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Forecasting The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Generative Case Study of Early Literacy Experiences of Black Male Youth

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FORECASTING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE: A GENERATIVE CASE STUDY
OF EARLY LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF
BLACK MALE YOUTH

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy - Curriculum & Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Forecasting the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

A Generative Case Study of Early Literacy Experiences of Black Male Youth

By

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This study examined the early literacy experiences of Black male youth who have dropped out of school and become court involved. Specifically, it examined how these youth's home, family and school literacy-related experiences have led them into what is known as the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP). These experiences included their ability to glean meaning and understand literacy processes, particularly in reading and through oral language, more specifically in their interactions with school faculty and staff.

This study employed a four-pronged conceptual framework, built at the intersection of Critical Race Theory, Adolescent Development, Critical Literacy, and the STPP, in considering the existing educational research on Black male youth. Generated from this point of intersection, this study theorizes that a *Literacy Confusion* mediates these students' home and school relationships in ways that incline, if not pre-dispose, them toward the STPP. Accordingly, *Generative Case Study* (a hybridized version of case study that also draws on grounded theory) was employed to explore the literacy experiences of six Black males in seeking understanding of how these experiences gave rise to Literacy Confusion and propelled them into the STPP.

One-on-one interviews were the primary data source used in this study, however field notes from observations and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) survey were also used as secondary data sources. This study's interview protocol used a base set

of 28 questions to gather information in seven general areas: reading frequency, encouragement, library exposure, parent-child relationship, teacher-student relationship, peer-peer relationship, and race-based influence. The MIBI was used for two specific reasons in this study: 1) to measure Black Identity in participants, and 2) to check the accuracy of participant narratives related to race.

The six participants in this study were Kevin, Jordan, Marco, Barry, Ronnie and Isaiah. All participants in this study were between 19 and 20-years-old and resided in the Southwest United States during their interviews. All participants in this study left school voluntarily, involuntarily or as the result of a negotiation with school personnel, and were court involved within the last three years. Several themes emerged from the cross case analysis process and the extended analysis, producing both case congruencies and incongruences: Revolving Door Guardians, Incarcerated Parents, Incarceration Saving their Lives, Black Identity Development, Early Literacy Development, Good Readers, Functional Literacy, and Importance but Avoidance of Reading. Additionally, the cases will also produced four subthemes, emerging from within one or more of the themes: Boredom, Ability to Self-Advocate, Truancy, and Lack of Role Models.

This study found that although literacy skill was not an explicit factor in these Black males' dropping out of school and becoming incarcerated, it did influence their perceptions of, and experiences in, school, primarily through their not being privy to "the why" of literacy—why literacy skill are so important to master. This study also found that literacy confusion played a significant role in these Black males' (mis)communication with parents, teachers and school administrators.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

Introduction

In the 1990's there was a sufficient rise in incarceration and dropout rates, both of which orchestrated what is now, unfortunately, fairly popularly known as the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP). The most recent research on the STPP mainly focuses on how zero-tolerance policies, as they relate to suspension and expulsion practices, lead some students to miss instructional time and eventually leave school voluntarily or involuntarily (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003; Casella, 2003; Christle, Jolviette, & Nelson, 2005; Heitzig, 2009; James & Freeze, 2006; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2012; Tuzzolo & Hewitt, 2007; Wald & Losen, 2003b). While zero tolerance policies have exacerbated poor and minority students' departures from school, they are not the only source of problems in school for these students. Literacy skill development, or the lack there of, has also been influential in orchestrating the STPP (Freire, 1970; Washington, 2001). This is especially true when considering how school language is used as a distributor of cultural and social capital that all students must use to navigate the educational system if it is to "educate" them (Chomsky, 2007; Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987). While dropout rates, incarceration rates, and school disciplinary policies have been linked statistically in voluminous research over a broad span of time, there has been little research examining the role of literacy skill development relative to the disproportionate poor educational outcomes for minority students.

Personal Connection to the Study

During my time as a graduate student I have made it a personal duty to give back to the local community so that it is more probable that others like me may one day have the same opportunities as I have had, despite any personal, economic, educational, and/or larger political

challenges they may face. As a graduate researcher and as a community volunteer, I continuously reflect on how I have gone from being an angry child with a lion's share of adversity, to a successful doctoral candidate and businessman.

While working in the tutoring program that I have worked hard to grow at a local school during the comprehensive exam stage of my doctoral program, this reflection process became more and more conscious and constant. The purpose of the tutoring program is to try to ensure that the children in it are able to succeed, both personally and academically, even if they have had significant obstacles and, therefore, have missed many developmental opportunities. In working with these children over time, I realized that I was once one of them and, further, how easily I could have become a statistic of the STPP, instead of the school-to-college pipeline. These reflections have aided me in focusing this study on Black males' early literacy experiences and how their literacy skill, or lack thereof, may have led them into the STPP. These reflections also influenced my methodological approach to this study (discussed further in a moment).

As a Black male, even though I was raised in a highly educated, two-parent family, the likelihood that I could spend time under state control at some point in my life was/is still very high (Alexander, 2010). Because my parents were educated (though not only traditionally), and, therefore, because education was instilled in my home as the primary means to all future ends, I was able to avert disaster, though I have struggled during my entire schooling career with the requirement to conform to school norms, including, as mentioned previously, the expectation that I use school language to distribute cultural and social capital. In dissecting this experience, I noticed that reading was always emphasized in my home. Not just reading for school, but reading for leisure. Further, because of the extensive stockpile of books in my parents' home library, the seemingly endless shelves of store-bought workbooks in my room, and frequent trips

to the public library, literacy was a skill that my parents essentially ensured I would master at an early age.

As a young Black male who grew up in (and out of) poverty, had occasional brushes with the law, and experienced ebbing and flowing interest toward school, I have realized that I rarely saw myself having a meaningful future—my lived experience as a Black man was not represented or affirmed, even in school settings, as particularly promising. Through my research efforts, I have come to recognize that, unfortunately, my story is not unique in this regard—it is, too often, *the* Black male story and, in general, the poor child story. The lived experiences (and often even the very lives) of youth, especially Black youth, are viewed as less valuable, important, or necessary, thus they are rarely considered by researchers, even by those seeking to understand their disproportionate social and academic outcomes (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For that reason, this study purposefully sought to employ a unique form of Case Study Method (discussed in greater detail further below and in Chapter 3) so that the own, though unheard, stories of Black male youth's personal and academic struggles were used to explain, further understand (including their origins in educational system's caste-like inconsistencies and imbalances in service delivery to them), and, potentially, resolve those struggles.

Problem Statement and Background

While Blacks make up only 16 percent of K-12 school students nation-wide, they account for almost a third of school suspensions and expulsions (NCES, 2013, figure 1.). The secondary school numbers relative to the suspensions of male students are even starker. Black males account for 57 percent of all male suspensions in the most recent, 2007, data reported, though they represented just 17 percent of the male student population overall (NCES, 2011, table 14.).

Not surprisingly, Black male student matriculation in school is often met with trepidation. Many factors have been shown to have an influence on Black male populations' experience in school as it relates to matriculation. Relative to this study, these factors include parental involvement, motivation, and special education referral (Bahena, Cooc, Currie-Rubin, Kutner, & Nq, 2012; Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Letgers, 2003; Black, 2004; Jogwu, 2010; Wald & Losen, 2003b). While literacy is discussed as a factor that may contribute to the lack of some Black males' school success, it is not typically the primary focus in this area of research. This lack of primary attention to literacy is startling when considering the role of literacy in high stakes testing results (NCES, 2012a). In reviewing this research, it becomes clear that absence of more robust consideration of literacy can be understood as researchers' thinking about literacy in a solely functional way (Levine, 1986). According to Freire and Macedo (1987), literacy involves "reading the word in the world," it is, in essence, the key to understanding the world. Thus, reading marks the beginning stages of understanding what the words of the world mean and how, as a whole, language is "the means to a critical consciousness, which in turn, is the means of conceiving of change and of making choices to bring about further transformations" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xv). This study considered this broader view of literacy.

Although Black students are known to attend school, particularly kindergarten, at earlier ages than White students, they are still behind in literacy skill development (Easton-Brooks & Brown, 2010; NCES, 2012a). Further, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the overall gap between Black and White students school success grows larger with each year of attendance in public and private U.S. schools (NCES, 2012a). It is important to consider why White students are used as the comparison group for achievement for Black students, because even though they are still the demographic majority in U.S. schools, in terms

of academic performance, Asian students are, at least in specific ethnic sub-groups, higher achievers (NCES, 2012a). When disaggregated by class, poor White students are also persistently educationally behind their at-least middle class White counterparts (Hernandez, 2011). This focus on White students as “the standard” is important to both contest and link to the Eurocentric educational Canon and the overrepresentation of White female teachers in U.S schools (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Moving forward, this study has employed both of these analytical perspectives.

Even fewer studies have sought to specifically address the experiences of Black males related to literacy skill attainment. Although many researchers have recognized that there is a problem with the delivery of information, especially as it relates to pedagogy, for minority students, few have attempted to examine this problem from a literacy perspective (Delpit, 1995; Kunjufu, 1985, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). This study sought to identify the early literacy experiences of Black male youth and explore how these experiences contributed to their insufficient development in school.

The lack of equal educational resources provided to Black students is well documented in U.S. history dating back to colonial times (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bell, 1980; Board v Board of Education, Topeka Kansas, 1954; Brundage, 2011; Clark & Clark, 1947). The fact that some Blacks have still been able to make educational progress, even to become highly educationally successful, despite this resource deprivation is a testament to the cultural wealth and resiliency of Black people (Yosso, 2005). But in considering this resource disparity in concert with broader societal laws that put people of color at a disadvantage by design, and also preclude them from having meaningful representation in, for example, the fields of law and politics, it is not hard to imagine that something more sinister is at play: A conspiracy; specifically, a conspiracy to

destroy Black boys, as Kunjufu (1985, 1986, 1990) has described it. Though some scholars may argue that the notion of a conspiracy is extreme, Clark and Clark's (1947) doll study, conducted with far less sinister considerations underlying it, provides evidence in support of conspiracy (Banks & Banks, 1997). By being forced, and later conditioned, to adopt White ideals, Blacks have learned to blame themselves, each other, and their blackness for the societal failures of their group, especially failures in the educational, economic, and sociopolitical realms (Cross, 1991). Thus, consideration of identity, specifically Black racial identity and its development, as codified in the work of Cross (1971) and Jackson (1976), is particularly salient to the school experiences of Black male students' taught by predominantly White female teachers. In this study, race in general, and racial identity, more particularly, have central consideration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the early literacy experiences of Black male youth as it relates to their sense of connection/disconnection with school. The narratives of these early experiences were used to map out these individuals' (Black male youth) reason(s) for leaving school and, later, in their becoming court involved, which often times go hand-in-hand. It is important to note that this study was not intended to predict a cause and effect relationship here; rather it was intended to document and then try to understand the life experiences of Black male youth through the lens of their early literacy experiences. Ideally, this study has lead to some insights as to how early literacy influences these young men's cultural, educational, and social capital.

This study was conceived as a *Generative Case Study*. As will be described below relative to the Conceptual Framework and, in greater detail in Chapter 3, the generative component here is borrowed from grounded theory and integrated into case study method. In

considering four conceptual influences on this study (Critical Race Theory, Adolescent Development, Critical Literacy, and the STPP), a fifth influence (Literacy Confusion) is generated.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), as discussed by Bell (1980, 2004), is utilized to prioritize the role of race within this study as a whole, and through which Literacy Confusion will be explicated. Discussion of adolescent development, critical literacy, and the STPP has also aided in the explication of Literacy Confusion.

This study's participants were selected from a pool of Black male youth who are or have been court involved. These participants were asked, in response to carefully sequenced interview questions, to describe their early literacy experiences, particularly with respect to oral language and reading, and, how they think these experiences may have impacted their literacy skill development. Participants were also asked to reflect on home, school, and societal influences on their identity and racial identity development. Finally, participants were asked to consider any relationship between their literacy skill, racial identity, and court involvement.

Introduction of the Research Questions

The research questions for this generative case study were designed to bring forward the participants' early literacy practices in the home and at school, as well as how information about how these practices influenced their interactions with teachers and other students, and predisposition to receive disciplinary penalties in school. The primary question that guided this study was: *How do Black males that have entered the STPP view their literacy (reading and oral language) development at home and at school?* Two ancillary research questions that were considered are: *How do literacy skills (reading and oral language) influence Black male students' interactions within and out of school?* And, *How, if at all, did these literacy skills lead*

them to the STPP? These questions were informed by this study's conceptual framework (discussed next and again in Chapters 2 and 3) and build on the review of the literature related to the study (discussed in Chapter 2).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study drew from four main areas of research, CRT, Adolescent Development, Critical Literacy, and the STPP. Each of these four are complex and multifaceted, crossing many fields of inquiry. Accordingly, the current study drew exclusively from each of these areas only in terms of their relevance to education, and, more specifically, to extending understanding of the early literacy experiences of Black male youth. At the intersections of these four areas of research, I theorize that a hybrid core concept, that I term *Literacy Confusion*, is generated. Through *Generative Case Study* inquiry this core concept will enable further understanding of the role of literacy in forecasting the STPP for Black male youth.

Critical Race Theory: The Role of Race

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged from Critical Legal Studies in the 1970's through the work of law professor Derrick Bell. Bell (1980, 2004) describes race as having many roles in society, including law, economics and education. The role that race plays in the education system is often at play, even when forms of bias, prejudice and discrimination seem dormant. Like a rubber snake in the grass, racial disparities produce real behavioral alterations even when blatant forms of discrimination are absent. Race-based influences have become institutionalized and, therefore, embedded in societal structures. Bell (1992) describes this ever-present danger through an allegory in which Whites on earth sell Blacks back into slavery to beings from another planet, in exchange for technology that will solve earth's environmental problems. Race, understood from this perspective, set the tone for the current study. Race is examined as a barrier for Black

students relative to how teachers, parents, and others, who have adopted “Whiteness” as the ideal, judge them. The “Whiteness” ideal will be examined in particular detail with respect to pedagogical instruction associated with literacy at large. CRT intimates that the educational separation between races begins at this instructional site, and that this pedagogical approach then bleeds into the everyday lives of Black youth who have the “choice” to be taught according to it or not at all. Because the parents of these youth have faced this same non-choice, this separation and bleeding may have also characterized their learning to read and speak in the home, before they even set foot in school.

Adolescent Development

This study considered adolescent development relative to racial identity and stereotype threat. Both racial identity and stereotype threat are major developmental factors related to Black male development and Black masculinity, especially from adolescence forward (Cross, 1971, 1991; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Statistically, these two factors are negatively correlated; meaning that the higher or more well developed an individual’s racial identity is, the less susceptible he or she is to stereotype threat. In contrast, the more vulnerable an individual is to stereotype threat, the inference is that her or his racial identity has poor coherence; relative to the current study, this identity is Black identity (Steele, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Racial identity and stereotype threat are important factors for the current study because of its engagement of Black male youth participants. These participants’ expressions of race (positive, negative, or other) are important analytical points of reference for the current study.

Critical Literacy: The Role of Language and Reading

Freire’s (1970) conceptualization of critical literacy can be used to explain disparities that

exist between groups. According to Freire, traditional pedagogical forms of literacy are akin to “banking” because the teacher, conceived of as the sole source of knowledge in the classroom, views teaching simply as a process of making deposits of his or her knowledge into, there-to-fore empty, heads of his or her students. Freire rejects this banking model’s usefulness, arguing instead that students should be taught to think critically and to use literacy in critical ways through “problem-posing” pedagogies that recognize students’ prior knowledge and engage students as agents in their own education (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987). In fact, banking education conflicts with the purported democratic process of education by limiting the power of learners to question what they are taught (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Banking education also forces students to read largely only to find answers to preset questions, rather than to simply discuss or, further, question what is read (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Teaching students critical literacy skills through problem posing education encourages them as readers to question what is read and how the content influences the world they live in. Freire and Macedo (1987) point out that critical literacy, especially reading, “always involves critical perception, interpretation, and *rewriting* of what is read” (p. 36). Through problem posing education language development is also achieved. Reading does not simply involve seeing and speaking the words in one’s head, but using words out loud—as oral language—to express understanding of the world; in sum, to communicate the relationship between what is being read/said and the contextual framework in and about which the reading and speaking is occurring. In the current study, the term critical literacy will be used to describe reading *and oral language* as integral to students’ learning to ‘read the word and the world.’

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) can be succinctly described as a fork in the

educational path at which children and adolescents are pushed, kicked, forced, or locked out of school and subsequently end up court involved, detained, or incarcerated (Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009; Wald & Losen 2003a, 2003b). Most parents of school-aged children view school as a safe place that protects their children from delinquency and the prison system, but the contrary is actually the case for many students. U.S. schools not only act to feed some children into the STPP, while steering others from it, they are *designed* to do this; to create student castes through school policy (such as tracking and various zero tolerance practices) that filter students in this bifurcated way (Alexander, 2010; Ansalone, 2010; Black, 2004; Christle, et al., 2005; Clark, 2003; Shannon 2001).

Research on the STPP emphasizes that there is no specific formula for identifying exactly which students are at risk of dropping out, because several variables play a role (Christle, et al., 2005; Wald & Losen, 2003a, 2003b). Researchers have not yet adequately analyzed these variables to the point where reliable predictions can be made, although there is ample documentation that the educational system segregates students based on race, potential, and perception, sometimes all three, and that doing so has the effect of putting some students on a path toward future incarceration (Casella, 2003; Guyon, Maurin, & McNally, 2011; Wald & Losen, 2003b).

Literacy Confusion

In this study the term Literacy Confusion is coined and used to begin to describe two aspects of literacy engagement: 1) a persons' (in this case, students') lack of literacy skill prohibiting them from deciphering verbal and non verbal references, especially in situations in which the individual cannot control, avoid or self-advocate; and, 2) how a person (in this case, teachers) interpret/misinterpret another persons' (in this case students') literacy skills, causing

both parties (teachers and students) to react in ways that conflict with some individuals' (educational, social, economical etc.) progress. Literacy Confusion and related teacher communication, or lack thereof, coupled with unfair school policies and teacher demands/pressure related to standardized test performance, disproportionately leads Black male students, as well as other minority student groups, into educational default (Ladson-Billings, 2006). These occurrences make literacy a potentially key factor in the STPP.

I came to the notion of Literacy Confusion in thinking about literacy as a factor in the STPP relative to the other three afore referenced areas of research. Literacy Confusion lives at and emerges from the intersections of these four areas. In using what I call a *Generative Case Study Design*, it was my expectation that the Black male youth's discussion of their literacy experiences would *generate* greater understanding of this confusion, where it comes from, how it operates, and, how it can be resolved. In this way, this case study also grounds this theory. This will be discussed more specifically in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Operational Definitions

In this section I explain the operational definitions of key terms in the study as they relate to familiar and unfamiliar uses of these terms (i.e., as opposed to their general or ambiguous definitions). Further, I explain how these terms will be used in this study, as opposed to their common use, especially as these terms contradict common grammatical rules and definitions. These terms are Black/black, Dropouts, Stereotype Threat, Zero Tolerance Policies and Generative Case Study.

Black/black

In this study, the term Black is used to describe its male youth participants. Participants in this study were selected only from a pool that identified themselves as Black, Black American,

African American, or of African descent. The term Black will also be used to describe individuals within this research that have previously been described as African American or of African descent, including those that may come from non-African countries but have self identified as such. This includes individuals from Latin America and/or first and later generation immigrants of African descent raised in other parts of the world (Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino etc.). Black is also capitalized throughout this study to emphasize the humanity of the individuals it represents, whether this humanity is referenced as a noun or an adjective.

Dropouts

The term dropout is used in this study interchangeably with various terms that describe how students may “leave school,” voluntarily, involuntarily, or as the result of a negotiation. These terms include: opted-out, pushed-out, kicked-out, stopped-out, kept-out, and locked-out among others. The term dropout is not used in this study to describe students’ academic status, nor to differentiate between students with high or low grade achievement, nor to differentiate students who have left traditional schools to pursue non-traditional school options (e.g., General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs).

Stereotype Threat

Codified by Steele and Aronson in the 1990s, stereotype threat describes a form of identity anxiety that emerges when a person from a particular identity group (e.g., on the basis of race, gender, etc.), who is aware of a stereotype pertaining to her/his group, enters into a situation in which that stereotype has saliency. In such situations, the stereotype has the potential to threaten the individual’s ability to perform. However, Steele & Aronson’s research also documents that the threat can be averted, or at least mitigated, if the individual, though a member of the group to which the stereotype is applied, is confident in her/his abilities relative to the

stereotype, and/or if a “qualifier” to the stereotype is interjected prior to entering the situation in which performance is required. For example, if a woman, aware of the stereotype that women are “not good in math,” is a supremely confident mathematician, the stereotype will be averted (not threaten her performance in math). Likewise, if a woman, also aware of the math stereotype, but not confident of her math abilities, is “primed” by the qualifier, “while women generally do not perform as well in math as men, on the math test you are about to take, women typically outperform men,” the impact of the stereotype may potentially be mitigated or averted.

Zero Tolerance Policies

Created as responses to the government’s “war on drugs,” since 2004, under the *Guns in Schools Act*, schools have been required to have these policies in place if they wish to continue receive funding through the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (now the *No Child Left Behind Act*) (Martinez, 2009). These policies require school officials to take specific, pre-determined action to specific student actions, without considering any such action in a specific context or relative to any mitigating factors, under the pretense that “zero tolerance” is a necessary posture to maintain the safety of faculty, staff and other students.

Generative Case Study Design

Generative Case Study Design is a hybrid methodology, best described as a combination of Grounded Theory and Multiple Case Study. Generative Case Study Design will allow me to explore the notion of Literacy Confusion, in particular, its efficacy as a Theory to explain further how, especially Black male youth, are overrepresented in the STPP. The Theory of Literacy Confusion (TLC) is grounded by the current study as the cases yielded relevant data. An added benefit of Generative Case Study Design is that it also allowed other themes to emerge, from some, most, or all of the cases, that added depth and/or breadth of understanding of the role of

literacy in, essentially, educationally tracking Black male youth into the STPP. This methodology is further explained in detail in Chapter 3.

Brief Review of the Topic Literature Related to the Study

This study examined the early literacy experiences of Black male youth relative to the STPP. In order to carry out this examination, the study drew from and built on research organized into eleven topic areas: Race in Education, Developmental Factors of Race, the Link Between Racial Identity and Stereotype Threat, Whiteness and School Culture: Creating Stereotype-Threat Situations, Rightness of Whiteness, Teacher Impact on Student Outcomes, the Role of Literacy: Creating Gaps in Knowledge, Identity Development as a Factor Affecting Literacy, Disciplinary Referrals, Standardized Curriculum, and Building on Case Study Research.

Just in reviewing these topic area headings, it is clear that race played a major role in bounding the researcher's examination of the literacy experiences at focus in the current study. According to Bell (1980, 2004) race plays a definitive role in human interactions in society, even when its role is denied. Freire's (1970) research also foregrounds race, as well as class and economic sustainability, as a major factor in the evolution of humanity in general, and in education particularly.

Freire's (1974) work on critical literacy locates the origins of human understanding of the world in the development of literacy. In this regard, Freire's work in literacy goes beyond that of others in this field, because it is rooted in social justice advocacy for self and others (Slater, Fain, & Rosatto, 2002).

Advocacy requires a sense of self-efficacy that is hard for young Black males developing in a White institutional context to effectively assert. In this regard, Cross's (1971) work in racial

identity measures, and Steele and Aronson's (1995) work on stereotype threat echo Bell and Freire, not explicitly, but implicitly in linking race and education and arguing that this link is foundational in understanding and changing educational outcomes for students of color.

Although racial identity and stereotype threat are considered foundational or predictive of educational trajectory, they also influence educational trajectory in real time through their ongoing impact of student motivation, self-perception, self consciousness—in sum, their self-efficacy (Cross, 1971, 1991; Sellers, et al., 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Brief Review of the Methodological Literature Related to the Study

Much of the topic literature relevant to this study draws from/builds on research on racial identity and stereotype threat, and since much of that research has emerged from the field of psychology, the preponderance of studies are quantitative in nature. A portion of the remaining relevant topic literature is explored through theoretical research. Further, since there is really no such method as *Generative Case Study Design* in the existing literature base, this study methodologically reviews the relevant research that employs simply a multiple or single case study methodological approach.

Purposeful Posture of the Study

As is typical in much research, this study was conducted from a particular point of entry to its content focus, race. Race is not a biological predictor of human outcomes, but through the racialized conditioning of humans in society, race *as a social construct* is often predictive of outcomes (Kunjufu, 2011; Ogbu, 1978). This study assumed that race would be a factor in the study's outcomes (relative to the collected data as well its interpretation). Additionally, this study assumed that literacy or lack thereof (defined by the participants and/or others) would inform the study participants' school experiences. These assumptions were confirmed by study findings

(discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5).

Limitations of the Study

This study primarily intended to focus on the early literacy experiences of adolescent/young adult-age Black male youth. This focus may be viewed as a limitation of the study as it relates to the recollection of those early experiences by its participants. Some participants had difficulty accurately recounting their pre-school experiences because of the length of time that has passed between infancy (defined as five weeks to one year old) and young adulthood. According to Ormrod (2008), time is the largest influence on human memory and even the most intimate memories can deteriorate over time. Thus much of the literacy experiences presented in this study occurred in the second half of participants' lives.

Some would also view a qualitative approach to the study as a limitation. This study was comprised of six case studies. The small sample size may not be as generalizable as a larger study could be.

Additionally, the sample population may also be viewed as a limitation. All participants in this study share similar racial backgrounds and were recruited from the Southwestern region of the United States. This may also limit the generalizability of the study in terms of geographic region.

Scope and Significance of the Study

As previously discussed, the majority of research on the STPP focuses on school policy, and, perhaps, rightly so, since policy plays a major role in how students are filtered into, through, and out of school. But there is still more to learn about policy and related practices relative to the STPP. For example, what are the circumstances that lead to the use of these policies? What is the nature of the communication among all those impacted by the policies? In what ways and to

what extent might the pre-school experiences of Black male youth influence or be influenced by these policies?

Very few research studies examine the role of literacy in student outcomes as they relate to dropping out and incarceration. Likewise there is a paucity of research exploring the early literacy experiences of Black male youth subsequently incarcerated. This study sought to augment the research in these areas; at the same time it aimed to do so in a manner (through interviews) that gives voice (in their own words and reading of the world) to those, as yet, largely unheard in research across topics and disciplines.

Accordingly, the current study may also provide a point of entry for teachers, school leaders, and parents to better support the education of Black male students. Because of the focus of this study is on literacy as it relates to the STPP, through it, schools and communities may be able to better determine what works and what does not work in building more culturally responsive and critically situated literacy learning processes for Black male youth. Freire (1987, 1992) and Macedo (1987) describe learning as a one stage process and re-learning as a two stage process in which what is incorrect must be untaught in order to effectively learn and master a skill, especially when it relates to reading, writing and language acquisition. Toward these ends the current study is directed.

Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter served an introduction to the study as a whole. This introduction provided information about the researcher's personal connection to the study, delineated the problem at focus in the study, and articulated the study's purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and operational definitions. It then forecasted the coming topic literature and

methodological literature reviews that will be explicated in Chapter 2. It concluded with a discussion of the study's posture, limitations, scope, and significance.

In Chapter 2, the research related to this study is outlined and reviewed. In Chapter 3, the methodological approach for undertaking the study is delineated. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the six generative case studies. In Chapter 5 the analysis and discussion of the study's findings is undertaken.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to this study to examine the early literacy experiences of Black male youth, and explore the possible relationship of these experiences to the overall academic and social outcomes of Black male youth who dropped-out of school and were, at one time, court involved.

This chapter will provide a review of the theoretical and empirical research that is related to this study. This research is focused in the following eleven areas: Race in Education, Developmental Factors of Race, the Link Between Racial Identity and Stereotype Threat, Whiteness and School Culture: Creating Stereotype-Threat Situations, Rightness of Whiteness, Teacher Impact on Student Outcomes, the Role of Literacy: Creating Gaps in Knowledge, Identity Development as a Factor Affecting Literacy, Disciplinary Referrals, Standardized Curriculum, and Building on Case Study Research. Each area listed above will be discussed in terms of its connection to the current study, especially as is related to the conceptual framework, research questions, and methodological approach.

Approach to Identifying the Relevant Literature

Multiple steps were taken to identify the literature at focus in this review. In considering how literacy relates to the STPP, I examined the literature on the STPP as it relates to Black males' suspensions and expulsions, seeking to identify if, and if so how, language is identified as a factor in teacher/student conflict.

From this review, several developmental factors pertaining to cultural disconnections between minority students and school curricula and pedagogical methods could be inferred. This led me to conduct database searches using various key terms. Initial key terms searched

included: African-American, Black, case study, critical literacy, incarceration, juvenile, language, literacy, prison, pipeline, and silencing. The results of these searches yielded new key terms—whiteness, rightness of whiteness, Black English, and masculinity—on which additional keyword searches were conducted.

These term searches returned thousands of articles. In order to narrow the articles down to those most relevant to the current study, specific combinations of key words, each of which linked race and literacy in some way, were run in concert with limiting the search to journal articles published within the last 10 years.

These compound term/date limited-searches enabled me to narrow the search further by eliminating studies on adult literacy, college students, and prisoners. From this juncture I was able to build the meaningful reviewable literature base from which emerged the eleven themes (mentioned above) and around which the ensuing literature review is constructed.

Race in Education

Education has long been promoted as a tool from which success is most reliably built (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) suggests that, prior to its judgment, high educational achievement for Blacks in America was an unreachable goal, though the avid proliferation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities immediately following the *Emancipation Proclamation* (1863) and the corresponding rise of the Black middle class during the Jim Crow era document the contrary (Bell, 1980; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). However, since *Brown*, minorities, especially Blacks, have continued to be held back more by negative stereotypes, white flight, school inequity, poor teacher preparation, biased standardized tests, and performance—characterized as “ability”—tracking (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Saddler, 2005; Steele, 2003; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005). Woodson (1990)

describes this inevitability as *mis*-education. Separating students according to perceived racial characteristics aligned with assumed intellectual ones creates a status of inferiority complex for minorities, and superiority complex for Whites. This status conveys to all students that “white is right” and, thus, anything else is wrong (Zirkel, 2005). While Critical Race Theorist, Derrick Bell (1980), argues that, “*Brown* transformed Blacks from beggars pleading for decent treatment to citizens demanding equal treatment under the law as their constitutionally recognized right” (p. 518), U.S. public schools today remain, at least *de facto* segregated, and unequal (Alexander, 2010; Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Zirkel, 2005). Segregation, whether *de jure* or *de facto*, disadvantages minorities and benefits Whites, and no legal decision can transform a hostile situation into a harmonious one without accountability attached to each stage in the transformation (Bell, 1980; Zirkel, 2005). Whites may even agree that Blacks have rights, including those initially given by the *United States Constitution* only to Whites, but consequences—intended or not—of past and continuing segregation makes Blacks access to those rights impossible without disturbing the sanctity of White status (Bell, 2005; Kunjufu, 2011).

The inequities in education have been racialized such that, more recently, they have become predictive of negative academic outcomes for Black students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These inequities are exacerbated, especially when race-based discrimination is no longer simply ignored, but denied and then re-imagined in victim blaming rationalizations. Ogbu (1978) argues that minorities in the United States become victims of a system that they concomitantly work to maintain. This is brought about by the emphasis on racial characteristics, religious values, and wealth to determine status in the United States, which in turn separation between the dominant and subordinate cultures (Ogbu, 1978). Clearly, race plays a role in creating and

perpetuating these competing dynamics, but race alone does not explain their persistence and pervasiveness. If race is only viewed as a social construct, its impact on society and societal roles is made invisible; so while race is not a “real” thing, it still has very real impact on social orders (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The denial of real race-based impact in society perpetuates the problem of racism, often manifested through Rightness of Whiteness (RW), or the ideal that what is culturally normatively for White people is what is considered correct in society. In using race as the primary means of identifying people, human roles in society are unnecessarily complicated; race operates as a determinant of social interaction even when other human classifications (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender) contradict the efficacy of this practice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). RW clearly undergirds this practice as so-called White characteristics (and values) serve as reference points for opposing “non-White” classification (Omi & Winant, 1994; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

This study built from this body of research in examining the influence that societal norms have on shaping the education system. This body of research also provides a starting point for this study’s analysis of how the U.S educational system is racialized.

Developmental Factors of Race

Racial identity and stereotype threat play major roles in children’s development, especially during adolescence (Rice & Dolgin, 2005). While youth begin to form their individual and group identities before entering school, these identities are likely to change progressively or digressively during their K-12 schooling (Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). One important part of identity development, especially for minority students, is racial identity development. While this development does also occur for White students, it is often not recognized, thus is contrasted in the research as having less salience in White students’ identity

development (Cross, 1971; Sellers, et al., 1997). Many minority children define themselves in relation to race (even before they define themselves as individuals), often comparing themselves to Whites (Cross, 1991; French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Sellers, et al., 1997). Accordingly, racial identity is said to be a factor in minority child and adolescent development, in which Whiteness is a factor.

Racial Identity

Racial identity can be defined as the thoughts and feelings an individual has about their specific group membership. Racial identity-related research emerged relative to Black and White identity development theories, simultaneously developed by Cross (1971, 1978) and Jackson (1976a, 1976b). The race-related research generally discusses identity categories or stages, depending on the model or tool used to describe and/or measure racial identity. Racial identity development grew out of the work done by Erikson (1968) on psychosocial development, specifically his identity versus identity confusion stage work on adolescent identity formation (French, et al., 2006; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Rice & Dolgin, 2005).

Stereotype Threat

Claude Steel and Joshua Aronson (1995) introduced the idea of stereotype threat as cause for diminished achievement on specific tasks for specific groups. Stereotype threat can be defined as how the otherwise normal functioning of an individual on a specific task is inhibited when the threat of confirming a negative racial or gender stereotype has *salience* for the individual engaged in the task. According to Steel and Aronson, stereotype threat affects Blacks on intelligence tasks when compared to Whites, Whites on intelligence tasks when compared to Asians, Whites on athletic tasks when compared to Blacks, Latinos/Hispanics on intelligence tasks when compared to all other racial groups, and women on science and math related tasks

when compared to men. Steele and Aronson's (1995) theory of stereotype threat was further confirmed when they compared the performance of Black and White students' performance on a portion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Identity Safety

Davies, Spencer and Steele (2005) found that creating identity-safe spaces helped educational outcomes improve for all students, but especially minority group students. Students feel a connection with their school and the curriculum when there are visual aids apparent in both that can assist them in making a connection between school culture and their own culture (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Accordingly, some Afrocentric curriculum-friendly schools have artwork related to African and African American culture, values, and/or beliefs on school and classroom walls (Nieto & Bode, 2012). If Black students feel a cultural connection to this artwork, it can aid in the creation of an identity-safe environment in the school and classroom. When this happens, students develop a desire to preserve the artwork and the culture it references. Students may even scold adults if they exhibit behaviors that do not align with said cultural preservation. An example of this would be if an adult stepped on a meaningful symbol stitched into school carpeting and students reacted harshly in explaining that the symbol should be stepped around, not on, because it is an important part of school culture and student identity formation and preservation.

Identity-safe spaces also include providing students with a place where they can be free to be themselves and avoid ridicule for being different (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). In such a place, cultural differences are celebrated, instead of opposed in favor of an emphasis on cultural similarities (Jackson, 2006). Students are more interested in school and the curriculum if they are allowed to express themselves naturally, rather than having to conform to dominant

group norms, and or to focus on what makes them like dominant group members (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Connection to the Study

This study built from this body of research by using racial identity and stereotype threat to further examine Black male youth perception of self and ability as are related to race. This body of research also provides a platform for this study's examination of the influence of race on the development of Black male youth's sense of educational efficacy.

Link Between Racial Identity and Stereotype Threat

Understanding if there is a correlation between racial identity and stereotype threat, and if there is what that correlation is, is an emerging body of inquiry. This is partially because stereotype threat is a relatively new phenomenon, and both racial identity and stereotype threat have been studied separately until recently. Most researchers contend that racial identity begins to take form in adolescents and usually peaks in young adulthood, but stereotype threat impacts student achievement in children as young as age five (Quintana, Aboud, Chao, Contreras-Grau, Cross, Hudley, Hughes, Liben, Le Gall, & Vietze, 2006; Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). Researchers have reported that participants with strong racial identity were less susceptible to the effects of stereotype threat (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Oyserman & Harrison, 1999; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001). Oyserman, Harrison, and Bybee (2001) found that academic performance was positively correlated with racial identity for eighth grade boys and girls. They also found that experiences of racism raised academic efficacy for boys, but did the opposite for girls. This suggests that stereotype threat is mitigated in individuals with strong racial identity, but that *ideology* may impact this mitigation within race across gender. That is, if the individual believes that the stereotype is not representative of that individual's

race, it does not hold true, but that gender, apart from race, may also impact academic performance.

In many stereotype threat studies (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Taylor & Antony, 2001), *priming* is used to create a stereotype threat when conducting experimental research. Priming usually comes in the form of a *verbal cue* from the test facilitator who states a common stereotype to research participants to make race (or gender, etc.) have *salience* in a testing situation. An example of priming is, “Black students tend to score slightly lower than White students on this exam.” The stereotype used for priming is often related to common stereotypes heard, seen and/or read about in the public domain, thus it assumes that the now-primed participant is aware of it and its relevance for her/his group. The efficacy of this assumption is assessed during data collection.

Racial identity, as discussed by Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, and Smith (1997), suggests that an individual’s choices are partially related to their racial identity. But, because there are at least two parts to every individual’s identity (i.e., an individual and a group part), and each individual has more than one identity dimension (e.g., racial, gender, sexual), the relationship between these parts and identities is said to be hierarchal (Sellers, et al., 1997). This means that one aspect may have greater importance for an individual at a specific time and, therefore, exert more influence on the choices that individual makes in that period. In sum, identity as a whole is constantly changing based on an individual’s circumstances.

Steele (2003, 2004) and Aronson (2004) make it clear that stereotype threat is not the only factor that contributes to the achievement gap between Black and White students. Other factors, especially family circumstances and media influences, contribute to not only the development of racial identity and stereotype threat, but also to the achievement gap itself.

As with other aspects of human and child/adolescent development, individuals establish core values, beliefs, and attitudes that have significant, often determining, impact on their social and educational beginnings with their family systems. Caregivers assessed as having poor perceptions of their own race have been shown to transfer these racial attitudes to their children (Hood, Brevard, & Nguyen, 2013; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Lalonde, Jones, & Stroink, 2008). Participants in the Hood, et al., (2013) study stated that *regard* was directly influenced by their caregiver's beliefs about race, and, further, that *regard*, as it related to racial identity, brought about stress in participants. Similarly, Lalonde, et al. (2008) found that Blacks who had greater frequency of racialized socialization within their families exhibited higher positive racial *salience*.

The media also plays a major role in developing both racial identity and stereotype threat. Increased mass media exposure has contributed to the negative stereotypes humans internalize about race and gender (Davies, et al., 2005). This is especially the case for adolescents, especially as they develop during identity versus identity confusion stage (Erikson, 1968; Pahl & Way, 2006; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). In fact, the mere mention of race in the media triggers *salience* for and influences the performance of many adolescents (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Davies, et al., 2005). Steele and Aronson (1995) and Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005) used experiments in which participants were asked to identify their race while taking an exam similar to the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). One group of participants identified their race prior to the exam, one did not identify race and another identified race post exam. The groups that identified race prior to the task scored significantly lower than those who identified it afterward or not at all. Race *salience*, then, is often times correlated with negative perceptions of race, thereby triggering stereotype threat.

This study was built from this body of research by using the relationship between racial identity and stereotype threat to further examine the salience of Black male identity relative to the performance of academic tasks. This body of research also provides a foundation from which this study further explores racial identity and stereotype threat pertaining to Black males' self-perception of their academic socialization and/or ability as compared to Whites students.

Whiteness and School Culture: Creating Stereotype-Threat Situations

Whiteness is said to create a landscape of psychologically-imposed supremacy, especially by evoking fear of the past (Alridge, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For example, slavery, lynching, the imposition of the *Black Codes*, and other race-based discriminatory practices continue to negatively impact the psyche of minorities, especially Black males in the United States. Freire (1970) uses the term *praxis* to illustrate how this negative impact manifests in education. Praxis describes how humans perceive, reflect on, and then react to, among other things, societal structures, including curriculum. Thus, the mere presence of mostly or only Whiteness in positions of power in society, and of only White people portrayed positively in educational materials, can create fear of Whiteness and of non-Whiteness at the same time. While Whites rarely recognize this presence (because it is normative to them), people of color are assaulted by it on a daily basis, because it is non-normative for them and therefore, plays a major role in their social and economic mobility (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; George, 2006). This fear allows Whiteness to function with anonymity and limited opposition.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have made three specific propositions that point to social inequities manifested in society that bleed into schools: 1) race largely determines educational success; 2) societal status (class) is largely determined by rights to property; and, 3) inequity (poverty) is most predictably found where race and property rights intersect. Easy

examples of how these propositions function within schooling context include inequitable school funding between majority and minority communities, the super majority White female teacher demographic across school communities (i.e., regardless of the student demographic), and disproportionate rates of Black and Latino/Hispanic male referral to special education, suspension, and expulsion. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2012b), 83% of all full time teachers (in both public and private K-12 schools) are White, and 75% are female. 24% of all U.S. public schools contain a student population with a more than 75% minority student body (2012b); and 57% of all Latino/Hispanic students and 52% of all Black students in the United States attend these schools (2012b). Only 3% of all White students attend a school where 75% or more of the student population is minority (2012b).

Case (2012) reported that most teachers choose to remain silent when challenges to Whiteness manifest in their classrooms and schools. For example, in instances in which students from minority cultures were mocked, teachers did not interfere. Teachers also expressed that they accept Whiteness as part of the educational culture, which they partially attribute to White male values they see as having been affirmatively adopted by the larger society. In addition to seeing Whiteness as normative (i.e., “right”), teachers express opting not to confront challenges to Whiteness to avoid being labeled racist; in many instances teachers feel that the mere discussion of race can earn them characterizations as racist, though many also admit to taking at least occasional racist stances on educational issues.

Castagno (2008) found that ordinary classroom occurrences strengthen the presence of Whiteness in schools as these occurrences determine who, if anyone, is allowed to speak about race and, therefore, limit discussions of race and racism. According to Castagno’s (2008) analysis on Utah’s urban schools, these limitations are enforced to deflect instances in which

blame and guilt could be placed on Whites. Further, being White as a student enables a sense of compatibility with same-race teachers and administrators. Castagno also found that teachers and administrators remain silent not only when Whiteness is challenged, or when race is discussed, but even when blatantly negative racialized stereotypes of minorities are expressed in school. This silence operates to covertly confirm students' erroneous perceptions of racial minorities—teachers do not intervene (in a sense they do not teach) even when more accurate information is readily available. As a result, students learn, by instructional omission and behavioral example, that stereotypes, discrimination, and even racism are not educationally noteworthy. Instead, White ideals are confirmed through proliferation of Eurocentric schooling practices that, at best, disvalue people of color (Castagno, 2008).

In fact, U.S. schools have been structured to promote inequality in order to diminish some students' motivation to pursue education (Woodson, 1990). Likewise, people of color are forced to confront race (and racism) on a daily basis because of the major role it plays in societal structure and, thus, in limiting their social and economic mobility, at the same time that it augments this mobility for Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; George, 2006). In these ways, White privilege functions with transparency and, therefore, limited opposition, all the while it also operates as a clear marker of access to equity (Lopez, 2006; Wise, 2008). Although race is a learned, not innate, characteristic, it still impacts minorities' and Whites' self-perception, self-esteem and identity. But for people of color, the construct of race simultaneously heightens their sensitivity to actual race-based rejection in schools and society at large (Mendoza-Denton, Pietrzak, & Downey, 2008; Zirkel, 2005).

This study built from this body of research in using the relationship between Whiteness and its influence on teachers and students of all races, to examine the impact of this relationship

on Black male students. This body of research also aided the current study in defining how Whiteness, as a construct, operates to human behavior, both in and out of schools, but especially as these behaviors relate to students speaking in class and teacher classroom management.

Rightness of Whiteness

The phrase Rightness of Whiteness (RW) has been used to describe how all minorities are judged in comparison to White people (Koppelman & Goodhart, 2009). RW is perpetuated in K-12 school culture through the Eurocentric curriculum, standardized testing and tracking. The RW has enabled and, in essence, policed the omission of contributions of minorities to history and culture, especially that recorded in K-12 U.S. school textbooks. This has contributed to how all students view themselves (and each other) in schooling contexts, but especially how people of color see themselves socially, academically and professionally in society as a whole.

Accordingly, RW also underlies even larger issues of educational funding, poverty, and crime in the United States (Juarez & Hayes, 2012; Shannon, 2001). RW has not been studied as a stand-alone subject, rather more by inference in studies on Whiteness and White privilege. Post *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), white flight became necessary to uphold Whiteness and maintain white privilege through the recreation of community, property, and school separation. As a result, race-based stereotypes, borne of prolonged separation of so-called races, have become a normal part of racial socialization in the United States, thus, contributing to the development and maintenance of the RW perspective, often through evocation of fear (Moule, 2009).

White Privilege

Whiteness provides a sense of ownership or acts as property for those who possess the characteristics necessary to benefit from it in the form of White privilege (George, 2006; Harris,

1993). White privilege describes the things that Whites, or people perceived to be White, are often able to benefit from that people of color (or people perceived to be “not White”) are not. Both Whiteness and White privilege allow RW to operate for Whites. But, Whiteness is reinforced by minorities socialized in the system in which their non-Whiteness becomes the basis of comparison relative to which their “wrongness” is determined. Dating back to the 1800’s, Blacks were depicted in odd ways; ways far distant from reality. Examples include the images of *Sambo*, *Mamie*, *Stepin Fetchit*, and “blackface” characters (played by Whites wearing black face paint) that portrayed Blacks as Whites imagined them to be; typically as clownish or ignorant buffoons in minstrel shows. While these images were generally considered entertaining by the White audiences by and for whom they were created and performed, little consideration was given to the short and long term impact of them on Blacks, Whites, and society as a whole (Brundage, 2011).

The diminished societal value of Blacks is also visible in racial identity measures that consider Whiteness as an operation of identity. Of particular note in this regard, in the Nigrescence model developed by William Cross (1971), pro-White, anti-Black and self-hatred are all considered Black identity manifestations in the model’s initial stage (Vandiver, Cross, Worrel, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002; Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). Through this model, Cross argues that Black self-hatred is a necessary stage through which most, if not all Blacks, must pass before achieving positive acceptance of their “Blackness.” The model does not give serious attention to the possibility that Black identity can emerge from a context unconcerned with Whiteness or its rightness. The necessary adoption of self-hatred in Black identity formation illustrates a disturbing fidelity to RW, the impact of which can also be seen in student performance of various identities in school (e.g., racial, academic) and the effect of this

on their educational success and psychological welfare (Cross, 1971; Taylor & Antony, 2001; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005). Cross' (1971) model has been tremendously influential, inspiring many subsequent identity models to also accept the negative portrayal of Black identity in their measures.

The Media

Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2004) examined the role of television in determining body image perceptions for minority women. They found that minority women were more likely to have lower perceptions of their body images when they had less exposure to positive images of women from their own race as main characters in television shows. Many of their study participants even noted that the ideal body image included attributes such as being tall, thin and blonde. This distorted body image ideal can be traced back to Clark and Clark's (1947) *Doll Test*. In this test, Black children, aged six to nine, were shown two dolls, identical in all ways except for color; one doll was White and the other Black. The child participants were prompted to pick the doll they wanted to play with, the doll they considered to be good, bad, nice, mean, and so forth. Overwhelmingly, the children chose the white doll when asked about positive associations, and the Black doll when asked about negative ones. Most disturbing, when asked which doll looked like them, the children either chose the White doll or acted out by crying or running away from the interview area. Data from this study was eventually included in the body of social science evidence introduced to support the plaintiff's position in the *Brown* (1954) case (Zirkel, 2005).

In 2005, filmmaker Kiri Davis, replicated the *Doll Test* and found that 71% of child participants still associated the White doll with the positive characteristics and the Black doll with the negative ones (Davis, 2005, 2007). In 2010, Cable News Network (CNN) hired a group

of psychologists to again duplicate this test with 133 children, but using identical—except for their five different complexion shades—cartoon-like doll images on paper instead of the two—one White and one Black—actual dolls. The children were split into two groups, one younger (ages 4-5), and one older (ages 9-10). Unlike the previous tests, the CNN test included Black and White participants. 76% of the younger participants across race pointed to the two darkest shade doll images when they were asked to “point to the dumb child.” When these participants were asked why they chose these darker doll images, many stated it was because their skin was “black” or “dark.” Further, 66% of the younger participants pointed to the two darkest shade doll images when they were asked to “point to the child most adults don’t like.” 59% of the older children pointed to the same two darkest shade doll images when they were asked to “point to the bad child.”

Television, toys, movies, and other media are powerful in conveying RW to adults as well as children, both Black and White. Perhaps most disconcerting is the persistence with which RW is conveyed over time, and especially today when positive images of Black people and portrayals of Blackness are more plentiful (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2004). While there is some anecdotal evidence suggesting that in the Obama era at least Black children may be more likely to attribute positives to the Black doll and/or darker doll images, only the test of time will reveal the empirical efficacy of this evidence.

Connection to this Study

This study built from this body of research by using RW to more deeply assess Black male youth’s behavioral stances in school from a post-Ogbu perspective (e.g., thinking beyond these stances as simply avoiding the appearance of “acting White” to avoid ridicule from Black peers) (Ogbu, 2008). This body of research also provided a springboard for further examination

of how the adoption of perceived or actual White academic ideals influenced Black males' perceptions of their teachers' perception of them in performing academic tasks, as well as their self-perception of their ability to achieve these ideals.

Teacher Impact on Student Outcomes

Teacher education programs continue to offer credentials to teachers who are not prepared to teach all students, especially poor and minority students (Juarez & Hayes, 2012). In examining teacher education program content across the country, it is clear that their core curricula only superficially attends to diversity issues in schooling, and rarely to race and poverty concerns within the education system (Ahiquist, Gorski, & Montao, 2011; Gorski, Osei-Kofi, Sapp, & Zenkov, 2013). This absence of substance in teacher training not only diminishes the importance of diversity, it also cultivates culturally (and otherwise) inept teachers, especially but not exclusively White ones, which has various negative consequences for all students' learning outcomes.

For example, teachers' acceptance (silence) and/or denial (avoidance) of Whiteness plays a major role in positioning students to succeed and/or fail in their classrooms (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Even those students, usually White ones, who are educationally successful, are ultimately deficit in their understanding of how "the system" works; this deficit is a pre-requisite to their professional success as it was in their educational success; critical consciousness, even in Whites, works at counter purposes to the institutional status quo and is, therefore, marginalized. Bennett (1972) (as cited in Saddler, 2005) contends that, "He who controls images, controls minds . . . The system could not exist if it did not multiply discrimination" (p. 43). Everyone in the system, perhaps especially teachers, is either an advocate or an enemy; the passive demeanor

many teachers' display in schools whether manifested out of ignorance, indifference, or fear, operates as systemic advocacy (though also enemy to educational equity and justice).

Another example of the impact of diversity deficit in teacher training can be seen in how teachers view student intelligence. If teachers view intelligence as performance based, rather than biological capacity, they see themselves as capable of improving the performance of poor and minority students (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Steele, 2003; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005). Unfortunately, the converse is more often the case. Teachers training leads teachers to believe that minority students often lack the raw ability to learn, thus directing their teaching efforts toward these students as a waste of time. This has the effect of pushing, kicking, or forcing students of color out of their classrooms, schools, and eventually into the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2010; Mauer, 2006).

Teacher Expectations

White teachers' low expectations for Black students are considered a major factor in the development and maintenance of the STPP (Alexander, 2010; Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009; Kim, et al., 2012). These low expectations often derive from minority students' low performance in literacy skill-building courses, such as reading and writing (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009). Poor and minority students have demonstrated that they are capable of understanding the need for literacy skills development, but often times they learn this lesson late, and thus have to make up so much ground that they become frustrated and/or discouraged (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009). Because some literacy skill development may be time sensitive (i.e., linked to a developmental window), even with hard work, some skill gaps cannot be effectively bridged at later educational stages (Chomsky, 2007). The curricular structure of literacy education in U.S. schools may exacerbate these problems; reading and writing instruction are usually taught discretely, when

research suggest that teaching them in tandem may benefit students with literacy skills gaps (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009).

Rutenberg (2009) reported that 62% of Black college students (incoming freshman), but only 22% of the total freshman student population, require remedial English instruction. While Black students' secondary education grades are sufficient for gaining admission to the post secondary institutions, after course placement testing they are found to be in need of additional educational assistance; they are then required to take remedial, non-college credit earning coursework, before being allowed to enroll in the regular undergraduate courses that count toward their degree programs.

Banks (2005) and Haddix (2009) found that Black students in college were able to recognize the difference between the skills they gained during high school compared to the skills their White counterparts gained, but often felt they could do little about it. These students expressed knowing that they were being cheated during their high school preparation, largely because of low teacher expectations for their performance, but didn't realize how much they were being cheated until they attended college. While some of these students recalled being praised for their intellectual skills during high school, they felt these skills were not supported with challenging academic coursework, thereby compromising their confidence in their ability to perform across subject areas. A major consequence of low teacher expectations is students' belief in their ability to fulfill educational requirements (Banks, 2005; Rutenberg, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Woodson, 1990).

Teachers View of Masculinity and Related Disciplinary Considerations

Haddix (2009) found that *masculine expressions* have contributed to teacher-student conflict. In particular, Black males often express masculinity through highly energetic verbal and

nonverbal behavior, often interpreted in school settings as aggressive or otherwise problematic. The miscue between these behavioral expressions and their interpretation builds barriers between especially Black male students and their 83% White and 75% female teachers (Haddix, 2009; Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010; NCES, 2012b; Washington, 2001). This conflict and the related barriers have the effect of lowering teacher academic expectations for these students. These low expectations lead teachers to negatively stereotype male, predominantly minority male, students as both marginally educable and/or dangerous, leading to the gross differential referral rates of these students (relative to White, including White male, students) to special education and/or for suspension and expulsion (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2012; Wald & Losen, 2003a, 2003b; Matthews, et al., 2010).

Literacy Creating Teacher-Student Conflict

Researchers attribute a large part of literacy skills gaps between White students and Black students to Black students use of African American English (AAE) in schools (Dillard, 1973; Thompson, Craig, & Washington, 2004; Matthews, et al., 2010). These researchers claim that: 1) AAE is used in schools by Black students across socioeconomic class levels, and 2) that its use creates a conflict between Black students and White teachers; a parallel case is made for Latino/Hispanic students that use Spanish in school (Thompson, et al., 2004; Matthews, et al., 2010).

The use of AAE in schools has also been recognized in the research as a contributing factor to low expectations set by teachers for Black students (Haddix, 2009; Matthews, et al., 2010; Thompson, et al., 2004; Washington, 2001). Teachers respond negatively to the use of AAE in school, and prefer, often even require, that students use Standard American English (SAE) in class. As with the use of Spanish in school, teachers erroneously believe that the use of

any form of communication other than SAE prohibits development of SAE ability (Chomsky, 2007; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Ortega, 2009). However, the body of research covering first and second language acquisition/development clearly documents that not only is this not the case, the development of first language literacy is the most determining factor in second language mastery (Chomsky, 2007; Ortega, 2009).

Researchers disagree as to the validity of AAE as a bona fide language; some argue it is a sub-standard form of SAE, others consider it slang, still others consider it a pigeon or dialect (Dillard, 1973; Morrell, 2008; Washington, 2001, Thompson, et al., 2004). Those who argue that it is its own language offer evidence of intricate and otherwise complex African language structures. However, these researchers all agree that student use of AAE complicates their relationships with teachers. Notably, Thompson, Craig, and Washington (2004) found that White teachers often refused to communicate *at all* with Black students that did not use SAE in their classrooms. Even when these students tried to explain to teachers that the language they use in class is reflective of the language they learn and use at home, teachers were unwilling to engage with these students—not about language use or more broadly. Teacher silence towards Black students was perceived by these students to mean that their opinions, ideas, knowledge, etc., were not valued, which had the effect of silencing their voices in the classroom.

Connection to this Study

This study built from this body of research by examining how the lack of teacher training in the areas of multicultural education and multicultural organizational development amplifies and augments deficit thinking among the predominantly White female in- and pre-service teaching force along racial and economic lines. Thinking along these lines fosters the negative (as threatening) social perception of (including in schools as societal institutions) Black males,

contributing to low expectation for, and low engagement of, them as students. Ironically, educated Black men are often seen as threatening for both similar and different reasons (Kunjufu, 1985). Thus, while the racist impetus for not educating Black males may have bifurcated origin, both origin strands lead to their being funneled into the STPP to suppress the perceived threat.

Role of Literacy: Creating Gaps in Knowledge

The influence that literacy skills have on shaping school culture is, at times, underemphasized in the United States. Un-trained teachers cultivate students' lack of literacy skill orchestrating what scholars, as well as the general public, now generally refer to as the STPP (Alexander, 2010; Christle, et al., 2005; Kim, et al., 2012). While other aspects of the pipeline have been developed more robustly in the literature base, only recently, has literacy been identified as a determining factor that influences if, how, and when students leave school en route to prison, probation or other forms of state and federal control (Alexander, 2010; Bahena, et al., 2012; Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Mauer, 2006; Winn, 2011; Kim, et al., 2012). School politics and reflective policy have also been influential in shaping the direction of public education in funneling students from school to the for-profit prison enterprise (Foucault 1995; Davis, 2003; Hatt-Echeverria & Jo, 2005; Rogers & Pole, 2010).

The most common educational skill set gaps that Black children have are in literacy, specifically reading, writing, speaking and listening (Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Haddix, 2009). These gaps influence students' ability to appropriately respond to verbal or written instructions pertaining to specific tasks like assignments or standardized testing, as well as in everyday classroom communications. Students must be able to listen to and/or read and comprehend the instructions for these tasks in order to take the action required to complete them;

they must also be able to appropriately negotiate the often-implicit expectations conveyed in communications.

Students with gaps in literacy skills who also exhibit (and/or are perceived by teachers to exhibit) behavioral misconduct are often moved into special education or sent for disciplinary referral; students of color are disproportionately placed in these circumstances, many of who do not need/require these interventions (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry, Klingner, Cramer, & Sturges, 2007). As a result, many majority children who actually need special education do not receive it. Increased attention to literacy development not only improves the academic outcomes of poor and minority students, it also often reduces acting out behaviors (Haddix, 2009; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Black students' educational gaps have been the topic of educational research for some time (Banks & Banks, 1989; Banks & Banks, 1995; Haddix, 2009; Harry & Klingner, 2006). During slavery, Blacks were largely prohibited from developing literacy skills (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Jogwu, 2010; Morrel, 2008). Some Blacks were taught literacy skills in order to maintain certain aspects of plantation life. Others learned to read covertly, often when serving as caretakers to slave-owners' children.

While literacy is clearly a source of social and political power, because of this history and continuing discriminatory educational practices, it has still not been mastered by many Blacks in the United States (Jogwu, 2010; Morrell, 2008). Gaining education outside of school was the only option for enslaved Blacks. Post emancipation, free Blacks actively pursued formal education, but since the 1950s the urgency to escape illiteracy has diminished significantly (Gundaker, 2007). Critical Race Theorist, Derrick Bell, argues that the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision in 1954 lead to the perception that the struggle for

educational access for Blacks had been won, thus it was taken for granted (Bell, 2004). Further, this decision opened up jobs for Blacks outside of Black communities, putting into motion a series of events that eventually culminated in majority White teaching force in majority Black schools.

Literacy, as outlined in the existing research, supports the current study's efforts to uncover how Black males have often been systematically deprived of the quality of educational experiences necessary to develop even functional literacy, much less critical literacy. In revealing a degenerative educational pattern dating back centuries, this research supports the current study's aim to uncover why Black males have found it difficult to build top quality literacy skills.

Identity Development as a Factor Affecting Literacy

Despite popular culture references to the contrary, all children do not begin with the same opportunities to succeed in school (Children's Defense Fund, 2007). Student development can be stalled for a variety of reasons, leading to lower motivation to learn, subpar academic progress, and poor social outcomes. In particular, Black male youth need to have their subsistence and identity-related needs met in order to minimally function in the social and academic setting of schools.

Maslow's *hierarchy of needs* (1943) states that children need to be healthy and safe in order to perform daily functions; often times their homes and schools don't provide these conditions (Davies, et al., 2005; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). Many poor and minority students are not developmentally nourished, at home or in school, which can lead to their poor social and academic performance. In particular, poor and minority students as a whole get less rest and go to school hungry more often than their White counterparts (Wald & Losen, 2003a). According to

the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), (2012b) 37% of Black students enrolled in U.S. public schools come from families that live below the poverty line. Additionally, only 35% of Black students lived in a two-parent household, compared to 75% of White students. Students with an economic hardship are less likely to be attentive in school and don't participate in classroom activities as often as others students from middle and upper classes (NCES, 2012b; Wald & Losen, 2003b). While it might be easy to lay blame for these circumstances on family dynamics, from a sociopolitical perspective, these realities expose societal, including school, structural issues that link class and race to classism and racism.

This area of research is particularly important to the current study because it begins to identify how the mental, physical, and emotional safety of Black male youth, who are also disproportionately from low-income families, factors into differences in their academic outcomes as compared to their predominantly White middle and upper class counterparts.

Disciplinary Referrals

In discussing the impact that literacy has on the prison pipeline, there must also be a discussion on how students are disciplined in reaction to conflict initiated in the classroom. In the 1980's, the various U.S. federal agencies began to employ zero tolerance policies in policing practice and criminal sentencing when dealing with the influx of highly lucrative street drug operations (Martinez, 2009). In the late 1990's, zero tolerance policies were increasingly adopted by schools to deal with criminal offenses, such as weapons possession and drug offenses on school campuses (Balfanz, et al., 2003; Davis, 2003; Martinez, 2009). Adoption of these policies was expanded by schools in 2004 under the *Gun-Free Schools Act*, and made a condition for continued procurement of federal funds under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 (Martinez, 2009). These policies, coupled pre-existing racial and related literacy-based

inequalities in schools following from the historical disadvantages of slavery and segregation, has only increased the challenges faced by minority, especially Black, and poor students in U.S. schools (Luna, 2008; Martinez, 2009). For example, the zero tolerance policy called *preventive detention* acts as the means of detaining and controlling the movement of students whom are deemed “dangerous.” The definition of dangerous in the policy is broad enough to be erroneously applied in practice to students—Black students—whose use of language is perceived as problematic by school personnel (Casella, 2003; Heitzeg, 2009; Martinez, 2009).

The mis-interpretation of literacy skill gaps, the mis-application of zero tolerance policies in schools and the negative effect of both on the educational outcomes of Black male youth has been well-documented, but little is being done to promote positive change (Christle, et al., 2005; Gundaker, 2007; Heitzeg, 2009). Zero tolerance policies have had the effect of fostering “all or nothing” responses from school administrators in their dealings with students perceived as rule breakers; and this is the case even when these students have medically documented special behavioral, emotional, or psychological educational needs (Casella, 2003; Heitzeg, 2009; Luna, 2008; James & Freeze, 2006; Martinez, 2009). Rather than being offered improved educational support or, where needed, accommodations, students are instead suspended, expelled, and even arrested for actions often arbitrarily deemed defiant or verbally disrespectful (Davis, 2003; Foucault, 1995; Heitzeg, 2009; Martinez, 2009; Nelson, Jolviette, Leone, & Marthur, 2010). Increasingly, schools where these practices are prevalent look more and more like prisons, perhaps by design, to prepare students for their future professional roles as inmates.

These practices and policies push some students out of school, even when they express interest in learning. When students are “mis-sed” in school they often go “mis-sing” from school; thus, they are less likely to develop even basic literacy skills and unlikely to gain mastery in any

subject, especially literacy-specific or -dependent content areas. According to the NCES (2012a) the average reading scores Black, Latino/Hispanic, and American Indian fourth graders in 2011 were 205, 206 and 202 respectively, while those of White fourth graders was 231; the national fourth grader average was 221. By twelfth grade, Blacks and Latino/Hispanics score 269 and 274 respectively, well below the national average of 288, compared to Whites who score of 296 (NCES, 2012a). Correlating these scores with dropout rates, by twelfth grade, more than twice as many Black, Latino/Hispanic, and American Indian student as White students have dropped out (NCES, 2012c). The achievement gap is not closing, it is widening.

Teachers negative perceptions of poor and Black youth contribute to teachers' disproportionate misuse of disciplinary referrals with these students. This is directly related to the current study's interest in examining how teacher communication (or lack thereof) with these students may enable these referrals.

Standardized Curriculum

Standardizing the curriculum does not solve issues of educational inequity as many researchers suggest (Au, 2011; Marzano, 2002). In fact, even when curriculum is structured, teachers still make arbitrary decisions on what to include in, and what to omit from it (Marzano, 2002). Textbooks used by U.S. schools are rarely written from any perspective of epistemic privilege and, to the extent they include such perspectives, they are less likely to be adopted by school districts as a base for their curriculum (Sleeter, 2005). Further, standardization puts less emphasis on learning core material and more emphasis on test scores, thus also on teaching to the test (Au, 2011). Standardization also exposes an imbalance of power in the classroom by positioning the teacher as sole authority and point of reference for one-way pre-packed information transmission, creating what Freire describes as the *banking* system of education in

which teachers are merely *technicians*, and students empty receptacles into which teachers make *deposits* of information (1970).

The teacher must consciously and skillfully mediate curriculum through pedagogy in the classroom for both meaningful teaching and learning to occur (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Sociopolitically-located multicultural curriculum and critical pedagogy promote this meaningfulness by establishing in the classroom resistance to discriminatory school culture; in contrast, lack of complex cultural input into teaching and learning in educational settings dominated by standardization prohibits reciprocal curricular and pedagogical process (Sleeter, 2005; Freire, 1970). Standardization is unsuccessful in seeking to convert heterogeneous student groupings into homogenous group-thinkers; hence standardization depends on tracking as a mediator in creating classrooms that attempt to assimilate students into promoters of Whiteness.

Curriculum standardization exacerbates the already-existing disconnect between Black male youth and the traditional Eurocentric curriculum. The current study will further examine this disconnect by seeking to understand how it compromises Black male student identity security. In particular, this study will explore how in restricting teachers' ability to even create a multicultural curriculum that coincides with various standards, conflict between teachers and their Black male students may result in a form of *Literacy Confusion*, exacerbating the trajectory of Black male youth in to the STPP.

Building on Case Study Research

As the preceding sections of this review have described in myriad fashion, the idea that the early learning of literacy skills in the home is foundational to child and adolescent educational success is not new. Key to the methodological approach of this study, are the studies among the research in this review that are also case studies—single, dual (one), and multiple.

These studies focus on how several forms of literacy attainment (beyond the mere reading of children's books) are being taught in homes.

Neumann, Hood, and Neumann (2008) used Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective to examine the natural emergence of literacy skills in the home. They conducted a case study that focused on how young children used language and environmental print and joint writing activities to sharpen their literacy skills. This study followed a single male child from age 2 to 6, keeping note of the child's progress and literacy involvement initiated by two educated middle class heterosexual parents (race not identified). The authors found that the use of environmental print and other visual aids provided the child with motivation to become aware of the things that surrounded him. It also provided the child with a reference point when it came time to learn the alphabet by providing a link of the new information to the old information, also known as "building knowledge".

In looking to understand how parents influence their child's educational trajectory at home, Robinson and Werblow (2012) conducted a case study that examined the relationships between Black males and their mothers. Robinson and Werblow's (2012) study included five Black mothers of Black males. The authors used purposeful sampling to identify participants in their study. The primary criteria for their study included Black male students that were successful in failing schools who were raised primarily by single mothers. The purpose of their study was focused on how and what Black mothers sacrificed for their sons and what factors influence their persistence in ensuring their sons received social and academic excellence. Their case study included individual interviews as well as focus groups with all participants from the proposed study. The authors found that even though two of the five mothers in the proposed study were not college graduates, they understood the importance of being supportive in their

sons' social and academic interests. This support included interacting with their sons' friends, assisting with homework and setting strong examples of work ethic and determination. Each of the mothers admitted they were encouraged to sharpen their own academic skills in order to assist their sons with their schoolwork. Additionally, participants provided images of positive role models and ensured that their sons understood that they were responsible for their own outcomes. The most interesting aspect of their study is that it produced the opposite of what the literature in the field argues. Robinson and Werblow's (2012) state that the literature shows that low performance in schools of minority children was a byproduct of their parents inability to navigate in academic environments. However, their study found the contrary, parents were willing and able to negotiate their child's academic success across socioeconomic levels.

In attempting to understand how race and race related microaggressions affect Black male middle school students, Henfield (2011) conducted a case study in a predominantly White suburban school district. Henfield's (2011) study is concerned with all three types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. These microaggressions can be characterized as the use of racial slurs, rude and insensitive words or gestures that demean an individual's cultural, racial or ethnic heritage and the exclusion or nullification of an individual's mental, emotional or physical well being respectively. According to Henfield (2011), these microaggressions are often the result of the diminished perceptions of Black male students by White peers and teachers. It is important to point out that the school in which the study was conducted, White students reading proficiency scores nearly doubled those of Black students in 2008. Henfield's (2011) study included interviews with students as well as observations in areas where students congregate including the classroom, lunchroom and hallways. Interviews with participants were based on what was seen during observations. The

majority of Black male students in this study made assumptions about the presence of White superiority in the school. Although most of the study participants acknowledged being treated equally in most cases, the lack of diversity in the school and town population, and curriculum was perceived as a “White is right” atmosphere. Additionally, an “assumption of deviance” was a theme across study participants. Study participants explained that their race elicited stronger discontent with unwanted behaviors.

Chapter Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study as a whole. This chapter provided a review of the theoretical and empirical research that informed, and on which, this study was built in seeking to extend understanding of how Black male youth are overrepresented in the STPP.

In Chapter 3, the methodological approach for undertaking the current study is delineated. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the six generative case studies. Chapter 5 undertakes the analysis and discussion of the study’s findings.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overall introduction to this study. Chapter 2 reviewed the research on which this study was built, providing a theoretical foundation as well as areas for future research.

This chapter will detail how this study was undertaken. This delineation is aligned to the following general discussion areas: study approach, research design, researcher role, methodology, and ethics.

Restatement of the Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the early literacy experiences of Black male youth as that relates to their sense of connection/disconnection with school. These early experiences were mapped to these individuals' reason(s) for leaving school and, later, their involvement with the judicial system. It is important to note that this study was not intended to predict a cause and effect relationship, rather it is intended to document and then try to understand the lived experiences of Black male youth through the lens of their early literacy experiences. This study led to some insights as to how early literacy influenced these students' cultural, educational, and social capital. These insights will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Approach to the Study

This study used a qualitative approach to record, analyze, and seek to understand the early literacy experiences of Black male youth who are or have been court involved. A qualitative research approach was chosen so that the voices of these young men can be documented in the academic literature. Generally, qualitative research enables the voices of those at focus in the research (called participants) to be foregrounded to a larger degree than

quantitative research does (in which participants are called subjects) (Creswell, 2007). Non-Blacks have conducted most research, even qualitative research, on Black people, thus it is *about* Black people, but not really *from* them (Kunjufu, 1985). But even research conducted by Black people about Black people is often more about us, than from us, precisely because of the expectation that a particular kind of voice will be employed in scholarly research (Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012). As more Black people enter the academy, this trend is starting to change. This study sought to be a part of that change, both in terms of its methodological approach, as well as in terms of its topic focus. Much of the research on the educational trajectories of Blacks in the U.S. education system has come from a deficit perspective; this study has purposefully tried to keep this in mind as the research is presented. The intent of this study is not to focus on *why* these young men faltered in their education and became incarcerated as a by product of or in conjunction with that faltering, but to give them a voice in explaining how they interpret their educational and social experiences, especially those that led them to drop out of school and become court involved. Additionally, this research intends to inform teachers, administrators, and policy writers to change educational practices, curriculum, teacher training, and policy to arrive at the goal of meaningfully engaging students throughout their educational matriculation in order to ensure that all students, especially the underserved, are in the School-to-College Pipeline instead of the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP).

Generative Case Study Design

As previously introduced, *Generative Case Study Design* is a hybrid methodology, best described as a combination of Grounded Theory and Multiple Case Study. The choice to use this approach is derived from the conceptual framework of this study, which draws from four main

areas of research, Critical Race Theory, adolescent development, critical literacy, and the School-To-Prison Pipeline. Each of these four areas are complex and multifaceted, crossing many fields of inquiry. This study draws from each of these areas exclusively in terms of their relevance to education, and, more specifically, to extend understanding of the early literacy experiences of Black male youth. At the intersections of these four areas of research, I theorize that a hybrid core concept, that I term *Literacy Confusion*, is generated.

I came to the notion of Literacy Confusion in thinking about literacy as a factor in the STPP relative to the other three afore referenced areas of research. Literacy Confusion lives at and emerges from the intersections of these four areas. In using *Generative Case Study Design*, it was my expectation that the Black male youths' discussion of their literacy experiences would *generate* greater understanding of this confusion, where it comes from, how it operates, and, potentially, how it can be resolved. This expectation was met. Accordingly, this generative case study also grounded this theory.

Other Methodological Approaches

Phenomenology was another methodology that I considered using to conduct this study. Phenomenology was considered because, similar to case study, it focuses on understanding the meaning of particular phenomenon in an individual's lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). However, phenomenology requires the researcher to rely on his or her own imagination to create a "picture" of what the participants experience is perceived to be (Creswell, 2007). I wanted study participants to create their own pictures. Phenomenology also uses long interviews and self-reflections as primary data sources. Because this study intended to engage adolescents and young adults, long interviews were not ideal.

In contrast, case study allows for the use of multiple sources including individual

interviews, group interviews, observations, surveys and other documents (grades, report cards, etc.). Additionally, because the study participants are young adults, multiple data sources allow for the triangulation of data, potentially yielding more robust results. Case study also allows for participants to describe their own experience with clear boundaries (Yin, 2013).

The Value of Generative Case Study Design for this Study

Although there are other methods, both qualitative and quantitative, that could have been employed to undertake this study, case study is the most appropriate because this research attempts to explore the lived experiences of Black male youth. Case study involves in-depth collection of data with rich content over a period of time (Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Additionally, case study allows for the examination of the who, what, and why of real-life experiences (Mason, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Case study also allows for the use of multiple data sources to develop a holistic view of a particular research focus (Creswell, 1998; Creswell 2007, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Mason, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher for this study, I was responsible for the creation and selection of all data related materials and procedures, including the questionnaires, interview protocols, and the consent process. I was the sole interviewer of all participants and was also solely responsible for the storage and safety of all documents related to this study, ensuring that participants' anonymity was/is not compromised. The protection of materials began with the selection process. Selection was done in conjunction with a local branch of an advocacy program for children and young adults that provided me access to the participants' for this study.

As the researcher, I was required to maintain the integrity of this study and the participants' dignity by monitoring their actions and interactions with me, especially by

proactively listening to them during the data collection process. Additionally my role required some technical skill as it relates to the recording and maintaining the participants' responses through all stages of the study. As the researcher I ensured that the participants' views and opinions, as it relates to their experiences, were/are valued and recorded accurately.

Methodology

The *Generative* Case Study was undertaken primarily through a CRT conceptual framework. As previously discussed, adolescent development, critical literacy, and the STPP also informed the conceptual framework and, in concert with CRT, gave rise to the notion of Literacy Confusion providing the main rationale for the generative aspect of the study's methodological design.

I coined Generative Case Study herein to describe how one case study helps build depth of understanding related to the notion of Literacy Confusion in the other case studies, within the larger context of the multiple case study research design. Since this study involved exploring the literacy experiences of Black male youth, some of these experiences—especially those seen to relate to the notion of Literacy Confusion—prompted exploration of seemingly similar experiences across all six of the study participant cases. The term Generative Case Study was used to describe the manner in which the notion of Literacy Confusion was generated from the juxtaposition of four research areas in cultivating the conceptual framework for this study. The process by which this notion became *grounded* as a Theory also served to explain the role of literacy in the STPP through the cross case analysis process.

Accordingly, Generative Case Study emerged as a rigorous, and well-suited methodological design for this study. In thinking about this design as a hybrid as discussed previously, starting with Multiple Case Study as a model allowed the research to begin with a

basic structure. In building the study forward from this entry point, Grounded Theory allowed the research to evolve on its own momentum resulting in the amalgam defined as Generative Case Study (further explained below).

As previously introduced, I also coined the notion of Literacy Confusion as a Theory (independent of Generative Case Study; however supportive of it), herein to begin to describe how teachers/administrators interpret/misinterpret students' literacy skills, causing both teachers/administrators and students to react in ways that can conflict with students' educational progress and create barriers to students' self-advocacy. Literacy Confusion and related teacher/administrator communication, or lack thereof, coupled with unfair school policies, human bias, and other social disadvantages disproportionately affect Black male (and other underserved) students, often resulting in educational default. These occurrences make literacy a key factor in the perpetuation of the STPP, because it is a predictor of future success in academia. Furthermore, literacy not only creates access, but also serves as a defense against injustices faced by minorities in the U.S. everyday in areas such as immigration, voting rights, and employment (Dotson, Kitner-Triolo, Evans, & Zonderman, 2008; Hernandez, 2011; Jogwu, 2010; Ortega, 2009).

Figure 1, below, illustrates the relationship between all of these study elements. In sum, the Generative Case Study Design (GCSD) allowed me to explore the notion of Literacy Confusion, specifically its efficacy as a Theory to further explain how Black male youth in particular are overrepresented in the STPP. The Theory of Literacy Confusion (TLC) is grounded by the study in that all of the cases yielded relatable data. The benefit of GCSD is that it also allowed other themes to emerge, from some, most, or all of the cases, adding depth and breadth of understanding of the role of literacy in, essentially, educationally tracking Black male

youth into the STPP. While this could possibly occur using a traditional case study design, GCSD allows these themes to emerge at the onset of the study rather than at its peak. This gives the researcher an advantage in organizing and planning the subsequent steps in the data collection and analysis process (further explained below).

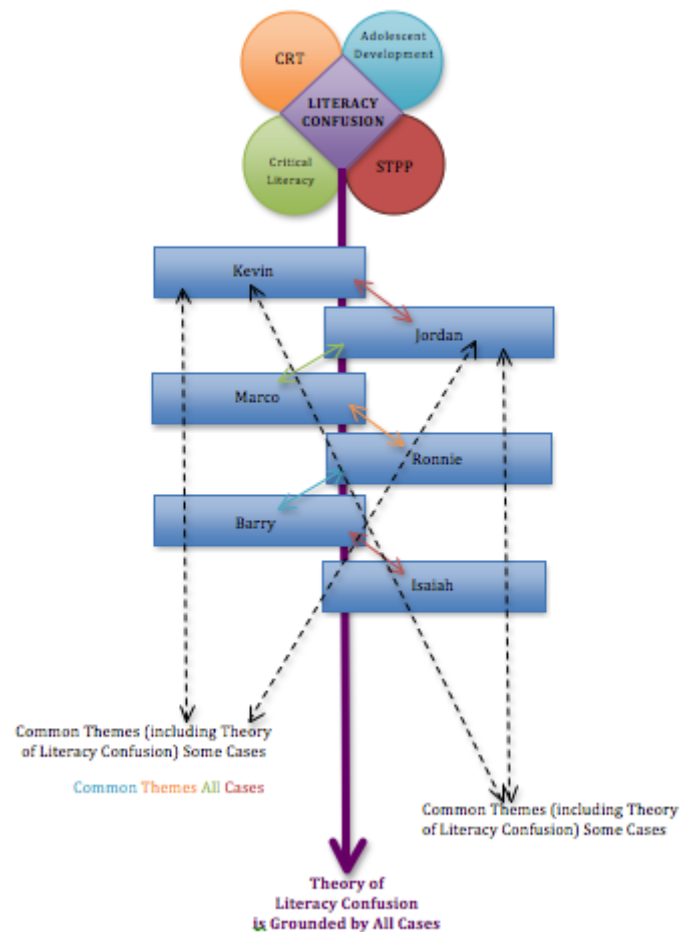


Figure 1. Relationship between conceptual framework and methodology that grounds the Theory of Literacy Confusion

Through the GCSD, the following questions guided this study:

- Primary Research Question: *How do Black males that have entered the STPP view their literacy (reading and oral language) development at home and at school?*
- Ancillary Research Questions:
 - *How do literacy skills (reading and oral language) influence Black male students' interactions within and out of school?*
 - *How, if at all, did these literacy skills lead Black male students into the STPP?*

The Process of Generative Case Study Research, As Intended

The process for generative case involved the use of the case study design, in this instance a multiple case study design, but from a grounded theory perspective. As stated previously, generative case study is a newly introduced methodology in this study; it is a hybrid composed of multiple case study and grounded theory methodologies.

This Generative Case Study had multiple stages in its design. The number of stages depended primarily upon the number of participants involved and the data emerging from each participant's case. High levels of patience, dedication, discipline and skill were needed to complete this study because of this design, specifically because of the number of stages (iterative dimensions of data collection) involved. The opportunity for more data collection moving forward was *generated* because information from the case at hand was used to create additional questions for the participant interviews in the prior and subsequent cases. That is, each case *generated* potential additional data considerations for both the previous and subsequent cases. Accordingly, each case created at least one more stage of data collection than the previous case did, meaning that each participant's data created a data collection stage for that participant (themselves), the next participant(s) (if applicable) and the previous participant(s) (again, if

applicable). Additionally, after each interview was conducted and completed, it had to be immediately transcribed and analyzed before I could move onto the interview with the next participant and before I could conduct a follow-up interview with a previously interviewed participant (only done after all participants in the study were interviewed once), as the information in each interview was used to inform the conduct of the next interview, whether initial or follow up. A brief narrative description of this generative interview process is bulleted below for participant 1, 2 and 3 only, from which the more or less same process can be inferred to have continued for the rest of the participants (this process will be discussed again and in greater detail in Chapter 4). It is important to point out that this description is what was intended and what *generally* occurred in using GCSD; in the next section I describe what *actually* occurred, which differs slightly from the intended design.

Participant 1

- Participant 1 is interviewed (stage 1)
- Participant 1 interview is transcribed (stage 2)
- Participant 1 interview and survey is analyzed (stage 3)
- Follow up questions for participant 1 are created (stage 4, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional initial interview questions for participant 2 are created (stage 5, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)

Participant 2

- Participant 2 is interviewed (stage 1)
- Participant 2 interview is transcribed (stage 2)

- Participant 2 interview and survey is analyzed (stage 3)
- Follow up questions for participant 2 are created (stage 4, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional follow up interview questions for participant 1 are created (stage 5, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional initial interview questions for participant 3 are created (stage 6)

Participant 3

- Participant 3 is interviewed (stage 1)
- Participant 3 interview is transcribed (stage 2)
- Participant 3 interview and survey is analyzed (stage 3)
- Follow up questions for participant 3 are created (stage 4, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional follow up interview questions for participant 1 are created (stage 5, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional follow up interview questions for participant 2 are created (stage 6, second interview for this participant occurs only after all participants have completed initial interview)
- Additional initial interview questions for participant 4 are created (stage 7)

As previously noted, in using this GCSD, I intended to use all participants in this study as data sources from whom new data relevant for all other participants in the study would emerge.

Because the participants' narratives displayed commonalities (due to their similar life circumstances dictated by the focus of this study (i.e., as dropouts and court involved) and because of the limited literature on this population, I assumed that these narratives would provide unique data not previously generated in the original interview protocol. For instance, the death of a close family member (discovered as a direct result of the interview protocol) might have become a turning point in a participant's education and, thus, would warrant consideration in the participant's educational trajectory. Although some participants in this study did not experience that particular type of loss (i.e., death of a family member), they did experience other kinds of profound losses that impacted their behavior and motivation in school, and overall educational trajectory in similar ways to those who experience death-related losses. In sum, these losses negatively impacted the students relative to the STPP.

What Actually Happened in This Generative Case Study

If this study had proceeded exactly as planned (as just described in the preceding section) there would be 44 stages in this study; however, there were only 38. This stage discrepancy was largely due to participant attrition. Specifically, the result of two participants being unavailable for second interviews and one participant not providing data that generated additional questions for a second interview or for other participants. Thus, Figure 2. (below) (in contrast to Figure 1. {above}) demonstrates the slightly different actual methodological process executed in this study. The arrows explain the staged (iterative) relationships between cases.

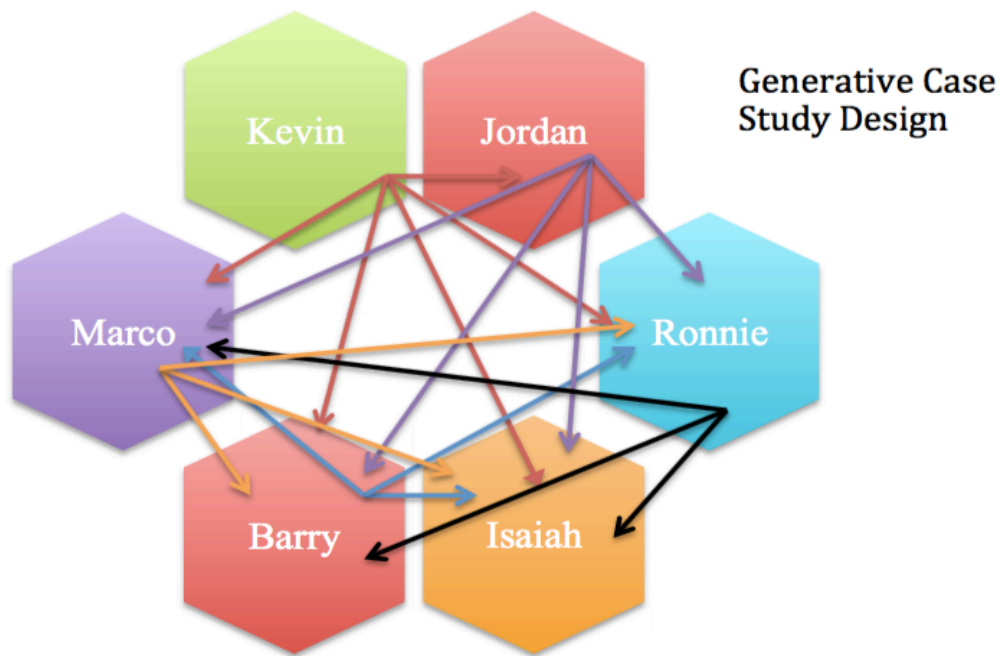


Figure 2. The relationship each case had in shaping the interview of other cases in this study. Likewise, in contrast to the brief narrative description of the generative interview process bulleted above for participant 1, 2 and 3 only, the number of questions each participant was actually asked and the other cases their case data influenced (based on the additional questions that were generated from their interview) is outlined below in Table 1.

| Table 1. | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>Number of Questions each Participant was Asked and the Cases They Influenced</i> | | | | |
| <u>Participants Interviewed (Case)</u> | <u>Number of Interviews</u> | <u>Other Interviews Influenced</u> | <u>Which Interviews Influenced</u> | <u>Number of Questions in Original Protocol</u> |
| Kevin (1) | 1 | 5 | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 | 28 |
| Jordan (2) | 2 | 4 | 3, 4, 5, 6 | 34 |
| Marco (3) | 2 | 3 | 4, 5, 6 | 38 |
| Ronnie (4) | 2 | 3 | 3, 5, 6 | 43 |
| Barry (5) | 1 | 3 | 3, 4, 6 | 49 |
| Isaiah (6) | 1 | 0 | N/A | 54 |

In sum, what actually emerged was that only five of the cases in this study influenced the interview protocols of the other cases. Three participants/cases did not have second interviews for one of two reasons: 1) their first interview question responses answered/negated the questions that would have been asked as a result of subsequent participants/cases, or 2) they were not available for a second interview.

Further Discussion of the Generative Case Study Process That Emerged in This Study

After the first participant took the MIBI (discussed further below), the initial interview was conducted with him. As is typical with interview protocols (Creswell, 2009), some additional questions were developed based on participant responses and immediately asked during the initial interview. After the initial interview with participant one was completed, I (as the researcher) reviewed my interview field notes, tallied the participant's scores on the MIBI,

and transcribed the interview—all in order to develop follow-up questions for the second interview with participant one. Additionally, some of these follow-up questions were asked of subsequent participants in their initial interview as a part of the now augmented initial interview protocol. Accordingly, the initial interview of the second participant included the original 28 questions administered to participant one (see Appendix D), as well as the additional follow-up questions that emerged from the data collected from participant one (See Appendix E). This process continued as participants were interviewed throughout the study (See Appendix D-I). In short, participant one had a base set of 28 interview questions, but participant two had a base set of 34 interview questions (detailed in Table 1 above).

Based on just the results of the MIBI, I (as the researcher) was able to create additional follow-up questions for second round interviews for some cases. These questions were directly related to the answers participants gave on several of the survey items because some items in the MIBI were clearly more salient for particular individuals, or they revealed a conflict with race-related data collected during the participant's initial interview. For instance, question 26, “Should Blacks have the choice to marry interracially?” was a particularly triggering question for participants one and two because they were the children of interracial relationships (this finding is discussed further in Chapter 4).

Validating Generative Case Study

By using generative case study, several themes emerged from the data. These themes are discussed under the following headings: Taking Responsibility for Some Life Challenges, Good Readers, Importance but Avoidance of Reading, Incarcerated Parents, and Incarceration Saving Their Lives. Because these themes emerged as a direct result of the use of generative case study

during the cross case analysis described in detail above, this unique methodological process was validated in the study.

The balance of discussion in/This section will delineate the methodological components of the study, and how they were sequenced. These components include: setting, participants and sampling, data sources, data collection, data collection timeline, procedural schedule, and data analysis and interpretation.

Setting

Participants for this study were those who self-identified as Black males under the age of 22 and had recently been court-involved; participants were identified through a local chapter of a nationwide advocacy/service program that works with adjudicated/formerly adjudicated youth. Primarily for financial reasons, this study was conducted in a single location (an urban city located in the Southwestern United States), thus participants were drawn from this geographic area. Fortunately, this area is home to a large urban population in which minority youth make up the majority of the public school district population making the participant pool rich and their narratives data rich.

Participants and Sampling

In this study, there were two tiers of sampling. First, purposeful sampling was used to search for participants. By using a purposeful sample, I ensured that the intended participants were connected with the goal of this study to explore a specific phenomenon and, thus, provided myself with an efficient way to explore the research questions (Creswell 2007, Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Second, criterion reference sampling was used to ensure that participants self identified with all of the criteria noted in the study. Criteria for this study included: self identifying as Black, and being a male between 6 and 21 years of age who left school and had

been court involved within the last three years. Participants also had to self identify as having lived with their biological parents prior to attending school.

As previously noted, participants in this study were identified through the local branch of a national advocacy program that assists youth in re-establishing themselves in society after being under federal/state control. After an initial screening process, 9 participants were selected to continue as participants of this study, however only 6 participants were interviewed and surveyed for this study. Three of the participants that consented to the study were not included in the data collection process because they were unwilling or unable to schedule their interviews over the course of the data collection process (five months).

After providing informed consent, participants were asked to complete a qualifying survey (See Appendix C) to further ensure they self identified as “Black”, had dropped-out of school within the last three years, had left a federal/state facility or had court involvement, lived with their biological parents prior to attending school and were under 22 years of age (i.e., the criteria for this study). Although this was already part of the screening process (discussed below) and was verbally discussed during the recruitment session, the qualifying survey was additional insurance that participants were accurately selected for participation in this study.

It is important that participants lived with biological parents prior to attending school in order to maintain consistency between participants; this removed one potentially confounding variable that would have been presented by different types of family configuration (e.g., being raised by grandparents, other family members, or adoptive/foster parents). However, differing parental dynamics still played a role in each participant’s narrative.

The reason for selecting participants that had left school and been released from a juvenile/adult/court facility within the last three years was purposeful in relation to the

study as well. The likelihood that participants would recall the details related to their exit from school and to their court involvement/incarceration was increased due to the short amount of time elapsed between those events and the time of the interviews.

Additionally, individuals under 22 years of age are still eligible to attend a K-12 school, which distinguishes this study from studies that have focused only on adults. The three types of participants solicited for this study were adults, adjudicated youth, and minors. Although no minors or adjudicated youth were participants in this study, a definition of each type of participant is included below for clarification purposes:

Adults. Refers to participants in this study that are over the age of 17 and are not considered adjudicated and are legally considered emancipated. These individuals are able to provide their own consent for the study. All participants ultimately selected for this study were considered adults.

Minors. Minors were originally part of the group solicited for participation in this study; however no minors met all the qualifications for the study, therefore none were selected to proceed beyond the information session. In terms of consenting, minors would have needed to be given a flyer to take home to parents/guardians and the parent/guardian would have needed to contact me (as the researcher) about their child's participation in this study. Parents would have needed to provide consent first; once the parent provided consent the minor would have been asked to assent to the study.

Adjudicated youth. In the case of adjudicated youth, the court is considered to be the legal guardian for that individual. This would require the court to provide consent for the individual to participate in this study. Adjudicated youth could be considered minors or adults and the court determines this status. The status considers whether the individual is able (mentally

and emotionally) to make sound decisions on his or her own behalf. The study considered adjudicated youth as part of the potential participant pool on an as needed basis only; however, no adjudicated youth were present at the information session the researcher attended to solicit participants. Additionally, because several non-adjudicated, qualifying individuals were able to provide consent to participate in this study, no adjudicated youth were further solicited for participation in this study.

Data Sources

This study used multiple sources for collecting data including surveys, interview field notes, and audio recordings of individual interviews. The use of several methods of collecting data has been described as a reliable and valid avenue for strengthening study components (through triangulation) and ensuring accurate data collection, transcription, and interpretation (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Once participants completed the consent process, and had been determined (through the qualifying survey) to have met all the study participant criteria—including self-identifying as “Black”—they were informed they would be contacted for first interview appointments, since no participants were able to schedule their interviews that same day. During these scheduled appointments, participants were asked to complete the Multidimensional Inventory of Black identity (MIBI) survey to determine specific racial identity information about them. I originally planned to use the MIBI-T for minors, however no minors were selected for this study; therefore no MIBI-T’s were administered. The information collected from the MIBI proved to be a factor in the extent to which the participants connected with or disconnected from school. Early experiences in the home, including literary works to which the participants had been exposed, were also found to be factors in this connection. These findings are discussed further in Chapter

4. Determining levels of racial identity also served as a foundation in determining if/how they have experienced stereotype threat and, if so, what the nature of that threat was. It was also used to develop more individuated second round interview questions to elicit data most closely related with the study focus, as previously discussed.

After completing the MIBI, first round interviews were conducted. In order to record the early literacy experiences of the participants in this study, a case study interview protocol (see Appendix D-I) was employed. First round interview questions explored participant exposure to literacy skills prior to school, relationships with teachers, exposure to home and public libraries, literacy development/exposure/socialization, race, and dropout and incarceration experiences.

Through the interview protocol, the study explored the path by which each participant left school and became incarcerated as well as if/how his literacy skills played a role in his individual personal and academic outcomes. All interviews were conducted on a one-on-one, face-to-face basis between the interviewer (me) and the individual participant.

Data Collection Process

As stated previously, access to participants was provided through an advocacy program; participants were then screened by me (as the researcher) to ensure they met the qualifications described in the study. Once potential participants were identified by the program (through an initial information sharing session about my research by program staff), I scheduled a follow up informational presentation about the study at the program facility. A flyer describing the study was handed out to group session attendees.

A casual rapport-building approach was taken by me during the informational presentation to assure participants that information they shared, as study participants, would be used with the best intentions. Also during this presentation, I described the nature of the study

through the personal connection I had with the study (earlier life circumstances mirroring those of potential participants). Following this presentation, session attendees were asked if they would like to participate; those that did, provided consent. As previously noted, all study participants were considered adults and, thus, were allowed to give consent to participate in the study for themselves. Interviews were scheduled at a later time.

Audio recording was the primary method of collecting interview data throughout the study, however field note taking was also used to provide context for narratives; these notes included notations of participant body language and other descriptive data that was not recorded due to the nature of the content (e.g., admission of guilt for criminal activity). Note taking was also an aid in development of follow-up questions drawn from participants' responses to the initial interview protocol questions.

The participants' information was de-identified from the outset of the data collection process and, at the conclusion of each step in the research process, was removed from electronic and paper storage vehicles. For added security, all data was kept in a locked file cabinet in room 338 of the Carlson Education Building (CEB) on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas located at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway Las Vegas, NV 89154. Only the study investigators (myself and the faculty Principal Investigator) had access to study-related data. Additional detail on data collection is provided below.

Data Collection Timeline

Each participant was surveyed once, and then interviewed a minimum of one time (initial and in three cases a follow-up); as previously discussed, some participants were lost through attrition, or follow-up was not possible or needed. The following timeline outlines the data collection steps that were undertaken during the Fall of 2014 and Spring of 2015:

1. October 2014—Initial contact, consent, qualifying survey, and scheduling of MIBI and first interviews
2. November 2014—First interviews, transcribing and analyzing
3. December 2014— First interviews, transcribing and analyzing
4. January 2015— First interviews, transcribing and analyzing
5. February 2015— Follow up interviews scheduled and conducted, first interviews conducted, transcribing and analyzing data sources
6. March 2015— More follow up interviews scheduled and conducted, first interviews conducted, transcribing and analyzing data sources
7. March 2015— Cross analysis conducted and writing findings
8. April 2015— Further writing of findings and writing of discussion
9. May 2015— Editing of documents and formatting
10. June 2015— Review

Procedural Schedule

The previous two sections described, in broad strokes, the data collection process and timeline for the study. This section will describe, in more specific detail, the procedural schedule for all study activities (see also Appendix J).

Initial contact with the advocacy program was initiated by the researcher (me) in order to schedule introductory information sessions about the study. The information sessions coincided with group sessions, previously scheduled by the advocacy organization, where potential participants would be in attendance. The researcher explained the study parameters (as noted above; see also Appendix B) and flyers were handed out to group session attendees. All of the attendees that chose not to participate were thanked for their time and excused. Nine attendees

from the information session chose to continue on as participants. These nine were then further screened to ensure they met the criteria for the study. The screening process involved giving all remaining session attendees (considered consenting adults) the qualifying survey (See Appendix C) that required them to answer yes to all the self-identification/demographic questions to ensure they would meet the study criteria. All nine remaining participants met the criteria for the study and were given consent forms to sign. The consent form was read to all participants and questions regarding the forms and the study were addressed at this time. While this study originally intended to recruit participants between five and 21 years of age, all remaining participants were adults who were able to provide informed consent. There is, consequently, no further discussion of the consent/ assent process.

Consent forms were read to all participants because, although this study explored their literacy experiences, it did not require them to be literate (i.e., able to read and write). However, participants were asked if they were able to read during the interview process when they were asked to complete the MIBI. All participants in this study are considered literate, because they were able to read well enough to complete the MIBI on their own, as well as an information sheet in which they provided their age and contact information, which included their name, address, phone number and email address (See Appendix K). None of the participants were able to schedule an interview at the time of the information presentation. Accordingly, they were informed that they would be contacted in the near future to schedule interviews. Interviews were conducted over the course of five months (November 2014 and March 2015).

Immediately prior to each initial interview, participants completed the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). After each initial interview, the participant's MIBI responses were scored, the interview was transcribed and the interview and survey were analyzed to create

appropriate follow-up interview questions for the current participant, as well as additional initial questions for the next (following) participant. This process was repeated for each participant until all follow-up questions and responses were asked and answered as has been detailed above. After the completion of the data collection process for all participants, the data was further analyzed in order to identify case uniqueness (including outlier information), as well as common themes across two or more cases. Transcription and analysis was followed by interpretation and discussion of results. Recommendations for future research are made in Chapter 5.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis was undertaken through the use of the conceptual framework components: CRT, adolescent development (focused on racial identity and stereotype threat), critical literacy, the STPP, and, of course, Literacy Confusion. Bell's (1992) CRT was prioritized in analyzing and interpreting the collected data to determine if and how race played a role in the process. Likewise, critical literacy took precedence in analysis and interpretation of data pertaining to reading and oral language.

The possibility that the collected data would not align with the conceptual framework would not have been unusual (Creswell, 1998; Yin 2013). Creswell (1998) explains that the difficulty in doing qualitative research is, in part, related to how the data can transform and take shape in ways dissimilar to what is discussed in the literature and, thus, should be abandoned if a connection does not emerge. As discussed previously, the GCSD provided for analysis and interpretative contingencies that ensured the study would be successfully concluded regardless of what the data yielded.

Qualitative analysis and interpretation. A within-case analysis was used to identify common themes for each case to determine patterns in the collected interviews (Creswell, 1998;

Merriam, 2009). This provided detailed information for each case and was used for further analysis. Each case underwent further analysis, which was holistic and embedded. Holistic analysis focused on the case as a whole, whereas an embedded analysis focuses on a specific aspect of the case (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2013). Through holistic and embedded analysis, common themes and assertions unfolded in the data and allowed for further analysis across cases.

After a within-case analysis, a cross case analysis was conducted. Cross-case analysis was used to determine if any common themes or incidences occurred across individual cases (Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Additionally, cross-case analysis provided naturalistic generalizability for the data collected by comparing common themes and assertions across multiple cases in the study (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Quantitative analysis and interpretation. Quantitative data analysis on the MIBI was based on the scoring rubric used for the instrument (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). The instrument used straight-addition scoring and reverse scoring to report the racial identity level of the participants' responses for each subscale (seven) of the three categories of racial identity: Centrality, Ideology (Assimilation, Humanist, Oppressed Minority and Nationalist), and Regard (Private and Public). Categories varied from one participant to the next, and changed over time, regardless of perceived consistency in the participants' attitudes toward race. These changes will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The interpretation of the survey data assisted in clarifying a participant's stance on a specific topic and also added validity to their narratives. For instance, participants may have shown high scores in Centrality, which might have implied that they took pride in their race and that their race played a major role in their daily lives. However, their scores on the MIBI might

validate or contradict this aspect of their narrative thereby serving as a “check and balance” to the authenticity of the interview data collected in this study.

Ethical Considerations and Risk

Because this study involves participants who are vulnerable population members, it was very important to maintain participant anonymity in this study. The primary risk in this regard was the possibility that participants who were court involved as minors could have their juvenile status compromised through the loss of information and/or available access of their information to non-research administrators of the study. Accordingly, all participant interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location provided by an advocacy program for children and young adults. This limited the exposure of those who are/were considered vulnerable population members and served to further protect the security of participant data. Additionally, as previously mentioned, information collected was de-identified. Each participant was given a pseudonym that only the participant and the primary researcher were privy to. Further, information was kept on a Wi-Fi-disabled laptop computer to ensure that their information could be surreptitiously extracted electronically. Otherwise, this study involved only minimal risk to participants (e.g., a sense of discomfort in discussing personal issues)

Limitations of the Study Revisited

This study was primarily focused on the early literacy experiences of adolescent/young adult-age Black male youth. This focus was a limitation in the study as relates to the recollection of those early experiences by study participants. Participants had difficulty recounting their experiences because of the length of time that has passed between their pre-school experiences and current young adulthood (now). According to Ormrod (2008), time is the largest influence on human memory and even the most intimate memories can deteriorate over time. Therefore

this is a common limitation for studies that require participants to recollect past experiences. This limitation of the study may be somewhat offset by the actual recollections of participants.

Although the study intended to focus on the early literacy experiences of Black male youth, their richest discussions of literacy experiences were more recent. Participants were most exuberant about their literacy engagement during their high school matriculation, which included their time in juvenile facilities.

Further limitations of this study include research bias related to the interpretation of collected data through the use of CRT, which focuses on the racial aspect of the study. The relationship between this aspect of the study and the researcher's connectedness to this aspect may influence the perspective from which the data is interpreted. The same may occur because of the researcher's Black racial identity, role as educator, and past experience as a struggling student who also had legal entanglements, potentially inclining the researcher to over identify with participants' experiences. However, because the researcher also occupies a position of epistemic privilege as the researcher and a doctoral student, he may be inclined in the opposite direction, or be able to find a balanced interpretive posture. This potential area of limitations was consciously kept to a minimum and the researcher provided several self-checks in regards to reporting and interpreting collected data.

The focus of this study, literacy skills, may also be a limitation. There are many factors that relate to a student's school trajectory: family dynamics, health, parental involvement, access to positive role models, school environment, home environment, help-seeking orientation, teacher attentiveness, peer relationships, economics, and social ability, among many others. Because so many variables may influence a student's desire to attend school, as well as the likelihood that he or she will commit crimes, it may be difficult to clearly bind the impact of

literacy in the study's findings. Accordingly, this study was not intended to isolate a cause-effect relationship here, but rather to augment understanding of how the STPP negatively impacts Black male youth, ostensibly so that this pipeline can be dismantled. Although participant discussions intended to explore literacy experiences, participants' narratives focused more on other aspects of their development. Interview conversations also explored the social aspects of the participants' backgrounds, largely related to family dynamics. In most instances, participants' relationships with their fathers played a role in their engagement/ disengagement with school. Although all participants lived with both their mother and father prior to attending school, their fathers became absent at some point in their development, which clearly became a factor in the study's findings, as further discussed in chapter 4 and explained in chapter 5.

Chapter Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 introduced the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the research relevant on which the study was built. This chapter delineated how the study was undertaken, specifically the approach to the study, the researcher's role, the study methodology, and ethical concerns related to the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the six generative case studies. Finally, in Chapter 5 the analysis and discussion of the study's findings is undertaken.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overall introduction to this study. Chapter 2 reviewed the research that informed this study. Chapter 3 delineated, in a highly detailed manner, how this study was undertaken.

In this chapter I present the findings of the six generative case studies. Each case begins with a discussion of the participant's home and educational background, is followed by a discussion of the participant's responses to the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers, et al., 1997), and then proceeds to a discussion of their interview question responses with ancillary references to the literature review in Chapter 2 (these references are undertaken in a more direct and analytical manner in Chapter 5).

Case Study Presentation

This section focuses on how each participant viewed their literacy skill training, how they have used this training, and how, if at all, this training played a role in their decision to leave school prior to graduation and later, in their court involvement. Additionally, this section discusses how, if at all, race played a role in participant's recollections of interactions with classmates and school employees, as well as other factors that might have played a role in their academic trajectory, including family dynamics, loss of close relationships, role models and any events that could be characterized as turning points.

The description of each case does not reflect the sequence in which the data was collected. Rather, the data is reported to reflect the linear sequence of life events that were discussed in each of the interviews in order for readers to more easily follow the narrative of each study participant. Although this is not ideal (Creswell, 1998), it is the most effective data

reporting approach for this study given the nature of the interviews with each participant (thematic versus historic), as well as the similarity of experiences across many participants' lives, but that occurred at different times in each participant's life, and, in some case, multiple times (i.e., repeat occurrences of the same event—a parent leaving the home, moving to another state, loss of a loved one, etc.).

As a reminder, the discussion of each participant's interview protocol relative to Grounded Case Study Design (GCSD) was varied in nature, as described in Chapter 3, while each participant responded to the same set of general question areas listed in the original interview protocol (see Appendix D), not every question was asked of every participant. Questions varied by case, based on the applicability to the circumstances of each participant, as well as each participant's degree of willingness to communicate with the researcher (See Appendices D-I).

Restatement of the Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the early literacy experiences of Black male youth as these experiences related to their sense of connection to/disconnection from school. These early experiences were used to map out these individuals' reason(s) for leaving school and, later, becoming court involved. This study did not intend to predict a cause and effect relationship between early and later experiences in any areas, rather it intended to document, and then try to understand, the lived experiences of Black male youth through the lens of their early literacy experiences. Accordingly, this study provides insights into to how early literacy experiences may influence students' cultural, educational, and social capital.

The Participants

This study included a total of six participants. The pseudonyms assigned to these

participants were Kevin, Jordan, Marco, Ronnie, Barry and Isaiah. Although all of the participants have similar demographics that qualified them as participants for this study, including their age, their life and educational journeys are very different. While there are several similarities across participants' experiences, each participant told a unique story about the life factors that led to their dropout status and court involvement. Each participant's description in this regard includes what led them to drop out of school, but does not include any detail of the circumstances, if criminal, that resulted in their becoming court involved (whether it occurred in or out of school), due, largely, to the statute of limitations for some crimes. To best protect participants, their crimes were not discussed at all to preclude study data from being subpoenaed and used against them. Additionally, some participants had richer racialized interactions than others; therefore the level of detail regarding race in these narratives will also vary by case.

It is important to stress the complex relationship between group and individual experience—while there is a “Black male experience” revealed in the data, there are also Kevin-, Jordan-, Marco-, Ronnie-, Barry- and Isaiah-specific experiences revealed in it. Understanding the complex relationship between group and individual identity is a core element in sociopolitically-located multicultural education research (Banks, 1995; Banks & Banks, 1992, 2004; Nieto & Bode, 2012), and supported by findings from racial identity development research (Cross, 1971, 1991; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Hardiman, 1979, 1982; Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Helms, 1984, 1990a, 1990b, 1995; Horse, 2001; Jackson, 1976a, 1976b, 2001; Kim, 2001). While all students have both individual and group identity, white students are more likely to consciously develop individual identity self-concepts, but not racial group identity ones. In contrast, students of color are more likely to develop both individual identity self-concepts and racial group identity concepts. Typically, for students of color, the racial group identity concept

emerges first, in relationship to their minoritized societal status, though the importance of this concept is often ignored (to avoid overt acknowledgement of unearned white racial advantage, Eurocentrism, and/or white supremacy operating in society and schools). Or, the racial group identity concept for students of color is only considered through a deficit, not asset, lens in their K-12 school experiences (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990; Yosso, 2005). The complex relationship between group and individual experience and racial identity for the participants in this study emerges in the discussion of their MIBI scores and their interview narratives (Sellers, et al., 1997).

As previously discussed, participant racial identity scores on the MIBI provided insight into their perspectives on race and were considered in concert with their discussions of their race-based experiences during the interviews. Participants were asked specific follow-up interview questions if their MIBI score and discussion of racial experiences revealed incongruences; however, most participants' MIBI scores were congruous with their discussion of racial experiences, suggesting internal consistency of the data across both data collection instruments. The MIBI score range for all participant cases is outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2.*Score Range for All Cases on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity*

| <u>Case</u> | <u>Centrality</u> | <u>Private Regard</u> | <u>Public Regard</u> | <u>Ideology Assimilation</u> | <u>Ideology Humanist</u> | <u>Ideology Minority</u> | <u>Ideology Nationalist</u> |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Kevin | Moderate | Very High | Moderate | Very High | Very High | Very High | Below Moderate |
| Jordan | Moderate | Very High | Below Moderate | Very High | Very High | Moderate | Moderate |
| Marco | Very High | Very High | Very Low | Above Moderate | High | Very High | High |
| Ronnie | Very High | High | Very Low | Moderate | Moderate | Low | Very High |
| Barry | Moderate | Very High | Below Moderate | Above Moderate | Very High | Very High | Below Moderate |
| Isaiah | Moderate | Very High | Moderate | Moderate | High | Moderate | Below Moderate |

Kevin

Kevin is a 20-year old self-identified Black male who grew up in an urban area of one Southwestern state of the United States. Kevin is the oldest of his mother's three children. Kevin grew up in a mixed raced family, his mother is White and his father is Black. Unfortunately for Kevin, his father died when he was seven years old.

Kevin recalled being able to spell his own name and knowing his parents' full names prior to attending school; however, Kevin does not believe that he was able to read well prior to attending school. Kevin stated that he was able to read several words, but was unable to read an entire book on his own before attending school. He describes himself as a good reader now, but says that he was a slow reader up until high school, mostly due to self-confidence rather than reading skill or lack thereof.

Kevin does not have his high school diploma because he left school at the end of the eleventh grade, and later became court involved. He is currently seeking entry into a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program. Kevin currently lives with his girlfriend and his young child.

Overall Kevin displayed a high sense of racial identity (connection) based on his responses to the MIBI (Sellers et al., 1997). Kevin scored very high in Regard (private), and Ideology (assimilation, humanist, and minority). His lowest scores were moderate level responses to Regard (public) and Ideology (nationalist). Kevin's varied responses in Regard and Ideology were very interesting to analyze. Kevin's scores suggest that he is proud of being Black and believes that his race is worthy of respect, but also that he does not believe that others share this opinion of him and/or of Blackness. Kevin's scores also suggest that he believes that Black culture is very important to the creation of pride in Black people, to the overall improvement of Black peoples' lives through them coming to know their history, and in supporting Black values and ideals.

Kevin's experience. After Kevin completed the MIBI survey, he and I began to discuss his early childhood as it related to how he learned to speak and read at home. I began the interview by asking Kevin if he was read to as a child, prior to attending school, whether both of his parents participated in this activity, and the frequency of this activity. Kevin responded with:

I was read to at home, by my mom like I could probably say once a day. My father passed away when I was young . . .

Often times these early years of development begin to shape children's social and academic development, especially as it relates to establishing relationships, specifically regarding trust and safety (Davies, et al., 2005; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). The death of Kevin's father undoubtedly had

an impact on his life that could not be quantified at the time. Likely because of the sensitive nature of this topic, Kevin did not go into detail about how his father died, and, out of respect, I did not ask any further questions regarding his death. I offered my sincere condolences and asked if Kevin was ready to continue the interview. He said he was ready, but, clearly, once this issue came up, he remained more sensitive than he might have otherwise.

In terms of his literacy development, Kevin being read to once a day would be considered “good” as compared to not being read to at all, but all children do not learn at the same pace meaning that being read to more often or at a higher frequency may be necessary for some children. Surprisingly, when asked if reading was important in his home Kevin stated that it was not, at least not once he began to go to school. At that point he said that his mother expressed the expectation that the school would take on the responsibility for his development in this area. However, when asked *if* and *how* he was encouraged to read at home he stated that he was encouraged, but was so in a way that suggested it may not always have been a priority:

They kinda joked about it at first, then they kinda made it a serious issue like, you know, as I got older. They made me read, they wanted me to read like every time like when I [came home] from school. They wanted me to make sure I practiced.

Kevin explained that he was told to read on his own, but also that there was not consistent encouragement to read on a daily basis, nor much explanation as to why it was important for him to read and/or to master reading as a skill, both of which are important to the cognitive processes associated with literacy development in terms of motivation and effort (Ormrod, 2008). He expressed understanding of the need to have the ability to read to function in school and the world, but was not sure what level of proficiency was needed in order to succeed in life beyond high school. Still, he believed he had sufficient reading skill to do well in these regards.

Kevin listed books he liked to read in his early years, even after he began to attend school; they included *Rocks*, *Goosebumps*, comic books, horror-themed books and all types of *Walt Disney* books. Kevin stated that his favorite books were those that brought humor to his life, especially those that made him laugh in his early years. He began reading with Disney books like *Goofy*, and then, as he progressed in school, he began to read *Goosebumps*. Later he progressed to horror-themed books. He stated that his interest in reading faded the older he became.

Kevin also discussed his home library and trips to the library throughout his life, specifically during school aged years. He stated that he had about 20 books on a shelf at home during his early years, though not necessarily prior to attending school (he had difficulty remembering), but definitely as early as second grade. When asked how often he had been to the library Kevin replied:

. . . in my entire life I think I only been to the library like three times / the school library was different / in school they made us go like once a week to pick up a book. They tried to keep us involved . . .

I asked Kevin about what type of books he read when he did go to the library, and what was his favorite book was and why. He replied:

. . . a lot of picture books. Even though *Goosebumps* didn't have a lot of pictures it was cool with the pictures, enough to keep me interested. I would say like horror books, [I liked] a little bit of scary books, I was into like the *Captain Underpants*, the comedy books. Always sports books, growing up I was into a little bit of everything.

When I asked Kevin about why some of these books were his favorite he said they were memorable because they kept him "guessing as a reader." At the time, he liked to push himself

emotionally and intellectually as a reader. He loved the books that kept his attention and interest and those were the ones with elements of suspense, these elements are what kept him reading. As he aged, he found it difficult to find material that continued to capture his attention and interests. Creating motivation to read, through material that is aligned with an individual reader's attention and interests (social, cultural, etc.), as well as with problem posing pedagogical strategies increases the likelihood of early and sustained reading; this may explain Kevin's decline in reading motivation (Freire, 1970; Philliber Research Associates of New York for the Kauffman Foundation, 2008).

Later in the interview Kevin and I discussed other people that may have encouraged him to succeed in school. In particular, Kevin stated that there were a few teachers that encouraged him, but that this occurred mostly in elementary school. Kevin also said that once he got older, specifically in high school, there was little effort made by his teachers to provide him encouragement, much less simply show him patience, as he attempted to tackle his academics. Kevin's social and economic status likely influenced his teachers' perceptions of him and, therefore, their expectations of his abilities. Unfortunately, this is supported by the literature examining teacher attitudes and practices aligned with students' race and class; particularly for students of color from high needs communities, teachers' expectations and effort are consistently lowest, regardless of these students' demonstrated capacity (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009; Harry, et al., 2007; Kim, et al., 2012). Kevin explains this further:

I think a lot of teachers just don't care. Some of them do and some of them don't /

Sometimes I feel weird because, you know, I'm Black. The teacher would expect me not to ask some questions or [be able to] do certain things. You know, [things in class] that was kind of hard.

As Kevin and I discussed these perceptions that he had of his teachers based on his interactions with them, we began to also discuss how his literacy skills (reading and speaking), or lack thereof, influenced his relationships with his teachers:

I felt like / they felt kind of disappointed like you know when I got to a certain age / past like fifth grade. They was like you really can't write that good, you really can't read that good, you know? To be that age and to know that you're not caught up to what everybody else is / it makes you uncomfortable with what you've been doing for the last four years.

Often times teacher perceptions and expectations of students manifest through microaggressions directed at students (Henfield, 2011). Kevin described his experiences of such microaggression as difficult, and how they influenced his participation in classroom activities. He also stated that the impact of these microaggressions were often intensified by the reactions of his classmates. I asked him exactly how his friends and classmates responded to teacher microaggressions directed at his literacy skills:

It was kinda equal for the simple fact that some kids were like . . . weren't really good at reading. Like some were really good at reading and but some of them weren't and then there was a couple of my friends were really good at writing. But they all had one good character in that subject it wasn't just me / I didn't write right. My writing was sloppy, my reading was a little bit slow, you know? So, it was kinda you know, rough. Because when we read out loud in class my reading might be / I might stutter a little bit / So that was a little kind of uncomfortable. We were still cool friends, but at the same time it made me less [skill wise according to grade level] than what I'm supposed to be [when compared] with them.

It is important to note that Kevin did not consider any of these peer reactions to be tormenting (bullying) in nature. He explained that these and other interactions with peers regarding school was done in a joking fashion; this is what is known in many Black communities as “playing the dozens,” in which individuals blend factual and fictitious elaborate comments in a humorous fashion to evoke laughter, usually in small groups, so as to mitigate the impact of a challenge that has been surfaced, in this case Kevin’s literacy skills (Bruhn & Murray, 1985; Hood, et al., 2012). Reflecting further on how his literacy skills (or lack thereof) manifest in the classroom, Kevin and I discussed conflicts he had, specifically related to reading for, or speaking with, his teachers. Kevin explained that he would often get strange looks from his teachers when he would speak to them in class, another possible manifestation of a microaggression (Henfield, 2011). He explained further that teachers would often look at him puzzled and sometimes explain to him that he wasn’t saying something “correctly,” though he noted that they were able to correct his speech, at the same time they acted as if they didn’t understand what he was saying. This illustrates what I coin and describe as “Literacy Confusion,” in the preceding chapters. In this instance, Literacy Confusion manifests in the teacher’s unwillingness to concede meaning or accommodate student language because it is perceived as problematic (Martinez, 2009; Nelson, et al., 2010). Kevin expressed that he didn’t understand these miscommunications between himself and teachers because when he would say the exact same phrase(s) or word(s) that his teachers claimed not to understand in speaking with his peers, his peers would understand him perfectly. As discussed in Chapter 2, Kevin’s teachers may have considered his speech African American English (AAE) or African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (also referred to as “Jive” or “Ebonics,” in different generational periods) and refused to speak to/engage with him in hopes of Kevin learning to conform his speech to Standard English (SE) or Standard

American English (SAE) (Haddix, 2009; Matthews, et al., 2010; Thompson, et al., 2004; Washington, 2001). Kevin recalled being suspended at an early age for things he said in class, but did not recall the exact circumstances surrounding these suspensions. Such early suspensions are reinforced by findings in the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) literature, that poor and minority students received disciplinary referrals for minor infractions, especially from teachers with inadequate training (Alexander, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kim, et al., 2012; Mauer, 2006, Wald & Losen, 2003a, 2003b; Matthews, et al., 2010).

Kevin also experienced some correction at home with respect to the way he spoke. He explains:

. . . they would tell me like “oh well you’re basically, you’re not speaking the proper term, like you’re not saying this right or you’re saying it out of context.” If I say it the wrong way, they correct me, because you don’t want to keep making a mistake like that. Since Kevin had been punished by the school for speech-related behaviors, again consistent with STPP literature (Christle, et al., 2005; Clark, 2004; Davis, 2003; Harry, et al., 2007), I asked if he received any type of discipline at home related to his speech, he replied:

No, they [his mother and her male friend] / would tease me / to make me correct myself, so next time it won’t happen. Now to this day it still happens, they just do it to me and all my siblings, so we do the same thing [to each other] to correct ourselves.

Kevin identified himself as Black and used the term “Black” throughout his interview, even though he is the product of a Black father and a White mother. Kevin never referred to himself as biracial or multiracial, but was very disturbed by one of the MIBI survey questions that asked if *Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially* (question number 26). Kevin expressed that he didn’t understand people’s preoccupation with interracial relationships and

expressed the belief that people have the right to be with whomever they choose, regardless of genetic characteristics. In discussing race further, I asked Kevin if he believed that race had any influence on his interactions with his teachers, he responded:

. . . in school I felt like some of my teachers downgraded me because they felt like I needed extra help / [I don't know if it was] because of my race. Sometimes they would pull me off to the side and have a conversation with me.

While not emphatically stated, it seems that Kevin did consider the possibility that race was a factor in his interactions with teachers, manifesting in their expectations, or lack thereof, for him, as well as through stereotype threat; Kevin's discussion of his teachers' interactions are consistent with manifestations of teachers' actions described in the literature in both areas (Alexander, 2010; Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009; Kim, et al., 2012; Steele, 2003, Steele & Aronson, 1995). In order to gain a clearer understanding of Kevin's perceptions of, and knowledge about, race-related behaviors, he and I began to discuss his familiarity with the concept of stereotype threat and the age at which he was first privy to its existence:

It was like middle school when I could really remember hearing about that. A lot of the time I felt like I didn't get called on because they didn't want to give me a chance. Even if I had the wrong answer they didn't give me a chance, cuz, you know, they felt like I didn't have the right answer.

Kevin described this as a partial reason for not attending school on a daily basis. Although Kevin said he liked school, he also expressed feeling the need to ditch school on a regular basis. He describes his consciousness of what he was doing while he was truant:

There was a few times where I felt like I was wasting my time, just being somewhere not doing nothing / When I could have just went there [to school] [and did] what I wanted

after school. [Then] I'd be like I'm already down four periods, why Imma go to school for just two periods.

Kevin further explained that deliberately missing school became what he described as a "habit" to which he abided often. He also discussed the ease of being truant as contributing to the habit, because his "ditch spots," or places where he would go when he was truant, were conveniently located in proximity to the school. Additionally Kevin stated that many of the people he would spend time with during "ditch days" were slightly older than he was, so they didn't have to worry about truancy officers looking for them; this allowed Kevin to "blend in" as older than school age. Though Kevin was truant often, he described school as a "fun" place to be. Kevin also expressed loving the social aspect of school, so I asked if his truancy was academically related:

Sometimes I would do the work, when I had a few teachers [that were] there to help.

[When I had teachers] there to help me I really went to school . . . I had an English teacher my freshman year. He was really helpful and he was there for me. [He would say] if you need the time I'll take the time to help you with your credit. If you need time to come make up a paper you can come. I had like one or two teachers, but I had seven classes though / the rest of the [teachers] were just mediocre.

While it is clear that school attendance was an issue for Kevin, this did not completely explain his reason for leaving school prior to graduation. Further, because he was also court involved prior to his last year of school attendance, this factor also does not completely explain his early school departure. After asking some more detailed questions about his last times in school, Kevin explained that he was told he couldn't come back to school at the beginning of his junior year. This puzzled me because he had not expressed being disciplined in or out of school. After additional probing Kevin explained:

I didn't choose to leave school / they told me it wasn't much they could do for me from my attendance, my progress, my credits. So it was more like, they gave up on me so I gave up on myself / [they said] you might as well stop now or go to adult ed[ucation] . . . they told me I couldn't come back due to lack of credits.

Kevin further explained that when he first entered his last school the administrators told him that they would help him regain his credits by giving him an extra class or two; however, this never came to pass. Kevin said that he sat in the school counselor's office and that either the counselor or vice principal (he could not remember who for sure) told him that he couldn't come back because they couldn't do anything for him, academically, given that he was a full year behind his class in credits. This occurred despite him still being "school aged" during this interview, almost three full years after leaving school. Again, the research on the STPP supports Kevin's experience of not expressly "dropping out" of school, but rather being "pushed out" of school through policy, whether applied fairly and flexibly, on a case-by-case basis, or unfairly and inflexibly, in a "zero tolerance" fashion (Alexander, 2010; Harry, et al., 2007).

Jordan

Jordan is a 20-year-old self-identified Black male who grew up in a number of urban and suburban areas in the Southwestern United States. Jordan lived with his parents prior to attending school in what he described as a "typical White household," where he and his sister were the only Black people in the home. Jordan's father is Black and his mother is White, but his mother was the primary caregiver when his father was absent, which was the majority of his childhood.

Overall Jordan displayed a moderate level (connection) of racial identity according to the MIBI (Sellers, et al., 1997). Jordan had high scores in Regard (private) and Ideology (assimilation, and humanist), but scored moderately in Regard (public) and Ideology (minority).

Although Jordan identifies as a Black male, he is very conscious of his upbringing in what he describes as an “all White household.” Jordan scored the lowest of all participants in Centrality, which suggest that Jordan is aware of being Black, but that his race has little to do with how he functions on a daily basis.

Jordan’s experience. Jordan and I first discussed his exposure to literacy practices prior to attending school. Jordan says he was read to constantly before he started to attend school. He was read to mostly by relatives, but stated this was a constant literacy practice in his early development. Jordan was able to recite the alphabet and read entire books on his own prior to attending school for the first time. Although Jordan says he had at least one shelf full of books that he could read before going to school, he could only remember *Franklin* and *Little Froggy*, because they were his favorites and because he had the entire collections of those series. He then described why he liked *Franklin* so much:

I liked looking at the pictures inside it. I remember that, looking at the turtle and stuff. I remember we had a crate just like that [at home, just like the library] but it was smaller but filled with books and my cousins used to read them to me all the time.

Jordan also discussed his trips to the public library before attending school. He could not remember if he actually checked out books, but stated that he went often with his mother because she always took him with her when she went to the library. Jordan said he was required to go to the school library at least twice a week in elementary school, but did not begin to go to the school library on his own until middle school. Jordan stated he mostly went to the public library to use the computer, but also read some books that were similar to comic books (graphic novels) while he was there.

Jordan says that in his household, Standard American English (SAE) was the staple. Slang was never used, but curse words were in constant rotation in home conversations. The only slang word Jordan could recall being used was “ain’t;” he said that he didn’t know ain’t wasn’t a “real” word until later on in his schooling. Today, he noted, it can be found in the dictionary. I asked if he ever used slang at home and whether he had conflict with his parents because of it. He explained:

I remember when I came home one day and I was speaking slang and my dad caught me, and he was like “It’s thing not thang boy!”

I didn’t expect Jordan to have any conflict with his teachers regarding language, because he described himself as a quiet kid, but I asked anyway and he could only recall such on his first day of kindergarten. He was asked by the teacher to read a book with his mother present in order to gauge his reading level and ability to use language. He said he was able to read an entire book on his own and the teacher seemed to be surprised. According to Jordan, this was not common in his class, so the teacher praised him and his mother for his being able to complete the task without assistance. I asked if he believed his race played a role in that situation or any other interactions with his teachers, and he stated that he couldn’t remember a time when he felt discriminated against. At this point in the interview process with Jordan, I was unsure if he was denying being discriminated against because he had adopted “rightness of whiteness” ideals, what Cross (1971) refers to as emersion-immersion, or an unwillingness to accept that racism is real. However, as the interview process with him progressed, Jordan stated that he knew that discrimination happens, especially to minorities, but, fortunately, did not believe that he had experienced it.

Jordan was so linguistically poised and verbally eloquent during his interview, demonstrating a large vocabulary, it was hard to believe that he was just 19 years old with no college experience. Jordan considered himself smart and an excellent reader, so I was a bit lost as to why he did not earn his diploma. He explained:

I was taken into the principal's office and they just told me I didn't have enough credits to pass this year, so I just uuuuhhh signed out of that school and went to a different one . . . adult [education] school and after a few months I just stopped going, period. Because I felt like it was just taking too long. I didn't want to do it anymore. It was just a waste of time / I was dropping out to get a job, it just didn't work out. I stopped going because I wasn't motivated. I was like, this is going to take two or three years so I'm just not going to go.

I asked Jordan whether he made the decision not to return to school based on what the principal told him and/or his experience in the adult education school. He replied:

No, it was all me, if I would have just did my work and did what I had to do / I don't blame anyone else for dropping out.

Although the principal initiated the process of Jordan leaving school (again, as with Kevin, what could be described as “push out” based on policy interpretation and application consistent with Black male students disproportionate entry into the STPP (Harry, et al., 2007), this could also have been considered a negotiation between the principal and Jordan (especially given Jordan's exceptional linguistic skills), because Jordan accepted what he was told by the principal, enrolled in adult education, and then left that educational setting on his own terms later. However, despite Jordan's ability to self-advocate, his teachers' inability to recognize his obvious significant abilities in the classroom point, again, to the manifestation of Literacy Confusion. Further, some

researchers would argue that Jordan's acceptance of the directive made by the person of authority in his school was a byproduct of him being in a submissive role due to a lack of social, cultural, and sociopolitical capital, including on the basis of age (Bell, 2004; Freire, 1970; Kunjufu, 1985). Another theme in the STPP literature is that, too often, Black male adolescents are perceived as adults because of how fear of Black men in society has been socially constructed since the period of enslavement in the United States (Alexander, 2010). Accordingly, Black male youth are not cared for by especially White adults in positions of authority as the children that they still are, and consistent with how their White peers are.

I asked Jordan if there were any adverse events that occurred in his life that may have altered his academic trajectory, because it appeared that he was on the right path during his early years, but then took a downturn in high school. Jordan explained:

My parents, they split up. Well when I was in, I think it was after second grade or something. My dad got out of prison and we moved in with him in a new house. So I left all my friends and stuff. Then him and my mom split up when I was like in the sixth grade, sixth or seventh. There was the joint custody battle going back and forth. It sucked! Yeah, I left like I didn't know what to do or what was going on, but I ended up staying with my mom.

Jordan described his interactions with his father as few and far between. Jordan says that he saw his father a lot before he began to attend school, but after he and his mother parted ways with his father in the sixth grade, his father was not as involved in his life as he would have liked. I asked if Jordan believed his family dynamics had an impact on his academics:

It could have. [Maybe] if I had more male role models. When my dad was around I had good grades, like they were like B's and C's ... my dad went to the school like every

week and talked to the principal and stuff. He was really serious about school. Then he moved out and I kind [of] just said you know . . . My dad does not have a diploma, he has a GED. The only person in my family that went to college is my brother on my mom's side.

Despite the stereotype (often codified in deficit-oriented educational research on students of color) of poor and minority families as not valuing education (Harper & Tuckman, 2007; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry, et al., 2007), Jordan's parents, although not traditionally educated, clearly valued education and sought to ensure that he would receive a good education through their engagement with him and his school. Nonetheless, Jordan was not able to capitalize on his parental support and complete high school. Fortunately, Jordan is currently enrolled in a program that will culminate with him earning a General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

Marco

Marco is a 20-year-old self-identified Black male who grew up in an urban city in the Midwestern region of the United States until the seventh grade; he then moved to an urban area in the Southwestern region of the United States. Marco received his high school diploma in a juvenile facility while serving time for criminal activity committed prior to becoming an adult. Marco currently lives with his mother and his younger brother.

Marco had a tumultuous childhood. He spent time living in group homes and was also homeless for a period of time when his mother kicked him out of the house. Currently, Marco is seeking employment in order to finance his further education. His intention is to apply to a four-year college or university and begin coursework in the fall of 2015. His major reason for pursuing higher education is to walk-on to a collegiate football team, hopefully earn a

scholarship so that he does not have to continue to work while in school, and, from there, fulfill his goal of becoming a professional athlete.

Overall Marco had a very high (connection) racial identity according to his MIBI scores (Sellers, et al., 1997). He scored very high in Centrality, Regard (private), Ideology (minority), but scored very low in Regard (public). Marco and one other study participant, Ronnie (discussed next), were the only participants to have very high scores in Centrality. A high score in this area reflects a strong sense of pride related to race, as well as a strong connection to other Black people. In Marco's case, his interactions with other Black people seemed to be a central part of his daily life, so I asked Marco if being Black influenced him on a daily basis and he replied:

Yes, a little bit, kinda. Imma keep it real man, if you not Black, low key, a lot of people [are] racist...Put somebody in the right situation, you [will] see their true colors, that's all I got to say.

It became evident over the course of Marco's interview that he harbors negative views about people based on race, including his own, which implies that he experiences threat to his racial identity and gives salience to the impact of stereotype threat in his life (Cross, 1971; Cross, & Vandiver, 2001; Davis, et al., 2005; Steel & Aronson, 1995). He described his teachers (in an indiscriminate way) as being racist and showing favoritism to non-Black students. An example of how this showed up in the interview was Marco's response to the question, "If we could erase racism from society, would your school experience be different?"

Uuugghhh, out here? Yeah. I mean I kinda was a bad kid. Like some of us Black kids have a bad attitude and cocky, but go hand in hand with the white people being racist.

I'm not really explaining it good. Like . . . we [Black people] already are bad, but they [White people] think we gonna be like that. Like they see it coming anyway.

Without realizing it, Marco described the notion of “self-fulfilling prophecy” in two ways: on the one hand he was bad because others expected him to be bad (because he is Black), and on the other hand he thinks teachers are racist because they expect him to be bad (because he is Black) (Cross, 1971). It was difficult to infer which one he believes is the cause and which is the effect because, even though he had several conflicts with his, almost exclusively White female teachers, he also describes them as providing him encouragement:

They said I was smart, but I just didn't focus. I was a bad kid. I wouldn't say bad kid, but I was just really goofy and silly. I wouldn't never steal nobody stuff . . . I would get into a fight occasionally, but I was more like a clown . . . I would get like average grades or just descent grades. They would say that I could do better, but I didn't want to hear that bullshit. They would say that I'm smart but, I wasn't, I didn't like working hard. They all would say the exact same thing. It was kind of encouragement.

Based on Marco's response here, it may be that he has specific academic challenges yet unrevealed or unacknowledged, or simply that he lacks confidence in his ability to perform in the classroom. While students are often able to recognize whether they are getting a good education, and whether teachers are being genuine in their praise, to what extent these insights go is yet unclear (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009). As a result, Marco may be able to recognize his teachers' racism in some instances, but not in others; and/or Marco may still be processing how a teacher can be both racist and helpful.

Marco's experience. Marco began the interview by describing himself as a curious child. He said that his mother engaged him in reading, writing, and math activities because he was

curious to learn about new things from an early age. Marco said he was read to by his mother a couple of times a week; not as consistently as most educators would hope for during a child's early development based on the known importance of repetition as a highly consistent mode of learning to read (Ormrod, 2008). Marco also stated that slang and curse words were the primary codes of communication in the home, and that SAE was not dominant. Even though Marco describes being encouraged to sharpen his literacy skills at home, all his references to mastering literacy were either to homework or to employment-related tasks. This apparent dichotomy is exemplified in the following statement made when asked if being able to read and speak was encouraged at home:

Yeah, you got to be able to read your homework and you got to speak to interview . . .

Like my mom didn't get no college education, so they [his parents] was always working from job to job. My dad was... He was, my dad was always making sure if I was with him I would get good grades. He was always talking about how you should go to college cuz they make so much money.

What Marco describes here is functional literacy, in which an individual can read to function on a daily basis, but not necessarily in transformative ways, or critically (Huey, 1968). Marco knew just enough to be able to do his homework or to apply for a job, but did not seek to improve his literacy skills beyond this. From Marco's interview responses, it was evident that he never developed his literacy skills to the point where he could think critically about text, interact with text, or question text, all of which are necessary in the development of critical literacy (Freire, 1970, 1974; Freire, & Macedo, 1987; Huey, 1968; Sipe, 2000). To get a better understanding of his literacy development in this regard, I asked Marco about the books he had at home and/or what, if anything, he read at home before and after he began to go to school. He responded:

Uuuuuuhhh kids books. Kids books and newspapers. Only reason I read the newspaper cuz we aint got no cable, I wanted to see the sports.

Marco said there were books at home for he and his little brother to read, but could not recall the names of any of the books or if any book was a favorite. It became evident that Marco did not learn to read for fun, but, again, for functionality. This became even clearer when I asked Marco about his visits to the public library:

There were times we had to go [to the library] so my mom could get on the computer, not for me to pick up no book. Only time we went to the library, the few times we did go was for my mom to use the computer.

Again Marco describes a conflict, where, on one hand he says he was encouraged to read, but then points out that, on the other hand he never used any resources, like the library, for the purpose of reading. I wondered if this was also the case with his school library. So I asked Marco if he ever used the library while in school:

Yeah, they [the teachers] wanted us to get books that we could read. I kind of just learned to read just by going to school, I pick things up fast.

Marco describes learning how to read in a way that suggests he is a kinesthetic learner, meaning he learns by doing (Ormrod, 2008; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). However, because Marco struggled with several words on the MIBI survey given at the beginning of the interview session, I asked him how and when he began to learn to read. Marco stated that he could recite the alphabet by heart at the age of six or seven. He stated he could not remember whether he was able to read prior to attending school for the first time, but that is unlikely if he was unable to recite the alphabet at that time. As some research literature suggests, knowing the letters and the sounds

each makes is *the* functional piece to reading the words (Huey, 1968). I then asked Marco how good of a reader he is now on a scale of 1-10 (10 being a perfect reader):

Like a eight. If I ain't never see the word before I probably can't pronounce [it]. You gone use words you use to seeing, but there are a lot of words I done seen before. I'm a real good reader. I can pronounce the word out. I was never one of those kids that needed the teacher to help me read EVER. You ain't finnin to embarrass me in front of my classmates. I'm an avid reader, but it's not like I read books every day.

In noticing that Marco was somewhat uncomfortable in discussing what were his obviously not fully developed reading skills (as exemplified in his struggle discussed previously), I switched the conversation to discuss his speech. Marco had already stated that he used slang much of the time at home, so I wondered if his interactions with teachers would support what is reported in the literature, specifically with respect to teacher-student conflict and his use of what could be considered AAE; further I wondered if him using both slang and AAE in school led to a manifestation of Literacy Confusion in his communication with teachers, or their communication with him (Dillard, 1973; Haddix, 2009; Hood, 1973). I asked Marco if he had conflict with his teachers based on how he spoke in class:

Yeah / I was [expelled] for it once. I called the teacher a bitch. Cuz she was acting like one. She was complaining about something. It was sixth grade. She was always complaining about something I did, so I called her a bitch [then] she kicked me out. I didn't think she heard me. I got expelled for it.

I might have expected that being expelled from school at that age would have had a traumatic influence on Marco's psyche, but he claimed that it wasn't a big deal for two reasons: 1) it wasn't an argument, if it had been an argument between the two of them it may have had more of

an impact; and, 2) he stated that he was always in trouble, so he was used to it even though that was the first time he had been expelled. For some students of color, leaving school enables maintenance of higher levels of self-esteem, absent the pressure to conform to “rightness of whiteness” standards of behavior required in most public (as well as private) schools (Cross, 1971; Fine, 1991; Koppleman & Goodhart, 2009; Juarez & Shannon, 2012). Marco explained that his bad actions in school were a combination of his rebellious personality and encouragement from his peers to act out. He went on to further explain the reason he was expelled, as well as how his academic orientation showed up in the classroom:

. . . all the homies were in that class. I was set up for failure. I had a decent grade in her class. . . I would always act up, but I would do the work. I would always get kicked out [too]. I felt like I was the king, to have the homies to back you up. If I was in there by myself I probably wouldn't have gotten in no trouble. I do good in them type of situations / I got away from that the next year. I wanted to go back to that school cuz it was fun.

Marco repeatedly described this constant fluctuation in his education—doing very well in school at times, and also being suspended and expelled. As the interview progressed, I learned that this constant fluctuation was primarily due to his father's fluctuating presence in and out of his life. Marco discussed his father being repeatedly incarcerated during several periods of his schooling in ways that obviously significantly impacted his schooling, in particular leaving him with little guidance as to how to perform. He explained:

Seventh grade I had descent grades cuz my dad came back, then, eighth grade I was bad again . . . just his [Marco's dad] presence to keep it real. I was scared of him. I got expelled that year [eighth grade], but he came [back] too late. I was already doing my

thing. In ninth grade, the first semester, I didn't miss a day in school when he was [there], for the first time.

Marco feared his father, but also described him as a “moron” for not being able to stay out of the penal system. Marco acknowledged that his father's frequent long incarcerations and resultant absences in his life had a tremendous effect on his academics. This was so obviously significant that he believed the school should have provided him with a mentor. Marco also attributed some of his bad behavior to the lack of other role models in his life, primarily, he believed, because of the environment in which he grew up. Marco described all of the neighborhoods where he lived as “the hood,” and where going to college wasn't perceived as an accessible goal, which, again, points to the salience of stereotype threat in his academic trajectory. Marco viewed academic success as challenging, in part because of his racial characteristics and the school not being an identity safe or otherwise affirming space for him because of those characteristics (Davis, et al., 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Marco also mentioned that he and his older brother (by two years) were often home alone because of his father's incarceration and his mother's need to work. Marco's relationship with his female teachers paralleled those with his mother. Throughout the interview Marco often said, “she was always on my head,” describing how his teachers and his mother were constantly complaining about something he said or did. This dynamic, in combination with minimal exposure to his father and other male role models, may have influenced his interactions with women in authority roles. Marco said that he had only had two male teachers in his lifetime and could not recall any conflicts with them. Marco had trouble providing a reason as to why he and his almost exclusively white female teachers constantly had conflict, though the research describes this scenario as inevitable, especially because of the role masculinity plays in the lives

of especially Black males (Haddix, 2009; Matthews, et al., 2010; Washington, 2001). For example, Haddix (2009) describes Black masculinity being expressed by Black youth in classrooms through highly energetic verbal and non-verbal behaviors. He also said that he believed race may have played a role in many of the interactions with teachers, but that it was difficult to say for sure because the majority of students he shared the class space with were also Black (until middle school, and Black and Latina/Latino in high school) and did not all experience the same conflict with teachers that he did. Additionally, to the present time, he described continuing conflicts with his mother, based, in part, on his resentment of her for kicking him out of the home, thus, in his eyes, forcing him to live in group homes or on the street.

Marco left school in the twelfth grade due to his incarceration in the fall semester of his senior year. As mentioned previously, he earned his high school diploma while incarcerated in a juvenile facility. In spite of this experience, he believes that he “most definitely” would continue to progress educationally because of his desire to attend college to play football.

Ronnie

Ronnie is a 19-year-old self-identified Black male who grew up most of his life in one large urban city in the Southeastern United States, but later moved to two other cities in the Southwest. Ronnie grew up with both his biological parents prior to going to school and through young adulthood. Both of his parents earned high school diplomas and his father has some college experience. Ronnie currently lives with another family member in a Southwestern part of the United States. Ronnie received his high school diploma while incarcerated in a juvenile facility in the Southwestern part of the United States. He currently works a blue-collar job, but will be attending a university in the Southwestern United States in the fall of 2015.

Overall, Ronnie has a high level (connection) of racial identity. On the MIBI he scored the highest in Centrality and Ideology (Nationalist) of all study participants (Sellers, et al., 1997). Ronnie's very high scores in these areas reveal a strong connection to and pride in his race. A strong nationalist score also reveals that Ronnie believes supporting other Blacks is an important part of his identity. Some of Ronnie's answers also imply that he does not trust other races to have the best intentions when it comes to Blacks and their well-being. This is clear in Ronnie's response to whether race played a role in his interactions with teachers and why he believed it did

. . . A lot! Like, I ain't talk a lot so they [teachers] ain't really have no reason not to like me [but they didn't]. But I don't think they liked anybody except the girls and the white kids / Man, they never got in trouble. I remember these white boys were throwing paper across the room and [the teacher] ain't do nothing. I mean she took the paper or made them throw it in the trash, but they ain't get in trouble. Like if one of the Black kids did that they would get kicked out.

This racial tension between Ronnie and his teachers came up often during the interview, despite Ronnie describing himself as quiet in class. I wondered if race or racial tension was something discussed in his home, so I asked Ronnie to describe his family life to me:

I think my family was normal. My dad was gone a lot but it was regular. He was in the military and then he worked a lot so he was always gone somewhere . . . It was cool. It was mostly me and my mom with my dad here and there. I hated moving when I got friends because my mom made me stay in the house a lot. I guess she was scared somebody would snatch me, but people don't kidnap Black kids cuz we don't got no money.

This led me to believe that Ronnie may have learned racial socialization at home and that this learning may have carried over to his assumptions about others, especially teachers, when in school (Cross, 1971, 1978; Jackson, 1976a 1976b; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005).

Ronnie discussed his father being absent much of his childhood due to his working schedule, and that he did not have many relatives with whom he interacted amply enough to meaningfully influence any part of his childhood (i.e., mentorship, socialization). He discussed two of his grandparents dying while he was very young, a third passing away while he was in high school, and the last one passing just recently. Ronnie believed that their passing had little to do with his overall academic motivation, development, or performance because they were not *that* involved in his life.

Ronnie's experience. Ronnie was able to recite the alphabet without assistance by the time he began to attend school for the first time. Additionally, Ronnie was able to spell and write his own name, likely attributable to his parents' dedication to his education. Ronnie discussed being read to often by his parents, as well as being encouraged to do math and reading worksheets at home up until the fifth grade. Interestingly, Ronnie did not consider himself a good reader until the third grade. From Ronnie's account, he was not interested in school until he got to middle school. He felt that academics were difficult to master (intrinsically) motivationally until he found the motivation (extrinsically) to do so through extracurricular activities. Access to extracurricular activities is well known to be the only reason some students' stay in school (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Ronnie recalled *Winnie the Pooh* as his favorite book, mostly because it is the only one he could distinctly remember reading as a young child, though he also remembered coloring

books with stories in them. As Ronnie got older, he read the dictionary as well as magazines and related print material, mostly because it was what was available to him at home. Ronnie discussed his father being really interested in fitness, so *Sports Illustrated* and fitness/exercise magazines were abundant at home. Ronnie also stated that he was motivated to teach himself various skills so he was constantly on the look out for “do it yourself” books such as the . . . *for Dummies* series of books. But these books were rarely available in his school library, and the selection of materials that were available to him there was limited. Therefore, he was discouraged from reading at school. At home Ronnie could not recall having a collection of his own books outside of what was mentioned previously. He stated that his home library is currently empty. He remembers visiting the public library, but could not recall for what reason, with whom, or whether he checked out any books.

Since Ronnie was exposed to ample popular media-driven material I wanted to see if this exposure assisted him with his vocabulary development and/or interpersonal socialization. I asked Ronnie if he had any conflicts with his parents related to how he spoke, he replied:

Nah not really. I mean my dad would tell me to speak like I got some sense, but we ain’t fight about it or nothing. I don’t think [my mom] ever told me not to say anything.

From this response it appeared that his literacy skills did not impact his relationships at home, so

I asked if he believed these skills influenced his relationship with his teachers and he replied:

I don’t know. I mean I know they ain’t like me. I never thought about why except cuz I’m Black. I mean I was quiet in school, I ain’t really talk except to my friends / so it didn’t really affect me like that.

I wondered if Ronnie refused to talk in class and if, for that reason, conflicts with teachers arose, but Ronnie later stated that he would never get called on in class, even when he occasionally put

his hand up to answer a question, though he didn't do this very often. This may have contributed to his perception of how the teachers felt about him. If a student raises his/her hand, and does so sparingly, one might expect a teacher to allow that student to respond. Since this was not Ronnie's experience, Ronnie's teachers may not have been "classroom aware," meaning they may have just viewed students as interchangeable classroom props, instead of as unique members of the classroom community with meaningful contributions to make to discussions (Freire, 1970). Freire's (1970) definition of *praxis* applies here; these negative experiences Ronnie relates impact how students *perceive* (know), *reflect* on, and *act* on their education, based, in large measure on the teachers' lack of praxis (absence of connection between knowledge, reflection, and action in their pedagogical decision making). Although Ronnie had several teachers that he considered unhelpful or unwilling, he had at least one teacher that had a significant positive impact on his schooling (this teacher will be discussed further below).

In relating the research on teacher-student conflict to Ronnie's experiences, I wondered if Ronnie's reading skills played a role in his experiences with his teachers. I asked Ronnie how good a reader he believed he was on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the best):

I would say like a nine, ten. I don't know what we are comparing it to but I can read well.

I never had a problem with that after third grade.

He mentioned third grade several times in the interview, especially when reading came up, so I asked what was so special about third grade:

I don't know. I mean I know I really liked my third grade teacher. It felt like she really wanted me to do good. She was ALWAYS helping me. Like I don't remember anybody in that class except for her.

I then said "it sounds to me like you had a crush on her" and he replied:

No, she was just really good. I mean I felt like she was always at my desk helping me.

Plus that was the year I felt good about school.

Obviously this teacher took a real interest in Ronnie, which resulted in this year of school appearing to be a turning point in his education. Ronnie went on to discuss how easy school was in fourth and fifth grade because of this teacher. It seemed that this teacher helped Ronnie build confidence in his academic abilities and/or provided some motivation for him to succeed academically. Based on Ronnie's description I wanted to know why this teacher in particular was so helpful. He further explained:

. . . nobody helped me like she did. I don't know why she even helped me so much, cuz she wasn't Black either.

Although Ronnie had difficulty recalling the exact racial profile of this teacher (she wasn't Black, but she may not have been White either), he did not forget the impact she made on his education. So even with a lack of male role models and male teachers, as well as his racial salience and distrust of non-Black people, especially teachers, Ronnie was still able to make changes to his academic trajectory due to the inspiration a single teacher provided to him during elementary school. It is possible that this teacher was, in fact, White, but that because his distrust of non-Black teachers he did not attribute whiteness to her, perhaps unable to reconcile his distrust with her behavior (Cross, 1971, 1978). Further, it can be risky for Black people, including Black students, to trust any White person, for fear of letting their guard down and then bearing the brunt of White racism when it emerges and they are unprepared for it (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Moule, 2009). It is possible that Ronnie had some, at least, sub-conscious awareness of this risk in relating to this teacher if, in fact, she was White.

After this mention of race, racial salience emerged as intricately bound to how Ronnie viewed the world (Sellers, et al., 1997). In explaining the concept of stereotype threat to Ronnie, I asked him if he was aware of the concept; he responded:

Yeah, I heard of that. My parents use to always say people said that about us, but it never made sense until I got to high school / I don't remember nobody asking what college I wanted to go to or nothing. I mean my parents did, but once I got in trouble they stopped. Ronnie stated that, despite a general lack of interest in school, he was a very good student. He was on the honor roll consistently, and bragged about not putting much effort into getting there. I asked if he believed he would have graduated if he had not been incarcerated:

Yeah, no doubt about it. I mean, I always had good grades, I was smart I just didn't like to do the work. It was pointless.

As mentioned earlier, Ronnie has plans to attend college in the fall of 2015. Ronnie stated that the only reason he is not currently attending a college is that he was previously unable to complete the necessary admissions tasks (i.e., entrance exams, such as the SAT) by the admission deadline, and that he did not have the resources to pay the fees and associated costs with the application for admission. Standardized testing and application fees are often identified as factors negatively impacting poor and/or minority students' access to higher education, even though standardized test scores do not correlate to graduation rates for any groups of student (based on race, gender, or class), and even though financial aid (included scholarships) will reimburse students for entrance fees upon enrollment (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Milem & Hakuta, 2000).

Since Ronnie was incarcerated for inappropriate activities during school, I assumed that Ronnie might have been habitually in trouble; however, Ronnie stated he was only expelled once

prior to the incident that precipitated his incarceration, and he was only suspended once in high school and once in middle school for fighting; no other disciplinary infractions were on his record. According to the research on adolescent development, most children and young adults do not take responsibility for actions that get them in trouble with their parents, at school, or with the law (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005); however, like Kevin and Jordan, Ronnie did, suggesting, perhaps, that the adolescent development research is skewed by a focus on White adolescents (Juarez & Hayes, 2012). Even though Ronnie discussed having several racially motivated conflicts with his teachers, he does not believe that the incident that caused his incarceration was racially motivated. I asked Ronnie whether he thought if he were white or another race the circumstances leading to his incarceration would have been different. He explained:

Nah, not really. I mean I got in trouble for doing something stupid so if I didn't do [that] I would be in college now. If I could do it over again I would probably still do it / I mean I would think about it more. [But] I probably still would have done it.

Most interesting here is that, even though Ronnie was college-bound and claims that this direction was derailed due to his own actions, he still believes he would not change a thing about his past. However, it is possible that Ronnie's awareness of a racial imbalance in society was buried in his subconscious (Cross, 1971; Kunjufu, 1985, 1986,) when he responded in this manner because when I asked him why he would repeat the same actions that caused his incarceration he responded:

I mean, it pretty much guaranteed I would graduate.

While Ronnie stated earlier that he would have graduated, regardless of his incarceration, because he was a good, smart student who was already thinking about college prior to his

incarceration, this statement led me to believe that there was actually doubt on Ronnie's part about his ability to graduate, perhaps based on some of the choices he has made that led to his incarceration. He later admitted that he had several bad habits and that he knew it was only a matter of time before they would catch up to him:

I was lucky I got caught when I did. I was clearly on a path to destruction.

Nothing was going to stop me from doing me, well, almost.

There is no doubt that Ronnie has some regrets regarding his incarceration, even if just about getting caught. Though he took responsibility for what ultimately led to his court involvement, he also said he probably needed that time (while incarcerated) to think about what he wanted to do with his life. Ronnie said that while he used this time wisely, leisure reading wasn't a significant part of how he did. He stated that when he read, it was to learn about a specific skill related to a career path choice, or about animals:

Man, when you read about how a lion survives in the wild only eating once a week it's crazy. He is king of the jungle, but he is starving. If I miss breakfast I might lose it. You got to learn to survive. That's interesting.

Ronnie said he loved and was interested in animals, but did not want to become a veterinarian because it seemed like too much work, nor did he necessarily want to work with animals on a daily basis. Like many people, especially young people, Ronnie wants instant gratification (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). He wanted to make the most money with the least amount of effort, but perhaps ironically, also wanted to do something meaningful to him. This is particularly interesting because Ronnie expressed the desire to pursue an undergraduate degree in business, because "everything is a business;" so with a business degree, no matter what career path he followed, he believed that someone would want to hire him. Remembering that Ronnie

said he didn't like to do homework in high school, I asked how he planned to graduate college in any degree area without doing homework:

It is something I'm going to have to adjust to. If I get caught [doing what I was doing before] I could be looking at some serious time. I'm not trying to do that to myself again.

Once was enough, I'm straight.

At first I thought these remarks made Ronnie sound un-industrious, but he then explained that he had no problem doing the work if there was a clear and meaningful purpose in so doing.

According to Banks (2005) and Haddix (2009), students can become frustrated and discouraged from learning, especially in instances when clear connections between curriculum, relevance, and applicability to the "real" world are overlooked in pedagogical implementation (Sleeter, 2005; Woodson, 1990). Ronnie stated that much of what he was asked to do in regular public school was tedious, work that seemed to be assigned solely to give his teachers opportunities to check their emails and text their contacts; however, school in the juvenile facility actually showed him how classroom tasks applied to life in the outside world:

We didn't just take tests. We actually did the work. We weren't just taught a period goes here and this is a noun. You actually learned why people sound stupid for not using it correctly. It just let me know high school was even more of a waste of time.

Ronnie discussed making up a year and a half of high school in just a few months in the juvenile facility. This reinforced his view of his regular high school experience, in general, as being a waste of time. Ronnie's ability to make up so much work so quickly, also reinforces findings in the STPP literature that especially minority male youth are overrepresented in this pipeline, because they are referred for special education services, usually for acting out, based on teacher assumptions, predicated on low expectations, that they are emotionally disturbed, rather than

intellectually gifted and bored past the point of frustration tolerance (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kim, et al., 2012).

Barry

Barry is a 20-year-old self-identified Black male who lived his entire life between two large urban areas of the Southwestern United States. Barry lived with both his biological parents prior to going to school and throughout most of his life. Barry left high school in the eleventh grade, but earned his high school diploma in a juvenile facility in the Southwestern part of the United States. Barry currently lives with his girlfriend and his two-year-old daughter in a large urban area of the Southwest. Barry is currently an entrepreneur and is having some success as such, but is interested in pursuing a college degree to further this success.

Barry scored very high in Regard (private), and Ideology (humanist and minority) but his lowest scores were in Regard (public) and Ideology (nationalist) on the MIBI (Sellers, et al., 1997). This implies that Barry is extremely proud of being Black, and that he believes that Blacks should support each other, especially through financial means, and also that it is difficult for Blacks to succeed without working collaboratively, including with other minority groups. However, Barry also believes that people from other racial groups may not share his positive perceptions of Blacks, mostly due to the impact of stereotypical portrayals of Blacks in mass media.

Barry's experience. Barry learned the alphabet at an early age and believed he was able to recite it by heart by the age of three. Despite knowing the alphabet and his mother reading to him at least once a day, Ronnie did not learn to read until after he began school, sometime in the middle of kindergarten. In his early years, *Dr. Seuss* books were his favorite books to read. Barry recalled having a bookshelf with twenty to thirty books on it as a child.

During Barry's early years he remembered going to the public library at least twice a month with his parents to check out books. He also remembered going to the school library at least once a month with his classmates, but also went on his own to complete school projects. As Barry got older he continued to go to the public library, even in high school, but for different reasons:

Yeah, that was the kick it spot.

Meaning that he kept going to the library, because it became a place to socialize with others, not because it was a resource for literacy development.

In his early years, Barry stated that he disliked reading, and that he did not read for fun until later. He expressed being interested in math, and felt that it would get him much further in life than reading. He discussed his parents encouraging him to read, but when I asked, "How did they do so?" he responded:

It was straight up. You need to know how to read. Don't be a dummy / There wasn't much they could do. I didn't like reading, especially when sixth grade came around. I was more of a math person. I ain't like reading. When I went to jail is when I started reading. Like I knew how to read, but I didn't just enjoy a fucking book. I never enjoyed a book until I went to jail.

Barry stated that before he went to jail he was an average reader, mostly self-assessed based on his reading speed, but that while he was incarcerated he became an excellent reader. He discussed how this came about:

There was nothing to do brother! At certain times of the day [you could play basketball or other activities] but you could read whenever you wanted to in your room [jail cell] / I'm

talking about going through a book in a day. Like you see that Twilight book right there?

It would take me like about two days [to finish it], like really whacking it.

While incarcerated, Barry stated that reading was a big part of how he passed the time. Although he was only allowed to go to the library once a month and could only check out between two and four books each time, he was able to trade books with other inmates. This also allowed Barry and his peers to continuously occupy their time reading (a positive pursuit), thereby improving their literacy skills. Barry was eager to tell me how many books he read during his incarceration; he could not remember the specific number, but said it was definitely in the hundreds.

As Barry discussed his incarceration, specifically the reading he did while in the system, he came to the point where how he ended up incarcerated was important to discuss, as well as what his accomplishments were while inside. Although I will not discuss Barry's crime, I will say that his incarceration was economically driven. Like Kevin, Jordan, Ronnie, and Marco, Barry not only took responsibility for his most recent incarceration, but also for his past run-ins with the law; further evidence that the research on adolescent avoidance of responsibility may not apply to Black male youth (Juarez & Hayes, 2012; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005).

Barry first entered a juvenile facility in the sixth grade, but vowed that his most recent infraction, occurring when he was in the eleventh grade, would be his last. At that time, he entered the juvenile facility with four academic credits after three years of high school, but, like Ronnie, was able to makeup close to twenty credits and earn his diploma in the ten months during which he was incarcerated. Doing time gave Barry motivation to complete his degree, or at least to occupy his time constructively. Barry didn't believe that he would have graduated from high school if he had not been incarcerated, so, again like Ronnie, he positively attributes

the time he spent locked up to his current, more positive attitude toward life and his future.

Famously, Malcolm X described how being in prison also afforded him the opportunity to focus on academics and, more specifically, to develop a critical consciousness about systemic racism, both of which foci enabled him to change the course of his life upon release (X & Haley, 1992).

In a way, Barry even credits his incarceration with saving his life:

I know for a fact that I wouldn't have graduated . . . I'm so happy that I went [to jail] when I went because I landed where I landed. If I didn't go to [juvenile facility] I don't know where I would be [today].

Barry stated two specific reasons why his incarceration changed his life: time and separation. He said that when he first went in he “acted out” because he wanted to leave, but once he realized he wasn't getting out immediately he took time to think about his situation in order to change it:

To keep it so real, that time alone changed my whole thinking process. And I'm not out [of jail] right now cuz I'm just that good, I just got a different way of doing shit.

Barry also discussed incarceration as getting him away from the people that he associated with before he was incarcerated; people's whose influence in his life might not always be positive. He discussed his best friend becoming addicted to hard narcotics during his incarceration. Barry stated that being incarcerated kept the two of them separated, which probably kept him from becoming addicted as well, because they often did things together. So while his time away created a gap in their friendship, Barry felt he benefitted from that gap. Barry was also on probation when he was released so he had to avoid many people, including this friend, in order to abide by the parameters of this probation. Barry's reliance on adjudicated separation from potentially bad influences suggests that he might not yet feel strong enough to initiate or maintain that separation on his own. While it is common for White students to limit their

socialization to other White students who perform at the same academic level (e.g., White A students tend to socialize with only other White A students, White B students tend to socialize with only other White B students), Black students tend to socialize with other students based on race (e.g. other Black students), regardless of academic performance (Treisman & Asera, 1995; Treisman & Fullilove, 1990).

Barry also discussed his first incarceration, his father's incarceration, and the significance of role models. Barry was first incarcerated and later on probation in the sixth grade. Surprisingly, this incident was also economically driven, although the circumstances were much different. After this incident things at home and school began to change for him:

I was rebellious, I was hella rebellious.

Barry believed that his behavior in this regard was influenced by his interactions, or lack thereof, with others, in particular his father and mother. Barry's father was incarcerated several times throughout his childhood, which had a tremendous influence on his behavior. At first it made him act out in school, later, while incarcerated, it made him more reflective. He described it this way:

Pops always sold drugs. He always had the big bread you know what I'm saying, shit. It's my family fault. I never had no positive role models, male role models and those that I did have I wasn't around enough.

It was obvious that the persistent absence of his father had an impact on Barry's academics, as well as other, perhaps unintended, consequences on his socialization. Because Barry's father was the breadwinner of the family, he and his mother were constantly moving between two cities. They would move to another city to live with relatives when his father was incarcerated, and

then move back to the city where his father was when his father was released. I asked Barry how early he remembered his father being locked up and he explained:

. . . like four, he always had a good ass lawyer that would get him out or drop half the cases or whatever / he like 50, 60 years old still selling [drugs]. That's not what I want. That's why I'm still trying to get my credentials [college degree] you feel me? fifty, sixty years old? That's not cute. That's not attractive none of that shit. He old as fuck trying to lay on one of those cots over there. Pops, you know, that's what triggered it though, he'd be like "Don't be like me!" But then sixth, seventh, eighth grade is when I started being bad, getting kicked out for stupid shit / he [dad] stopped fucking with me [after I got in trouble in the sixth grade, because it also got him in trouble], he stopped giving me the newest shoes, he stopped giving me all the Gucci / he stopped buying me shit.

Based on the experiences Barry had in school and with his family I was curious about what type of career he saw for himself. At different points in the interview, Barry described what he wanted to be, career-wise, at different times in his development. In elementary school Barry said that he wanted to be a lawyer, by 11 or 12 years of age he said he wanted to be a chef, and by the tenth grade he had no aspirations—he was completely derailed from any meaningful educational/professional path by that time. Interestingly, the trajectory of Barry's declining professional aspirations mirror the declining trajectory of national test scores in reading for minorities (NCES, 2012a, 2012b; 2012c, 2013). While this may seem like an analytical stretch (meaning it would be a lot easier to surmise that Barry's declining professional aspirations more likely a function of the cumulative effect of his father's absence in his life) (Haddix, 2009), the research on whiteness and its negative influence on human behavior (i.e., the "rightness" of whiteness), school culture (typically absent minority role models and related relational norms),

and curriculum (including curriculum hyper-standardization, as well as the absence of meaningful representations of people of color in the curriculum) suggests that there is merit in attributing Barry's declining aspirations to the declining quality of schooling for students of color nationwide (Sleeter, 2005; Woodson, 1990). Coupled with teachers' low expectations for minority students, white ideals that devalue minority students are further strengthened in schools, spilling over into how those students see themselves contributing to society at large (Case, 2012; Castagno, 2008; Rutenberg, 2009). Barry explained that in tenth grade he felt there was nothing left to be gained from school, which is consistent with Mauer's (2006) research revealing that for many students, especially poor and minority students, school is viewed as a waste of time. And this view is supported by concrete realities; even when minority students stay in school and do well academically, they are not economically rewarded for it commensurate with their White peers (Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990). For example, a White male high school graduate will earn more over his lifetime than will a Black male college graduate. Despite his declining professional aspirations, Barry still explained his reasons for remaining in school in quasi-career terms:

I wanted to be a dope boy [drug dealer]. I thought the math [I learned in school] would help me.

Not surprisingly, by this time (high school) Barry was constantly in trouble and had so-called career aspirations that didn't really coincide with attending school, despite his claim to value the of learning math. I asked Barry why he continued to get into trouble at school or at least didn't stop going to school. He responded:

I didn't like it [school] that much. By the time high school came, ninth grade, tenth grade year I was not going for no grades or to learn nothing. I felt like I knew it all. I knew how

to read, I was good at math, what else do you need in life you know what I'm saying?

That's how I was looking at it. I was really going for the girls. I knew I had to go to school cuz it was mandatory at home, you know what I'm saying, but as far as trying goes I stopped trying like ninth grade.

Barry's primary disciplinarians were his father (when his father was not incarcerated) and his grandmother, whose influence is what really kept him going to school in later years. Such positive intergenerational influences are common in this regard, especially in poor and minority communities, though they are often unacknowledged or untapped by school personnel (Nieto & Bode, 2012). However, the older Barry became, the less effective his fear of these disciplinarians he seemed to be. According to Barry, he was going to do what he wanted to do. This attitude emerged from how Barry was treated at home; he was given a tremendous amount of freedom at home. He described being in high school and going "out on the town" all night, coming home at four or five a.m., arriving just minutes before his father when his father was present, even on school nights. This freedom forced Barry to grow up faster than he should have, thus it had a largely negative impact on him because he was not mature enough to put the freedom to effective use; ironically, perhaps, this maturity came with his last incarceration (utter lack of freedom, or, said another way, intense structure).

Barry's freedom at home was not mirrored by freedom in school, and this lack of freedom at school may have influenced his interactions with other students and teachers. Barry said he was liked for the most part by teachers, but because he was also liked by his peers he enjoyed leadership status with them and that status is what got him into trouble the most. He explained:

I wasn't bad in class, I was just [a] smart[aleck] and talked a lot. And if the class was moving too slow I would venture off, and I'm a leader, so when I ventured off thirteen, fourteen people would venture off with me.

All discussed previously relative to one or more of the other participants' school experiences, several possible reasons for Barry's high school experience in these regards come to mind: 1) low expectations on the part of the teacher for Barry and his classmates; 2) the teacher providing instruction on material Barry had already learned in a previous grade or in another class; and/or, 3) presentation of the material by the teacher in a way that appeared to Barry to be useless or that failed to show him how it applied to the real world (Alexander, 2010; Banks, 2005; Freire, 1970, 1974; Kim, et al., 2012). Generally, it seemed that Barry was not challenged in school; precisely because Barry was able to display his obvious intellectual knowledge in several areas during our interview, I asked him if he had felt challenged in high school:

Not at all. I felt like it [the instructional pace] was too slow.

Again, as previously discussed relative to other study participants, when teachers' expectations of students are low, many students lose interest in the curriculum, respect for the teacher, and a sense of the value of school in general (Banks, 2005; Matthews, 2010; Thompson, et al., 2004; Woodson, 1990). When teacher pedagogical skill is poor, many students do not pay attention—this is especially the case if they have already learned the material being presented poorly and when it is not relevant to them personally or professionally (Marzano, 2002; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter, 2005). And, when teacher's fail to assess students' prior knowledge before instructing them, many students can not find real world efficacy in learning (Freire, 1970). Generally, Barry felt like the classes he was enrolled in moved too slowly. Barry stated that the only subject that gave him trouble in school was science, but, again, mostly because he didn't see

how it applied to anything he did or would likely do in life. Like Ronnie, Barry did not understand why anatomy was so important if he did not plan to go into a medical profession. Because Barry did not intend to go into medicine at any point in his academic trajectory, he did not see the point of investing learning in this subject. Given Barry's use of slang throughout the interview, I wondered how language played a role in his schooling and home life. Barry stated that growing up he only used SAE at home and at school, mostly because that is how he learned to speak; his two disciplinarians would not have had it any other way. Barry explained that he never had any issues with teachers based on *how* he spoke, but that he did have conflicts with them based on *when* he spoke. He explained:

I just chose to talk at the wrong time, that's what they would tell me . . . I kept talking, I wasn't hearing that shit.

Barry made it clear that he was not fond of following the rules or submitting to authority figures, likely, as previously discussed, because he had so much freedom in other areas of his life. To learn more about the role that his speech may have played in his conflicts with teachers, I asked Barry what the interaction was like between him and the teacher when the teacher told/asked him to stop talking:

Dismissive . . . [like] I was a smart ass.

Even though Barry acknowledged that many of his responses in class may have conveyed a lack of respect for the teacher, he was never suspended/expelled for these interactions with teachers, though he did acknowledge having several parent-teacher conferences as a result of them. This is most interesting in light of Barry's overall school disciplinary history; he was expelled more than six times between the sixth and eleventh grade, none of which were for such minor infractions. This suggests that Barry's entrée into the STPP was more gradual than, perhaps, for

other participants, but that by the time his transition from school to prison occurred, Barry's behavioral patterns were more consequential (Harry, et al., 2007); this may partially explain why Barry has been somewhat successful as an entrepreneur than he might be working for others

Isaiah

Isaiah is 20 years old and grew up his entire life in two urban areas of the Southwestern and Western United States. Isaiah grew up with his mother and father just prior to attending school. His father left the home when he was still at an early age and did not re-enter his life until just recently. Neither of his parents have any college experience. He was unsure if either of his parents earned their high school diploma. Isaiah is the third youngest of his mother's seven children. Isaiah described his family life as:

Very organized. We were always together.

Isaiah did not receive his high school diploma after leaving school in the eleventh grade, but is currently seeking information on an adult education programs so that he can pursue his high school diploma. Isaiah currently lives with another family member in an urban area of the Southwestern United States.

Isaiah described race as "not being an issue" for most of his life, except for in the ninth grade when he was jumped (a fight in which two or more people fight one person) by a white student and a Mexican student who called him the "N" word during the fight. Isaiah said he first learned of the "N" word in the sixth grade. Surprisingly, this incident did not have a lasting effect on Isaiah's interactions with any other races, nor did it create sensitivity in him with regard to race or race-based discrimination. However, it still may have influenced Isaiah's racial identity. Isaiah scored only close to average or much lower than average on every scale on the MIBI except the Humanist subscale under Ideology (Sellers, et al., 1997). Isaiah's scores on the

Humanist subscale coincide with his responses to interview questions regarding race—specifically in that he is more focused on the individual and less on the group characteristics of the individual. I asked Isaiah how being Black impacted him on a daily basis and whether he believed that if he were White he would have been treated the same way, he responded:

It doesn't! . . . People tell me to this day...like...I'm the Whitest Black person they know. I'm like what? / They like, you skateboard, you don't talk like you Black, you talk like you White, very proper. It's like I was just raised right. I'm like I don't get that.

Again, Isaiah is focused more on the human, rather than the racial, in his interactions with other people. Accordingly, he is much more likely to focus on individual uniqueness's, rather than on the physical characteristics groups of individuals share. His scores also imply he is unlikely to consider race in making daily decisions, and does not believe others should either.

Isaiah's experience. Isaiah says he was read to every other day, by either his mother or his siblings, before he entered school. He says he read mostly Dr. Seuss books, *Green Eggs and Ham* was his favorite book. Isaiah said that this book was his favorite because he knew everything about it. He said it was the first book his family read to him, and that the rhyming stories also helped him learn the words; in this instance, Isaiah's experience is supported by existing research as it relates to learning to read through various stimuli, including through poetry or rhyming activities with short words that have related sounds (Dugan, 1997; Sipe, 2000, 2002). Isaiah believes that the continuous reading/re-reading of books with which he was familiar is what helped him learn the alphabet, which also helped him learn to read prior to attending school for the first time. He credits his mother for teaching him the alphabet, how to read, and generally preparing him for school. Isaiah said he was also encouraged to read on his

own at home. I asked him how his family expressed to him that reading was important. He responded:

My mom used to read books [on her own or to us], we [me and siblings] used to sit there and watch her. It was fun. It was fun to me and like she used to say that reading helped your mind. That used to run through my head whenever I was reading, so. It really used to work cuz I used to learn words and sentences and stuff. Reading was good to me.

Although Isaiah said that he read often, he did not have an abundance of books to choose from, especially because he had seven siblings so resources were scarce and often dedicated to other needs. Still, Isaiah said that there were about 20 books that he and his siblings were able to choose from in the home, but that he was also able to go to the public library often, mostly with his older sister, up until middle school. He never checked books out on his own for fear of losing them, but he would sit and read them at the local library for hours.

Isaiah said he stopped going to the public library when he got to middle school. This was when skateboarding became a key part of his everyday routine. Isaiah expressed the career goal of becoming a professional skateboarder or a chef. His brothers also skateboard, and once he got his own skateboard he was hooked. Isaiah said he liked to cook, so he thought about being a chef, but that skateboarding professionally has been his greatest dream since middle school. Isaiah was clearly joyful as he discussed how he, his friends, and siblings all went to the skate park to practice their skateboarding.

It's not surprising that Isaiah's heavy skateboarding practice eventually negatively affected his grades. Isaiah describes himself as a C student with some B's and D's mixed in. Despite his grades, he believes that among his friends, he was the most interested in school; however, he also stated that the only reason he went to school was because he had to in order to

do the things he wanted to do when he wasn't in school (i.e., skateboard; if he did not achieve at a basic level in school, he was not permitted to skateboard at non-school times). Still, Isaiah stated that choosing not to attend school was a common practice, especially once he got to the tenth grade. I asked Isaiah what he did when he "ditched." He replied:

Go chill, play video games, go play basketball or something, smoke. Wait for everybody else to get out of school.

Isaiah stated that only one of his friends graduated from high school; the rest did not due to a combination of factors, including ditching school. Since there was such disinterest in school between Isaiah and his closest peers, I wondered if Isaiah could see the big picture, beyond high school, as oftentimes young people do not realize the consequences of their actions until later on in life (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012). Accordingly, I asked Isaiah if getting his diploma was secondary, meaning if it mattered to him if he received it or not. He responded:

Yeah, at the moment. But then once I got older it started to hit me harder that I need it so I should have made the choice to stay in school . . . A lot of jobs require it. A lot of applications I tried to fill out, they wanted a high school diploma or something and I didn't have it so I couldn't finish the application.

Clearly, like many adolescents, Isaiah did not initially realize the consequences of not earning a high school diploma. Although Isaiah stated that he should have chosen to stay in school, he also stated that didn't have a choice in this matter. He was kicked out of school after an incident, involving several students, in the eleventh grade, during which other school violations on his part were discovered. According to Isaiah the violations that came to light during this incident got him expelled not just from his school, but from the entire school district. He only realized the

magnitude of these consequences imposed on him for those violations when he tried to enroll in another school in the district shortly after his expulsion.

As far as school discipline was concerned, prior to his expulsion, Isaiah was only suspended from school twice, both times for fighting. These fights occurred in middle and high school. Other than these two infractions, Isaiah had no other disciplinary incidents in school, again, aside from what led to his expulsion. This is interesting because, like Barry, Isaiah said he would often talk out of turn in class. Isaiah discussed a teacher that gave him a hard time in elementary school, although he also admitted to giving the teacher a hard time as well. I asked if he acted out in the class as an aggressor or in defense of himself or others. He responded:

Nah, it was just me. I was a class clown back then. Once I got to seventh eighth grade I realized it wasn't the person I needed to be.

While Isaiah realized at an early age that being the class clown was not a good idea, he didn't realize that he was hanging with "the wrong crowd" in high school until it was too late for him to change course. According to Isaiah, he was not actually participating in the incident that led to him being expelled from the school district; rather he was merely a spectator. He described the situation this way:

I wasn't really fighting, it was the people behind me, but when he [the hall monitor] looked at me I was in the situation. So they thought I was fighting and then he said he saw me swinging and stuff / he didn't like me at all, he wanted me out of there, I knew that. But I was done with that school anyway, so I just told them what I had to say and then they just kicked me out.

Isaiah's description of what happened didn't seem to provide sufficient explanation to me for him being expelled from the entire district, but it was clear he did not want to talk more about it

so I did not pursue additional information. After discussion on other topics, it became clear to me that further discussion about the expulsion incident would have led Isaiah into discussion of the criminal activity that resulted in his court involvement; for that reason Isaiah chose not to reveal additional details of the incident.

Although Isaiah discussed having a lack of male role models, like almost all of the other participants, he never blamed his father's absence or anyone/anything else for his poor choices. Isaiah saw one of his older brothers as a role model, as well as one of his mother's close friends who spent a lot of time with him and his siblings. His mother's friend took them out on a weekly basis and gave them gifts when they did well in school. Isaiah credits his older brother with getting him interested in skateboarding, which occupied a lot of his time in a somewhat constructive manner.

Isaiah also has an older brother who has been incarcerated for the past eight years. His brother's incarceration is a big reason why Isaiah says he has been able to stay out of the penal system since his own initial court involvement:

He was always in my ear.

Isaiah has never visited his brother in the penitentiary. He says he did not want to see his brother in that place, so he has never made the trip to see him there. He stated that his brother's current status in the penal system serves as a constant reminder to him to stay out of trouble and pursue his education.

Chapter Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 provided an overall introduction to the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the research that informed the study. Chapter 3 delineated how this study was undertaken.

This chapter reported the study's quantitative and qualitative findings. This reporting included the participants' responses to the racial identity survey (MIBI), and their individual interview responses, especially to racialized situations and their literacy experiences. The report of findings was supplemented with participants' direct quotes to illustrate their lived experiences.

In Chapter 5, the cross-case analysis and discussion of the study's findings, in general and specific to the research questions, is undertaken. The chapter also discusses implications and significance of the study, especially for critical multicultural and literacy education and related considerations for future research. Finally, the limitations of the study are iterated.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overall introduction to this study including the conceptual framework. Chapter 2 reviewed the research that grounded the theoretical framework and shaped the questions on which this study was built. Chapter 3 detailed how this study was undertaken. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the six generative case studies.

In this chapter, following from the individual reporting of the six case participant findings in Chapter 4, an in-depth cross-case analysis undertaken to reveal the emergent themes and/or other commonalities between and across the cases, as well as discrepant findings. Following this analysis, the themes are discussed relative to the study research questions. Implications and significance of the study, especially for critical multicultural and literacy education and related considerations for future research, are also discussed. The chapter concludes with discussion of the limitations of the study.

Cross-Case Analysis

In this cross-case analysis data commonalities from the participants' narratives were used. Hand coding was used to organize data and to draw out themes and patterns displayed across participants.

Figure 1 (above, in Chapter 3) illustrates the relationship between this study's conceptual framework and methodology, including the potential for the *Theory of Literacy Confusion* to be grounded by the case data. Through the overarching Generative Case Study Design (GCSD) lens of this study, the cross analysis of the cases is undertaken here to illustrate the *general* relationship between and across the cases.

The general cross analysis of the cases yielded strong connections to the existing research in all of the areas reviewed in Chapter 2; these connections readily surface in the patterns that emerged between and across the cases. All the cases were reviewed for congruencies or incongruencies with one another. Discussion of case congruencies and incongruencies is organized under the following themes: Revolving Door Guardians, Incarcerated Parents, Incarceration Saving their Lives, Black Identity Development, Early Literacy Development, Good Readers, Functional Literacy, and Importance but Avoidance of Reading. Additionally, the cases will also be discussed relative to the following four subthemes, emerging from within one or more of the themes: *Boredom*, *Ability to Self-Advocate*, *Truancy*, and *Lack of Role Models*.

General Analysis of the Relationship Between and Across the Cases

Revolving door guardians. All of the participants have had what I term a *revolving guardian door*; that is, they have had parents, guardians, and siblings that have disappeared from their lives for various reasons, including death, incarceration, and as a result of various personal choices. The constancy of this revolving guardian door in the participants' lives had several consequences for them, but two consequences are of particular note. First, this door made it difficult for participants to cope emotionally with their parent's or guardian's absence precisely because this absence was revolving—it was never permanent, and, thus, never provided opportunity for closure (for the participants to get over, move past, and/or find reliable substitutes); this absence can be related to their adolescent development, including their identity development, but more particularly to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, specifically the need for safety and love and/or belonging relative to the establishment of trust and the building of relationships (Rice & Dolgin, 2005). The second consequence of this door, alluded to in the first, is that this door left the participants with a *lack of role models* in their development. Role models

are particularly important because they are critical in young people's learning to set goals for themselves; such goal setting education occurs through adult modeling of this behavior (Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Robinson & Werblow, 2012). In all cases, the father was absent at some point in the participants' lives, if not for the majority of their lives. Participants also expressly discussed the lack of positive male role models in their lives whether their fathers were present or absent. Further, all participants stated they were positively influenced when their fathers were present in the home, mostly because of the disciplinary roles their fathers' played in their lives (often expressed as fear, but not in a dysfunctional or otherwise abusive way).

Incarcerated parents. Criminal activity played a major role in the participants leaving school and court involvement. An unfortunate consequence of adult criminal activity and the response to it by the justice system is the state in which these adults' children are often left. Not surprisingly, especially given the disproportionate incarceration rates for minorities, especially for Black males, four of the six participants in this study had a parent incarcerated during their lifetime (Alexander, 2010). In all of these cases, the parent incarcerated was the biological father; further, some participants had other family members incarcerated, including siblings. Statistically, having a parent or other family member behind bars increases the likelihood of being incarcerated oneself (Alexander, 2010; Balfanz, et al., 2003; Christle, et al., 2005; Kim, et al., 2012).

Incarceration saving their lives. All of the participants that were in juvenile facilities for longer than 5 months while in grades 10-12 credited their incarceration with saving their lives. Notably, the three participants (Marco, Ronnie, and Barry) that spent more than 5 months incarcerated during grades 10-12 were the only participants that earned their high school diplomas. None of the other participants have a high school diploma, GED, or the equivalent.

Only one of the participants (Jordan) who did not have a high school diploma is currently enrolled in a program that can culminate in a diploma, GED, or equivalent. More broadly, the time spent in a juvenile facility provided participants with an opportunity to change their educational and larger life situations in three ways: 1) to move from credit deficient to credit sufficient status; 2) to reflect on the decisions that led to their incarceration; and, 3) to plan for their future upon release.

Black identity development. Participant Black Identity scores measured by the MIBI (Sellers, et al., 1997) proved largely consistent with characterizations of Black Identity painted in the participants' narratives (Cross, 1971, 1978; Jackson, 1976). Though all the participants seemed more or less well adjusted relative to their "being Black," being so was a much more salient identity feature in some cases and much less salient in others. While Kevin, Marco, Ronnie and Barry all expressed loving their racial group and racial group members, as well as pride in being Black in every way, Jordan and Isaiah described being Black in ways that revealed that it was less central in their thinking on a daily basis.

Whiteness was also a factor in the racial identity development in all cases, but played a particularly significant role in to the case of Kevin, Jordan, Marco, and Isaiah, though for very different reasons. Though Kevin and Jordan were raised by White mothers, their narratives did not suggest that they were inclined to overcompensate for this by attempting to play up or down either their blackness or whiteness. Both Kevin and Jordan self-identified as Black, but recognized that they were biologically biracial. They explained their experience of society seeing them as Black, not White, thus arguing that the term "biracial," though an accurate descriptor of who they were in one regard, bore little relevance to how they generally experienced and were experienced by others in everyday life. This is consistent with research on biracial identity

development in which biracial people often express feeling pressure to “choose sides” based on how they “look” (Root, 2008). In Marco and Isaiah’s case, whiteness had a more direct impact on their behavior, but in different ways. Marco believed Whites expected him to act a certain way—“White”—to deem him “good.” He perceived this expectation as negative generally, and especially in terms of the default “bad” way it deemed blackness or people when they “acted Black” or, at least, “not White” (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004; Davis, 2005, 2007; Ogbu, 2008). Accordingly, he overcompensated by pushing back against this expectation with his behavior most of the time; that is, he preferred to “act bad” to maintain fidelity to his blackness, than to “act good” and risk the perception that he was a race traitor or “sell out” (Fasching-Varner & Dodo-Seriki, 2012; Ignatiev, 1996). On the other hand, Isaiah did not want to be identified with negative behaviors and therefore curbed his actions and interests to coincide with the so-called “white ideals.” Both Marco’s and Isaiah’s behaviors align with the “two sides” of the immersion-emersion stage in Cross’ (1971) Nigrescence model, in which a person is engaged in discovering what it means to them to be “Black in America,” thus weighing whether they are better served by adopting an Intense Black Involvement or a Pro-White and/or Anti-Black posture, respectively.

Early literacy development. While the participants’ senses of safety, love, and/or belonging, as well as their racial identity development influenced their ability to learn, their awareness and susceptibility to other developmental influences, including stereotype threat and their teachers’ pedagogical methods, also played a major role in their educational trajectories, especially their early literacy skills development and the progression of those skills over their lifespan to date (Davis, et al., 2006; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). Though they did not know the term associated with it—stereotype threat—the participants were aware of societal perceptions of them based on race, class, and gender and how these perceptions were

grafted onto their perceived abilities, including their reading and speaking prowess (Steele & Aronson, 1995). As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, a key factor in the operation of stereotype threat is that one is aware of a stereotype applied to one's group—and the participants were—and that stereotype has salience in that one is entering a situation—for example, school—in which that stereotype is commonly active—again, for example, in teacher expectations or lack thereof for one's performance. The participants all described situations in which stereotype threat was operationalized in their educational trajectories. Additionally, their teachers' pedagogical methods reinforced this threat most evidently in their verbal interactions with participants, in many cases, serving to ground the *Theory of Literacy Confusion* put forth at the outset of this study. Through these “confused” verbal interactions, the rightness of whiteness surfaces in three ways:

- 1) it limited the power of the participants as learners in their respective classrooms to question what they were learning, lest they be characterized as disruptive;

- 2) it kept participants from learning, in the proactive way that White students typically do, how “the system” or the world operates, including the rules and laws associated with navigating it successfully, again because being curious learners (i.e., asking questions), was often negatively perceived by their teachers as a manifestation of disrespect and/or opposition to authority; and,

- 3) it strengthened the impact of negative stereotypes of them as Black males by forcing them to accept whiteness as a functional part of school culture or be pushed or kicked out (Case, 2012; Castagno, 2008; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Saddler, 2005; Woodson, 1990).

Ultimately, all of the participants described a sense of *boredom* with school because of the teachers' use of what Freire (1970) terms a “banking” educational pedagogy, in which teachers

knowledge is centered as absolute and students learning flows one-way, from teacher to them, by way of the teachers making “deposits” of knowledge into students empty head receptacles. This pedagogical method left participants unengaged in learning, especially reading, and uninterested in school.

Good readers; Functional literacy; Importance but avoidance of reading.

Participants described teacher engagement of their race, culture, or individual interests relative to curricular pursuits as being non-existent until middle school, and even then only sparingly. This absence of cultural relevance and responsiveness (Gay, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Lasdon-Billings, 1995a, 1995b); in the curriculum, as well as in the pedagogical practices of teachers also negatively influenced the participants literacy development, particularly their motivation to read (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994), and, from there, to think critically about text and the larger world (to learn to read the word and the world; Freire, (1970), and ultimately to develop the *ability to self-advocate* in their education. (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Ormrod, 2008; Philliber Research Associates of New York for the Kauffman Foundation, 2008). Kevin, Jordan, and Isaiah were particularly negatively impacted by these compounded manifestations of Literacy Confusion. For Kevin and Jordan, they were instructed not to return to schools that they were, at the time of their interviews for this study, still willing and able to attend (as many as three years after being pushed out of school, though still young enough to be school eligible). There was no effort made on the part of the school system to re-engage them in school after their expulsion, no matter how long ago the expulsion was—in essence, their expulsion became a “life sentence” from which there was no return (Alexander, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry, et al., 2007; Kim, et al., 2012). This further illustrates the problem with zero tolerance policies in schools (and mandatory sentencing in the criminal justice area), as well as alluding to the larger problem

with standardized approaches in education—the absence of discretionary, case-by-case decision making, ensures that punishments are almost always excessive relative to crimes, and that students who fall outside the White, middle class norms on which public education is largely modeled, and not equitably educated (Nieto & Bode, 2012). On the one hand society claims “blindness” to differences, on the other, it calls for conformity to whiteness (Alexander, 2012). Likewise, in Isaiah’s case, he was seemingly arbitrarily dismissed from an entire school district for his involvement in a school altercation, based on a single witness’ account (according to Isaiah), though he contends he was just a mediator in this instance. In this instance, not unlike a situation where a driver is supposedly stopped for the catch-all “failure to signal a lane change,” but actually stopped for “driving while Black,” the ability to punish Isaiah came about as a result of pre-existing infractions that would have never come to light at that time (and, perhaps, never, or at least not until after he had graduated) had the arbitrary/erroneous circumstances that led to the examination of his behavior in the altercation not occurred.

If these participants had been exposed to curriculum and pedagogy designed to affirm who they are (not measured against ideals of whiteness) and, thus, also teach them to think more critically about their educational and life trajectories, they may have been engaged by and in their schooling through high school and into higher education (Alridge, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Case, 2012; Castagno, 2008; Woodson, 1990).

While all participants expressed being encouraged to read at an early age by their parents and other adults in their lives, no one at home or school explained why it was important for them to master the skill of reading—to become not only literate, but critically literate (Freire, 1970). Accordingly, they perceived reading as a chore rather than an asset in their personal, educational, and professional futures. Though all the participants perceived themselves as good readers, they

all rarely read at all, except some of them during periods of incarceration. So, though they thought of themselves as good readers, they only thought to read for functional purposes—including for the purpose of passing time while behind bars. Thus, they viewed reading as a means to various functional ends in daily life, for example, being able to read “good enough” to complete a job application, rather than for edification (to have a “life of the mind,” for self-enrichment, or to develop critical consciousness) (Freire & Macedo, 1987). As a result, reading never became important, but rather unimportant, in their daily lives. Likewise, all the participants also viewed math as functionally necessary and applicable to their daily lives, but again not higher level forms of math, such as geometry and calculus (Frankenstein & Powell, 1997).

The perceived irrelevance of schooling in general to “real life” played the major role in the participants’ exiting school prior to graduation. This perception was born and nurtured in the classroom through the lack of culturally relevant and responsive curricular and pedagogical approaches employed by their teachers. As a result, the participants felt persistent and pervasive *boredom* in school which led to them becoming disconnected from learning, acting out in class and school, and, eventually, to their *truancy*.

All participants eventually engaged in truant behaviors to avoid the boredom they felt while in school. Several of the participants explained that their courses moved “too slow.” In many instances, participants were enrolled in course below their ability levels, either because of the erroneous perception of their abilities, as previously discussed, and/or because of their credit deficiencies (they were forced, but the standardized nature of the curriculum, to take lower level course before progressing to higher level ones) (Sleeter, 2005). As a result of this slowness, they became bored and some (Kevin, Marco, Barry, and Isaiah initially) acted out in response and then became truant, while others (Kevin, Jordan, Barry, and Isaiah more immediately) chose not

to continue in school. These behaviors are consistent with students of color that are tracked into lower level courses based on perceived or actual academic abilities (Ansalone, 2010; Guyon, et al., 2011; Zirkel, 2005). It is of note that when White students have behavioral challenges in school, the typically response is to improve the quality of instruction; however when students of color exhibit the same behavior challenges in school, the general response is to increase disciplinary measures (Harry & Klingner, 2006). It is also of note that minority male students are grossly over-referred for all forms of special education services (as behaviorally disordered, learning disabled, and developmentally disabled), and that white females are comparatively under-referred, with most referrals being made by White, female teachers (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

Finally, all of the participants discussed the negative impact of the *lack of role models* in their educational trajectories, especially their literacy development, in various ways. Generally, all participants described a lack of (as well as the need for) role models in their lives to encourage and guide them to establish and pursue academic, as well as professional goals. In particular, they all described the ways in which their parents and/or other adults facilitated their early reading and speaking abilities. Additionally, all of the participants described their father's early involvement in their lives as having positive academic and social influence, especially relative to their need for structure and benevolent discipline. According to social learning theory and related research, when students have clear goals and mentors dedicated to supporting them to reach those goals, their motivation to work toward accomplishing these goals, and success in so doing, is significantly increased, at the same time behaviors associated with academic default are decreased (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; National Mentoring Partnership, 2014; Wallace, 2009).

Answering the Research Questions

Building on general cross-case analysis, this extended cross-analysis is undertaken to examine the relationship between and across the cases *relative to the research questions* that guided the study:

- Primary Research Question: *How do Black males that have entered the STPP view their literacy (reading and oral language) development at home and at school?*
- Ancillary Research Questions:
 - *How do literacy skills (reading and oral language) influence Black male students' interactions within and out of school?*
 - *How, if at all, did these literacy skills lead Black male students into the STPP?*

As with the general cross-case analysis, Figure 1 (again, above, in Chapter 3) illustrates the relationship between this study's conceptual framework and methodology, including the potential for the *Theory of Literacy Confusion* to be grounded by the case data. Through the overarching Generative Case Study Design (GCSD) lens of this study, the extended cross analysis of the cases is undertaken here to illustrate the relationship between and across the cases *relative to the research questions*.

Extended cross analysis of the cases again yielded strong connections to the existing research in all of the areas reviewed in Chapter 2, particularly to the existing research on the School-to-Prison Pipeline relative to the participants' exiting school prior to graduation and later becoming court involved. Discussion of these connections is organized under the following themes (and embedded sub-themes): Black Identity Development, Early Literacy Development (embedded sub-themes: Boredom; Truancy), Functional Literacy (embedded sub-themes: Good Readers; Importance but Avoidance of Reading; Ability to Self-Advocate), and Lack of Role

Models.

Extended Analysis of the Relationship Between and Across the Cases Relative to the Research Questions

All of the participants' in this study projected confidence in their reading and speaking literacy during the formal interviews, as well as during informal rapport-building conversations. This could have been misinterpreted on my part (as the researcher), leading to a form of Literacy Confusion between us, if the study had not been organized by, and analyzed through, the study's particular conceptual framework. Notably, the participants' characterizations of themselves as good readers and speakers relative to their variously revealed literacy challenges during our discussion, could have easily led me to perceive them as falsely confident of their literacy development, perhaps attributable to some deficit on their part (e.g., stereotypical masculine bravado, fear of expressing weakness, intentional lying). However, through the lens of the study's conceptual framework I was able to discern *how* the participants' viewed their literacy skills both at home and school, and, thus, draw more accurate conclusions as to *why* they characterized their skills in this area positively.

Kevin, Jordan, Marco, Ronnie, Barry, and Isaiah thought of literacy as only functional, not critical. Accordingly, their perceptions of what it means to be an excellent reader and speaker flowed from this view of literacy. This view of literacy was heavily influenced by their literacy development (or lack thereof) at home (influenced, as discussed previously, by revolving door guardians and lack of role models, in addition to their parents' own school experiences) (Clark, Flores, Rivera, Biesinger, & Morgan, 2012). This view of literacy was also heavily influenced by their literacy development (or lack thereof) at school, established and reinforced by pre-existing societal barriers between them as working class, Black males and their teachers as middle class,

White females teachers discussed extensively in the School-to-Prison Pipeline literature focused on student-teacher/teacher-student communication conflicts (Harry, et al., 2007; Kim, et al., 2012; Wald & Losen, 2003a, 2003b). The participants' functional perception of literacy also exacerbated the educational performance gaps between them and their white counterparts due to schools' creation and perpetuation of stereotype-threat situations through the Eurocentric school culture as an identity peril space for Black males to be affirmed individually or culturally, thus also academically. (Dillard, 1973; Haddix, 2009; Matthews, et al., 2010; Thompson, et al., 2004; Washington, 2001).

As this study reveals, Literacy Confusion emerges from such school environments especially when teachers' lack the cultural competence to manage their classrooms relative to the presence of various dimensions of student diversity (in the case of this study, relative to the presence of Black males), coupled with teachers' failure to even recognize or care when a specific student, or group of students, has become disengaged in the learning process (Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990, 2011; Woodson, 1990). Teachers are generally unprepared to engage students who are socioeconomically, racially, and gendered different from themselves, and who may need to be taught differently than they were taught (Banks & Banks, 1989; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Kunjufu, 2011). Further, as previously discussed, White female teachers especially lack knowledge regarding normative Black male, and Black male student, behavior, specifically how healthy Black male masculinity develops and is expressed through playful banter (e.g., energetic verbal and non verbal behaviors, including "playing the dozens",) (Bruhn, & Murray, 1985; Hood, et al., 2012). Again, it is of note that White female teachers typically do not experience the same knowledge challenges relative to very similar expressions of healthy White male masculinity (Haddix, 2009; Hood, et al., 2012; Matthews, et al., 2010).

While Kunjufu (2011) purports that all Black males have a particular learning style and, therefore, need to have specialized instruction that is geared toward affirming that learning style, the leading researchers in critical multicultural and literacy education argue that teaching and learning geared to a specific style, no matter how antiracist-ly it is conceived, ultimately still ends up reifying racial stereotypes that limit, especially minority students', learning outcomes (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Accordingly, teachers who are supported in learning to affirm students' multiple ways of learning (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic) are not only successful in avoiding Literacy Confusion through excellent student engagement and, therefore, classroom management, they play a key role in dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kunjufu, 2011; Ormrod, 2008; Rice & Dolgin, 2005).

Black identity development. All participants described learning about their race and the differences between their own race and others' races at an early age, a factor that is important in racial identity development, especially given that these learning opportunities were not laden with negative racial, ethnic, and/or nationality-related stereotypes as is so often the case (CNN, 2010; Cross, 1971; Davis, 2005, 2007; Rice & Dolgin, 2005). Even though participants had significantly different experiences, they scored similarly on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers, et al., 1997). However, though participants had similar scores, there was still variance in their responses, even on the same questions.

Additionally, even though all participants knew the difference between their own race and others' races, including those of mixed race, race did not become a salient identity factor in most cases until the participant entered middle school (sixth, seventh and eighth grade) or later. In some cases (Marco and Ronnie) this salience emerged when they moved from an all Black

neighborhood into a mixed race area. These moves heightened their sense of racial difference, thus significantly influencing their racial salience.

All participants noted they also did not learn about most aspects of their racial history in school until middle school. All participants' noted that there was little integration of Black history (except in February during Black History Month), into any curricula until high school.

Race was also not addressed in a meaningful way in the participants' homes. If it was discussed, it was done so only quickly or in a joking fashion.

While these racial factors may seem to imply that race was not significant in the participants' academic trajectories—that is, that race played an incidental role, in fact, racial identity development factors impacted the participants' literacy skill development in concert with their adolescent development in enormous ways. In particular, the manners in which whiteness operated in their school settings had formative impact on their academic and professional goals. Similar to what Case (2012) found, the participants in this study were taught to accept whiteness as a functional part of school culture, which was not to be interrupted; if it was, there were negative consequences. Similar to Castagno's (2008) research participants, the participants in this study discussed the normal occurrences of various classroom behaviors by White peers that did not incur disciplinary referrals, but when they exhibited the same behaviors such disciplinary referrals ensued. This is especially evident in Marco and Ronnie's discussion of students' classroom behaviors and the reactions of their white female teachers to those behaviors through which a "white is right" attitude was, at least covertly, revealed:

Marco: . . . She was always complaining about something I did.

Ronnie: I don't think they liked anybody except the girls and the white kids /

Man, they never got in trouble.

Though Marco and Ronnie are the only participants that expressly discussed their teachers showing leniency to other students' behaviors relative to their own, all participants expressed signs of damage to their Black identity in ways that interfered with their literacy (and other) learning. This was especially true in terms of the participants feeling the pressure to live up to stereotypes, whether related to academic performance (i.e., non-performance) or otherwise (e.g., bad behavior) (Steele & Aronson, 1997). All participants knew what stereotype threat was (defining it without using this term), and it remained salient in their education in several ways: teachers' low expectations of them, racially standardized curriculum, academic tracking, Eurocentric school culture, insidious micro- (as well as intermittent macro-) aggressive threats to their identity safety, and teachers' reinforcement of racial stereotypes (including through silencing of some students) in the classroom (Alridge, 2007; Case, 2012, Castagno, 2008; Davies, et al., 2005; Davis, 2005, 2007; Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990; Nieto, Bode, 2012; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Woodson, 1990; Zirkel, 2005).

The relationship between the participants' Black identity and literacy development was also particularly important in answering the research questions relative to the participants': relationships with others and their self-efficacy (or lack there of), and the resultant path that was created leading them into the STPP. This is well articulated in Marco's response to some of his in-class behaviors:

. . . Like some of us Black kids have a bad attitude and cocky, but [it] go hand in hand with the white people being racist / Like . . . we [Black people] already are bad, but they [White people] think we gonna be like that. Like they see it coming anyway.

Black identity, specifically impacted by stereotype threat and whiteness, heavily influenced participants' interactions with teachers in school, parents and other family members outside of

school, including at home, and peers in and out of school, though in trifurcated ways. Some researchers discuss these influences as barriers in education; academic duties distract students from conforming to the social norms of school that enables them to achieve acceptance in their particular social circle, even if these norms conflict with their identity (Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Some of the participants' (Jordan and Isaiah) racial identity development was more influenced by whiteness, or the right of whiteness, in ways that they perceived or that actually created separation between them and their peers. Using Isaiah as an example of how this surfaced:

. . . People tell me to this day...like...I'm the Whitest Black person they know.

I'm like what? / They like, you skateboard, you don't talk like you Black, you talk like you White.

Other participants' (Kevin, Marco, Ronnie, and Barry) racial identity development was more influenced by their experience of negative racial stereotypes, making them susceptible to stereotype threat. Here, whiteness and stereotype threat are not just a function of school culture and/or school disciplinary practices, but their teachers' classroom behaviors as well. Marco explains:

. . . I would get like average grades or just descent grades. They would say

that I could do better, but I didn't want to hear that bullshit. They would say that

I'm smart but, I wasn't . . .

Participants' racial identity also impacted their reading development and, thus again, their interactions with teachers. Most participants described most of their teachers as White and female, and expressed perceiving their teachers' whiteness as adversarial (Case, 2012; Castagno,

2008). As a result of this adversarial perception, participants did not challenge their teachers' instructional methods or push back in situations where Literacy Confusion was obviously at play. For example, when their teachers' expressed low expectations of their ability to do class work, their inclination to self-advocate to challenge those expectations was diminished (NCES, 2012a, 2012c). Kevin explained how this affected him:

. . . in school I felt like some of my teachers downgraded me because they felt like I needed extra help / [I don't know if it was] because of my race. Sometimes they would pull me off to the side and have a conversation with me.

Sometimes I would do the work, when I had a few teachers [that were] there to help. [When I had teachers] there to help me I really went to school . . .

Bonilla-Silva's (2003) discussion of whiteness and Alridge's (2007) discussion of school culture support this finding. Minority groups members tend to perceive Whites as figures of authority in schools, thus these figures are not to be challenged, even when it is appropriate to do so (e.g., when they express racism). Further, research describes whiteness as operating in a way that forces behavioral conformity, often leading minorities to take subordinate roles, especially in identity peril spaces (Bell, 2004; Case, 2012; Davies, et al., 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Consistent with Ogbu's (2008) research, some participants even seemed to view literacy skill development, even schooling as a whole, as a "white thing," thus, not aligned with their life agendas. While the research has been over-interpreted to blame students of color who express this sentiment for their own failure (Nieto & Bode, 2012), Ogbu's point is that schools and teachers have a socially constructed view of academic identity as White, thus students of color who have a strong sense of racial identity are put in the position of having to choose whether to maintain racial esteem at the expense of academics, or visa versa. In sum, schools and teachers

have not considered the existence of, for example, a Black male academic identity, much less how it might be expressed (Kunjufu, 2011). Here, Literacy Confusion emerges again relative to the participants' not knowing how—*inside* “the system”—to advocate for, or position, themselves for a future in which academic and professional success is their only option. It is of note that “the system” is self-reflexively set up to do this advocacy and positioning for white students, regardless of their knowledge in these regards (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Saddler, 2005).

Participants also attributed their both positive and negative perceptions of race and racial identity as emerging from family members, peers and media outlets, mostly television and internet news. Racialized images portrayed in the media are particularly well known for perpetuating stereotypes (Brundage, 2011; Davis, 2005, 2007). For many of the participants, these perceptions negatively impacted their academic trajectories. As previously noted, in pursuing education the participants were not racially affirmed (by teachers and in school), thus, they did not experience their pursuit of education as a racially affirming thing to do (i.e., they did not want to be noticed by peers) because of the perceived alignment of such work with White identity and ideals (Ogbu, 2008), especially if there were potentially more lucrative opportunities available to them.

Early literacy development. Clearly, the early literacy development of all participants builds from their racial identity; it also extends from it. All participants in this study had received formal and informal literacy development instruction from birth to the time of their interview. Their literacy development occurred in several ways that were generally consistent across all participants. They described being read to at least once a day, usually by parents, but also by siblings or other family members. Consistent with language instruction research relative to the learning of letters and the sounds each make, often while referencing a known object to illustrate

this connection (Chomsky, 2007; Huey, 1968), all the participants described being taught the alphabet and letter sounds. They all also described visits to the library (public and school) to access a range of literacy resources, including environmental print. In these ways, all of the participants self-reported generally having relatively normal early literacy development experiences.

In terms of their formal schooling, all participants entered Kindergarten by age 5, though the majority of them reported not yet being able to read when they started school; Jordan and Ronnie being the exception. As discussed in Chapter 2, early entry to Kindergarten with a lack of early literacy skills is common because standardized testing of students in this age group typically does not occur, thus there are no steadfast entry benchmarks (Easton-Brooks & Brown, 2010; NCES, 2012a).

Although most participants described being told that reading and speaking were important literacy skills to learn, they also reported that no one explained to them why these skills were important, nor how being deficit in these skills would negatively influence their social, academic, and professional trajectories. Research suggests that it is more common for students of color to be taught technical skills absent a larger critical context in which the rationale for learning those skills is explicated (Nieto & Bode, 2012). In this regard, the participants' racial identity was, once again, influential in their literacy development. The Eurocentric school curriculum taught in schools devalues all so-called minority cultures, if for no other reason than because they are measured relative to the majority culture (Kunjufu, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Further, to the extent that teachers have discretionary decision-making authority, they are pre-conditioned (by Eurocentrism) to make decisions on what to include or exclude in the curriculum, such that multiculturally affirming literature is rarely integrated

(Castagno, 2008; Marzano, 2002; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter, 2005). This cross-cultural gap in the curriculum is intensified by teachers' lack of preparedness to teach students from racially different populations, especially if they are also poor (Juarez and Hayes, 2012). In order for the curriculum to be equitably meaningful to, and, thus, well received by, all students, teachers must learn to use, and then actually implement, critical pedagogical strategies to mediate the curricular gap that prevents all students from learning at high levels (Freire, 1970; Nieto & Bode, 2012). As the participants' narratives reveal, when these strategies are not in place, students become frustrated by the educational process and, in turn, are discouraged from engaging in learning (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009). This is well-articulated by Jordan:

. . . I felt like it was just taking too long. I didn't want to do it anymore. It was just a waste of time / I was dropping out to get a job, it just didn't work out. I stopped going because I wasn't motivated.

In failing to provide the reasoning for why fully attaining literacy skills is so crucial, the participants' teachers generally failed to provide them (and, by extension, their families) with a meaningful and otherwise adequate education to (Gardner, 2006). This notwithstanding, the participants were able to discern what a good education is and that they were not getting one (Clark, 1993).

Literacy Confusion, as coined and defined in this study, describes how teachers are ineffective in accurately assessing the literacy skills of students who are different from them (e.g., racially, in terms of class, relative to gender), and, therefore, often rely on stereotypical assumptions of these students' skills. Because the participants' teachers were either unable to see or unconcerned with acknowledging that they were not engaged as students in their classroom, the participants' literacy skills went unassessed prior to instruction, thus unaddressed during it.

Here again, the participants' experiences are consistent with research on Black students' ability to differentiate the negative quality of the education they are receiving relative to the good quality one most of their White counterparts do (Banks, 2005; Haddix, 2009). As a result, Black students are nearly three times as likely to require remedial English than are White students, especially if they are to be able to compete in literacy intense courses (Rutenberg, 2009, p. 1). Representative of the participants' experiences of this manifestation of Literacy Confusion, Barry describes the value of his high school courses (outside the juvenile facility) this way:

. . . By the time high school came, ninth grade, tenth grade year I was not going for no grades or to learn nothing. I felt like I knew it all. I knew how to read, I was good at math, what else do you need in life.

While all of the participants described environmental print, they did not understand it as an instructional tool their parents and other family members used to educate them. Existing research supports home use of environmental print to supplement literacy development, particularly with pre-Kindergarten-age children because of how it facilitates children in relating new learning to prior knowledge (Molfese, Modglin, & Beswick, 2006; Query, Ceglowski, Clark, & Li, 2011). Participants' descriptions of their parents' use of environmental print suggests that its value to literacy development was either not known by the parents, or, if it was, not consciously acknowledged. That is, though participants were often encouraged by their parents (directly or by example) to read magazines and graphic novels, their parents' encouragement in these regards was rarely formally conveyed as reading instruction or as a part of learning to read.

Ironically perhaps, some of the participants were able to sharpen their literacy skills during their free time while incarcerated. The three participants that were incarcerated for long

periods of time—Marco, Ronnie, and Barry—all discussed sharpening their literacy skills, particularly in reading; though, as previously noted, they acknowledged that doing so was incidental (to pass the time) rather than intentional. Barry stated that there was little else to do in the facility, while confined to his room, as previously discussed in Chapter 4. Barry was the most avid reader with the most diverse reading menu, even among the three participants who read more often while locked up; it is of note that he was also in the most economically stable position of all the participants at the time of his interview. But all the participants discussed reading more while incarcerated than they did previously. Unfortunately, this increase in reading did not continue after their release. Nonetheless, from the participants' discussion of their reading during their incarceration, insight can be gleaned into how they viewed reading in their personal, academic, and professional development. First, they all emphasize the importance of having choice in what they read as increasing their inclination to read. They contrasted the choice they had in this regard while incarcerated against the set script of what they were read in school, whether dictated by curriculum standards or, arbitrarily, by teachers. Research documents how standardized curriculum can restrict teachers from teaching students in ways they learn best, and, even cultivate student disinterest in learning in particular subject area or generally (Au, 2011; Marzano, 2002). This is especially the case if curriculum standardization extends into the pedagogical arena, dictating not only what is taught, but how it is taught (e.g., through a “banking” instructional model, rather than a critical, culturally relevant, and otherwise engaging way) (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Marzano, 2002; Sleeter, 2005).

Oral language use was also key in participants' literacy development, including as a factor in their entering the STPP. Although all of the participants reported receiving some push back from teachers, and some, but less, from parents, for some of ways in which they expressed

themselves orally, this pushback was not significant enough to disrupt their daily personal or academic lives in or out of school. This finding is inconsistent with the preponderance of findings in the STPP literature denoting oral (and written) language as the primary source of conflict in teacher-student relationships, specifically those between Black male students and White female teachers, leading these students into disciplinary action and/or for special education referral (Alexander, 2010; Christle, et al., 2005; Dillard, 1973; Haddix, 2009; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kim, et al., 2012; Matthews, et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2004; Washington, 2001). Though the participants in this study expressed being corrected for misusing some words or using foul language, no participant recalled receiving significant punishment or derision *solely* for language use at home or in school (except the single isolated incident described by Marco in Chapter 4). Participants agreed that language corrections they received were expressed in non-offensive ways. Further, while they all expressed disappointment in themselves for needing the correction, they did not sense any disappointment coming from peers, teachers, or parents at the moment of correction (except in Kevin's case). Still, their non-SE or non-SAE conforming language use during formal classroom literacy activities (e.g., read alouds) did provoke jokes from their peers. While the participants expressed that these jokes did not embarrass them, negatively impact their self-confidence, or discourage their continued participation in these activities, they did notice these instances and they easily recalled them. For example, Marco, recalled the following:

. . . If I ain't never see the word before I probably can't pronounce [it]. You gone use words you used to seeing, but there are a lot of words I done seen before. I'm a real good reader. I can pronounce the word out. I was never one of those kids that needed the teacher to help me read EVER.

So while the participants noticed that their non-standard or inappropriate oral language use was noticed and corrected at home and in school, none identified it as a source of conflict leading to disciplinary referral or special education coursework. However, they did describe a negative impact of this noticing as a source of Literacy Confusion between them and their teachers. Thus it was a source of less explicit conflict and, thus, may have negatively impacted them over time (through an accumulation of incidents of Literacy Confusion), rather than immediately (based on a single, significant language-related conflict). Oftentimes teachers and administrators consider students' disciplinary histories in making the decision to expel students for a relatively minor infraction; likewise they consider students' academic histories when deciding who to “encourage” to leave school based on credit deficiencies. This is particularly likely when considering how dropouts are “counted” in graduation rate calculations that are often tied to school funding. Luna (2008) reported that in Nevada, students who dropout prior to their senior year of high school are not included when calculating the graduation rates for their grade cohort. Therefore, schools are incentivized to *push* borderline students *out* of school. As previously discussed, this was also the experience of several participants in the study.

Boredom; Truancy. In response to: 1) curriculum not being presented in meaningful ways and/or its value to students not being expressly articulated in its presentation; 2) didactic and/or idiosyncratic pedagogical practices; 3) disaffirming school culture; and, 4) the seeming inescapability of downward tracking, all the participants in this study expressed feeling bored in the classes they took. Their boredom was not brought on by a lack of interest in curricular topics (though disinterest was a factor in their disinclination to read), but rather the slow pace at which the instruction on these topics was delivered. Research suggests that this slowness derives from school assumptions about student's educational abilities (expressed through tracking) and teacher

expectations (or lack thereof) for student achievement (Ansalone, 2010; Banks, 2005; Guyon, et al., 2011; Haddix, 2009; Kim, et al., 2012). No participant reported being enrolled in special education courses, but all were unsure of whether or not they were enrolled in lower level courses, and all described several instances in which their course instruction covered material they had already mastered in an earlier grade. Literacy Confusion may have played a role in the participants' boredom; though it is not known for sure, it is likely that at least some of the participants in this study were tracked into lower level courses, if not also special education, based solely on them being Black and male, but also on their accumulated credit deficiencies, and also on their subsequent entrée into the STPP (Alexander, 2010; Christle, et al., 2005; Clark, 2004; Harry, & Klingner, 2006; Harry, et al., 2007; Kim, et al., 2012). Participants responded to their boredom in two ways—they acted out or became truant. But, consistent with other findings in this study, the participants' description of their acting out behavior is not significant, and, in fact, sometimes it illustrated their abilities, even if these abilities were unacknowledged and/or unengaged by teachers. Barry described his acting out as leadership:

. . . I was just [a] smart[aleck] and talked a lot. And if the class was moving too slow I would venture off, and I'm a leader, so when I ventured off thirteen, fourteen people would venture off with me.

Boredom, perhaps even with acting out in class, ultimately led some participants (Kevin, Marco, Barry and Isaiah) to decide that their time was best spent elsewhere. Even for the participants that were quiet in class (Jordan, Ronnie and Isaiah) truancy came to be preferred over boredom. In Kevin, Barry, and Isaiah's cases, boredom led them into truancy early in their educational careers (6th-8th grade). Ultimately, boredom led all the participants in this study to become increasingly truant over time. Even when participants thought about going to school while

ditching, they opted not to go because their boredom led them to conclude they were not getting a good education even when present in school. These conclusions are consistent with those of other minority youth document in the related research (Banks 2005; Haddix, 2009). Kevin describes the conundrum of boredom this way:

There was a few times where I felt like I was wasting my time, just being somewhere not doing nothing / When I could have just went there [to school] [and did] what I wanted after school. [Then] I'd be like I'm already down four periods, why Imma go to school for just two periods.

Functional literacy. The majority of participants in this study perceived literacy as a functional part of their lives, rather than as a tool to think critically about, and with which to act critically in, the world (Freire, 1970; Morrell, 2008; Winn, 2011). Reading was considered unimportant beyond its functional value; for example, for directional navigational (reading signs) or in securing employment (reading a job application) Though the participants' expressed confidence in their literacy skills, especially their reading, self-reported getting good grades in school, including in literacy-related courses (English, writing, and humanities), and described the strong encouragement to read that they received at home, they described the value of their literacy skill in their daily lives as incidental or relatively low. So, while they considered themselves to have above average or higher literacy skills they did not use these skills to perform at similarly above average or higher levels in school or life. They did not, for example, use their literacy skills to challenge teachers and/or administrators to increase the quality of their instruction and/or to let them stay in school. In sum, they did not view literacy skills as tools of empowerment, rather simply as a means to complete discrete tasks

Good readers. Even though participants in this study viewed literacy in only functional ways, they still seemed to pride themselves on being good readers (rating 7 or higher on a scale of 1-10 with 10 representing an excellent reader). Still some of the participants described struggling with reading during adolescence, and clearly struggled with reading the MIBI. As previously discussed, though their reading confidence could be interpreted as disingenuous, when considered in tandem with their expressed definition of literacy as functional, this confidence is clearly warranted. That is, because the participants viewed literacy skills, including reading, as only functional skills, they were, in fact, *good readers*. This conclusion is contrary to the conclusions that Banks (2005) and Haddix's (2009) make in discussing similar groups of participants in their studies. They conclude that their participants' positive assessment of academic ability is a function of their inability to differentiate between the quality of the education they received (deemed by the researchers as poor) and a good quality education. However, the participants in this study can clearly differentiate educational quality and knew that they were not getting a good education; still they thought of themselves as good readers. Further, their good reader self-perception was unlikely to have been challenged if they were, as previously surmised, unknowingly tracked into low level and/or special education courses—they already knew the material being taught, so they must be capable. It is also possible that the participants in this study were the best readers in their peer groups and/or families—perhaps their peers and/or family members even relied on their for reading support.

Further, despite the challenges that some of the participants had reading the MIBI, their sense of themselves as good readers seemed reasonable to me as the researcher. Although they used slang and what has been termed “broken English,” Black English, Black Vernacular English (BVE), Jive, and/or Ebonics (Dillard, 1973; Ogbu, 2008), throughout the interview, they

were able to articulate themselves very clearly throughout the interview process. Additionally they easily code-switched from “broken English” to SE or SAE during the interview, and did so not arbitrarily, but in an insightful way, based on the type of question asked. For example, in answering questions about language, they were more apt to respond using SE or SAE; whereas questions about truancy were discussed more informally using “broken English”. Yet, some of the literature on the use of language would deem many things the participants said in this latter regard as examples of language deficiencies or deficits (Chomsky, 2007; Dillard, 1973). For example, their excessive use of “uuummmm,” “like,” “you feel me?” or “know what I’m saying?” is often said to reflect gaps in language development; fortunately, some researchers also recognize that the use of such expressions may simply reflect the participants’ desire to culturally connect with me as the researcher, their cultural petitioning of me as the listener for affirmation, or that they are mentally searching for a specific word while continuing to speak (Chomsky, 2007; Dillard, 1973; Ormrod, 2008; Ortega, 2009). It is of note that almost all first and second language learning research has been conducted by monolingual, English speaking researchers (Ortega, 2009). In this instance, distinguishing language choice from language deficit may be done more accurately by researchers who, themselves, have had the experience of learning and using more than one language. Further, it can be difficult to decipher intended linguistic meaning as a language and/or cultural outsider, whereas an insider can decipher intentional breaks in language conformity through the epistemic privilege insider status affords (Chomsky, 2007; Orbe, 1998; Ortega, 2009).

Importance but avoidance of reading. While participants all felt they were good readers and viewed reading as important in their literacy development, they also routinely avoided reading. When participants were asked about the last time they read (a book or other related

material) to themselves or to someone else, the most recent response was “at least three months ago” (Isaiah). Because the participants discussed reading, at least regularly (Marco, Ronnie) and sometimes avidly (Barry), while incarcerated, I thought that this practice of reading would continue after their release, but it did not. Here again, reading served a largely functional purpose—to pass time while incarcerated. This importance but avoidance of reading is of particular note for Kevin and Barry, because they both have young children. When I asked Barry if he read to his daughter he responded:

No, but I make sure her mother does.

Barry then laughed at his own response, realizing some level of absurdity in it. He then explained that he felt that as long as someone was reading to his child, the child’s literacy development was assured. The participants agreed that reading was important; and though they defined that importance differently, all of their definitions described the purpose of reading as largely functional, thus avoidance of it for purposes of enrichment or empowerment could be rationalized. From a Freirean (1970) perspective, the perception of reading as merely a functional pursuit (and, thus, the related avoidance of it) reflects the impact of educational and other forms (racial, class, etc.) of oppression in the participants’ lives. Ogbu (2008) might argue that the participants have internalized the idea of reading for reading sake as a “White” behavior, and, for that reason they avoid doing it. From Bell’s (1992, 2004) CRT perspective, he would agree that oppression, especially racial oppression, is at play here, he would also trouble Ogbu’s racial determinism, arguing that the participants’ avoidance of reading cannot be solely attributed to race. He would also argue, as Freire does, that, though oppressed, the participants’ in this study also have the capacity for agency engendered by critical literacy education, imparted through critical multicultural educational pedagogy. Clearly race played a role in several other

aspects of participants' literacy development and, thus, continues to influence their practices and related view of literacy.

(In)Ability to self advocate. Using the four-pronged analytical lens of the study's conceptual framework, it is clear that the participants' Black identity development influenced their early literacy development; and that their early and subsequent literacy development (or lack thereof), mediated by Literacy Confusion, led to their inability to self-advocate, which ultimately led them into the STPP. Here again, because the participants in this study came, through their educational experiences, to view literacy development as an only functional pursuit they were not inclined to develop critical literacy. Critical literacy not only increases students functional literacy development (the technical aspects of reading, writing, speaking, and listening) (Freire & Macedo, 1987), it also increases their ability to think critically in relationship to the functional literacy—to question what they are reading and why they are reading it, perhaps in order to bring about desired change—as well as, to think critically about real life events—to question what is happening to them in the world and why, perhaps in order to challenge it (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In this study, because the participants were not taught through critical pedagogy, they did not develop a transformational critical consciousness (Irizarry, 2011). Irizarry (2011) distinguishes between transformational resistance and self-defeating resistance in describing how urban youth often express critical consciousness in rejecting schooling. Like the participants in this study, students exhibiting self-defeating resistance who are rightfully dissatisfied with what they have critically surmised is the poor quality of education they are getting, act up in or leave school. Unlike the participants in this study, students exhibiting transformational resistance who are, also, rightfully dissatisfied with what they have critically surmised is the poor quality of education they are getting, challenge teachers, administrators,

education policy makers to give them the better education they want and deserve. While the students in both scenarios are critically conscious, only those in the latter scenario are able to apply that consciousness transformationally—to advocate for their own education. In this study Kevin and Jordan were unable to transformationally self-advocate when their school administrators “encouraged” them to leave high school, due to their credit deficiencies, and instead pursue their diplomas through adult education programming. Despite being credit deficient, they were still eligible to attend the high schools in which they were enrolled. Their lack of exposure to critical literacy led them to follow the directive of their school administrators (perhaps as an act of self-defeating resistance, giving up), rather than challenging it. This same reactional pattern is also described in the participants’ interactions with teachers in which they realize, because of Literacy Confusion, that the teacher is not understanding or is misunderstanding them, but they do not fight to be understood. Conditioned by the Eurocentric education system, the participants learned not to question what they were told, and, from there, that their opinions and knowledge were not valued. As a result, once again, school became a identity peril space for them (Bell, 2004; Castagno, 2008; Davies, et al., 2005; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2012; Matthews, et al., 2010; Wald & Losen, 2003a, 2003b; Woodson, 1990). As Kunjufu (1985, 1986, 1990) and Alexander (2012) argue that schools are intentionally created and perpetuated as identity periling spaces for Black males, in order to deliberately track them into the STPP as a continuing form of social control, as well as for corporate profit through the proliferation of the prison industrial complex (discussed further below).

Lack of role models. As my discussion with the participants about their literacy development experiences progressed they started to build a connection between their faltering

school engagement, expressed through boredom and truancy, with the lack of role models in their lives. As discussed previously, social learning theory suggests that the participants' educational default is, at least in part, a function of them not having clear academic and professional goals, which reflects them also lacking access to role models who teach and model how to develop and pursue these goals (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; National Mentoring Partnership, 2014; Wallace, 2009). Jordan describes this lack as follows:

. . . [Maybe] if I had more male role models. When my dad was around I had good grades, like they were like B's and C's . . . my dad went to the school like every week and talked to the principal and stuff. He was really serious about school. Then he moved out and I kind [of] just said you know . . .

Because participants did not have role models, or at least not consistent, positive role models, their motivation to continue to go to school from middle school on was negatively impacted, in concert with other aspects of their adolescent development (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005; Wallace, 2009). For example, the specific absence of consistent, positive, Black, male role models also impacted their racial identity development, which, in turn, had negative consequences on their early and continuing literacy development as previously discussed. Critical multicultural and literacy educational curricula can be used to partially remediate such real life disparities. For example, using books written by and about revolutionary Black men, integrating information about the contributions that Black men have made throughout history to every field across the curriculum, or bringing in Black male guest speakers on various curricular topics. However, Eurocentric curricula and, increasingly, hyper-standardized Eurocentric curricula, not only do not allow for such remediation, by design, they exacerbate these disparities (Banks & Banks, 1989; Banks & Banks, 1997; Freire, 1970; Sleeter, 2005). Lacking both

personal and curricular role models, participants struggled to learn how to develop and work toward reaching academic and professional goals. This theme is especially pertinent in answering the main research question of this study: *How do Black males that have entered the STPP view their literacy (reading and oral language) development at home and at school?* Because of the intermittent or later absence of a father or other positive male role model in their lives, the participants' educational trajectory was interrupted. For those whose fathers were intermittently absent, it is of note of how much better their grades were when their fathers were present. Marco notes:

Seventh grade I had descent grades cuz my dad came back, then, eighth grade I was bad again . . . just his [Marco's dad] presence to keep it real. I was scared of him. I got expelled that year [eighth grade], but he came [back] too late. I was already doing my thing. In ninth grade, the first semester, I didn't miss a day in school when he was [there], for the first time.

Barry notes:

sixth, seventh, eighth grade is when I started being bad, getting kicked out for stupid shit / he [dad] stopped fucking with me.

Descriptions of how their fathers, as role models, positively influenced them and their educational trajectories can be found in the narratives of all participants. From these narratives it is clear that the participants want to be successfully, personally, academically, and professionally, but, like their successful White counterparts, need culturally relevant and otherwise responsive guidance to achieve this success (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Implications and Significance for Critical Multicultural and Literacy Education and Future Research

The implications and significance of this research sit at the intersections of critical multicultural and literacy education relative to both fields' concern for dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP). By taking a purposeful posture in critically examining the participant data at the common juncture of the four distinct areas of research that, in sum, comprised the conceptual framework of this study, analysis of the findings reveal new points through which Black male youth enter the STPP, as well as new strategies for dismantling that pipeline.

Much of the existing research in critical multicultural and literacy education focused on the STPP examines schools' mis-use of *zero tolerance policies* (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Winn, 2011, 2015). Interestingly, the participants in this study (all except Marco) were not removed from school for the often arbitrary and incidental single-incident violations of school protocols in the manner described in the literature (e.g., verbal disrespect to peers or teachers, non-verbal disrespect to peers or teachers, physical altercations with peers, etc.) (Alexander, 2010; Balfanz, et al., 2003; Christle, et al., 2005; Clark, 2004). Yet, the participants in this study still entered the STPP. This is significant in that it may signal a beginning reduction in the application of zero tolerance policies, at the same time that it reveals other factors that still lead students into the STPP. In 2011, the Equity Project at Indiana University's "The Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative" was formed to gather data nationally on school-based disciplinary disparities and make recommendations for reducing them (Carter, Fine, & Russell, 2014). In 2013, school district leaders in Las Vegas, Nevada, released disciplinary statistics that revealed that although only 12% of the student body was Black, they comprised 43% of the students who were expelled (Denson, 2013, para., 2). As a result of these findings the district established a

mandate to reduce this over-representation by required district-wide cultural competency training. Other research has documented that if teachers do not make special education, especially behavioral, referrals on students, students are almost never referred (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry, et al., 2007). This means that teachers who are better prepared to engage (interest) students in learning, as well as to autonomously manage challenging classroom dynamics (dynamics that are less likely to arise when students are engaged in learning) can contribute to the dismantling of the STPP (Clark, 2004). But, as the participant narratives in this study illustrate, this still is not enough; even when students, especially Black male students, are not negatively impacted by zero tolerance policies, they are still ending up in the STPP. Participants described teachers and administrators as more or less reasonable in interaction with them, yet that interaction still ultimately led them to feel alienated in school, become academically disengaged, and, thus, vulnerable to the STPP. Accordingly, teachers' (and other school personnel's) cultural competency training, as well as their preparation to engage students, and manage classroom dynamics must be embedded in *critical* multicultural and literacy education if, especially, White, female teachers are going to contribute in more significant ways to ending the STPP for Black male students.

The participants' literacy development was an important factor in their negative educational trajectories and, from there, their becoming court-involved and incarcerated. While there is significant research connecting student school experience and performance to the STPP (Clark, 2012), very little of it has looked specifically at literacy education, and even less of it at literacy development (Banks, 2005; Dotson, et al., 2008; Haddix, 2009; Mathhews, et al., 2010; NCES, 2012a; Morrell, 2008; Thompson, et al., 2004; Washington, et al., 2001; Winn, 2011). This study revealed how the participants view of literacy as only a functional, not critical pursuit,

put them at social, educational, and societal disadvantage. Because schools and teachers were not able to recognize and/or broaden this view, or were not interested in doing so, society is now bearing a burden as well. The participants were subsequently incarcerated and since being released have had a difficult time securing employment. Thus, the state bears the burden of supporting the participants, as well as the burden of not benefitting from the intellectual and economic contributions they could be making. And these costs extend across whole populations that public education has failed, who now make up the 1 in 100 people in the United States who sit behind bars (PEW, 2008). But this functional, not critical, view of literacy and its relationship to subsequent incarceration also points to the impact of Neoliberalism in education and incarceration (Giroux, 2012). The societal contributions that the participants in this study could be making with greater critical literacy works against private interests that seek to widen gaps between the poor and wealthy, including through proliferation of the prison industrial complex (Stowers, 1998); for this reason, these participants' value is greater as inmates in privatized prisons. Making these private interests known to pre- and in-service teachers, as a part of their own critical multicultural and literacy education, is paramount to preparing teachers to teach from this critical posture, as well as inspiring them to do so (e.g., interrupting their deficit thinking in ways that encourage them to join with their students against racism and other forms of discrimination, rather than acting in concert with racism against their students and their families (Giroux, 2013).

The participants' view of education in general, and of literacy education in particular as, at best, functional, also impacted their personal, educational, and professional trajectories, by inclining them to not pursue school at all. The school curriculum, teacher pedagogy, and administrator "encouragement" all inclined the participants in this study to become truant,

particularly in high school. Defined as “missing 10 or more days of school” in an academic calendar year, by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2008, table 2.), in many school districts more than 40% of the middle and high school students are considered truant (table 2.). When participants resisted the inclination to ditch school, their view of education in general, and of literacy education in particular, shifted from the ceiling of functional, to the floor of boring or “too slow” for their abilities. As previously discussed, this kind of downward educational tracking is well-documented in the STPP research (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry, et al., 2007). What is less well-documented is the absence of upward educational tracking of minority students into gifted and talented educational programs (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Here Literacy Confusion gets in the way of teachers’ ability to understand that students’ demonstrated abilities are not manifestations of their cognitive abilities, and, further, that student acting out is not a function of their inability to learn course material, rather their frustration in already knowing it, but being assumed to not know it, and, thus, having to learn it over and over again. Both truancy and boredom are problems that can be remedied through the more comprehensive and rigorous integration of critical multicultural and literacy education content, pedagogies, and assessment practices into pre-service teacher education, advanced teacher education, and in-service teacher professional development. Critically prepared teachers know how to engage each student in their classroom in myriad, culturally relevant and otherwise responsive ways, they also recognize when individual students and/or students who share common cultural characteristics and/or learning challenges begin to waiver and know how to re-engage these students quickly and effectively (Children’s Defense Fund, 2007; Freire, 2005). At the core of the critical preparation of teachers is a focus on their abilities and motivation to build relationships with students, their families, and in the communities in which the schools they teach at are located (Nieto & Bode,

2012). While “relationship building” is often stated as important in teacher training, it is rarely meaningfully engaged in training, nor in practice; like many elements of a critical multicultural and literacy education, relationship building is treated as a “frills added” approach to, or otherwise unimportant factor in, teaching effectiveness and student learning, rather than foundational to it (Clark, et al., 2012; Morrell, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2012). When teachers are all or mostly White, and students all or mostly *of color*, for sincere relationship building to occur, teachers have to be expressly prepared to reach out across especially class and race differences; while students and families also need to learn to be receptive to teachers who act on this learning (i.e., mutual accommodation), because of the institutional power associated with whiteness, schools as societal institutions, and the authority role of teachers, this relationship building must be initiated and sustained (long enough for the trust of students, parents, and communities to be established) by teachers (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

All of the participants shared that they rarely saw their race, ethnicity, or culture reflected in their school curriculum until middle school, and from there still only sparingly at best. As a result, they were unaware of the significant positive contributions of people like them to fields across the curriculum; they were also unaware of the significant negative contributions of White people. Participants also shared that once they got to middle school, they were already set in their thinking and felt it was too late to change their attitudes about themselves (individually and racially), their schooling, and/or their futures. Providing educational experiences that capture all students’ interests *and* that affirm their cultural identities in early stages of their development is important to assuring their initial and on-going positive educational trajectories and related academic outcomes. This can be achieved through the integration of critical multicultural and literacy curriculum in which culturally relevant and responsive problem-posing pedagogical

strategies are centered (Banks & Banks, 1989; Banks & Banks, 2004; Clark, 2004; Freire, 1970; Gollnick & Chinn, 2013; Sleeter, 2005). Critical consciousness imparted in what is taught (curriculum content) and how teaching is undertaken (pedagogy) is foundational to the development of positive identities in youth, especially youth that have been traditionally underserved in education. Critically conscious curriculum and pedagogy enable the creation of identity safe spaces in which all youth feel comfortable and confident, and, thus, can achieve positive self-efficacy and high level academic success, (Davies, et al., 2005; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2012; Rice & Dolgin, 2005).

Limitations

Limitations of this study relate primarily to the instruments used to collect the data, and, therefore, also to the study findings. These limitations will be discussed under the headings: Difficulty in the Research Study, Study Focus and Generalizability, Research Participation Pool, and The Researcher.

Difficulty in the Research Study

While the complexity of the data collection and analysis process (the generative nature of the case study design) might seem the most likely limiting factor in this study, it was not. Rather, it was the participants. The participants in this study, though they eagerly consented to participate, were ultimately difficult to engage—in sum, they were often elusive.

It was very difficult to schedule the interview(s) with the participants. While I had hoped that after the first interview was executed, subsequent ones would come easier (due to initially established rapport and interest in the study topic), the opposite was more often the case. Most participants scheduled an interview time, canceled at the last minute, or just did not show up and did not follow up. Additionally, many of the participants moved frequently, often because of the

post-incarceration status (family members kicked them out, parole/probation conductions required specific living arrangements, rent money was not forthcoming). Participants' cell numbers were disconnected (again, perhaps because of resource scarcity) and they were unresponsive to email (perhaps because of access challenges).

While I anticipated that, due to their age and often shifting places of residence, the participants might be somewhat challenging to connect with, I underestimated this challenge. To resolve this challenge, I started to “camp out” at the youth facility through which I initially made the connection with them (and where the interviews were always scheduled). Though they did not always keep appointments with facility staff, they were more likely to keep these appointments because their attendance at them was often tied to the terms of their release and/or to financial rewards. Though I did also offer the participants a financial incentive for their participation in the study, I learned too late that the amount of this incentive was insufficient to encourage their more predictable participation, and that what would have been sufficient in this regard would have been deemed coercive by the IRB. In reconnecting with them face-to-face at the youth facility, though they were often initially avoidant, I was able to complete the interviews with them by negotiating with the facility staff to allow me to use some of their scheduled time with the participants (immediately in that moment) to complete the interviews.

It is, perhaps, ironic that it would have been easier to interview the participants if they were still incarcerated, rather than following their release. Most of the research conducted on adjudicated youth takes advantage of their “captive audience” status (JPI, 2009). Accordingly, though participant elusiveness was a limitation here (the interviews would have been easier to conduct, thus potentially more fruitful), in having documented the experiences of court-involved youth outside of a locked facility, this research is also unique in the contributions it makes.

Study Focus and Generalizability

This study intended to focus on participants' early literacy experiences. In designing this study, I had hoped that the still young age of the participants would mitigate memory loss as a problem in their ability to recall and discuss these experiences, as fewer than 15 years had elapsed between their initial literacy formation and when the interviews were conducted. Instead, 15 years proved to be long enough to provide memory challenges. Although participants were able to quickly recall general information about their early literacy experiences, they experienced difficulty recalling more detailed information on these experiences. So, again, while this study intended to focus on the participants' early literacy experiences the participants' richest discussions of literacy related to their more recent past. Still the participants' early literacy experiences provided predictive value in my understanding of their literacy development over time and, thus, the ability to generalize, across and from this small participant pool, the results of this study.

Research Participant Pool

All of the participants in this study self-identified as Black. For comparative purposes, also examining the literacy experiences of participants from one or more other racial backgrounds might have furthered the study analysis and, potentially its findings. For example, if this study considered the literacy experiences of White and Latino male students, as well as Black male students, more information regarding how teachers might best provide literacy instruction to all students, to all male students, as well as to various racially specific male student populations might have emerged from the findings. That said, the focus on White students as the "the standard" for comparison is equally important to contest; accordingly, focusing exclusively

on students of color, including in the case of this study, Black male students, provides some contestation (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

The Researcher

A final possible limitation of this study might be my (as the researcher) shared physical/identity characteristics with the participants. Convergence in this regard might typically be considered likely to foster bias in my interpretation of the study results (Creswell, 2007). However, these similarities could also be seen as assets to the study. Since this study sought to understand the literacy experiences of Black male youth, my being a Black male could lend validity to my ability to more easily establish rapport with participants, glean more honest and complete responses from them to interview questions, and accurately analyze and interpret collected data. In attempting to carefully mediate the potential for bias here, the study was strategically designed, in relationship to a robust conceptual framework, to ensure that data collection and interpretation would be fairly and otherwise evenly handed.

Conclusion

The participants in this study all “dropped out” (as defined in Chapter 1) of school and became court involved for different reasons. Although all instances of their dropping out could be deemed as self-controllable, this study argued that the participants were not equipped to defend themselves in the face of Literacy Confusion, particularly as this confusion manifest in their inability to self-advocate relative to how whiteness operated in their school culture. Frighteningly, especially for Black males, whiteness operates in this manner in the culture of all U.S. schools (Castagno, 2008; Woodson, 1990). It is, quite unfortunately, all too common practice for schools across the country to, in effect, require poor and minority students, especially Black male students, to seek alternative schooling to graduate (Christenson &

Thurlow, 2004; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009); hence, the characterization of many high schools across the country as “dropout factories,” especially for working class students and students of color (Balfanz, et al., 2003; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Balfanz, 2009). Schools operate as dropout factories for Black male students largely because of how states and/or school districts calculate dropout and graduation rates (Balfanz, et al., 2003; Luna, 2008; Martinez, 2009) These rates are the most commonly disseminated information, largely because they are intimately tied to school funding, as well as, increasingly, to principal and teacher evaluation (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983); parents also often seek out these rates in making decisions about where to live and/or where to send their children to school when they have choice in these regards (Hastings, Kane, & Staiger, 2005; Holme, 2002; Rogers & Pole, 2010). As a result, schools often choose to “increase” their graduation rates through deceptive counting practices (Luna, 2008). As previously discussed, students who drop out of school prior to their senior year are not counted in the graduation rates of particular schools within specific districts (Luna, 2008). As a result, administrators are incentivized to seek out students who in their junior years can be identified as having what might be deemed dropout potential, perhaps given, like many of the participants in this study, their credit deficiencies, and then push them in the direction of dropping out in order to boost school statistics. These practices shed new light on the adage, “numbers never lie;” perhaps they don't lie, but clearly they can tell tales, literally out of school, so to speak. It is particularly disheartening that an administrator might cajole a student toward an adult education program in lieu of continuing in high school, and then be professionally rewarded for her or his schools’ graduation rates. Further disheartening, is the lack of concern this widespread practice reveals on the part of policy makers, school leaders, and teachers for their long-term ramifications on the students at focus.

This lack of concern is embedded in the deficit characterization, not asset potential, of these students as borderline or at-risk, instead of resilient and at promise (Yosso, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Based solely on the findings of this study, students who drop out of school and become incarcerated in juvenile facilities have a better chance at becoming more well academically prepared than do students who are tracked into lower courses in school, and then pushed to drop out of school and into adult education. Some participants in this study entered juvenile facilities with only six credits towards graduation and made up three years of high school in ten months or less. All the participants in this study who were incarcerated for longer than five months received their high school diploma. Additionally, all of the participants in this study who were incarcerated longer than five months were, at the time of their interviews, doing better economically, than the other participants. *With these study outcomes in mind, what benefits should the participants in this study, and others like them, be expected to believe come from going to school? Further, how should they be expected to view school as important if the credits earned in four years of regular school attendance can be made up in five to ten months of alternative schooling undertaken in a juvenile facility?* These findings reinforce the concern that the public schooling available to poor and minority students in the U.S. is not rigorous, at the same time revealing the gross inequities in the quality of public education available to these students and that are provided to their at-least middle class and White counterparts (Hastings, Kane, & Staiger, 2005; Holme, 2002). That the participants in this study, and many others like them, consider school a waste of time, effort, and resources should not come as a surprise. What should be surprising is that voluminous educational research still tries to attribute these students' negative consideration of schooling a function of their class or racial culture (as not valuing

education), rather than a function of the systemic racism in education and these students clear understanding of this (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Edler, 2001; Noguera, 2003)

The review of the research undertaken to situate this research study gives scant attention to the infringement on students' educational rights described repeatedly by the participants in this study. Youth incarcerated in juvenile facilities are supposed to be protected as minors by law, thus their criminal records are supposed to be expunged once they become adults upon completing requirements of their release—that is, there should be no record—at least no public record—of them ever being incarcerated as juveniles. However, this is clearly not the reality. Participants' in this study who earned their diplomas in a juvenile facility, and, thus, received their high school degree from the facilities' high schools, quickly discovered that the names of these high schools (printed on their diplomas) revealed that they were juvenile offenders. A simple *Google* search of these high school's names reveals that they are located within the juvenile facility. This revelation was particularly disturbing to me, especially as an educator, and should be, in my estimation, to all educators, especially those who work with juvenile offenders. The participants in this study who were “found out” to be juvenile offenders by perspective employers were not hired. Extrapolating this experience into their futures, there are obvious serious long-term consequences for them, as well as for adult offenders who were first incarcerated as juveniles. Not being able to get a job as an adolescent or young adult because of detainment as a juvenile, increases the likelihood of adult criminal activity and incarceration (Alexander, 2012).

Literacy development is known as a major influence in students' positive academic trajectories. Through the provision of more and more rich curricular opportunities for literacy development through community-based endeavors—prior to school, during school, and after

school—can immediately reduce the negative impact underperforming teachers and schools are having on the literacy development of historically and persistently underserved populations (CDF, 2007; Delpit, 2006; Freire, 1970, 1974, 1992; Sleeter, 2005). The participants in this study discussed several factors that influenced their literacy development and overall academic trajectories that do not require school engagement to positively effect: frequency of being read to by any adult (especially those identified as role models), the existence and number of books in their home libraries, the experience of visiting a local library to check out books, and personal and academic mentorship (again, especially those identified as role models). While many researchers who examine student literacy and overall academic development from a deficit lens characterize these factors as unique to, or more common in, “the Black community” (Dillard, 1973; Ogbu, 1978), these factors also manifest in poor communities, that are statistically more White than Black, as well as in affluent communities (Alridge, 2007; Ogbu, 2008; Shannon, 2001). Access to and effective use of adequate educational resources, not culture, race, or class, underlies how these factors play out. Because poor literacy development and academic success is a problem attributed *to* some groups, not *for* society as a whole, adequately resourced programs for literacy development have not been meaningfully introduced and/or sustained in all communities across the country. If they were, the benefit to society as a whole would be extraordinary; according to the Corrections Education Association (CEA), for every one dollar invested in education and training juvenile and adult detainees, two and a half dollars are paid back in taxes, further, a 1% in recidivism saves a state 1.5 million dollars a year (JPI, 2009, pp. 1-20). However, the privatization of education and of prisons as capitalistic societal ventures has begun to dictate that students fourth grade reading test scores be used to plan for future prison construction in some states, regardless of the costs to individuals, communities, or public interest

(Wald & Losen, 2003a). In discussing the educational and societal implications of favoring in private over public interests, Lawrence (2005) argues:

In *Pierce* [*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*], parochial and private schools brought suit to enjoin the enforcement of an Oregon statute that required all children to attend public school. The Supreme Court invalidated the statute on the ground that it “unreasonably interfere[d] with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control.”⁷² The court held that the state could not “standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only.”⁷³ *Pierce* articulates a positive constitutional value that is often read to justify parents’ choices to leave troubled public schools as a moral and legal right.⁷⁴

The school choice movement has brought together a collection of unexpected bedfellows, including right-wing libertarians, liberal civil libertarians, religious fundamentalists, progressive alternative-school advocates, and home schoolers. All of these groups have looked to the holding in *Pierce* for legal and political arguments that parents have an inviolable right to choose the place and content of their children’s schooling. For purposes of this discussion, however, I do not speak to the merits of applying *Pierce* in support of arguments for school choice. Rather, my intention here is to explore the shape and meaning of the moral value identified in *Pierce*—family intimacy and autonomy—to ask how that value shapes the way we think about integration, community, and our

collective responsibility for children and to consider how we ought to weigh it in the context of our commitment to equality. Put most starkly, I want to ask whether, in a setting where parental school choice results in the hypersegregation of public schools, the liberty value from *Pierce* ought to trump the equality value from *Brown*, or vice versa. (pp. 1385-6).

I agree with Lawrence, and the findings of this study clearly support his contention, that, “If the injury of segregation is achieved by symbolic defamation and material/structural exclusion of African Americans from the community of fully respected citizens that creates and is created by the common school, we can only remedy that injury by reforming the common school to directly address that symbolic defamation and material/structural exclusion. Offering choice in a segregated, largely unregulated market does not do this. In practice, the schools remain segregated and unequal, although there is no longer a constitutional violation because they are no longer run by the state” (p. 1388). Towards these ends this study is directed.

Appendix A

Approval Notice



Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation, suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: July 17, 2014
TO: Dr. Christine Clark, Teaching & Learning
FROM: Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action
Protocol Title: Forecasting the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Generative Case Study of
Early Childhood Literacy Experiences of Black Male Youth
Protocol #: 1403-4750
Expiration Date: July 16, 2015

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed and approved by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46 and UNLV Human Research Policies and Procedures.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year and expires July 16, 2015. If the above-referenced project has not been completed by this date you must request renewal by submitting a Continuing Review Request form 30 days before the expiration date.

PLEASE NOTE:

Upon approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the protocol most recently reviewed and approved by the IRB, which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent forms and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains approval and expiration dates.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through ORI - Human Subjects. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB. Modified versions of protocol materials must be used upon review and approval. Unanticipated problems, deviations to protocols, and adverse events must be reported to the ORI – HS within 10 days of occurrence.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
(702) 895-2794 • FAX: (702) 895-0805

Appendix B

Recruitment Flyer

Mr. Tarryn McGhie, a UNLV doctoral candidate, is conducting a research study titled:

*“Forecasting the School-to-Prison Pipeline:
A generative case study of early childhood literacy experiences of Black male youth.”*

The purpose of this study is to explore how young Black males experiences of learning to speak and read at home may have played a role in their leaving school prior to graduating high school.

Tarryn is looking for participants to interview for this study who are:

- 1) *Black males;*
- 2) *Between the ages of 5-21 years old;*
- 3) *Who lived with their parents/guardians prior to attending school;*
- 4) *Who left school within the past 3 years; and,*
- 5) *Who have been court involved within the past 3 years.*

Participation in this study may take up to 5 hours of your time.

**If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact:
Tarryn McGhie at (702) 895-1540 or mcghiet@unlv.nevada.edu**

Questions about this study may also be directed to Dr. Christine Clark at (702) 895-3888 or chris.clark.unlv@me.com.

Appendix C

Qualifying Survey

1. Do you consider yourself Black? Yes____ No____
2. Did you leave Elementary/Middle/High School before graduating? Yes__ No____
3. Did you leave (stop attending for a long period of time or indefinitely) school within the last three years? Yes____ No____
4. Have you been incarcerated in a jail, prison or juvenile facility, been on probation or been on parole within the last three years? Yes____ No____
5. Did you live with your biological parents prior to attending school for the first time?
Yes____ No____
6. Are you 21 years of age or younger? Yes____ No____

Appendix D

Interview Protocols (Original/Kevin)

Exposure to Literacy Prior to School

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
5. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
6. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?

Teacher-Student Relationship

1. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
2. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
3. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?

Home and Public Library Exposure

1. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
2. Did you have a library at home?
3. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
4. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
5. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?

Literacy Development

1. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
2. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
3. Were you able to read before you attended school?

Literacy Exposure

1. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
2. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
3. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)

Literacy Socialization

1. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
2. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
3. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?

Race

1. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
2. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)

Dropout and Incarceration Experiences

1. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?

2. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
3. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?

Appendix E

Interview Protocols (Jordan)

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
- 5. Was there any of cursing or yelling? If so how much?**
6. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
7. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
8. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
- 9. Specifically, what did they do or not do?**
10. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
11. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?
- 12. If so, did they explain to you why it was incorrect?**
13. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
14. Did you have a library at home?
15. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
16. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
17. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?
18. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
19. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
20. Were you able to read before you attended school?
21. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
22. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
23. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)
24. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
25. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
26. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?
27. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
28. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)
29. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?
30. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
31. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?
- 32. Did you have any positive role models growing up?**

33. Did you lose anyone close to you growing up, either by death, incarceration or otherwise?

34. As far as the survey goes, is there anything on there you wish to discuss or elaborate on?

Appendix F

Interview Protocols (Marco)

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
5. Was there any of cursing or yelling? If so how much?
6. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
7. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
8. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
9. Specifically, what did they do or not do?
10. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
11. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?
12. If so, did they explain to you why it was incorrect?
13. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
14. Did you have a library at home?
15. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
16. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
17. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?
18. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
19. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
20. Were you able to read before you attended school?
21. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
22. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
23. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)
24. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
25. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
26. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?
27. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
28. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)
29. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?
30. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
31. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?
32. What race are your parents?

- 33. Did you have any positive role models growing up?
- 34. Did you lose anyone close to you growing up, either by death, incarceration or otherwise?
- 35. As far as the survey goes, is there anything on there you wish to discuss or elaborate on?
- 36. Did you have any positive role models? If so why were they your role model?**
- 37. Was there anything that kept you going to school?**
- 38. What did you do when you skipped school?**

Appendix G

Interview Protocols (Ronnie)

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
5. Was there any of cursing or yelling? If so how much?
6. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
7. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
8. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
9. Specifically, what did they do or not do?
10. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
11. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?
12. If so, did they explain to you why it was incorrect?
13. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
14. Did you have a library at home?
15. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
16. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
17. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?
18. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
19. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
20. Were you able to read before you attended school?
21. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
22. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
23. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)
24. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
25. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
26. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?
27. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
28. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)
29. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?
30. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
31. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?
32. What race are your parents?

- 33. Did you have any positive role models growing up?
- 34. Did you lose anyone close to you growing up, either by death, incarceration or otherwise?
- 35. As far as the survey goes, is there anything on there you wish to discuss or elaborate on?
- 36. Did you have any positive role models? If so why were they your role model?
- 37. Was there anything that kept you going to school?
- 38. What did you do when you skipped school?
- 39. Were you ever suspended? How many times? Expelled? How many times?**
- 40. Were there times in your childhood when you went hungry?**
- 41. What kind of food did you eat? Was it healthy or junk food?**
- 42. When did you become aware of your race?**
- 43. What was your family life like growing up?**

Appendix H

Interview Protocols (Barry)

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
5. Was there any of cursing or yelling? If so how much?
6. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
7. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
8. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
9. Specifically, what did they do or not do?
10. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
11. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?
12. If so, did they explain to you why it was incorrect?
13. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
14. Did you have a library at home?
15. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
16. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
17. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?
18. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
19. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
20. Were you able to read before you attended school?
21. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
22. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
23. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)
24. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
25. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
26. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?
27. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
28. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)
29. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?
30. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
31. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?
32. What race are your parents?

33. Did you have any positive role models growing up?
34. Did you lose anyone close to you growing up, either by death, incarceration or otherwise?
35. As far as the survey goes, is there anything on there you wish to discuss or elaborate on?
36. What race are your parents?
37. Did you have any positive role models? If so why were they your role model?
38. Was there anything that kept you going to school?
39. What did you do when you skipped school?
40. Were you ever suspended? How many times? Expelled? How many times?
41. Were there times in your childhood when you went hungry?
42. What kind of food did you eat? Was it healthy or junk food?
43. When did you become aware of your race?
44. What was your family life like growing up?
- 45. Would you say that getting locked up was a good thing or a bad thing?**
- 46. Do you think there was anything in your childhood that triggered your behavior leading up to your incarceration or was it something else?**
- 47. Did anyone close to you become incarcerated growing up?**
- 48. While you were incarcerated, how much was reading a part of your daily routine?**
- 49. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? If nothing, do you think it kept you from being motivated in school? If so, how did it motivate you if at all?**

Appendix I

Interview Protocols (Isaiah)

1. Were you read to as a child prior to attending school for the first time?
2. How frequently were you read to?
3. Was reading encouraged in your home?
4. What type of language was used at home? (slang, Standard English, non-Standard English etc.)
5. Was there any of cursing or yelling? If so how much?
6. Do you feel being able to read and speak (literacy) was considered important in your home?
7. How was this importance (or lack thereof) expressed by your parent(s)/guardian(s)?
8. Did your teachers encourage you in school?
9. Specifically, what did they do or not do?
10. Did they ever tell you that your use of language was not appropriate or incorrect in school?
11. If they did, how did this make you feel about them?
12. If so, did they explain to you why it was incorrect?
13. What, if any, types of books were you exposed to at home? At school?
14. Did you have a library at home?
15. How often did you visit the public library prior to attending school?
16. How often did you visit the public library after attending school?
17. Did your school have a library? If so, how, if it all, was it used by your teachers? By you?
18. By what age did you know the alphabet by heart?
19. Were you able to spell your own name prior to attending school?
20. Were you able to read before you attended school?
21. What type of books, if any, did you read as a child?
22. What, if any, was your favorite book and why was it your favorite?
23. Was “environmental print” a focus of learning to read at home? (explain environmental print if necessary)
24. How did your skill, or lack of skill, in literacy (reading and speaking) influence your relationship with teachers and other students?
25. Do you remember having any conflicts with your parents related to the way you spoke (used language) at home?
26. Do you remember having and conflicts with your teachers related to the way you spoke (used language) at school?
27. What, if any, role do you think your race played in your interaction with teachers?
28. Were you aware of the phenomenon called “stereotype threat” while you were in school? (explain what stereotype threat is if needed)
29. How old were you (and what grade were you in) when you left school?
30. Do you recall specifically deciding to leave school? If not, what factors do you think led you to leave school?
31. Was your leaving school academically related? Economic related? Related to something else?
32. What race are your parents?

33. Did you have any positive role models growing up?
34. Did you lose anyone close to you growing up, either by death, incarceration or otherwise?
35. As far as the survey goes, is there anything on there you wish to discuss or elaborate on?
36. What race are your parents?
37. Did you have any positive role models? If so why were they your role model?
38. Was there anything that kept you going to school?
39. What did you do when you skipped school?
40. Were you ever suspended? How many times? Expelled? How many times?
41. Were there times in your childhood when you went hungry?
42. What kind of food did you eat? Was it healthy or junk food?
43. When did you become aware of your race?
44. What was your family life like growing up?
45. Would you say that getting locked up was a good thing or a bad thing?
46. Do you think there was anything in your childhood that triggered your behavior leading up to your incarceration or was it something else?
47. Did anyone close to you become incarcerated growing up?
48. While you were incarcerated, how much was reading a part of your daily routine?
49. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? If nothing, do you think it kept you from being motivated in school? If so, how did it motivate you if at all?
- 50. How many books did you read while incarcerated?**
- 51. What type of education did you parents have?**
- 52. Was school more important in elementary school, middle school, or high school? Why?**
- 53. Do you believe that your race impacted your relationships with others (students, teachers etc.)?**
- 54. How did your close relatives influence your academics and socialization? Good, bad, otherwise?**

Appendix J

Research Protocol Schedule

| Action | Description | Type of Meeting |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Contact the advocacy program | Once IRB was approved, initiated contact with participants that fit the criteria and scheduled meet and greet via the program | Group with all parties involved |
| Meet and Greet | Meet participants and inform them of the purpose and details of the study | Group |
| Qualifying Survey | Provide initial survey to determine participant criteria eligibility | Group |
| Review Qualifying Survey | Review Qualifying Survey, dismiss non-qualified participants if any | Group |
| Consent | Consent individuals considered adults (skip to qualifying survey after), identify minors and adjudicated youth | Group |
| Appointment | Schedule MIBI and initial interview with first participant | One-on-One |
| Review MIBI and Initial Interview Responses | Review MIBI and initial interview responses and determine follow up interview questions | By Researcher |
| Appointment | Schedule follow-up interview/MIBI and initial interview with next participant | One-on-One |
| Continue to Schedule | Schedule MIBI/initial interviews and follow-up interviews with participants | One-on-One |

Appendix K

Participant Information Sheet

The information on this sheet will not be shared with anyone. The information will only be used to contact you to set up interviews. You may choose to discontinue at any time. Once the information has been recorded on a computer it will be kept in a locked folder. Your information will not be accessible to anyone except me (Tarryn McGhie). These sheets will be destroyed once the information is transferred to an electronic source.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Parent First Name _____ Last Name _____ (If a
minor)

Address _____

City _____ State NV Zip code _____

Home phone number _____ cell phone number _____

Email address _____

How do you prefer to be contacted (circle one)? Home # Cell # email

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- Yin, R. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A CRT discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.
- Zirkel, S. (2005). Ongoing issues of racial and ethnic stigma in education 50 years after Brown v. Board. *The Urban Review* 37(2), 107-26.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Tarryn E. McGhie
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Education

- 2015 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Curriculum and Instruction
Cultural Studies, International Education, and Multicultural Education
(CSIEME) Emphasis, Literacy Education Cognate
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Dissertation Title: *Forecasting the school-to-prison pipeline: A
generative case study of the early literacy experiences of Black male youth*
- 2010 Master of Science (M.S.) in Educational Psychology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Thesis Title: *Verbal v. non-verbal cues: Producing the same results in
stereotype threat research?*
- 2007 Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Psychology, Minor in Landscape Architecture
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Employment Background

- 2015-Present *Post Doctoral Fellowship*, Cultural Studies, International Education, and
Multicultural Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- 2011-Present Lead, Lion's Den Mentoring Program, Las Vegas, Nevada
- 2012-Present *Site Coordinator*, Children's Defense Fund: Freedom School, Las Vegas,
Nevada
- 2009-Present Founder & Director, Malcolm X Mentoring and Tutoring Initiative, Las
Vegas, Nevada
- 2010-2015 *Instructor*, Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
- 2009-2012 *Substitute Teacher*, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada
- 2009-2011 *Servant Leader Intern*, Children's Defense Fund: Freedom School, Las
Vegas, Nevada
- 2007-2010 *Teaching and Research Assistant*, Department of Educational Psychology,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Research Concentration

- Literacy development in elementary education
- Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline
- Combating stereotype threat through racial identity elevation
- Reversing teacher deficit thinking in relation to minority student populations
- Educational policy and its influence on Pre-K-12 student drop-out rates

Research and Scholarship

Refereed Publications

- Clark, C., Sapon-Shevin, M., Brimhall-Vargas, M., **McGhie, T.**, & Nieto, S., (in review). Understanding the power of analysis shifts in intersectionality scholarship: A focus on race, as well as on class, gender, religion, sexuality, dis/ability and family configuration.
- McGhie, T.** (2014). Stereotype threat. In S. Thompson (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of diversity and social justice* (pp. 695-97). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- McGhie, T.**, & Haddad, Z., (2014). Arab Americans (as culturally different clients). In L. Cousins, & G. Golson, (Eds). *Encyclopedia of human services and diversity* (pp. 103-4). SAGE Publications.
- McGhie, T.**, (2011). *Stereotypical and non-stereotypical cues: Producing the same results in stereotype threat research?* ProQuest Digital Dissertation/Thesis.
- McGhie, T.**, (in process). Policies, prisons and public schools.
- McGhie, T.**, (in process). A comparison of high achieving charter schools and high achieving public schools.

Refereed Conference Presentations

- Clark, C., Sapon-Shevin, M., Brimhall-Vargas, M., **McGhie, T.** & Nieto, S., (2014). Understanding the power of analysis shifts in intersectionality scholarship: A focus on race, as well as on class, gender, religion, sexuality, dis/ability and family configuration. *American Educational Research Association* (AERA).
- Horsford, S. & **McGhie, T.** (2010). Leading schools in the (post) racial era: Advancing racial respect in separate and unequal schooling contexts. Presented at *American Educational Research Association* (AERA).
- Carter, D., & **McGhie, T.**, (2010). Addressing the educational and legal effects of child sexual abuse. *American Psychological Association, Association of Black Psychologists, and National Black Graduate Student Association* (NBGSA).
- Jelenic M., **McGhie, T.**, & Mallin, C., (2008). Middle schooler's perceptions of middle school and leadership. *American Psychological Association*.
- McGhie, T.** (2007). The negative influence stereotype threat has on working memory without triggering. *American Psychological Association and National Black Graduate Student Association* (NBGSA).
- McGhie, T.**, & Keyes, A., (2006). Perceptions of men: Examining racial stereotypes. *American Psychological Association*.

Reviewing Activities

- 2014-Present National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), *Journal of Research and Practice*, Manuscript Reviewer
2009- 2011 National Black Graduate Student Association (NBGSA), Proposal Reviewer

Funded Research

- 2014 Policies, prisons and public school. University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) Research Award
\$1125.00
2013 A comparison of high achieving charter schools and high achieving public
schools. University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) Research Award
\$1250.00
2010 Stereotypical and non-stereotypical cues: Producing the same results in stereotype
threat research? University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) Research Award
\$1250.00

Invited Research Institutes and Seminars

- 2014 *Disconnecting the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, Diversity Leadership Forum Series,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada
2010 *Navigating the Academy*, Dialogue On Progressive Enlightenment Conference,
Greensboro, North Carolina
2010 *What the School District Doesn't Want You To Know About Your Child's*
Education, Andre Agassi Preparatory Academy, Las Vegas, Nevada
2009 *Race Relations and Racism*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas,
Nevada
2009 *Progression in a Failing Economy*, National Black Graduate Student Association
(NBGSA), Regional Conference, Phoenix, Arizona
2009 *Advancing through Adversity*, National Black Graduate Student Association
(NBGSA), National Conference, Houston, Texas
2008 *Life and Times of Ernesto "Che" Guevara*, Latino Heritage Month, Las Vegas,
Nevada
2008 *Passion or Anger? The Role of Racism in Human Perception*, National Black
Graduate Student Association (NBGSA), Western
Regional Conference, Tucson, Arizona
2008 *Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, Black Graduate Student Association
(BGSA) Forum, Las Vegas, Nevada
2008 *The Untold Stories of the Struggle*, Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA)
Forum, Las Vegas, Nevada
2007 *About the Gear Up Program*, Nevada State College, Las Vegas, Nevada
2007 *Not Being a Victim: Awareness of Racial Identity and Stereotype Threat*,
Occidental College, Los Angeles, California

- Los Angeles, California
- 2007 *Self Motivation and Positive Influence: How Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance*, Nevada State College, Las Vegas, Nevada
- 2006 *The Growing Need for Black Leaders*, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina
- 2006 *Intra-Race Racism/Colorism*, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina
- 2006 *Making a Difference with a Second Chance*, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Homecoming Alumni Breakfast, Greensboro, North Carolina

Competitive Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

- 2015 Roosevelt Fitzgerald Outstanding Scholarship and Leadership Award, University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$500.00
- 2014 The Village Foundation, LJP Scholarship Award \$1000.00
- 2014 Graduate Access Award Grant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$2000.00
- 2013 Graduate Access Award Grant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$2000.00
- 2012 Graduate Access Award Grant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$2000.00
- 2011 Graduate Access Award Grant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas \$2000.00

Higher Education Teaching

Fall 2015

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Special Topics in Multicultural Education: School-to-Prison Pipeline, CIG 661 (co-taught)

Fall 2014

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280

Spring 2014

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Special Topics in Multicultural Education: School-to-Prison Pipeline, CIG 661 (co-taught)
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280

Fall 2013

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Multicultural Education, CIG 660 (co-taught)
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280

Spring 2013

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Theory and Research in Multicultural Education, CIG 662 (co-taught)

Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280
Multicultural Literature, CIL 684 (co-taught)

Fall 2012

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Children's Literature in the Elementary Curriculum, EDRL 401 (co-taught)
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)

Spring 2012

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Children's Literature Elementary School Curriculum, EDRL 401
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)

Fall 2011

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Teaching and Learning
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280 (online)
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Educational Psychology
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)

Spring 2011

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Educational Psychology
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Valuing Cultural Diversity, EDU 280 (online)

Fall 2010

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Educational Psychology
Educational Psychology, EPY 303
Intro to Descriptive and Inferential Statistics, EPY 721 (co-taught)
Research Methods, EPY 702
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)

Spring 2010

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Educational Psychology
Adolescent Development, EPY 707 (co-taught, online)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Counselor Education
Multicultural Issues in Counseling, CED 200 (co-taught)

K-12 Teaching

Summer 2009-Present

Children's Defense Fund: Freedom Schools, Las Vegas Promise, Las Vegas Nevada

Culture-centric literacy program that employs culturally relevant literature through culturally responsive pedagogies to increase children's motivation to read; geared for children of color in high poverty neighborhoods, including English Language Learners (ELL), students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans and related behavior plans; Grades K-8.

Fall 2009-Present

Founder & Director, Malcolm X Mentoring and Tutoring Initiative, Las Vegas, Nevada
One-on-one and small group tutoring in literacy strategies, specifically in reading speed, fluency, and comprehension; high minority/low income public schools; Grades K-2.

Fall 2012-Present

Lead, Lion's Den Mentoring Program, Las Vegas, Nevada
One-on-one and small group tutoring in reading and mathematics with school-identified "at risk" students, especially students with 504 plans (including behavioral plans) and/or those identified as English Language Learners (ELL); high minority/low income public schools; Grades K-8.

Fall 2009-Fall 2012

Substitute Teacher, Clark County School District (CCSD)
Public and public charter elementary and middle schools; Grades K-8

Service

International

2010-Present Member, American Educational Research Association (AERA)

National

2014-Present Member, National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)
2014-Present Member, Association for Literacy Educators and Researchers (ALER)
2013-Present Member, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
2011-Present Member, National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)
1998-2012 Volunteer, Boys and Girls Club of America (NBGCA)
2009-2010 Director of Corporate and Institutional Development, National Black Graduate Student Association (NBGSA)
2006-Present Member, Association of Black Psychologists
2008-2009 Western Regional Representative, National Black Graduate Student Association (NBGSA)
1995-2007 Member, Association for the Study of Landscape Architecture (ASLA)
2001-2005 Coach, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Basketball, Carolina Blazers Inc., Charlotte, North Carolina
2000-2001 Coach, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Basketball, Charlotte Storm, Charlotte, North Carolina

Regional

2005-2008 Member, Southeastern Psychological Association
2005-2007 Member, Southwest Consortium for Innovative Psychology in Education

Local

2013-2014 Student Representative, Department of Teaching and Learning Doctoral Studies Committee
2013-2014 Department of Teaching and Learning Representative, Graduate and Professional Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007-2013 Volunteer, Meals on Wheels, Las Vegas, Nevada
2008-2010 President, Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2008-2010 Member, Students Organizing Diversity Activities, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007-2010 Member, Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA), University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2010 Facilitator, Cultural Leadership Retreat, Facilitator, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007-2010 Consultant, TRIO-Upward Bound, Nevada State College, Las Vegas, Nevada
2009 Dialogue Facilitator, Avoiding Racial Conflict Initiative, Bridger Middle School, Las Vegas, Nevada
2005-2007 Volunteer, Loyalton of Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina
2006-2007 Volunteer, Nathaniel Middle School, Greensboro, North Carolina
2006-2007 President, Psychology Club, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina
2005-2007 Member, Student National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina
1995-2007 Member, Student Association for the Study of Landscape Architecture, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina
2005-2007 Volunteer, Bryan Young Men's Christian Association, Greensboro, North Carolina
2005-2007 Member, North Carolina Psychological Association, Greensboro, North Carolina
2001-2005 Volunteer, Food Bank, Charlotte, North Carolina