting at a state parole office. Posting the flyer within federal parole office will increase the opportunities for participation in the study.

Looking forward, this study was male oriented. However, the phenomenon of dropping out of school is not limited to men. I believe this study should be replicated using a female population. It is important to hear their voices.

Furthermore, this study could be duplicated with a sample of previously incarcerated siblings. There is limited research that focuses on the phenomena of previously incarcerated siblings in the context of earning a high school diploma.

Lastly, juvenile detention centers may serve as wealth of information regarding insight from students that may already have one foot in the school-to-prison pipeline. I would like to hear their voices in a collective format. A qualitative narrative forum would help gain insight of barriers encountered for success in school.

Final Reflections

When I first started this dissertation, I viewed the lack of success in the Black and Latinx communities through a deficit lens. In essence, in some ways, I failed to acknowledge to what degree systemic racism and social injustices contribute to family structures. Ladson-Billings (1998) describes the function of institutionalized racism and educational inequality this way:

Perhaps no area of schooling underscores inequity and racism better than school funding. CRT argues that inequality in school funding is a function of institutional and structural racism. The inability of African Americans to qualify for educational advancements, jobs, and mortgages creates a cycle of low educational achievement, underemployment and unemployment, and standard housing. Without suffering a single act of personal racism, most African Americans suffer the consequence of systemic and structural racism. (p. 20)

Her sentiments have now been embedded in the lens through which I now view some aspects of low educational achievement. Furthermore,

Listening to the voices of Latinos who have dropped out was a critical element to understanding the realities they encountered in their schooling. Their ideas may be utilized to help the educational community advocate for resiliency-building in schools in order to promote social and academic success and reduce the dropout rates among Latino youth (Tavitian, 2013, p. vi).

I have learned that the lens in which society is different based on our own personal experiences. I would like to share that before the interview started, one of the participants (Harry) asked if I would be his mentor. I had mixed emotions. On the one hand, I felt a certain a degree of honor. On the other hand, the stigma that Harry was a former inmate lived rent-free in my head. At that point, I realized that I was no better than the employers that refused to hire men with criminal record. I felt a since of guilt and shame. I began to really understand the life-long stigma that comes with being labeled a "former inmate."

Lastly, I would like to reflect on the school environment. This year a teenager in California will become her high school's first Latina valedictorian. Shortly after that announcement, the school's principal stated it would be transitioning to having the top ten students honored at the graduation ceremony, rather than just one. The fact that the principal wanted to change the rule after a person of color was selected speaks to a certain level of overt racism that continues to exist in America.

Mandatory Correctional Education and Inmates Perceptions and Beliefs About the Value of
Earning a High School Diploma
Michael Thomas, Ed.S.

Name: _____

Race: _____

Prison Job: _____

Highest education obtained _____

===
=

Please select the number below that best represents how you feel about your educational
experience.

Strongly				Strongly
Agree(1)	Agree (2)	Undecided(3)	Disagree(4)	Disagree(5)

1. I was able to learn in school. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The teacher cared about me as a student. 1 2 3 4 5

3. My parents/family members helped me with homework 1 2 3 4 5

4. I found the material relevant to my culture 1 2 3 4 5

5. I encountered bullying in school. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I found school to be valuable. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I value education. 1 2 3 4 5

8. Education played a part in working in Prison Industries. 1 2 3 4 5

9. Prison Industries has changed my perception of education. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I believe education will create better employment opportunities. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I do not need education to get a job. 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Hello

My name is Michael Thomas and I am a doctoral student in the University of Missouri-Kansas City's Interdisciplinary PhD program. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation titled "Former Inmates Perceptions and Beliefs About The Value of Earning a High School Diploma."
I am looking for volunteers to take part in the study.

Participants must be of any age, African American or Latino, and have worked in Prison Industries at Lansing Correctional Facility. In addition, participants will have entered the Correctional Facility prior to receiving a high school diploma. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to: complete a questionnaire and some will be required to complete an interview.

Your participation would involve (1) sessions, each of which is approximately (45-60) minutes.

In appreciation for your time, if you are selected for an interview you will receive $50.00 for your participation.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Michael Thomas
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Kansas City
at
(573) 575-6543

The study has been reviewed and approved by the
Research Ethics Review Board, University-Missouri Kansas City.

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Today's Date: _____/_____/_____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

Participant's Name: _____ **Pseudonym:** _____

Thank you for your willingness to volunteer to participate in this study. I will be asking you about your experiences as an African-American or Latino male regarding your perceptions of education prior to confinement and during confinement. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. A digital recorder will be used to record your responses. If you
need to take a break at any time during the interview, please let me know. I would like you to be as open and honest as possible about your experiences. If you have any questions during this process, please ask me. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with being recorded, please let me know and I will stop recording immediately. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, you may choose to not answer. Additionally, if you decide that you no longer wish to participate in the study, you are entitled to discontinue participation, without prejudice or penalty, at any time.

Interview Questions

1. Why did you drop out of school?

2. How would you describe your perception of education prior to incarceration?

3. How would you describe your perception of mandatory prison education?

4. How do you perceive employability inside the prison system?

a. What is your perception of prison industries?

b. How do you perceive your opportunities for employment upon release from prison?

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UMKC
Office of Research Services

NOTICE OF NEW APPROVAL

Principal Investigator: Dr. Loyce Caruthers
615 E. 52nd St.
Kansas City, MO 64110

Protocol Number: 18-110
Protocol Title: FORMER INMATES' PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE VALUE OF EARNING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
Type of Review: Full Review
Expedited Category #: 7

Date of Approval: 08/01/2018
Date of Expiration: 07/09/2019

Dear Dr. Caruthers,

The above referenced study, and your participation as a principal investigator, was reviewed and approved, under the applicable IRB regulations at 21 CFR 50 and 56 (FDA) or 45 CFR 46 (OHRP), by the UMKC IRB. You are granted permission to conduct your study as described in your application.

This study was approved for the inclusion of prisoners pursuant to 45 CFR 46.305(a)(1)

This approval includes the following documents:

Attachments
- Recruitment-Script
- Questionnaire
- Interview Questions
- subpart-c-1
- Flyer
- 18-110_Consent for Participation in a Research Study_stamped

If a consent is being used in this research study you may find the stamped version in section 16 of your application.

The ability to conduct this study will expire on or before 07/09/2019 unless a request for continuing review is received and approved. If you intend to continue conduct of this study, it is your responsibility to provide a Continuing Review form prior to the expiration of approval or a final report if you plan to close the study.

This approval is issued under the University of Missouri - Kansas City's Federal Wide Assurance FWA00005427 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under the Board's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

There are 5 stipulations of approval:
1) No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date. (PIs and sponsors are responsible for

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Office of Research Services

initiating Continuing Review proceedings).

2) All unanticipated or serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB.

3) All protocol modifications must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk. This includes any change of investigator.

4) All protocol deviations must be reported to the IRB.

5) All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.

Please contact the Research Compliance Office (email: umkcirb@umkc.edu; phone: (816)235-5927) if you have questions or require further information.

Thank you,

Cynthia Thompson

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VITA

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