Summer March 2016

Portraits by African-American Male University Students: A Retrospective Study

Lauren Fissori
Loyola Marymount University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd

Part of the Education Commons, and the Race and Ethnicity Commons

Summer July 2010

Portraits by African-American Male University Students: A Retrospective Study

Lauren Fissori
Loyola Marymount University, lfissoriplacer3@yahoo.com

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Portraits by African-American Male University Students:

A Retrospective Study

by

Lauren Fissori

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2010

Portraits by African-American Male University Students:

A Retrospective Study

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
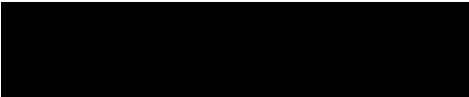**Los Angeles, CA 90045**

This dissertation written by Lauren Fissori, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

01 June 2010
Date

Dissertation Committee:

Edmundo Litton, Ed D., Committee Chair

Marta P. Baltodano, Ph D.

Yvette V. Lapayese, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank my fiancé and future husband Jamaal Turner for all of his support. He encouraged me to give the doctoral level a try, made dinner for me all the time, and made our home a place where I could both relax and creatively focus on my work. He also lent his ear when I needed to discuss experiences I encountered in conducting my research. Thank you.

I would like to thank my parents, Mark and Carol, and Jamaal's family, especially Akanni, Arion, Johnny, and Jahid, for engaging in critical, courageous discussions with me about race throughout the time I worked on this dissertation. Our discussions shaped what I began to think about as well as what I wrote when analyzing the data I received. I learned much from the distinguished professors I had in class, as well as from the many researchers' work that I read; I also learned just as much from all of you. Thank you.

I would also like to thank the scholars that helped me at the university level throughout this process. Thank you Dr. Gail Buck for all of your support and for helping me track down participants for this research. I would also like to thank Dr. D.W. Sue and Dr. Madonna Constantine for contacting me immediately with my questions and allowing me to bring their research into my work. I would also like to thank the Loyola Marymount University professors on my committee: Dr. Lapayese, Dr. Baltadano, and Dr. Litton. Through the courses we had together, the discussions, and the meetings, you all helped me to become more mature academically and personally. You helped me to improve my writing and to think more deeply about my own intuitions. I hope I will continue to grow as much as I did during the time we worked together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Portraits by African-American Male University Students:

A Retrospective Study

By

Lauren Fissori

African-American male students are systematically forced to confine themselves to the social construct that European-American society has developed for them. Actions, behaviors, and words that communicate this message spread both interracially and intraracially within schools and affect African-American males tremendously in terms of their identity development and personal well-being. While many studies examine the overt forms of racism and more obvious microaggressions that African-American male students encounter in their schooling, few look at the deep-seated forms of racism that are less noticeable but that have a disastrous psychological impact on these students. This study shows the effects on the psyche and development of the three African-American male students involved as they retrospectively recount their secondary school experiences. Portraiture is used to capture each participant's story accurately and clearly while critical race theory is interwoven throughout as theoretical framework for this

research. Using both critical race theory and portraiture, a complete examination of how

racism occurs within schools and its effects on African-American males is shown.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF STUDY

"I have a dream that [we] will one day live in a nation where [we] will not be judged by
the color of [our] skin but by the content of [our] character."
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I have a dream" speech (August 28, 1963)

A Few of my Experiences

When I first moved to Los Angeles to begin teaching high school mathematics

and working on my master's degree in education, I was fully unaware of the atrocities

encountered by students of color in the educational system. Prior to teaching, I had

assumed that every student had access to the same quality of school instruction and the

same quality schools. Upon entry into my first teaching assignment at a predominantly

African-American high school, I was appalled by what I saw.

I saw exceedingly limited expectations for the students I taught from all parties

involved. I saw it from administrators and other teachers that told me not to ever blame

myself for my students not doing well; one fellow teacher told me it was completely the

fault of the student if they failed to achieve. I observed and heard from parents that

expressed little faith in their students' academic abilities. I recall one parent who told me

her son could never get into one of the top schools but would certainly be accepted at a

junior college or a historically African-American institution; her son had been one of my

best calculus students and one of the top in his class. But what struck me the most was

that these low expectations forced the many African-American students I taught to

believe in the African-American male construct—the construct that places African-

American males into a world with a glass ceiling. Although I taught both young men and

women, I noticed specifically that talented, creative, and intelligent male students turned

to athletics instead of their academics, gave up on concepts even when they were verbalizing profound thinking, and put limits on their own achievements as if they believed they could not and would not be able to do more. The more I process what I saw even now, the more I see how these actions and thoughts were produced. Society has created the construct of the African-American male; this "discursive image" is not limited to but includes the projection of African-American males being "jewelry-donned, baggy-clothed, player thug[s] who project a nonchalant attitude toward school and academics" (Stinson, 2008, p. 1002). Solorzano and Yosso (2001) added several descriptors typically used to depict the image of African-American male as well that include "stupid" and "violent" (p. 6). This image has been created to keep these men from achieving and having the same opportunities as others. As Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2007) discussed, African-Americans "may be more prone to experience racial [discomfort] around…themes like "assumption of criminal status" and "color blindness" (p. 78). When I try to challenge myself to consider what it must feel like to be looked on in such a way as a result of one's ancestry, I cannot. I cannot fathom being made to feel so worthless while simultaneously trying to grapple with learning content in academia that society has implied is important. What would even be the point if no matter how hard I tried, I would never be looked on any more favorably?

Society's goal to keep African-American males at a lower status is reached every day, every hour, and every minute. Unfortunately, for many African-American males, the construct that society maintains for them is drilled into their heads from all angles— teachers, parents, peers, adult figures, and entertainment figures. It is adopted so

pervasively that these men believe it themselves. I believe this is why the African-American male students I taught behaved as they did. They actually believed they needed to conform to the reduced status that society had taught them. According to Stinson's (2008) research of African-American male students in high school, the stereotype of the African-American male "results in lower school and academic expectations for African-American male students, lowered by teachers, and most importantly,…lowered by the African-American community in general" (p. 992). I believe this is a result of this troublesome stereotype being imposed on the African-American community for so long; some researchers argue the pressure to "conform to a stereotype that [a community] did not endorse" can often lead to "feelings of being trapped" (Sue, Bucceri, et al., 2007, p. 78).

However, as I learned as I have grown up, and especially while conducting this research, discussing race and issues of racialized matters is taboo. I have experienced and seen in both myself and in others discomfort, even tears, when we begin to bring up our understandings of race and how it has played a role in our lives. When people asked me, while I was working on this research, what my dissertation was about and I told them I was investigating racism in schools, I was met with silence, shock, and denial; in most instances, the end to the conversation came quickly afterward. I have come to believe that our thinking is the result of our training. In the United States, people are "shush[ed]" at a very young age when topics involving race are discussed (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 58). In Bronson and Merryman's work (2009) where they reported on how a researcher looked at improving racialized views in children, several families dropped out of the

study when the families were asked to spend time each evening discussing race with their children. Two of these families told Vittrup, the researcher, "we don't want to have these conversations with our child. We don't want to point out skin color" (p. 53). I have come to believe that silence, however, preserves the racialized order that society has created and leaves stereotypes intact. As Singleton and Hays (2008) noted, "Each of us must let go of the racial understanding that we have been holding onto in order to move forward" (p. 20).

When I first began to learn about the privilege that European-Americans enjoy and read an article by Peggy McIntosh (1990) on the subject, I felt uncomfortable. I began thinking about the ways that my light skin color had given me an advantage over others and how I may have been treated differently as a result of belonging to society's dominant group all my life. Further, I did not want to believe that I could have imposed my unconscious feelings of racial superiority on the many students of color that I had taught. When I looked closer, I saw that I had. Through subtle comments, actions and non-actions, I realized that I was a part of the problem. My consciousness of my own racism, however, has brought me hope since then. In conducting this research, I have gained confidence in discussing matters of race and, more importantly, have gained the courage to listen and reflect when concerns about my thinking and actions are called into question by others. However, I still have much more learning to both do and undo.

Via accessing the voices and stories of marginalized members in the educational system, everyone is capable of learning and internal growth. It is imperative that race not be a topic that is forbidden to discuss any further; society will grow and flourish the more

society learns about and from each other concerning the presence of racialized thinking. This dissertation is hopefully my first of many written attempts to counter the "shushing" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 58) about race that has gone on for far too long and expose how African-American males continue to be marginalized within their secondary educational environments as a result of their skin color.

The Focus of this Research: Leadership for Social Justice

Everyone deserves a chance to succeed, especially within their educational setting. In the United States, politicians, superintendents, administrators, and teachers try their best; some students are left without the access others have. Leadership is often used to promote dominant ideologies and further personal agendas rather than to strengthen the minds of all of America's young learners (Foley, 1991; Kozol, 2005). The type of leadership that this research begs to become commonplace in every classroom is that which inspires, awakens, and challenges students to question their own thinking and question what has always been so easily passed off as truth (Kozol, 2005). Those who lead through social justice promote this inquiry and ask students to think about why some individuals of a particular race are often thought of as superior to others. In a socially just society, differences are embraced, used to unify, and are never looked on as deficits. Leaders that embrace social justice in their practice communicate the injustices they see and give all their students the same networking channels. Only through this praxis can the toxic stereotypes that are detrimental to the development of a just society be broken and deconstructed.

Though the findings and analysis in this study may not be a part of any formal lesson of any classroom in America, this study focuses on challenging those who read it to think about race and the ways in which society is affected by it. This dissertation leads through literature, narratives, and analysis centered on justice in society. If even one reader is compelled enough to begin considering how race has become a force in society and begins to share their insights with others, the movement toward a more socially just society will be furthered.

This dissertation is committed to exposing a dominant society's powerful, often racialized agendas as manifested through the subtle forms of oppression that may be experienced by African-American male students during their educational careers in secondary school (Bell, 2004; Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1988; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). By documenting the narratives, experiences, and perceptions of African-American male university students retrospectively, this research seeks to promote a more socially just educational system by aggregating the views of some mature and experienced insiders.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural differences and deficit theories, differences in home environments (Ogbu, 1994; Toler-Williams, 2001), and even biological differences in works such as *The Bell Curve* (Herrstein & Murray, 1994) have been used to explain the achievement gap between African-American males and the rest of their peers (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The examination of the ways in which these perceptions of oppressive ideologies affect the achievement of these young men must be exposed. "Racism is about institutional

power which people of color have never possessed" (Solorzano et. al., 2001, p. 61); this must be addressed in order for all students to have equity in their education. African-American males are continually made to feel uneasy and not a part of their classroom group. Educators must be "deliberate in the deconstructing" of forms of marginalization specifically for students of color within their educational settings (Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2007, p. 561). If these forms of oppression persist, African-American males will continue to be marginalized within their educational environments via the explicit and implicit means that the dominant society uses to communicate their perceived supremacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explicitly identify and document the perceptions and stories of African-American university male students regarding their previous secondary school experiences, specifically in regard to their racialized experiences. Critical race theory (CRT), which among other tenets stresses that race is used as a "primary organizing principle" (Foley, 1991, p. 78), was used to analyze the experiences of the participants in this study; its framework in its entirety is validated in this study's findings as these findings confirm that race continues to impact society's thinking and actions. The participants in this study have additionally described in detail how their identified racial experiences affected their identity development and emotional well-being. Via the careful documentation of these narratives, the perspectives of African-American male students is now more transparent and ultimately assists in heightening educational outcomes for students of all races.

Research Questions

In order to fully capture the narratives, experiences, and perceptions of African-American male high school students within their high school settings, this qualitative study involved observations, interviewing, and a focus group. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How did African-American male university students experience racism within their secondary school setting?

2. How did the identified experiences affect the participants' identity development and emotional well-being?

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT), as outlined by theorists such as Yosso, Solorzano, Tate, and Crenshaw, is central to understanding education through the lenses of African-American males and the experiences they encounter in the classrooms of America today. Although several theorists have stated that racism is a permanent fixture in American society (Smith et. al, 2007; Yosso, 2005), others have a more positive outlook that stratification can be overcome (Winant, 2000). Regardless, African-American males are constantly and consistently being oppressed, especially in the classroom, as a result of their gender and race (Smith et. al, 2007). The second chapter of this study outlines in detail alarming statistics about African-American males. A few of these statistics are: (a) African-American males make up less than 12% of professors in higher education (Toler-Williams, 2006), (b) African-American males generally have lower grade point averages (GPA) than their White and Asian counterparts (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998), and (c)

African-American males have lower percentages of enrollment and degree completion than their African-American female peers (Hubbard, 2005). Further, African-American males are overrepresented in special education courses (Conchas, 2006; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001), and generally experience lower teacher expectations (Ford & Harris, 1997). These occurrences as well as many others in the African-American community are discussed further in Chapter Two.

CRT allows individuals to examine social issues while keeping a critical focus on racially motivated components. CRT assumes essentially that all actions are racialized. Only through the tenets of CRT, including challenging the dominant group ideologies and being fully committed towards more socially just outcomes, can equity be reached in the American education system (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Thinking through racialized lenses can only be reversed through communication about stereotypes when they are encountered. Using a critical race framework also requires that the voices of people of color are heard and that the application of racilized views can be used in conjunction with gender, age, and sexual orientation side-by-side. For the purposes of this study, CRT allows for a more extensive examination of race and its role in the lives of three African-American males. CRT is discussed further in Chapter Two and its use is shown extensively in the findings of this study.

Using CRT as a framework for this research allowed all of its tenets to be exposed and proven. Specifically, the tenets of CRT are: (a) race is central in the discourses of life, (b) dominant ideologies must be challenged, (c) a commitment to social justice must occur, (d) the voices of the marginalized must be heard, and (e) a multidisciplinary lens

must be used (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). All tenets are addressed and used within this research; race is used to frame all analyses in order to begin discussions that involve challenging preconceived and often unconscious thoughts and actions. By beginning such discussions about race, social justice is inherently at the focus. Further, using the qualitative methodology of portraiture and inquiring about what it means to both be male and African-American , the voices of the participants paint a picture of both gender and race-related issues that still occur in classrooms today. It is through the use of CRT that such an intriguing look at race-related issues came to fruition within this research.

Overview of Methodology

Chapter Three of this research discusses in detail the portraiture, data collection, and data analysis used within this study. Essentially, portraiture is a qualitative form of methodology that was developed by researchers, such as Featherstone, Lawerence-Lightfoot, and Hoffman-Davis. Via transformative inquiry, portraiture seeks to capture the stories of the participants so that their experiences can be seen and felt by others—their portraits tell their story (Featherstone, 1989; Lawerence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). Portraiture involves the tenets of: (a) context, (b) voice, (c) relationship, (d) emergent themes, and (e) aesthetic whole (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). These tenets were all used in order to process the data received from participants in this study as well as to assist in analyzing it. Portraiture further requires that, in piecing together the aesthetic whole, the "goodness" of the portraits painted by participants

shows through (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997, p. 9); consequently, this is done in the analyses in Chapters Four and Five of this research.

The third chapter, after discussing portraiture in more depth, goes on to introduce the three participants in this study. All thee participants names have been changed in this work as well as the names of the secondary schools they attended. The three participants are Noah Bernard, Joseph Wyatt-Gomez, and Peter Hansen. After briefly introducing each participant, I discuss the schools and communities they have come from prior to attending their current university in Los Angeles. The criteria for selecting participants is discussed as well as the rights these participants were made aware of prior to becoming a part of this research. This includes their understanding that, among other things, confidentiality would be used at all times in the study and that they would not be compensated for their participation.

Additionally, Chapter Three of this research outlines how data was collected. While it began with observations and, for two participants, a campus tour at the current university they attend, the study also included a focus group and more in depth interviews related to the research questions in a variety of locations, always done at the participants' convenience. Journaling was initially, also, to be an added means of collecting and triangulating data; however, participants did not use the journals they were provided with. A discussion of reasons this may have occurred is included later in Chapter Four of this document.

Finally, data analysis is discussed. All interviews were transcribed immediately and themes were highlighted early on. Once all interviews were completed, all data was

read collectively four times using the guidance of Hatch (2002), along with the tenets of portraiture to piece together overarching categories and themes. Further, CRT remained salient throughout this process in order to ensure that issues of race were always kept at the forefront when analyzing the data. What each read-through of the collective set of data entailed is discussed more at length in Chapter Three.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to understanding the perceptions of African-American male students regarding their experiences during their secondary educational years and effects these perceptions had on the participants. The elapsed interval of time allowed the university students to report on their secondary school experiences with mature insights and perspectives. Inherently, this led to greater success in exposing stereotypical views held by society and slowly began to demystify the troublesome constructs that may serve to keep African-American males from equity and equality within their educational environment. Without heightened awareness of these constructs, the achievement gap for African-American males will continue. As Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) state:

> The potentially corrosive effects of racial and class segregation [a form of microaggression] can, under the worst circumstances, socially organize the relational dynamics within each context (family, background, etc.) in ways that make it virtually impossible to access multiple forms of social and institutional support. (p. 236)

Racial microaggressions are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano et al., 2001, p. 60). The microaggressions that may have a hand in producing the African-American male achievement gap must continue to be exposed. This study contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to promote more awareness of any subtle forms of oppression that may be lurking within American society and, in turn, America's schools. However, while some of the present literature blames primarily low teacher expectations (Conchas, 2006; Duncan, 2005; Ford & Harris, 1997; Hubbard & Datnow, 2005) and others such as Ogbu (1990) tend to focus on the community aspects that cause the present achievement gap, very few have critically examined the voices of African-American male students to gain an increased understanding of which forces work for justice for all and which forces continue to marginalize students within school settings. According to one researcher, "stories of minorities are necessary to disrupt allochronic discourses that inform racist inequalities in schools and society" (Duncan, 2005, p. 101). This study finally begins to document these stories in an attempt to lessen and eliminate the marginalization of African-American males in United States by examining how university students perceived their secondary education years.

Limitations of the Study

This research was limited in that it used only one theoretical framework (critical race theory) to discuss the perceptions of African-American university males. Certainly, there is some strength in blending both positivist and interpretivist branches of theory together when analyzing data or using a generally "eclectic theoretical approach"

(Stinson, 2008, p. 975). Additionally, only one university in the Los Angeles area participated in this study; certainly not all male student perceptions may be exactly like those of African-American males living in the city of Los Angeles who specifically attend one particular institution. Further, this study gathered data retrospectively. Although these concerns are further addressed in Chapter Two, some memories are hard to recall or may have been forgotten.

Summary

This chapter began by describing the importance of this research and how this study's focus was to actively promote a more socially just society. The purpose and significance of this research along with the research questions and limitations have also been stated. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework and discusses previous related studies. As well as giving background about the methodology of portraiture, Chapter Three recalls the research questions before specifically outlining the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter Four presents the findings from study participants and gives an analysis of these findings. Chapter Five includes further discussion, implications, and recommendations for this field of study based on the findings.

In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework is fully developed surrounding critical race theory and prior research is examined. Key terms that will be used throughout this dissertation are listed and described in the following section.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this research, the following are provided to give more concrete definitions of terms used throughout this dissertation.

A-G requirements. This is a list of classes and the amount of years needed to take the specified classes to ensure any student entering a university funded by the state of California can "fully participate in the first-year program at the university in a variety of fields of study" (University of California, 2009a). According to the University of California (UC) faculty and staff, "the requirements are written deliberately for the benefit of all students expecting to enter the University, and not for preparation for specific majors" (University of California, 2009a). The requirements are the following: two years required of history/social science, four years of English, three years of mathematics, two years of laboratory science, two years of a language other than English, one year of visual and performing arts, and one year of college-preparatory electives (University of California, 2009a).

Academic performance index (API). The API is a score, ranging from 200 to 1000 points, given to all schools in California as mandated by the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999. According to the mandate, the purpose of giving schools the API score is to "measure the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures" (California Department of Education, 2008b).

Advanced placement (AP) courses. AP courses are college level high school courses that allow students to advance in their collegiate level coursework while still attending secondary school. According to the College Board, the administrators of the AP

exams taken by AP students at the end of each course, students "have the opportunity to earn credit or advanced standing at most of the nation's colleges and universities" (College Board, 2009). This allows high school students to "gain the edge in college preparation", "stand out in the college admissions process", and "broaden intellectual horizons" (College Board, 2009).

African-American. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, an African-American person is an "American of African ancestry" (Neufeldt & Sparks, 1990, p. 11). This term was and is "currently being used interchangeably with the term Black and is increasingly being advanced as a self-referent for Americans of African descent" (Ghee, 1990, p. 75).

California standards tests (CST). State examination administered by California's public schools to students; students are scored on a scale of proficient and advanced (meaning at grade-level or slightly above), basic (slightly below grade level), and below basic and far below basic (very much below grade level) scores in core topics including science, English, and mathematics. According to the California Department of Education, The purpose of the California Standards Tests (CSTs) is to measure the degree to which students are achieving the academically rigorous content standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE)" (California Department of Education, 2008c).

California State University(CSU)/University of California (UC). These institutions are California state funded schools offering bachelors and graduate degrees. Candidates for these schools are required to complete the A-G coursework during high school in order to be eligible to attend (University of California, 2009d).

Critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a theory that discusses how views and thinking presumed as a result of race tend to dominate the way society is shaped and how it functions today; the five major tenets of CRT are: race as a central factor, challenges dominant societal thinking, voices of people of color must be heard, commitment to social justice, and interdisciplinary approaches (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002).

European-American. This is a person of any European decent and living in the United States. This term often is used interchangeably with Caucasian or White and is often associated with "white identity" (Fordham, 2008, p. 227).

Microaggressions. These are the subtle, implicit ways in which the dominant society communicates preferences for their own group and/or marginalizes people of color. This includes comments, actions, etc. that communicate forms of ethnocentric feelings that serve to make people of color feel unaccepted by other groups (Solorzano et. al, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Racialize(d). This implies that people cognitively view situations and create opinions based on race. When decisions and choices are made that are racialized, race is the central feature of the decision. Typologically operating is also synonymous with operating through a racialized lens. According to Dillard, seeing groups through this lens becomes a "limitation" that does not allow for people to "capture the complexities and the possibilities of identities" (Dillard, 2008, p. 87).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Underlying Principles for the Literature Selected

Discussions of race and racism are never done easily. This literature review seeks to provide background as to how race has and continues to play a role in society. Since the focus of this dissertation is to identify racialized experiences and their effects that high school graduates recall, it is imperative that a background is given that discusses race issues and history specific to the African-American male.

Therefore, after discussing in this chapter the lens of critical theory, a history of documented racialized acts will be presented. Statistics that illuminate potential effects of these racialized acts are given followed by details about the experience of being an African-American male today in United States society. It is important to note that the statistics, though compelling, do not tell the whole story of the experiences that African-American males have had within their secondary school settings. There are no statistics that show how racialized experiences may have affected the psyche of African-American young men; and, despite the ability of many to overcome these barriers, these young men may often come away from some exchanges with feelings of inferiority and self-defeat. Within this chapter a variety of African-American male voices, both young and adult, that were previously recorded will be heard; the necessity to hear from more, especially those of African-American men at the university level, becomes apparent.

Although research involving African-American male students has been done involving young children or much older adults, little research is available regarding African-American males attending a university that focuses on their critical reflection of

their educational experiences from high school and the effects of these experiences. Using a retrospective approach, the perceptions of African-American male students can be documented while simultaneously looking at the implications these perceptions had on the individual. Using the influence of critical race theory, this literature review provides a backdrop that represents the findings of others concerning African-American males who are not necessarily young men at the university level.

Introduction to Theoretical Rationale

Critical race theory (CRT), as outlined by theorists such as Yosso (2005), Solorzano and Ornelas (2004), and Crenshaw (1988), is central to understanding education through the lenses of African-American males and the experiences they encounter in the classrooms of America today. Although the scholar W. E. B. Du Bois once said that racism is a permanent fixture in American society as cited in Smith et. al, (2007) and Yosso (2005), others have assumed the more positive outlook that stratification can be overcome (Winant, 2000). Regardless, African-American males are constantly and consistently being oppressed, especially in the classroom, as a result of their gender and race (Smith et. al, 2007). African-American males make up less than 12% of professors in higher education (Toler-Williams, 2001), have generally lower grade point averages (GPA) than their European-American and Asian-American counterparts (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998), and have lower percentages of enrollment and degree completion than their African-American female peers (Hubbard, 2005). Further, African-American males are overrepresented in special education courses (Conchas, 2006; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001), and generally experience lower

teacher expectations (Conchas, 2006; Duncan, 2005; Ford & Harris, 1997; Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). These occurrences are no coincidence.

CRT assumes essentially that all actions are racialized. Only through the tenets of CRT, including challenging the dominant group ideologies and being fully committed toward more socially just outcomes, can equity be reached in our education system (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Using a critical race framework also requires that the voices of people of color are heard and that the application of views expressed can be used in conjunction with gender, age, and sexual orientation side-by-side. For the purposes of this study, CRT allows for a more extensive examination of the school environments that African-American university male students experienced while in high school and learning about the ways in which these experiences affected their identity development and emotional well-being.

CRT will be used within this literature review to discuss the ways in which race shapes the educational experiences of African-American males in education today. Many agree that CRT consists of five essential components (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). However, Dixson and Rousseau (2006a) added a sixth component regarding the insistence upon "historical analysis of the law" as related to race and education (p.4). To acknowledge all experts in the arena of CRT, a brief historical overview of the educational laws will be introduced later in this chapter.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): A Tool for Social Justice

The challenge of honestly engaging in a dialogue about issues of race afflicts the society of the United States. Some deny the existence of discrimination as a result of civil rights laws being passed and the removal of "White Only" signs from facilities (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 21). However, despite the dismissal of the explicit, "symbolic and formal" forms of oppression specifically against African-Americans, racism is far from dead in America (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 19). The "Eurocentricity" that bombards the discourses of society creates the illusion that American society is solely the experience of European-American society (Asante, 1991, p. 172). This Eurocentric discourse does not exclude itself from the classrooms of the schools that students of all races attend. As a result, it becomes critically important to view the perceptions, relationships, and practices of everyone involved in the educational setting via the lens of CRT. Without such an examination, the subtle effects in which race shapes and hinders the educational opportunities of minority students, especially African-American males, may never be fully exposed.

W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed that racism in America will never end as cited in Smith et al., 2007. Sue and Capodilupo, et al. (2007) defined "aversive racism" (p. 272) as the small ways in which dominant group members unknowingly communicate their sense of power over the "other" (Bell, 2004, p. 19; Bell, 1992, p. 10; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 16; Yosso, 2002, p. 94). Sue and Capodilupo, et al.(2007) further stated: "The invisible nature of acts of aversive racism prevents perpetrators from realizing and confronting (a) their own complicity in creating pathological dilemmas for minorities and (b) their role in

creating disparities in employment, health care, and education" (p. 272). Further, Tate (1999) claimed that many within academia have consciously "contributed to the efforts to minimize the importance of our knowledge of people of color" (p. 252).

According to Ladson-Billings (1999), CRT offers assistance in tracking marginalization in the academic arena of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and funding within the American education system. To do so, CRT encompasses the following five tenets:

1. Race is central in the discourses of life; it is used as a "primary organizing principle" (Foley, 1991, p. 78).

2. The dominant ideology must be challenged and deconstructed.

3. A strong commitment to social justice exists.

4. The voices of those that are most marginalized, those with expert, first-hand knowledge, must be heard.

5. A multidisciplinary lens must be used, such as race and gender perspectives, simultaneously (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002).

The above principles of CRT are each described more in detail in the sections that are presented next followed by a historical discussion relevant to CRT according to Dixson and Rousseau (2006a).

The centrality of race. Race plays an undeniable role in the interaction and exchanges that occur among individuals at all levels of American society. The ideology of racism is "a powerful structuring, hegemonic force in the world today" (Darder &

Flores, 2009, p. 151). As Bell (2002) stated, "racism in all its myriad manifestations is beyond the power of law or the desire of most of our citizenry to reform" (p. 327). Many experiences have been documented that serve to highlight Bell's statement particularly within the realm of education and academia. Banning (1999), a female researcher and woman of color, recounts how a female European-American professor, whom she was observing for various research purposes, used her racial status to intimidate Banning into not using various parts of their dialogues together in her research outcomes. Banning also observed similar structures between the professor and her students. Her findings suggest that such relationships may be prevalent throughout schools and institutions of all demographic make-ups.

Many researchers illustrate how European-American teachers at the primary and secondary level use the power of their European-American privilege to continue to place lopsided numbers of African-American and other minority students into special education classes (Blanchett, 2006; Conchas, 2006; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001). Reporting that these students have various issues such as emotional disturbance and other behavioral issues, Blanchett (2006) found these teachers to effectively keep segregation in schools alive and well. The teachers Blanchett (2006) observed used special education referrals as a means of segregating and calming their discomfort in teaching multiethnic student populations. Such unconscious forms of aversive racism are manifested through both implicit and explicit (like special education referrals for a disproportionate amount of students of color) forms of action called microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007) and are highly prevalent in America's schools.

Some stated that oppression can also be more subtle (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). According to Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007), "microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they below to a racial minority group" (p. 273). Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) also identifies themes, microaggressive language, and the language that gets conveyed to individuals of color. Table 1 below presents some of these items as they may be experienced by students of color in schools today.

Table 1
Examples of Racial Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Ascription of intelligence; assigning intelligence to a person of color	"You are a credit to your race."	People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites.
	"You are so articulate."	It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.
Color-blindness; statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race	"When I look at you, I don't see color."	Denying a person of color's racial/ethnic experiences; assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture; denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.
	"America is a melting pot."	
Criminality/assumption of criminal status; a person of color is resumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race	A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latino approaches or passes; A store owner following a customer of color around the store; a White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.	You are a criminal. You are going to steal/You are poor/You do not belong. You are dangerous.

Table 1 (continued)

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Denial of individual racism; a statement made when Whites deny their racial bias	"I'm not a racist. I have several Black friends."	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color.
	"As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority."	Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can't be a racist. I'm like you.
Myth of meritocracy; statements which assert that race does not play a role in the life successes	"I believe the most qualified person should get the job."	People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race.
	"Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough."	People of color are lazy and/or incompetent
Pathologizing cultural values; notion that values of White culture are ideal	Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated?"	Assimilate to dominant culture.
Second-class citizen; occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment over a person of color	Person of color mistaken for a service worker	People of color are servants to Whites. They couldn't possibly occupy high-status positions.
	Having a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a White passenger	You are likely to cause trouble and travel to a dangerous neighborhood.
	Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to the White customer	Whites are more valued customers than people of color. You don't belong.
	"You people…"[1]	

[1] *Note.* "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for clinical practice," by D. Wing Sue, C. M. Capodilupo, G. C. Torino, J. M. Bucceri, A. M. Holder, K. L. Nadal, and M. Esquilin, 2007b, *American Psychologist, 62*(4), p. 276, 277. Copyright 2007b by the American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission of the author.

All microaggressions function to stereotype African-Americans and other people of color as having an inability to be educated, lacking in motivation, and generally not as disciplined as the dominant societal group (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). In fact, even more harmful stereotyping exists. Crenshaw (1988) highlights the binary differences between typical African-American and European-American images. Stereotypical words often used to portray "whiteness" are: "industrious, intelligent, moral, knowledgeable, enabling culture, law-abiding, responsible, [and] virtuous"; meanwhile, African-American images include: "lazy, unintelligent, immoral, ignorant, disabling culture, criminal, shiftless, [and] lascivious" (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 17). Ladson-Billings (1999) added that terms such as "gangs, welfare recipients, basketball players, [and] the underclass" are also terms and categories associated with African-American (p. 9).

Microaggressions take place in a variety of settings and the stereotypes that are associated with those of a certain race perpetuate the marginalization that ensues. For example, Constantine and Wang (2007) discussed a variety of these instances such as African-Americans being pulled over by police for no reason ("driving while Black"), proclamations that "colorblindness" is an effective means for dealing with race in certain settings, and far fewer people of color occupying top positions within corporations, companies, etc. as compared to European-American individuals (p. 143). In fact, Constantine and Wang (2007) identified seven themes of typical racial microaggressions against people of color including "reluctance to give performance feedback for fear of being racist" and the tendency to blame the victim for the hardships they encountered in their lives "even when such issues seemed to be related to prejudice, racism,

discrimination, and other forms of oppression" (p. 147). The same occurrences are not absent from inside the walls of America's school.

According to Gordon and Johnson (2003), many predominantly European-American college campuses disengage African-Americans and do not promote educational achievement for all students. Gordon and Johnson (2003) also discussed the prevalence of the "hostile educational environment" (p. 420) as similar to the sexual harassment environments and the conditions on some college campuses that make it virtually impossible for African-Americans to focus and learn as a result of the discrimination they experience on a daily basis. Although it is alarming that students of color at the collegiate level are being disempowered and made to feel subordinate to the dominant group, it is even more disheartening to consider what may go on inside the classrooms at the secondary and primary levels. Although many college-level students of color can defend themselves or find positive coping mechanisms such as student groups and "counter-spaces" or safe environments to discuss frustrations when they are unfairly treated (Solorzano et al., 2001, p. 70), younger students of color may not have the same options.

For younger students of color, microaggressions can sometimes make it virtually impossible to learn in the academic setting. As Ladson-Billings (1999) stated, "These daily indignities [i.e. microaggressions] take their toll on people of color. When these indignities are skimmed over in the classrooms that purport to develop students into citizens, it is "no wonder" students 'blow off' classroom discourse" (p. 19). In the state of California for the 2006-2007 academic year, 31% of second grade African-American

27

students scored far below or below the basic proficiency level in both math and English language arts compared to 24% of the Latino peers, nine percent of European-American peers, and 7% of Asian-American peers (California Department of Education, 2008a). By grade 10, the achievement gap widens; in California, 67% of African-American students were not proficient in English and 72% of African-American students were not proficient in math (California Department of Education, 2008a). These scores represent the worst performance of all demographic subgroups in the state of California for the 2006-2007 academic year (California Department of Education, 2008a).

Additionally, according to the state of California's Department of Education (2008d), 7.8% of African-American secondary students dropped out from school in the state of California during the 2006-2007 school year. This was the highest dropout rate of any demographic subgroup in the state and compares to 5.4% of Latino secondary students and 2.8% of European-American students (California Department of Education, 2008d). African-American males also have the lowest percentage in the state for completing the state recommended A-G college admission requirements to gain access to admittance to any CSU or UC school (California Department of Education, 2008e). The California Department of Education (2008e) reported that only 19.7% of African-American males in the state and 31.6% in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) met these state requirements. This is the lowest percentage of any subgroup in the state including African American females that outperform their male counterparts in LAUSD with a 45.9% rate of completing the state college and university requirements (California Department of Education, 2008e).

Some have argued that African-American males tend to struggle more than others in schools because society treats them differently and in a more critical manor that is unsupportive of academic progress (Malveaux, 2006). Others (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004) reported that race plays a role in the rigor of coursework selection and causes secondary students of color to fall off the college track as a result. In LAUSD, African-American students were underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) college track courses; they represented 14% of all student enrollment in LAUSD in the 2002-2003 school year, but made up only 8% of AP students (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) also reported that some schools have larger disparities than others including one school that had an overall student population that was 27 percent African-American with only 8% of these students making up the AP course student population. Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) argued that the centrality of race is a blatant factor in these instances and that African-Americans and other students of color are being discriminated against by not being allowed the same access to the rigorous coursework as other student subgroups.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) noted that minority students are constantly faced with institutionalized marginalization within their academic settings. Students of color are subjected to (a) specific values being placed on certain races (not their own), (b) feeling uncomfortable about trying to fit in with others outside of their race, (c) not being evaluated the same on assessments as others, (d) experiencing a general lack of trust, and (e) being discouraged in attempts at improving behavior and performance (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). As a result, students of color are destined to under-perform, have a lack of

trust and enjoyment of learning that some other groups enjoy, and are forced to observe

racial stereotypes and other deficit thinking models as they are reinforced. One study

found that when minority students were reminded of their race via questioning prior to

taking an exam, they performed far worse than when they took the same exam without

the prior questioning (Solorzano et al., 2001). This suggests that students of color feel

inferior and that their performance suffers when they recall the privilege that some

groups have over themselves (Solorzano et al., 2001). This also illustrates how racial

microaggressions, both in explicit and implicit forms, harm the psyche of students of

color. The internalization of microaggressions not only hurts students of color

academically in terms of performance, especially African-American students, but also

their ability to find solace within their educational setting. Year after year, African-

American students are subjected to this vicious system that is, arguably, perfectly

designed to ensure their failure in school. In contrast, students that fall into racial groups

of privilege continue to flourish and leave their African-American peers behind.

According to Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007), "when one considers that people of

color are exposed continually to microaggressions and that their effects are cumulative, it

becomes easier to understand the psychological toll they may take on recipients' well

being" (p. 279). As stated previously, this manifests itself in the school dropout rates

particularly for African-American male students. The extent to which race affects

African-American males on a daily basis has gone unchecked for too long. Many

African-American males find little value in their education as a result of being constantly

discouraged via microaggressions and other overt forms of the dominant group

30

establishing their privilege within society. The American educational setting has continued to focus on "merit and individualism" since these structures typically favor European-American society (Tate, 1999, p. 259). Rather than continuing to normalize the Eurocentric view of structures within society, specifically within the classroom, society must begin to take on perspectives of people of color and examine the ways in which various practices pertain to minority groups, especially African-American males.

Society has failed to view the many rich perspectives that students of color, especially African-Americans, and how these perspectives can be shared within all communities. By continuing to see the cultural values of African-American students as deficits (Toler-Williams, 2001), students of all races suffer from a curriculum lacking multiethnic perspectives. When differences can be embraced in the classroom, all students are made stronger as a result of the deconstruction of the power-driven, dominant group ideology. This ideology serves only to further the agendas of privilege held by the dominant group and continues to promote feelings of unfounded superiority as a result of promoting the dominant group's views touted as "the sum total of the human experience" (Asante, 1991, p. 172). Some have acknowledged that although not much has changed in terms of racial stratification, hierarchies, etc., change has undoubtedly occurred in terms of racial norms and structures (Winant, 2000). If educators recognize and foster education of all races, more change will occur for the positive.

Solorzano and Yosso (2001) made note of the ways people have developed socially constructed views of various racial groups. A powerful part of change regarding racial structures in place will come with the realization and acknowledgement of

manifestations of these social constructions and the ways in which they promote

perceptions that are often harmful toward people of color. Looking at differences

between people and utilizing only the Eurocentric norm is wrong, unwarranted, or

unfitting for all communities and will inhibit positive change. In fact, Solorzano and

Yosso (2001) stated the following:

> In practice, the deficit model is applied in the classroom, and to students of color,
>
> by teachers who are professionally trained in colleges, and specifically in teacher
>
> education programs that utilize an individualistic and cultural deficit explanation
>
> of low minority educational attainment. (p. 4)

Following this, Yosso (2005) claimed that schools traditionally use deficit

thinking when educating students of color within classroom: "The assumption follows

that people of color 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility. As a

result, schools most often work from this assumption" (p. 70). Ultimately, education

became differentiated based on race. The "apartheid schools" (Kozol, 2005, cover)

references and the "apartheid of knowledge" referred to by Yosso (2002, p. 97) when

discussing schools that are predominantly educating students of color mirror this; schools

that educate a population that is predominantly European-American become so exclusive

that those within them do not realize the privilege they hold or are accustomed to.

Students of color are seen as "second-class citizens" and, as a result, get a second-class

education (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277).

According to many (Asante, 1991; Bell, 1992; Bell, 2002; Crenshaw, 1988; Smith

et al., 2007) including W.E.B. DuBois, the marginalization of people of color has and

will always be "a permanent component of American life" (Bell, 1992, p. 13). However, by understanding the perspectives, history, and narratives of traditionally oppressed groups, stereotypes have a chance of being exposed and people may start to understand that each race does not come with its own unique checklist of features. Rather than continuing to designate people of color as "other" (Bell, 2004, p. 19; Bell, 1992, p. 10; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 16; Yosso, 2002, p. 94), by finding value in the differences each racial tradition brings to the forefront, the racialized views of society may become obsolete. Without attempting to understand the way race affects the lives of everyone in society, race will continue to play a central role in the ways people are treated and, ultimately, live; inequality will persist. Crenshaw (1988) discussed how this is possible as a result of the dominant societal group placing blame on people of color: "If Whites believe that Blacks, because they are unambitious or inferior, get what they deserve [as a result of their race], it becomes that much harder to convince Whites that something is wrong with the entire system" (p. 20). Society must first believe that equality *is* a valuable commodity and believe in its uplifting, freeing effects.

Race as a central force and determining factor for many opportunities open to people of color remains salient today. Its ubiquitous presence can be found in a variety of places especially including "academic and social spaces" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 560) where many young students and impressionable minds exist. Although explicit segregation has formally been made illegal and civil rights movements have made much progress, underlying tensions are still very apparent (Crenshaw, 1988). These tensions, although they may be seemingly harmless, have major consequences for students of

color, especially African-American males (Solorzano et al., 2001). Students of color

continue to be reminded on a daily basis that they are not a part of the dominant norms,

will never be, and should live in a manner that is always striving to meet the Eurocentric

norm. This plays a role in the way minority students form relationships, are given access

to certain networks necessary for their success, how practices are viewed within social

settings, and, ultimately, the extent to which they come to value their education.

According to Gordon and Johnson (2003):

> Nearly a century's worth of psychological data demonstrate that racism is
>
> widespread and that it can be a part of the unconscious, that is, that even people
>
> who identify themselves as nonracists or antiracists hold racist presumptions on
>
> which they sometimes act. (p. 415)

The fact remains: race is a central and pervasive part of American society today.

Challenging Eurocentric reality. Another tenet of CRT is the characteristic of

challenging traditional and stereotypical racial norms that are prevalent in American

society (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001;

Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). According to Solorzano and Yosso (2001), this critical CRT

component addresses ideologies that marginalize people of color since "claims of

objectivity and meritocracy camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of

dominant groups in United States society" (p. 2). Constantine (2007) addressed how often

well-intentioned privileged societal members often promote their own social superiority

via implicit and often unconscious means. The media contributes by promoting social

privilege of certain groups over others. Delgado (1990) discussed how "media

manipulatives" are "designed to serve different purposes" such as encouraging the idea that "nonwhites deserve inferior treatment because they are actually inferior" (p. 105). Within the classrooms of America's schools, students of color are often ignored in class by their teachers and peers, are expected to perform worse than their non-minority counterparts, and are generally made to feel as if they are not welcome within the educational community.

At the macro-level, schools that serve predominantly minority students have been historically underserved. In the late 1920's, W.E.B. Du Bois performed a study in Georgia schools and found that the per pupil dollars for European-American students was $36.29 whereas for African-American students, it was a mere $4.59; he additionally reported that European-American teachers had a monthly salary of $97.88 per month compared to African-American teachers' pay, which was $49.41 on average as cited by Bell (2004, p. 15). More recently, Jonathan Kozol (2005) researched per pupil spending in major eastern American cities over the course of the 2002-2003 school year. He found that in the Chicago area, the school district with 87% African-American and Latino students making up the population had an average per pupil expenditure of $8,482. Yet the Chicago area school district serving 90% European-American students posted a per pupil expenditure of $17,291 (Kozol, 2005). He found similar differences in major metropolitan areas including Philadelphia, Detroit, Milwaukee, Boston, and New York. The disparities are far from subtle and they show the advantages of dominant groups as they continue to maintain their privilege.

Davis (2007) highlighted the critical need for society, especially educators and educational policymakers, "to think about what it means to serve students in high poverty, segregated schools" (p. 225). The American educational system has a history of finding ways to keep both minority students pushed to the side yet allowing privileged societal members' students to be served. As Bell (2004) noted:

> From the nation's beginnings, policymakers have been willing to sacrifice even Blacks' basic entitlements of freedom and justice as a kind of political catalyst that enables Whites to reach compromises that resolve differing and potentially damaging economic and political differences. (p. 9)

Further, Bell (2004) stated that the only reason dominant society's America promotes civil action and rights is their belief that it will not "significantly dimin[ish] whites' sense of entitlement" (p. 9). Although schools have been formally desegregated as a result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the 1950's, schools continue to be institutions of oppression by promoting dominant ideologies and failing to address the histories and values of minority students in both outlandish and subtle forms (Kozol, 2005). For America to proclaim the schools have been fully desegregated and that every student is receiving the same free and appropriate education as mandated by the federal government is simply untrue.

In looking at the projection of Eurocentric values at the university level, Duncan (2005) reported how a European-American undergraduate student shared his feelings in class one day about what he learned to be a common understanding amongst those in his social circles regarding African-American physicians. According to Duncan's (2005)

recollection, the student claimed that an American-American physician under 40 years of age should "never be trusted"; this student seemed to imply the ideology that affirmative action had caused a decline in the qualifications of people of color and that, ultimately, "the Black middle class is intellectually and morally suspect and inferior to its White counterpart" (p. 105). Duncan (2005) also discussed the use of terms such as "inner-city" which typically hold connotations unfavorable to minority groups (p. 98); such a term is often associated with crime, poverty, and non-European-Americans. Such words are inadvertently used in daily conversations by dominant group members to both establish and maintain the sense of racial superiority that they feel entitled to.

Well-intentioned society members often promote these feelings even when they are unconscious of it or do not mean to do so. Smith et al. (2007) cited psychological experiments that showed societal implications toward believing African-Americans are not safe. In one particular study, participants viewed a scenario of people sitting on a bus; a European-American individual was shown to be holding a knife (Smith et al., 2007) According to Smith et al.(2007), when participants were later questioned about what they saw, many claimed they had seen the African-American holding the knife. This exposed the commonly held presumptions that many dominant group members hold of people of color, specifically African-American males, as being "criminal" and dangerous (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 17).

Gale and Densmore (2000) discussed the notion of essentialism which is briefly defined as group stereotyping or holding beliefs about certain groups although they may not be historically or culturally accurate. More specifically, Gale and Densmore defined

essentialism as a categorization based on group membership and its downfall is that it ultimately "inhibits understanding in certain circumstances" (2000, p. 129). Gale and Densmore (2000) proceeded to give an example of two groups of girls within a school (Group A and Group B) that illustrated how essentialism leads to Group A being pitted against Group B. Although Gale and Densmore (2000) discussed this clique-like and stereotyping behavior as applied to groups of females, it can also easily be extended to racial groups. When dominant group members expressed their ideologies of superiority and that their Eurocentric view were normal and universal, they formed themselves into a group that is against anyone that is not fully a part of their race (i.e. minority group members). Teachers often promote this group separation within their classrooms by making claims that are culturally unfounded or by teaching multicultural education in a way that treats all other cultures as different and bad compared to the European-American lens. When educators do not appropriately develop the curriculum in ways that embrace all cultural lenses and give superficial intercultural celebrations rather than explicit discourse on race and the history of each culture, the multicultural educational experience is cheapened (Gale & Densmore, 2000); students continue to learn that the European-American way is the standard. As a result, the perceived "high levels of exclusion among Black children…inevitably affect[s] their academic performance" (Majors, 2001, p. 3).

With regard to how the governing laws promote Eurocentricity, Crenshaw (1988) noted "Antidiscrimination discourse is fundamentally ambiguous and can accommodate conservative as well as liberal views of race and equality…Liberal reform discourse must

not be allowed to undermine the Black collective identity" (p. 3). Further, she stated "people think that they are confirming reality—the way things must be [via following antidiscrimination laws]" but instead, society is blinded by the structures that come with these laws and, in the end, "the entire order is never seriously questioned" (p. 8). Discrimination laws are shaped in such a way that they continue to favor the dominant social order. While many find relief in that they have formally addressed issues of race, they have done little if anything to promote real growth and change in the ongoing racial struggles that plague America. By continuing to water down racial overtones in laws from the government and social dynamics within institutions including America's schools, racial tensions and stereotypes given to people of color become acceptable. Racism has the façade of being a dead issue when it really must be explicitly brought to the forefront, be addressed, and be deconstructed. "The very absence of visible signs of discrimination creates an atmosphere of racial neutrality and encourages Whites to believe that racism is a thing of the past" (Bell, 1992, p. 6).

Additionally relating to law Gordon and Johnson (2003) asserted that the Supreme Court has often ruled in ways that make microaggressions legal and, thus, has created socially acceptable forms of discrimination. He stated: "The court, by refusing to recognize the existence and function of unconscious racism, creates and fosters a false picture of reality" (p. 418). Historically, although the Supreme Court formally abolished segregation in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, it also left much room open for state interpretations and allowed room for states to enforce the laws in their own manner (Bell, 2004). Segregation within America's schools continues harm all students the

longer it persists. During the time of the *Brown* decision, the Supreme Court stated: "oppression is harmful to the oppressor as well as the oppressed" (Bell, 2004, p. 24). The Supreme Court's knowledge of the injustices occurring within America and subsequent failure to address them with forcefulness within the law setting proved to be a setback for all antidiscrimination discourse and continues to plague America today.

The entitlements that dominant group members communicate via microaggressions and other various stereotypical thinking put into action continue to marginalize people of color because they are not recognized as members of the privileged group (Toler-Williams, 2001). Within the educational setting, it becomes imperative for teachers to recognize the ideologies that are being promoted within their classrooms. The structures, processes, and discourses used to deliver instruction must be critically examined to expose their deficit views that "serve to rationalize discriminatory curricular processes" (Yosso, 2002, p. 93).

Furthermore, educators must look at all facets of the classroom that promote stereotypical thinking and harmful racialized views as being "neutral" (Tate, 1999, p. 257; Yosso, 2005, p. 74; Yosso, 2002, p. 99). Tate (1999) also articulated more about how such neutrality camouflages power structures that oppress minority groups. It is incumbent upon educators to foster critical awareness in students and give students the tools necessary to view social practices through the other's experiences. This must occur in order to allow all students to foster critical lenses and allow all to receive a quality education rich in cultural meaning and experience different from their own. Failure to do this will continue to confuse students of all races into thinking only one racial view point

is truly the model to adopt; "without a multicultural education, students remain essentially ignorant of the contributions of a major portion of the world's people" (Asante, 1991, p. 172). Society must start looking at the positive results brought about by knowing more than one cultural lens rather than looking at everything that each other culture or race, other than European-American, is not (Yosso, 2005).

Schools must continue to critically examine the ways in which seemingly productive student-centered practices are actually articulating superiority of the dominant group. For example, while apparently trying to better help African-American students in schools, African-American students are hugely overrepresented in the special education population in America's schools (Blanchett, 2006; Conchas, 2006; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001). According to Blanchett's (2006) research, African-American students were more than 2.0 times more likely to be referred for special education and almost 1.7 times more likely to be identified as having an emotional disturbance or behavior issue. This overrepresentation "must be viewed in the context of the White privilege and racism that exist in American society…in the educational system specifically" (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24). Further, Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and McLaren (2003) implied that society must end such practices as continuing to refer African-American children into special education since these practices reproduce oppression under the "banner of democracy" (p. 159). Societal structures, such as disproportionate numbers of African-American students in special education programs, continue to informally segregate students based on race within formally desegregated schools; the only way to eradicate such structures, as suggested by some, was to propose radical ways

to stop these sorts of practices from happening (Blanchett, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

The "hidden curriculum" within the classrooms of America was defined by McLaren

(2009, p. 75) as "the unintended consequences of the schooling process"; this curriculum

including "descriptions, discussions, and representations in textbooks, curriculum

materials, course content, and social relations embodied in classroom practices"

specifically worked to "benefit dominant groups and exclude subordinate ones"

(McLaren, 2009, p. 75). It becomes critical to "identify the structural and political

assumptions upon which the hidden curriculum rests and to attempt to change the

institutional arrangements of the classroom so as to offset the most undemocratic and

oppressive outcomes" (McLaren, 2009, p.76). This has tremendous implications

especially for teachers within their classrooms: Teachers must "not only be prepared to

educate whoever comes into their classrooms but also are prepared to deconstruct

institutional as well as their own White privilege and racism" (Blanchett, 2006, p. 27).

Overt racism, oppression, and other means of promoting social privilege or

aversive racism are often challenging to decode. According to some, aversive racism was

often transparent to those utilizing it in their social interactions and so, consequently,

became a challenging target to address (Constantine, 2007; Dovidio, Gaertner,

Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). More specifically, Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) stated:

> In most cases, White Americans tend to believe that minorities are doing better in
>
> life, that discrimination is on the decline, that racism is no longer a significant
>
> factor in the lives of people of color, and that equality has been achieved. More
>
> important, the majority of Whites do not view themselves as racist or capable of

racist behavior…Social psychological research tends to confirm the existence of unconscious racial biases in well-intentioned Whites. (p. 277)

The ways in which an individual views those from different racial backgrounds deserves critical examination that may be extremely uncomfortable on the parts of anyone choosing to engage in such a task. Stepping outside one's zone of comfort is often the best way to learn (Gale & Densmore, 2000). Rather than avoiding challenging conversations about race, a practice that often occurs as many are unwilling to engage in any form of praxis that might yield discomfort, race must begin to be specifically called to the forefront (Smith et al., 2007). This is a specifically important practice for teachers to engage in (Smith et al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

Students as well as adults must become more cognizant of the ways in which they engage in the interactions of life that leave the dominant ideology unchallenged. Smith et al. (2007) discussed the phenomenon of "racial priming" which they defined as the process of European-American children receiving various explicit and implicit messages that tell them they are "color-blind" when they in fact have extremely racialized views (p. 560). Americans must be "deliberate" in addressing these messages that even very young children receive, especially considering that European-American children receive so many of these by the time they turn 18 and move legally into adult society (Smith et al., 2007, p. 561). Further, according to some, the reinforcement of these harmful racial priming stereotypes disenabled students of color from succeeding, especially African-American males (Malveaux, 2006).

Ultimately, the fact remains that dominant society's America does not want to let go of the power that is in their possession, a power that people of color have never had (Solorzano et al., 2001). The dominant group continues to find ways to maintain privilege and remains committed to maintaining this privilege (Winant, 2000). Beginning to address this requires that society begins to listen and analyze racial priming messages being taught and understand the racial microaggressions that persist (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). It is imperative that the dismantling of these presumptions occurs since these stereotypes impact the development of all of society.

The "cruel hoax of American-styled racism" has pitted minority groups against each other and, consequently, encouraged the dominant group to believe in their privilege as a norm (Davis, 2007, p. 221). Oppression in America may never cease if, first and foremost, people of color are unable to come together enough to comment on the marginalization they encounter on a daily basis. When people of color marginalize each other, European-American society takes up the opinion that minority peoples are to blame for their own situation and hardships (Bell, 1992). American racism is pervasive and works in ways that actually pit groups seeking the same equal treatment against each other. Race becomes a tool since "it has been rendered meaningful by the actions and beliefs of the powerful, who retain the myth [that racial constructs hold] in order to protect their own political-economic interests" (Darder & Flores, 2009, p. 157). The structures that enable such to occur must be recognized and stopped. Bell (2002) stated: "If we challenge the rights in whiteness—the very essence of racism—as our forebears

challenged first slavery and then segregation, we, like they, can overcome the racial restraints of our time" (p. 334).

In Bell's work (2004), he proposed a "sardonic equation" for the way he understood "social physics of racial progress and retrenchment" to work: "Justice for Blacks vs. racism = racism" and "racism vs. obvious perceptions of White self-interest = justice for Blacks" (p. 59). CRT is a challenge to the dominant ideology in that is seeks to inspect American society carefully and find the ways in which many continue to promote hurtful racialized ideologies that inherently harm every member of society (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). Minority groups must become aware of and vocal about the ways they are overtly and covertly mistreated and European-Americans must make it their business to eradicate the thinking that "justice means 'just us'"(Gordon & Johnson, 2003, p. 430).

Use of interdisciplinary lenses. This particular tenet of CRT, according to Solorzano and Yosso (2001), promotes looking at race relationships side-by-side with other disciplinary approaches and themes such as gender. By looking at how race and gender intersect, a more complete, accurate representation of targeted populations can be shared. This interconnection with other factors specifically sheds more light on how African-American males develop their masculinity while also accounting for the racialized treatment they encounter. This "trans-disciplinary perspective" allows for the voice of African-American males to both communicate how their race has formed their identity and also shows how gender has done the same (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004, p. 17). Critically examining a variety of lenses from which African-American males help

form their own persona allows for the truest picture of American society (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). It allows for a more comprehensive analysis of societal dynamics and provides a glimpse at the way race and other factors such as gender play critical roles in the development of social constructions.

Hubbard (2005) found gender to be a predictor of academic success among the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program students she observed in a low-income, predominately African-American school. While many of the girls she observed found success within their academics, strong performing African-American males communicated their desire to become athletes or somehow infiltrate the professional sports world in the future. Hubbard (2005) also routinely noticed the boys receiving "negative attention" within the classroom and school setting for their academic endeavors and general behavior (p. 611).

One author found that African-American boys were the most likely to encounter "disidentification" with academics that increases as they navigate their way through primary and secondary school (Osborne, 2001, p. 50). Disidentification is defined by Osborne (1997) in his discussion as the following:

> Theoretically, students who are more identified with academics should be more motivated to succeed because their self-esteem is directly linked to academic performance. For these students, good performance should be rewarding and poor performance should be punishing. In contrast, students not identified with academics should experience lower motivation to succeed because there is no contingency between academic outcomes and self-esteem-good performance is

not rewarding, and poor performance is not punishing, leaving those who have

disidentified with no compelling incentives to expend effort in academic

endeavors. (p. 728)

In his study, Osborne found that of all subgroups examined including African-

American females, African-American males, European-American females, European-

American males, Latino females, and Latino males, the African-American male subgroup

had the most dramatic and significant decline in its correlation between self-esteem and

achievement scores from the 8th to the 12th grade (Osborne, 2001). Osborne also noted

that, as a positive, "while the seeds of disidentification are undoubtedly sown much

earlier [for African-American males], there is a long grace period within which we can

work to prevent disidentification" (p. 50).

In his study of one multiethnic high school setting, Conchas (2006) noted the

differences in social dynamics and development of African-American males versus

African-American females. The high school Conchas observed offered several academies

with various emphases including graphic arts and medicine. Many of the students within

these academies had student populations that were predominantly African-American,

Latino, and Vietnamese. Conchas (2006) observed that many African-American males in

the academies, despite their academic success, tended to want a future involving

becoming a professional despite their academic strengths; Conchas commented that these

academically strong young men were "no different from the general stereotype" (p. 56)

(i.e. the young men not a part of the specialized academies within the school). Further,

Conchas found that African-American females believed they had challenging obstacles to

47

overcome as a result of their gender and race; but generally, the African-American females believed themselves to be more independent and have better chances in life than African-American males. Some females explicitly stated they were more easily able to overcome adversity than their male African-American counterparts (Conchas, 2006).

Similarly, Riegle-Crumb (2006) found African-American males were much less likely to perform well in their advanced level mathematics courses. According to the study, African-American male students were less likely than all other groups of students, including their African-American female counterparts, to get good grades in algebra 2 or above and advance to classes past algebra 2 in general (Riegle-Crumb, 2006). Specifically, African-American males are less likely to acknowledge any feedback about their performance as a result of their academic strengths; this includes comments made by their teachers regarding their academic performance (Riegle-Crumb, 2006). Thus, Riegle-Crumb (2006) found that African-American males find academic work less fulfilling and rewarding than other groups, and they do not strongly identify with academics. This, however, may also show that being African-American and male means lower returns and rewards from academic performance (Riegle-Crumb, 2006).

Hubbard (2005) found that many of the young AVID men in her study stated the only reason for academic performance was to ensure college entrance so that a professional sports career could be attained. According to this research, for many of the African-American young men, doing well academically in high school seemed to be practice for maintaining athletic eligibility in college. In studies, female students tended to work together to enter college as a means of getting a good job and starting a positive

48

future. The females also seemed to be performing slightly better than their African-American male counterparts (Hubbard, 2005; Osborne, 2001; Riegle-Crumb, 2006). The gender differences that Hubbard observed showed the different motivations of both sexes within her study. The "gender gap cannot be solely understood as a product of school practices or peer pressure" (Hubbard, 2005, p. 616); many of the African-American female students commented that they felt very supported by their parents including those coming from single-parent homes. Although many females communicated they had a generally negative view of men, they had been made aware by others that they should not expect much support, assistance, etc. from the African-American young men they might marry (Hubbard, 2005).

Other researchers noted that these "racial and gender lines" (Solorzano et al., 2001, p. 71) created powerful dynamics within school settings. For African-American males, developing their identities became a prominent aspect of life. Weaver-Hightower (2003) stated:

> Masculinities coalesce around various subject positions. To phrase it more actively, individuals and social groups create and adapt versions of masculinity for their own uses with their own cultural frames…Not every boy, therefore, experiences societal relations of power in the same way. (p. 480)

Additionally, Weaver-Hightower (2003) added that researchers must "look at multiple locations and levels of power and discourse in an institution as complex as a school" (p. 481). Mature and accountable African-American university male students that are able to

reflect and articulate concerning their previous school experiences may be able to shed more light on such issues.

One powerful ethnographic examination of the African-American male masculinity formation was done by Ferguson (2000) within one California elementary school. Ferguson first stressed how media forces masculine trends and how these trends are often perpetuated by teachers, especially toward African-American students. According to Ferguson (2000), the "rap music and videos" that young men encountered strongly promoted the risks and benefits of being a male while simultaneously representing the "tragic realities of urban poverty" (p. 16). During the course of her study, Ferguson brought a 12 year old African-American male to the movies. While movie hopping and enjoying a variety of different films, Ferguson noted a variety of different images of masculinity that her young companion was being exposed to. In one particular film *My Girl*, the young male character tragically dies after performing an act of kindness for his young female friend, highlighting how masculinity can be "soft and gentle…but in the final analysis, being masculine in this way is also mortally dangerous" (p. 26). Other films watched included scenes about "tests of manhood", saving distraught females, "absent fathers", and "fight scenes that inscribe masculinity" (p. 26). Osborne (2001) commented:

> One thing that multicultural curricula have been relatively successful at doing is providing role models. Black males need to see that Black males can be successful in academic domains, that they can become scientists, engineers,

mathematicians, teachers, etc. The popular media are notoriously poor at allowing

these role models to receive widespread attention. (p. 53)

In Ferguson's (2000) study, the school observed was notorious for its use of the

"punishing room," a place where students were sent when they created a classroom

disturbance or their teacher requested they be disciplined (p.41). Within this setting

where the majority of the students were African-American males, Ferguson found

evidence of the young men being taught how to present themselves as men, how to speak

and at what pitch, how to organize their facial mannerisms in certain circumstances, and

what manners they should have. Ferguson also found that adult males on campus,

including the one that was in charge of the "punishing room" (p. 41), frequently "[did]

not hesitate to grab boys by the shoulder, by ears, or push and shove them [with] body

contact" (p. 43). As a result, young men within this school were taught to be rough and

that powerful bodily contact must be taken "in stride to handle situations independently

and to not get ruffled" by it (Ferguson, 2000, p. 43). In general, Ferguson noted: "the

school reads [African-American male] expression and display of masculine naughtiness

as a sign of an inherent vicious, insubordinate nature that as a threat to the order must be

controlled" (p. 86).

A particularly compelling component of Ferguson's (2000) ethnography involves

the three components of masculinity she found while observing the young African-

American males at their school. While fighting and power relationships were two of the

components, she named "heterosexual power" as the third (p. 173). One specific instance

of this display of such power came from a African-American eleven year-old male when

he was forced to write down his mistakes and issues with what he was being punished for. He wrote: "I will stop fucking 10 cent teachers and this five cent class. Fuck you! Ho! Ho! Yes Baby" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 173). The clear sexual aggression that this young man writes with denotes what he has learned regarding heterosexual power and masculinity. Specifically, he "allies himself through and with power as the school/teacher becomes 'female,' positioned as a sex object, as powerless, passive, infantilized" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 174).

Davis (2001), in his study of African-American male masculinity construction, found similar issues regarding sexual aggression and power. He found that many young men were held to high expectations, especially sexually, and that very often, males and females did not coexist "unless the friendship [could] be socially recognized as the precursor for a sexualized relationship" (p. 176). Davis (2001) also noted that some forms of masculinity are clearly unacceptable and that if young men do not fall into this prescribed African-American masculine system, they are frequently looked on as outcasts. He stated, "Black boys that dare to verbalize alternative views of masculinity and any aspect of the code in effect violate the masculine code" causing the young men to be "expelled from the confines and benefits of boy networks at the school" as a result of practicing what is constituted as "inappropriate masculinity" (p. 177).

Davis (2001) added that the feminine culture that encompasses the school experience is also a factor in the making of African-American masculinity. Since many classrooms in American society are predominantly under the control of European-American female teachers, students receive instruction and curriculum of this feminized

Eurocentric perspective (Davis, 2001). Tatum (2005) stressed the "feelings of invisibility" for African-American males as a result of this feminine culture and concluded that many African-American males can find few connections between the curriculum they receive and their own lives. Some of these young men, as Ferguson (2000) suggested, negotiated to identify the feminine culture and consequently their female teachers within it as "incompetent" (p. 41). As a result African-American young men looked elsewhere to learn about masculinity and simply find their schooling "superficial" (Tatum, 2005, p. 11).

Delpit (2002a) explicitly described the ways that the laundering of stereotypical ideas about African-American males occurs via the American media. She stated:

> We have not fully realized the extent to which media and general American belief systems have permeated the consciousness of African-American children. Many have internalized the beliefs of the larger society that they and people who look like them are less than the intellectual norm. From media portrayals of African-American criminals, to news broadcasts which ignore the positive models of African-American maleness, to a focus in schools on slavery rather than on the brilliance of the African intellectual legacy, children come to believe that there is nothing in their heritage to connect to schooling and academic success. (p. 46)

African-American men are marginalized not only as a result of their race but also as a result of their gender (Smith et al., 2007). According to Smith et al. (2007), this "gendered racism" continues to serve the dominant societal group and simultaneously

reproduces the oppression of African-American males within society (p. 563). Lynn (2001) noted:

> Because Black men are racialized and gendered subjects existing within a white supremacist and patriarchal context, it is important to situate their work and their lives within a critical race analysis that explores important connections between race and gender oppression. (p. 15)

Although the role of gender is certainly deserving of examination, race remains the most critical piece in understanding social injustice; "race continues to be significant in explaining inequity in the United States in that class- and gender-based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all of the differences (or variance) in school experience or performance" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009, p. 170)

Commitment to social justice. According to Bell (2002), "the ideology of whiteness continues to oppress whites as well as blacks" (p. 333). The movement toward the extermination of racial oppression for all social groups is the fourth major component of CRT (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). By discussing race and allowing for an open dialogue about issues of oppression, society may find ways to create a more just educational system that benefits students of all races. Within the current laws of the United States, some argue that discrimination may never be resolved. According to Crenshaw, less recent discourses regarding civil rights were "abstractions [that] blind people to the contingent nature of human existence" (1988, p. 10). However, perhaps with a more optimistic outlook for the codes that govern education, these laws will eventually be amended to the benefit of all of society.

Davis (2007) argued that a critical part of resolving issues of privilege was to engage in dialogue about the concerns faced and experienced within society surrounding racialized views. Davis (2007) stated that American society must additionally stop attributing minor successes regarding racial equality to one person, action, or event. A more collective dialogue in which everyone contributes is necessary as "it is only through this deconstruction that real change can occur" (Davis, 2007, p. 218). When students, educators, and all others within the educational communities of society fail to communicate about these issues of significance openly and honestly, they perform a disservice to themselves and each other.

Historically, some have commented on the methods European-Americans have used to continue to wield their privilege within the education system. For example, Duncan (2005) noted:

> White power interests used the considerable material and political resources that they had at their disposal to impede the academic advancement of Black children and youth in ways that all but guaranteed that racial progress in the U.S. would proceed with all deliberate speed. (p. 97)

Duncan (2005) added that the most fruitful way for educators to empathize with all students and more thoroughly understand different perceptions and perspectives as a result of race. Duncan (2005) asserted "we must rethink our pedagogy and test out what we know" (p. 103). Teachers become a critical force within this action plan as classroom facilitators. Hubbard and Datnow (2005) noted that "teachers [are] integral components of successful outcomes" especially in settings where all students can enjoy success (p.

128). This is true even beyond secondary educational settings. Roach (2007) interviewed a well-respected professor who discussed the advancements that African-American men are slowly starting to make within the college and university system. The professor noted: "My suspicion is that what works for African-American male students in terms of the kinds of support structures, early warning systems, and college bridge programs will work for all students" (Roach, 2007, p. 16). Solorzano (1992) similarly stated that finding structures early on in place that work to support students is the ideal way to ensure success for all.

The critical need to foster open-minded thinkers and more racially aware and cognizant individuals is eminent. Within the walls of America's schools, students must be encouraged to fight for socially just outcomes, even when it means vanquishing some of their own privileges within society as a result of their race. Faulty institutional structures have too long plagued the development of the American mind. For example, Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) noted the disparities between races in AP course offerings within high schools. As a consequence of more European-American students being given access to AP and college preparation classes within their secondary education, these students continue to develop their analytical skills leaving their African-American, Latino, and other minority group peers behind. This problem is further exacerbated by colleges and universities that place high significance on AP courses taken when considering admissions for their respective schools (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). This college entrance algorithm has for far too long served to keep students of color out of the post-secondary institutions of their choosing. These blatant forms of oppression within the

educational system must be altered to benefit all students. It is imperative that corrective measures are taken to deconstruct the fundamental issues causing these explicit forms of marginalization. Students of color that have successfully infiltrated the system of education in America must be heard.

Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) discussed the issues European-American counselors and their clients of color face when working within the confines of therapy sessions. Sue, Capodilupo, and his colleagues (2007) found that many European-American therapists often blamed clients of color for their own issues. Much of Sue, Capodilupo, et al.'s (2007) findings can be paralleled to the educational setting. When replacing the word "clinicians" in this work with the word "teachers" and "clients" with the word "students" (p. 283), their suggestions become:

> Education and training must aid White [teachers] to achieve the following: (a) increase their ability to identify racial microaggressions in general and in themselves in particular; (b) understand how racial microaggressions, including their own, detrimentally impact [students] of color; and (c) accept responsibility for taking corrective actions to overcome racial biases. (p. 283)

Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) further added that an improved awareness of racial microaggressions both in terms of coping mechanisms and responses is a beneficial quality for students of color to have as they enter into American society. One might also consider the benefits that European-American students might receive from an education about microaggresions and the privileges they possess as well.

Asante (1991) concurred "White children have been the victims of mono-culturally diseased curricula" (p. 175); he further discussed how teachers often teach subjects such as history solely via a Eurocentroic lens leaving out facets such as the stories of slaves, descriptions of the slave trade, and other viewpoints that may allow students to view history through the eyes of another. Such a rich history education that allows students to see history through multiple perspectives may change a student's ability to empathize and can possibly begin more critical thinking about the ways in which race impedes the general thinking in America. When all students are forced to deal with the horrors that some experienced within American history, they become more aware citizens and more ready to promote social change and deconstruct troublesome stereotypes. Asante (1991) states: "without an understanding of the historical experiences of African people, American children cannot make any real headway in addressing the problems of the present" (p. 177).

If American society cannot begin to challenge dominant group structures within the educational system, the social justice issues that persist will continue, arguably, to keep America from earning the full respect of others at the global level. If the United States wishes to be the world leader, it must clean up the issues of race that are present to enjoy such "moral superiority" (Bell, 2004, p. 83). What other countries see "jeopardizes the effective maintenance of our moral leadership of the free and democratic nations of the world" (Bell, 2004, p. 85,86). In order for America to bring about such a change, it is imperative that educators begin deconstructing the norms students bring with them into the educational setting. "We need to be aware of two ways that racial inequalities are

reproduced today. One is through institutional practices, and the other is through representations of racial differences" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 19). These issues can be amended if those within education make a firm commitment to address them within their everyday instruction at any and all academic levels.

Ultimately, social justice promotes knowledge of and for others. Fullan (2003) described social justice within education:

Moral purpose of the highest order is having a system where all students learn, the gap between high and low performance becomes greatly reduced, and what people learn enables them to be successful citizens and workers in a morally based knowledge society. (p. 29)

Hubbard and Datnow (2005) argued that the only way for society to create successful, responsible students is to increase awareness of institutional practices and thinking in an explicit way. Students must learn to question social constructions that demean views of other groups within society and they must be able to see American society through multiple perspectives. Students must be cognizant of issues related to social justice. According to some, "CRT recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society" (Tate, 1999, p. 257) and seeks more socially just outcomes. CRT provides a lens by which society may look at the ways dominant thinking has influenced disciplines and discourses commonly found in America (Tate, 1999). Tate (1999) urged that in order for American society to develop of moral integrity and become more socially just, it is imperative that research is conducted in ways that benefit all people, not just a select group.

Centrality of expert knowledge. The fifth and final tenet of CRT is centrality of expert knowledge that involves hearing the "lived experiences of students of color [that] are generally marginalize, if not silenced from educational discourses" (Delgado, 1991; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2). It is imperative that the experience of African-Americans, especially males, be brought to light as evidenced through their voice. A critical component of the methodology of CRT is documenting the accounts of those that are most marginalized as these voices lead to powerful narratives that will incite change (M. Baltadano, personal communication, August 6, 2008). "The goal of narrative in CRT is to encourage an ethics in scholarship that prompts a kind of multiple consciousness" (Duncan, 2005, p. 106) and this can only be brought to the forefront via voices of those marginalized to some extent within their educational career. Duncan (2005) further explained that it becomes incumbent upon the reader or listener of these narratives to decide whether the story is acceptable or should be rejected; stories from viewpoints other than the dominant group are often unimaginable to European-American people. This is a direct result of the power that European-American society possesses which in effect tends to influence if not mute the voices of marginalized groups attempting to tell their narratives (Duncan, 2005). According to Duncan (2005), some groups have not been given the same respect as others. The European-American researcher must be meticulous about the documentation of narratives of participants, especially when the participants are speaking of the oppression they have experienced.

Narrative inquiry and the fluidity of conversations led by the interviewees allow for the most full and telling stories to be told (Hermes, 1999). When Hermes (1999)

conducted research of one Native American group, she allowed participants to proofread

her work to ensure that she had captured their meanings correctly and gave her

participants access to her work process nearly every step of the way. In so doing, she was

able to powerfully capture the stories of her participants and greatly reduce her perceived

power as a researcher while within her research setting. The importance of storytelling is

tremendous as it allows for legal and school practice issues to be brought to light as they

are experienced by people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Storytelling is also a

powerful way of countering stories that traditional Eurocentric views have made to seem

to be the norm (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1999). CRT is able to do this "by

relying on the perspectives, experiences, and expertise of racialized peoples" (Lynn,

2001, p. 49) and opening a "receptive ear to the voices of students who have been

historically marginalized" (Thompson, 2002, p. xiii).

Stories and counterstories serve to promote social justice by allowing others to see

society through the experiences of others. They "open new windows into reality, showing

that there are possibilities for life other than the ones [currently being] live[d]" according

to Delagdo (1989, p. 2414). Additionally, Delgado (1989) noted, "stories do not try to

seize the body of received wisdom and use it against itself; [rather] stories attack and

subvert the very institutional logic of the system" (p. 2429). Through countering the

dominant group's discourse, stories and counterstories make way for social change. It is

imperative that the dominant group be exposed to the stories of those who are

marginalized. According to Delgado, "[The dominant group's] complacency—born of

comforting stories [embracing their privilege]—is a major stumbling block to racial

progress. Counterstories can attack that complacency" (1989, p. 2438).

Hearing the voices of those that are the most oppressed in society both empowers

those speaking and reminds America that racialized deficit thinking and stereotypes

remain alive and well in society today (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) identified six ways in

which people of color communicated the forms of "cultural wealth" they often experience

within American society. They are explained below:

1. aspirational wealth or having high goals despite many setbacks;

2. linguistic wealth or getting used to code switching;

3. familial wealth or holding a strong sense of family, "broad understanding of
   kinship" (p. 79);

4. social wealth or becoming resilient within communities or support systems

5. navigational wealth or developing coping mechanisms, giving strategies to
   deal with difficult circumstances;

6. resistance wealth or challenging the norm, teaching kids not to believe
   everything they hear in stereotypes about race

These forms of wealth and strengths that people of color contributed to society

must continue to be heard in order to correct the Eurocentric, privileged thinking that has

plagued America for far too long. "Stories of minorities are necessary to disrupt the

allochronic discources that inform racist inequalities in schools and society" as these

stories allow people to experience life through the eyes of others and develop more

cultural proficiency (Duncan, 2005, p. 101, 102). As Delgado (1989) noted:

Stories humanize us. They emphasize our differences in ways that can ultimately

bring us closer together. They allow is to see how the world looks from behind

someone else's spectacles. They challenge us to wipe off our own lenses and ask,

"Could I have been overlooking something all along?" (p. 2440)

It is imperative that narratives of culturally oppressed groups are told in order for all

society members to gain a more eclectic and encompassing sense of experiences. Stories

of those oppressed must be heard (Duncan, 2005).

For example, Constantine and Wang (2007) conducted a qualitative study

involving African-American employees and European-American employers. They

identified seven key microaggression themes involved in their participants' interactions

including European-American employers who "tended to minimize, dismiss, or avoid

discussing racial-cultural issues in supervision" (p. 146), made stereotypical assumptions

about African-American workers, and offered generally culturally insensitive treatment.

Additionally, Constantine and Wang (2007) generally found that African-American

employees found that "their supervisors seemed reluctant to provide feedback regarding

their clinical skills for fear of being seen as racist" (p. 149). The researchers finally made

note that the employees "expended considerable time and energy processing and coping

with microaggressions in the sessions [when they were observed] and their lingering after

effects" (Constantine & Wang, 2007, p. 150). This glimpse of the dynamic between

African-American workers and their European-American bosses may be similar to that

found within schools between African-American male students and their predominantly

European-American female teachers.

Tatum (2002) described two stories involving race relations in her life and her

critical reflection on those instances as a woman of color. After her son asked her how he

was considered "underrepresented" as an African-American student at school especially

in light of their middle to upper class socioeconomic standing, Tatum reflected and

shared some of her response with her son:

> Our class status provides many benefits but it does not protect my children from
>
> the relative absence of positive images of black men and women in the curriculum
>
> or in the media. It does not protect them from the assumptions others make about
>
> them solely on the basis of their skin color, reflected in women's nervous
>
> clutching of purses or the sounds of automatic door locks on cars as they pass by.
>
> It does not protect them from teachers who don't know their parents and who may
>
> make erroneous assumptions about their ability or potential as "troublemakers." It
>
> does not protect them from the real threat of a deadly encounter with police
>
> officers. It does not give them the benefit of the doubt that white skin so often
>
> conveys. (p. 218)

Tatum (2002) additionally told of a time when she once spoke at an elite eastern

university. After her speech to a group of students, she waited in the conference area

answering questions and chatting with those that wished to stay. One European-American

student told her how much he felt he identified with being African-American more than

he identified with being European-American. He attributed it to his many African-

American friends and their influence as well as the predominantly African-American

neighborhood he had grown up in. He also told Tatum how he had recently checked the

"black box" when he was asked for his identity in a recent survey. Tatum (2002) noted the inability of this student to critically reflect on his own privilege as a result of his race: "I resented his unwillingness to acknowledge the racial privilege that comes with it, whether he wants it or not. Choosing the "black box" does not change that" (p. 219).

One study reported such a situation of inequality that occurred involving several African-American female students within their secondary school setting. In Hubbard and Datnow's (2005) study of 30 high-achieving African-American male and female students, findings confirmed that the females were more likely to be resistant and, consequently, resilient within their educational setting when confronting unjust practices. A group of African-American females spoke up when they were punished during a tardy sweep for the same offense that a group of white females were not. Hubbard and Datnow (2005) report that this group of young women saw to it that issues of equality were addressed by the administration.

Malveaux (2002), an African-American woman, discussed how her home was broken into while she was living in Washington, D.C. The intruder was European-American and was carrying a screwdriver. Once Malveaux realized what was going on, she made enough noise to startle him and he left. She got a baseball bat and followed him home only to realize that he was one of her neighbors just a few doors down. When she called the police, they came and questioned her intruder who told them he had lost his way and was looking for his girlfriend. She was then asked to apologize to him for causing a scene and using a baseball bat. Malveaux (2002) reflected: "Need I ask whether two police officers would have engaged in police chitchat if a Black man had attempted

entry into a white woman's home?" (p. 104). Pitts (2002) specifically stated how he feels about being African-American in the United States:

> The result is that being Black in modern America is to feel the touch of hidden hands down upon you. You know they're there. Their effect is clear in government and university statistics documenting that, in terms of education, employment, housing, justice, health, and other quality-of-life indicators, people like you lag behind the nation as a whole. (p. 23)

Students have told many stories of how they have been marginalized and oppressed within their educational settings. Solorzano et al. (2001) reported a multitude of inequities experienced by African-American secondary students. Some African-American students reported that their teachers assumed they had cheated when they had done well on tests, were picked last by their other peers when making choices for academic groups conveying their stereotypical thinking that African-Americans are "just not technically smart," and articulated about teachers and classmates that "thought that the only reason Black students were getting into [the] universities was because of affirmative action" (Solorzano et al., 2001, p. 67). Another study found African-Americans had higher aspirations than European-American peers despite commonly held notions that African-Americans believe little in their future (Solorzano, 1992). These findings raise questions about factors that cause African-Americans, especially males, to become so disenfranchised with school as they progress further into their education years. Perhaps school does not become the only place where microaggressions are experienced.

Everyday situations also continue to illustrate the many ways in which people of color experience racial microaggressions. Dovidio et al. (2002) researched several situations in which African-Americans received poorer treatment within social settings. In one instance, Dovidio et al. found that a European-American person asking for assistance in public was far more likely to get a response than an African-American person. They also found that in hiring situations, when all candidates posted ambiguous job qualifications, European-American applicants were heavily more favored than African-Americans for each of the jobs inquired about (Dovidio et al., 2002). One story (Delgado, 1989) told of an African-American highly qualified professor that was not hired by an elite law school. When questioned about why the candidate was not hired, the European-American review board members responded with various excuses including his lack of experience despite the fact that he was currently teaching at another prestigious university. By "scrupulously avoid[ing] issues of blame or responsibility, race [was glossed over so that it] played no part in the candidate's rejection" Delgado noted (1989, p. 2422). His list of qualifications proved otherwise.

D. W. Sue, an Asian-American researcher and professor, discussed with his colleagues how during one business trip, he and his African-American associate boarded a plane and sat near the front of the plane where seating was based on first-come, first-serve (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). The plane began to get full and two European-American men came and also sat near the front of the plane later on. When seats became scarce, the flight attendant asked Sue and his African-American associate to move from their seats to the back to let more newcomers sit near the front and distribute the plane's

weight. Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) discussed his psychological dilemma in approaching the flight attendant and asking why others were not asked to move to the back of similar height and stature. He asked her why she chose the only people of color near the front to move to the back of the plane. While the flight attendant denied that her decision had been racially motivated, Sue made note of how subtle discrimination happened frequently (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). Microaggressions serve to make people of color oppressed on a constant basis; these microaggressions also continue to keep racial tensions unresolved, communicate mistrust, and create feelings of inferiority amongst those that are being spoken against. These perceptions are often best brought to light via the narratives of those that are being constantly oppressed.

The telling of partially fictional stories and counter-stories has also served as a powerful means of African-American's communicating the ways in which they perceive American society. For example, Smith et al. (2007) included a fictional story in their article about a well-liked European-American female professor who was attacked in a parking lot just prior to addressing a student group at her university. She initially reported that four African-American men were responsible, sending a community into hysterics over any African-American male spotted in the area or on campus. A series of racial stereotyping events landed several African-American honors students in jail and into detainment before a group of European-American fraternity brothers finally confessed to the crime. Smith et al. (2007) left the story unfinished as a means of promoting discussion as to such issues especially for students; they further commented, "oppressed

groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation" (p. 577).

Bell (1992) also wrote several partially fictional accounts of how African-Americans experience society. In one story, he discusses a continent called "Afroatlantica", a place where only African-American people can live since, by some natural phenomenon, they are the only people able to breathe there (p. 45). As African-Americans gain more enthusiasm to have their own continent and many prepare to start a new life there, suddenly the island begins to disappear until one day, it is completely gone. Bell (1992) asked "was Afroatlantica, after all, no more than a cruel hoax, Nature's seismic confirmation that African-Americans are preordained to their victimized, outcast state?" (p. 45). In another story, Bell listed the rules by which African-Americans are governed when working together or in the limelight. The fourth one he mentioned was:

> When a Black person or group makes a statement or takes an action that the
> White community or vocal components thereof deem "outrageous," the latter
> will actively recruit Blacks willing to refute the statement or condemn the action.
> Blacks who respond to the call for condemnation will receive super-standing
> status. Those blacks who refuse to be recruited will be interpreted as endorsing
> the statements and action and may suffer political and economic reprisals. (p.
> 118)

Microaggressions, as can often be clearly articulated best via stories, narratives, and first-hand accounts of those that experience them, serve to powerfully undermine the self-esteem of people of color and have potentially corrosive psychological effects

(Constantine & Wang, 2007). Often, the best way for the dominant group to become aware of the privilege they possess requires clear articulation of the ways in which racism plays a part of other people's lives and, in turn, their own. One study found that European-American college students became much more aware of racialized issues when they were exposed to them within their curriculum (Kerhahan & Davis, 2007). However, these researchers noted that it is often something that, outside of the educational setting, very few European-American people are willing to do. With continual exposure to multiple viewpoints, perhaps CRT methodology can help more in society to deconstruct issues involving race. Without all sides to the social structure of society, the research remains incomplete (Duncan, 2005). When minority groups are given a chance to tell their story, the resolution can be brought about so that the oppressor and the oppressed relationships can start to be resolved and mended; this is the only way that schools and American society can begin to become more informed about the ways race plays a part in their construction (Duncan, 2005). Delgado (1989) stated:

> Telling stories invests text with feeling, gives voice to those who were taught to hide emotions. Hearing stories invites hearers to participate, challenging their assumptions, jarring their complacency, lifting their spirits, lowering their defenses. Stories are useful tools for the underdog [i.e. non-dominant group member] because they invite the listener to suspend judgment, listen for the story's point, and test it against his or her own version of reality. This process is

essential in a pluralist society like [America], and it is a practical necessity for

underdogs: All movements for change must gain the support, or at least

understanding, of the dominant group, which is white. (p. 2440)

Capturing the voices of African-American males is one of the most effective ways to

expose microaggressions prevalent in society today. Without allowing for these voices to

be fully articulated, race issues will continue to be the sore that they have been

historically in American society.

Race and Education in American History

In the late 1800's, "segregation was the name, but domination was the game"

(Bell, 2004, p. 13). African-Americans were given the right to vote but were still often

limited in their right to exercise it; for example, in the state of New York, freed slaves

could only vote "if they met a discriminatory property qualification of $250" (Kluger,

1975, p. 38). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling created separate but equal schooling facilities

under the law for people of color and European-Americans despite struggles and tensions

still prevalent as a consequence of slavery's end just years beforehand. "The court

countenanced racial segregation only so long as the separate facilities were equal"

(Kluger, 1975, p. 134) but African-Americans continued to be extorted and education

continued to benefit European-Americans more than all other groups (Ladson-Billings,

2006). "Racial categorization" still occurred especially within the walls of America's

schools (Winant, 2000).

Through the late 1940's, just prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision,

educational institutions in American continued to show explicit signs of racial inequities.

For example, in 1950 in Clarendon County, South Carolina, very few school-aged

children went to school beyond the fourth grade (Kluger, 1975). In fact, up until

approximately 1950, it was estimated that nearly 35 percent of all African-Americans in

the county were illiterate. More overt forms of marginalization were experienced within

the educational spending agenda, an agenda not unlike many other counties in the country

at the time:

> In Clarendon County for the school year 1949-50, they spent $179 per white child
>
> in the public schools; for each black child, they spent $43…In Clarendon County,
>
> there were sixty-one Negro schools, more than half of them ramshackle or plain
>
> falling-down shanties that accommodated one or two teachers and their charges,
>
> and twelve schools for whites. The total value of the sixty-one Black schools
>
> attended by 6,531 pupils was officially listed as $194,575. The value of the white
>
> schools, attended by 2,375 youngsters, was put at $673,850. (p. 8)
>
> It was in 1954 and 1955 that the *Brown* decision was formally ruled upon and

schools were to be desegregated. However, despite the ruling, many states and schools

failed to comply with the law. According to Chapman (2006), "the complexities of

segregated housing and red-line districting in the north allowed northern cities to fly

under the federal radar much longer before school desegregation became a major court

issue there" (p. 69). A senator from a southern state was even noted as explicitly stating

that no school in his state would "abide by or obey this legislative decision by the

political court [without] great strife and turmoil" (Kluger, 1975, p. 710).

Bell (1980) proposed the principle of "interest-convergence" to explain why such legislation was passed in light of the plain fact that "it [was] clear that racial equality [was] not deemed legitimate by large segments of the American people, at least to the extent it threaten[ed] to impair the societal status of whites" (p. 523). Bell's "interest-convergence" principle encompassed the following:

> The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites. However, the fourteenth amendment, standing alone, will not authorize a judicial remedy providing effective racial equality for blacks where the remedy sought threatens the superior societal status of middle and upper class whites…Racial justice-or its appearance-may, from time to time, be counted among the interests deemed important by the courts and by society's policymakers. (p. 523)

In short, one ulterior motive for the passage of school desegregation was that European-Americans benefited as a consequence (Bell, 1980). It promoted local control which helped in the "maintenance of a status quo" (Bell, 1980, p. 527) and America now looked better to other countries. Delgado (1990) noted, "Legal racism" takes different forms; there are "poles of a continuum" where "many varieties fall in between" (p. 104). Ultimately, when racism is propagated through policy, "narratives and rules [are made] that invalidate or handicap Black claims" (Delgado, 1990, p. 105). According to Chapman (2006), "at a time when the United States wanted to expand its global interests with the support of European nations, the *Brown* decision demonstrated its supposed dedication to equity and equality of all U.S. citizens" (p. 72). Additionally, the southern

73

states would be forced to lessen their plantation and rural enterprises in favor of a more industrial twist that was encouraged by the government (Bell, 1980). Additionally, within the court system, plaintiffs would now be forced to show that the "result[s] of discriminatory actions [were] intentional" and prove harm was done in order to fight injustices within the educational system, a task which would now be much more challenging for people of color to prove (Bell, 1980, p. 527). Ultimately, "power is something that people fight to obtain and struggle to avoid giving up" (Delgado, 1990, p. 110).

However, this did not deter many Americans from fighting for their rights in light of unjust situations. For example, a lawsuit begun in the 1960's finally ended in 1997, when the court ruled that the Rockford school district had employed "de jure segregation practices" and the district was forced to reform their structures at all levels (Chapman, 2006, p. 70). Specifically, parents of students of color were able to prove that "segregated housing patterns [were used] to maintain the segregation that was initially beyond their control" and that the district's "rezoning [was done] in order to close west side schools and build more on the east side of the city", a move than would benefit the predominantly European-American area (Chapman, 2006, p. 75). In general, the district was found guilty on "11 counts of willful discrimination" that included other forms of marginalization including tracking and teacher assignments (Chapman, 2006, p. 77).

Manifestations of Race Issues Today

The fact remains today that "families of color have regularly been excluded from the decision-making mechanisms that should ensure that their children receive quality

education" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 7). Bell (2002) discussed the ways in which reforms serve to perpetuate the status quo for European-Americans; he stated "social reforms such as education, housing, etc. will benefit undeserving Blacks and so they are consequently seen as unnecessary or not passed" (p. 331). This must be at least acknowledged by society "to counter the insidious ways that American cultural messages and institutional policies and practices still benefit White people in educational and employment settings" (Tatum, 2002, p. 216). For many students of color, especially African-Americans, "special education has become a form of segregation from the mainstream" (Blanchett, 2006, p. 25), invoking a process that often gets students off the college track and struggling just to meet basic school requirements. Some note the continuum by which education has been used to keep African-American students from achieving. In the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009), the authors stated:

> In schooling, the absolute right to exclude was demonstrated initially by denying blacks access to schooling altogether. Later, it was demonstrated by the creation and maintenance of separate schools. More recently it has been demonstrated by white flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice. So complete is this exclusion that black students often come to the university in the role of intruders—who have been granted special permission to be there. (pp. 176 – 177)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) furthered their argument by defining the "model desegregation program" within American schools as "one that ensures Whites are happy (and do not leave the system altogether) regardless of whether African-American and

other students of color achieve and remain" (p. 174). Many families also have little choice as to which school to send their children as a result of financial situations and rigid district zoning lines. Well-known, powerful African-American figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks have schools in their name usually predominantly attended by students of color (Kozol, 2005). These schools tend to be run-down, dirty, and poorly organized. Of Martin Luther King High in New York, Kozol (2005) commented:

Segregated schools like Martin Luther King [in New York City] are often tense, disorderly, and socially unhappy places, and when episodes of student violence occur, the inclination of parents of white children to avoid such schools is obviously reinforced. Martin Luther King has had its share of violence across the years, and it was in the news again in 2002 when two students were the victims of a shooting in a hallway of the building on the anniversary of the day when Dr. King was born. The mayor of New York noted the irony of timing and some of the media reminded readers that the legacy of Dr. King had been one of peace. He had been a "man of peace," "preached peace," "taught about peace," as the city's newspapers observed. There was less reference to the "other" important legacy of Dr. King. Although some press accounts alluded to the unsuccessful efforts to attract white students to the school, no headlines pointed to the segregated status of the school as a dishonor to that portion of his legacy (p. 26, 27).

Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and McLaren (2003) noted that race is a social construction and must be looked on in terms of the power relationships that surround

various manifestations of its shape. McLaren (2009) described constructed knowledge in the following way:

> Knowledge acquired in school—or anywhere, for that matter—is never neutral or objective but is ordered and structured in particular ways; its emphasis and exclusions partake of a silent logic. Knowledge is a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relationships. (p. 63)

In his explanation of social constructs, McLaren (2009) further added, "knowledge (truth) is socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated" (p. 73). As a result of these constructs, racial categorizations are made and each category is perceived as different from the others. These "categories have power because they have been embedded in social meaning" and stereotypes slowly begin to develop (Tatum, 2002, p. 222). Further, Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and McLaren (2003) discussed the exclusive ways in which marginalization serves to promote racialized relations under capitalism. This becomes very apparent in the distrust that people of color have of the schools that educate their children (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Ogbu (2004, 1998) noted parents of students of color bring with them many histories that they impart on their children including struggles with unfair wages and dealing with a variety of forms of discrimination. Additionally, the looming recollection of slavery serves as "a constant reminder of what White America might do" (Bell, 1992, p. 12). The lack of trust that ensues does little to support students that are already at a disadvantage as a result of the ways in which the Eurocentric standard is held as a measure and promoted norm.

Even within elite schools of law in America, faculty and students have made note of the ways in which privilege of the dominant group plays a role in the academic community. Delgado (1989) stated:

Once every decade or so, a law school, imbued with crusading zeal, will bend the rules and hire a minority with credentials just short of Superman or Superwoman. And, when it does so, it will feel like an exception. The school will congratulate itself—it has lifted up one of the downtrodden. And, it will remind the new professor repeatedly how lucky he or she is to be here in this wonderful place. It will also make sure, through subtle or not-so-subtle means, that the students know so, too. (p. 2433)

Along a similar vein, in November of 2008, the citizens of the United States elected Barrack Obama president of the country, the first African-American ever to hold the position. McLaren (2009) stated once, "Why is the public still unlikely to vote for a woman or a Black for president?"(p. 64); despite the many that claimed American would never see this day or had sentiments similar to McLaren, Obama's election became a reality. Though for many, the election signaled hope, compassion, and the end of inequality in America, it is imperative to note the ways in which the supremacy of the dominant group may manifest itself in Obama's years as the president. Will President Obama be supported by his staff? Will President Obama be placed under heavy scrutiny for each and every decision he makes? At the time of this writing, it is too early to tell. A few things regarding his election are certain: (a) his appointment was "not the end of anything, but rather, a new beginning" (C. Valverde, personal communication, Nov. 4,

2008), and (b) it is crucial that American society remain cognizant of the ways in which the dominant group's privilege may show its face during Obama's leadership. The subtle ways in which the dominant group may turn the election of an African-American into a gain of their own are numerous, pervasive, and imminent. In Bell's (1980) discussion of "interest-convergence", the author noted, "true equality for blacks will require the surrender of race-granted privileges for whites" (p. 522).

Delgado (1990) stated, "There is no change from one era to another, but the net quantum of racism remains exactly the same, obeying a melancholy Law of Racial Thermodynamics: Racism is neither created nor destroyed" (p. 106). Some African-Americans speak about their perceptions of the way in which socially constructed racialized views are dismissed by the dominant group and the dominant group's use of their power to cover for the racism that is endemic in society. According to Pitts (2002), many in society treat racism as if "it does not exist" (p. 25). He went on to discuss the many ways in which racism is disguised or labeled as something else: "not racism, but fear of crime. Not racism, but concern for property values. Not racism, but…fill in the excuse" (p. 26). Similarly, Malveaux (2002) explained how the "Don't play the race card" stigma has affected her in her life. Each time she is confronted, as a woman of color, by an oppressive remark or action toward people of color, she feels that those within the dominant group would think less of her if she spoke up, she would and draw a critical look at any such discriminatory practices. Malveaux (2002) reflected, "Don't call attention to yourself—you pay a price for playing [the race card]. But don't we pay a price for not playing it" (p. 107).

African-American history is often left out of United States history classes, leaving students with a narrow view of their country's past (Asante, 1991). With the use of more Afrocentric pedagogy in the classroom, what Asante (1998) called "Afrocentricity" (p. 2), students would be able to begin to negotiate between the "intransigence of white privilege and the demands of African equality" (p. 41). More specifically,

> Without African agency as a key part of the theoretical frame, whites remain smug in their old habits of believing that Africans did not have civilization prior to contact with whites, that Africans never invented or created anything, that Africans are inferior beings to whites, and that the United States is solely a white project. As long as such beliefs persist, even if prejudice and overt discrimination decline, Africans remain victimized and subtly discriminated against because someone or some people do not in their own minds want to accept Africans as agents. (p. 41)

"It is in fact the ultimate example of European rationalism" when society uses measures of the dominant group and various social constructions to maintain their power and push the perspectives of people of color to the side ever so discreetly (Asante, 1988, p. 80). In fact, society is often "so enraptured by Eurocentric thought that they cannot see the entrapment" that ultimately limits everyone (Asante, 1988, p. 83). Bell (1980) noted that equality will only come when European-American society releases their privilege:

> Whites may agree in the abstract that blacks are citizens and are entitled to constitutional protection against racial discrimination, but few are willing to

recognize that racial segregation is much more than a series of quaint

customs that can be remedied effectively without altering the status of

whites. (p. 522)

African-American Masculinity

In the United States, males have many advantages over their female counterparts.

However, being African-American and male does not necessarily yield the same

advantages as it does for dominant group males. In 1991, there were 609,000 African-

American males in the prison system; of those, the recidivism rate was 85% (Edmonds et

al., 2000; Kunjufu, 1991). There are more African-American men in the prison system

than there are attending college and AIDS has become one of the top killers of African-

American young men (Kunjufu, Giovanni, Gates, West & Daniels, 1996). In the

secondary and primary grades, African-American male students make-up 37% of

suspended students and, while they make up 8.5% public school attendees, they represent

36% of the special education population (Kunjufu, 1991). Further, "only 38% of African-

American children have their fathers present and only 1.2% of African-American [male

adults] are teachers" (Kunjufu, 1991, p. 45). Kunjufu (1990a) stated: "In order to be an

African-American man, you have to see one, and an African-American boy can go

through grades [kindergarten through eighth] and not encounter one African-American

male teacher" (p. 160).

African-American male students report receiving less attention in class, harsher

punishments, and lower marks than the rest of their peers; in fact, more African-

American males are expelled than any other group (Pierre, 2007). Schools and

educational institutions are guilty of reinforcing troubling stereotypes of African-American males and perpetuating these stereotypes via actions that continue to inhibit this subgroup. According to Kunjufu (1990a),

> Teachers lower expectations on the basis of race, income, gender, and appearance of the child. A recent study in New Orleans indicated that 60 percent of the teachers did not believe that African-American male students would make it to college. (p. 161)

Others have criticized the traditional Eurocentric instruction that the students of America receive in their classrooms (Vann & Kunjufu, 1993). African-American students, in particular, receive a variety of images through traditional history lessons that serve to diminish their confidence and overall pride in their ancestry. Vann and Kunjufu (1993) noted: "In textbooks, African-American history begins with American slavery, instead of with the genesis of civilization in Africa. Therefore, African-American [males] are considered as descendants only of slaves, not of kings" (p. 491). Further, Vann and Kunjufu (1993) asked: "If you have been taught that your ancestors were illiterate, impoverished sharecroppers, how would you feel about yourself?" (p. 491).

Media influences. According to some, the media and entertainment have also been tremendously powerful in framing the image of the African-American male today (Ferber, 2007; Henry, 2002; Hunt, 2006; Lyden, 2008). A "very narrowly defined masculinity" has crept its way into society regarding African-American males in the past several decades (Henry, 2002, p. 119). "Hood movies" (e.g. "Boyz N the Hood") have defined black masculinity as "urban aesthetic, [having] a nihilistic attitude, and

[maintaining] an aggressive posturing" (Henry, 2002, p. 114). Another "blaxploitation" (Henry, 2002, p. 114) film, Shaft, portrays the "retrograde image" (Henry, 2002, p. 115) of the African-American male that is more consumed with "violence" and "seeking revenge" than "fighting racism and interrogating masculine stereotypes" (Henry, 2002, p. 118). Henry (2002) noted how threatening African-American males are portrayed in film, especially to each other, and calls the male that actor Samuel L. Jackson plays an "ego-tripping, homicidal misogynist" (p. 118). These films with such images of the African-American male are ubiquitous in American society and serve to further cement the mold by which African-American men are perceived by other groups.

The news media also play a strong role in the development of American society's views of the African-American male and the way in which African-American men may view themselves. On news broadcasts, stories of individuals in need of help at the hands of African-American men are numerous and African-American males are often depicted to be at fault for many crimes (Ferber, 2007). The media further stresses the coverage of African-American male athlete crimes. The stories of African-American professional athletes such as Michael Vick, Barry Bonds, and O.J. Simpson are plastered in newspapers, on sports broadcasts, and are even covered on national nightly news shows; a large number of the American public may be able to comment on one or all of these individuals' mishaps with the legal system (Ferber, 2007). However, the coverage of European-American athlete crime is minimal. Does American society hear as much about European-American professional football player Jared Allen who was recently arrested in 2008 for two incidences in three months of driving while intoxicated? Does society hear

83

about European-American professional baseball player Andy Pettite who confessed to using steroids in 2008 but is still currently playing the major league in 2009? Does society hear about European-American professional football player Bret Favre and his alcohol abuse and other issues with use of over-the-counter medications? Are the stories about the African-American male athletes that much more interesting? Or, is this society's way of keeping the African-American male down?

Ferber (2007) noted how African-American male athletes are almost always shown to be under "the control of whites" (p. 20). Specifically,

Although African-American men have been very successful in certain sports, they are rarely found in positions of power and control—as coaches or owners. Within the industry, they are largely under the control of white men. Success in the field of athletics does nothing to undermine the historical propensity to reduce Black men to their bodies. (p. 20)

When looking at the small number of African-American men in positions of power, it becomes increasingly evident that there must be some reason for this under-representation. Ferber (2007) argued that there is; "[The images of African-American men] reinforce the message that Black men are naturally aggressive, are violent, cannot succeed on their own, are not suited for professional careers, are not good fathers, and need to be controlled by white men" (p. 22). Kunjufu (1990b) continued: "We hear so much about the negative statistics concerning the African-American male. He is in the unenviable position of leading the nation in homicide, lung cancer, incarceration, unemployment, dropouts, suspensions, and alcoholism" (p. 21). As a result, society has

defined African-American men as "beasts who [have] to be controlled and tamed to be put into service" (Ferber, 2007, p. 15). The dominant society reassures its superiority by continuing to ensure that these images are upheld and prevalent in the news.

According to Hunt (2006), African-American males must earn their masculinity. The process where this occurs involves feeling isolated, alienated, and not being able to relish accomplishments (Hunt, 2006). This is a result of the themes that, according to Ferber (2007), permeate societal thinking about African-American males. The themes include: (a) "a continued emphasis on Black bodies and essential racial differences," (b) "a concern with taming and controlling Black males," (c) "inequity is depicted as a product of a deficient Black culture," and (d) "white supremacy, and white male superiority, are naturalized" (Ferber, 2007, p. 16). Within schools, within the media, and within nearly all aspects of societal communication of norms, African-American males are portrayed as "aggressive, hypersexual, threatening, and potentially violent" (Ferber, 2007, p. 16). These themes support the "new racism" of "colorblindness" which allows for a "culture of privilege…to naturalize inequality and preserve race, gender, and class privilege" (Ferber, 2007, p. 14).

An optimistic look toward the future. Some are more optimistic about the progress and future of the African-American male. On National Public Radio (NPR), Lyden (2008) discussed the new image that has surfaced in society of African-American males especially with the election of African-American President Obama. Lyden (2008) interviewed activist Bryon Hunt who discussed the idea that Obama brings to masculinity regarding the "power of mind" and that much of his power lies in his intellect and his

ability to articulate his ideas clearly. Hunt, in his interview with Lyden (2008), contrasted this with mainstream African-American male rap stars that emphasize masculinity through "physicality, intimidation techniques, control, [and] exploitation of women." He further stated his belief that it will be interesting to see the choices that open up for African-American men as a result of Obama's leadership.

Kunjufu (1990b) stated in his address to his African-American male readers: "These are perilous times, African-American man". According to Kunjufu (1990b), "You can choose to follow the street or you can choose to emulate…Martin Luther King, Jr. [and] Elijah Muhammad" (p. 23). Had Kunjufu written this later, he may well have included President Obama in his list of powerful African-American leaders. "We are at war to save the African-American male child" (Kunjufu, 1991, p. 45); with the crime statistics and statistics from within America's schools improving little for this subgroup, it becomes plainly apparent that societal thinking must change to start the revolution. Until then, one thing is certain: "there's something different about the way a Black man has to walk in the world" (Pierre, 2007, p. 43).

Identity Development and Emotional Well-Being

Much research has been conducted to look into the specific development that individuals encounter when forming their identity, specifically with regards to their ethnicity (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Phinney, 2005; Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Tse, 1999; Tse, 2000). The ethnic identity process, according to researchers such as Phinney and

Tse, involves several steps including two major developments in the process: exploration and commitment. According to Phinney et al. (2007), exploration involves the following:

> [Exploration includes] evidence of current or past efforts to learn about or gain understanding on the history, practices, and beliefs of the group and the implications of ethnic group membership, such as positive and negative aspects of one's group. Exploration involves individual efforts such as talking to people, reading, going to museums, attending cultural events, and taking classes. (p. 479)

Commitment, the other key factor of ethnic identity development, is defined by Phinney et al. (2007) as well: "[Commitment involves] clear feelings of belonging to one's ethnic group, together with positive attitudes and pride in the group. Commitment implies feeling comfortable with one's group, even though there may be awareness of problems associated with group membership (e.g. discrimination)" (p. 479). Phinney and Ong (2007) added, "exploration is important to the process [of ethnic identity development] because without it, one's commitment may be less secure and more subject to change with new experiences" (p. 272). Further, "a commitment, or sense of belonging, is perhaps the most important component of ethnic identity" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 272).

Phinney et al. (2007) reported the stages of ethnic identity to be the following: diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved (p. 479). These stages are described in more detail below in Table 2. Another ethnic identity researcher, Lucy Tse (1999) also

Table 2

Phinney et al.'s Stages of Ethnic Identity Development

Stage	Description of Stage
Diffuse	Absence of both exploration and commitment; shows little interest in or understanding of their ethnicity; have made little or no effort to learn more about it; little evidence of pride or a positive sense of belonging to the ethnic group.
Foreclosed	Commitment without exploration. Individuals express pride and a sense of belonging, but there is little or no evidence of having explored or questioned the meaning of this group membership for themselves. Rather, the views they hold reflect the opinions of parents or other authority figures.
Moratorium	Exploration without commitment. Individuals have engaged (or are engaging) in an effort to learn about and understand their ethnicity, but remain unclear about it or express ambivalence about belonging to the group.
Achieved	Presence of both exploration and commitment. Individuals have thought about and made an effort to understand the meaning and implications of their ethnic group membership for themselves, and have a clear sense of belonging to the group based on that understanding.[2]

[2] *Note. "*Positive Inter-group Attitudes: The role of ethnic identity," by J.S. Phinney, B. Jacoby, and C. Silva, 2007. International Journal of Behavioral Development, *31*(5), p. 478-490. Copyright 2007. Adapted from original article.

developed a series of similar stages for ethnic development. Her stages include ethnic

unawareness, ethnic ambivalence/evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity

incorporation (Tse, 1999, p. 122). Tse's stages of ethnic identity formation are

summarized in Table 3 below.

_____

Table 3
Tse's Stages of Ethnic Identity Development

_____

Stage	Description of Stage
Ethnic Unawareness	Ethnic minorities are unaware of their minority status, usually because of limited contact with other ethnic groups. This is typically a relatively short period that takes place before ethnic minorities attend school.
Ethnic Ambivalence/Evasion	This stage usually occurs in childhood and adolescence and is characterized by feelings of ambivalence toward the ethnic group. Ethnic minorities in this stage may distance themselves from their own group and adopt the norms and behaviors of the dominant group.
Ethnic Emergence	Ethnic minorities realize that joining the dominant group is not wholly possible (at least to the extent desired) and, therefore, an ineffective approach to achieving a better self-image. For this reason, they experiment with alternate group associations, and many look to the ethnic homeland group for acceptance.

Table 3 (continued)

Stage	Description of Stage
Ethnic Identity Incorporation	Ethnic minorities join the ethnic minority American group (e.g. Asian Americans, Chicanos) and resolve many of their ethnic identity conflicts.[3]

Phinney et al. (2007) and Tse's (1999) stages of ethnic identity development are both different and similar. In both, stage one that Phinney et al.(2007) called "diffuse" (p. 479) and Tse (1999) called "ethnic unawareness" (p.122), ethnic identity occurs generally when they individual is younger and involves the individual not realizing and not caring much about ethnicity at all. However, while Tse (1999) seemed to emphasize the complete lack of ethnic awareness toward ethnic identities, Phinney et al. (2007) implied that this stage involves the individual realizing some amount of ethnic differences among people of different ethnicities; however, the young individual does not care about or understand how to investigate these differences further. Phinney et al. (2007) also implied that a certain overall maturity may not have been attained and so consequently, other concerns have higher priority over ethnic identity matters.

In stage two that Phinney et al. (2007) called "foreclosed" (p. 479) and Tse (1999) called "ethnic ambivalence/evasion" (p.122), both sources stated that this level involves the individual coming to a realization about their own ethnic identity even if it is as

---

[3] *Note. "*Finding a Place to Be: Ethnic identity exploration of asian-americans," by L. Tse, 1999. Adolescence, *34*, p. 121-138. Copyright 1999. Adapted from original article.

simple as being able to proclaim "I am Asian-American" or "I am Latino." However, Phinney et al. (2007) emphasized that the individual may not be sure where their realization came from and may not know or see how to investigate their new-found realization further. Tse (1999), though, went one step further; not only has the individual realized their simple ethnic identity, but they have also come realize a dominant ethnicity and may have even realized whether or not they are a part of that dominant ethnic identity. At this time, some individuals may even want to try to become a part of the perceived dominant ethnic group they recognize (Tse, 1999).

Stage three that Phinney et al.(2007) called "moratorium" (p. 479) and Tse (1999) called "ethnic emergence" (p.122) involves the individual's turning more toward their own ethnic group and becoming a supporter of the ethnic group they are a part of. However, while Phinney et al. (2007) stated that the reason for this turn toward one's own group may have limited origins or underpinnings, Tse (1999) stated that the turn may come as a result of rejection from trying to enter the dominant group. Consequently, there may be some resentment built toward the dominant group at this time.

Despite any negative feelings that may linger during stage three of ethnic identity development, according to Tse (1999) and Phinney et al. (2007), all is slowly let go by stage four. In stage four that Phinney et al. (2007) called "achieved" (p. 479) and Tse (1999) called "ethnic identity incorporation" (p.122), the individual joins their ethnic group fully with specific reasoning and insight for doing so. Phinney et al. (2007) emphasized the pride in one's own ethnic identity that occurs at this stage while Tse

(1999) highlighted the quelling of any lingering negative tensions one may have had in the struggle to form one's ethnic identity.

The degree to which individuals are able to consider and deal with their own ethnic identity issues has profound implications for the individual's academic environment and social interaction world (Phinney, Cantu, et al., 1997; Phinney, Ferguson, et al., 1997; Phinney, 2005; Tse, 1999; Tse, 2000). According to Phinney, Cantu, et al. (1997), "ethnic identity, assessed as a broad construct including sense of belonging, positive attitudes, commitment, and involvement with one's group, was a significant predictor of self-esteem for African-American, Latino, and White adolescents in predominantly non-white schools" (p. 178). Phinney (2005) also commented: "the extent to which young people have explored and resolved issues related to their ethnic group membership is a factor in psychological well-being" (p. 190). Further, a study conducted in Los Angeles using schools with two predominant minority groups at each, as discussed in Phinney's (2005) work, found that individuals who "rated their own group more positively tended to give more positive ratings to members of [other groups]" (p. 965) and concluded that "ethnic identity increases with age" (p. 967). Thus, ethnic identity formation has a profound effect on educational outcomes and appears to become more developed as the individual matures.

African-American Male School Experiences

In public education, African-American students in the United States have performed below the levels of their non-African-American peers, especially at the secondary education level. This is reflective of American society's oppressive ideologies

that serve to keep minority populations, specifically African-American males, as second-class citizens. Only 40 years ago did some educational researchers began to finally discard cultural deficit discourses and embrace teacher education centered on learning more about cultural plurality in United States society (Foley, 1991). Yet, despite current efforts, Black students, especially males, continue to score at the bottom levels of achievement based on many scales including test scores, grades, and upper level course enrollment.

The narratives of African-American university male students, as well as their perceptions of the microaggressions present in their previous high school environment, are necessary in order to dismantle the oppressive discourses that inundate society today especially in American classrooms (Duncan, 2005). According to Duncan (2005), when these stories are allowed to be told, others can experience the world through the eyes of people of color and, thus, begin to correct their thinking and problematic ideologies. Some noted that particularly in schools with predominantly minority populations, students are often silenced via direct instruction and teacher-centered pedagogy (Foley, 1991; Kozol, 2005). Many students, including African-American males, find that their strengths are suppressed and unrewarded, and these students start to see the ways in which the larger society's hierarchy is being brought down to them in the classroom and configuring them into their assigned societal group (Foley, 1991). Gibson (2005) outlines several of the ways in which African-Americans and other students of color are often treated; the ways in which these factors align with educational environments are presented below.

Feelings of belonging. When African-American males are treated as if they are "stupid," "violent," and "unclean" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 6) by those in their educational environments and when the experiences of African-American men are pushed aside, lack of faith in the education system is a given result (Smith et al., 2007). As Gibson (2005) stated:

> Creating a sense of belonging or membership in the school community may be especially important for minority students, due both to the power differential that exists between themselves and members of the dominant society and due to the discontinuities that many minority students experience between home and school cultures (p. 596).

According to Gibson (2005), the alienation that students of color often experience in the school setting often leads to feelings of not belonging. Delpit (2002b) stated, "We [people of color] double-think every aspect of our beings—are we good enough to be accepted by the White world?" (p. 35). Teachers are often the promoters of these feelings.

Teacher relationships. Perhaps it is the fact that teachers in poorer, predominantly minority community schools get paid nearly $40,000 less per year than teachers in predominantly European-American schools that causes some discomfort and concern (Kozol, 2005). Gibson (2005) found that there can sometimes be underlying issues between students of color and teachers despite no seemingly apparent miscommunications. She found also, however, that when communication lines are open and when high expectations are a norm, student performance and relationships within the

classroom are healthy and beneficial toward all students' development. In one account, Delpit (2002b) discussed how her own daughter constantly returned home from her predominantly European-American school communicating feelings of inferiority as a result of her race. Neither her peers nor her teachers made her feel like she was a part of the group. The conditions that allow all students to feel safe and secure within their own skin must be a part of every curriculum in every classroom in America; "teachers have to create [these conditions] for their students" (Delpit, 2002b, p. 42). Tatum (2008) noted:

> Too often, the invisibility of blacks and other people of color has been the norm. The teacher who includes positive representations of children and adults of color signals his understanding of the importance of affirming the identities of all the children in the school. (p. 311)

Ladson-Billings (2002) also noted: "culturally relevant teaching is designed to help students move past a blaming the victim mentality and search for the structural and symbolic foundations on inequality and justice" (p. 111). "The antiracist teacher opens the door to productive dialogue" (Tatum, 2008, p. 312) and encourages all students to succeed.

Peer influences and relationships. Another pertinent component of African-American male education experiences are those that occur between these young men and their peers. According to Gibson (2005), peers can either serve as positive influences on each other or they can cause academic harm and bring sanctions to academic development. One must also keep in mind, as Stanton-Salazar (1997) stated, the "superficiality" that most high school students experience in addition to these peers

95

pressures (p. 19). Ogbu (1992), for example, stated that for African-American males, doing well in school is often looked down upon as "uncle-tomming" (Foster, 2004, p. 375), "acting White" (Gibson, 2005, p. 587; Ogbu, 1992, p. 10) and generally catering to what European-American society desires (Ford & Harris, 1997; Ogbu, 1992). Furthermore, Ogbu claimed some African-American males "turn the tables" on their European-American institutions and develop an oppositional stance toward education (Ogbu, 1992, p. 8). Thus, Ogbu said that African-American males must ultimately make the decision about which they find to be more important: their identity or their education (Ogbu, 1990).

Missed opportunities and connections. "Networking is a critical life line" and until African-American males are given this access to these "institutional agents" that promote growth and success, the achievement gap will persist (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 5). Language often plays a key role in creating conditions that do not allow students of color, especially African-Americans, to succeed. In fact, according to Delpit (2002a), language tells "exactly where in the social hierarchy a speaker should be assigned" (p. xx). Often, the terminology and speech patterns typically employed by African-Americans are seen as incorrect or an "inferior language" (Delpit, 2002a, p. xxi) causing stereotypes to be formed and, consequently, marginalization to occur. Those students that speak "proper" (Springer, 2002, p. 76) are those that are exposed to connections that will allow them to succeed. In Delpit's (2002b) work, she told a story of an African-American sales representative that went out to help a company that was considering buying her company's product. Despite the woman's expert knowledge in the product, her speech,

according to the potential buyer and client, was unacceptable; this caused the client to

reject everything she tried to explain. Teachers are often just as guilty for dismissing the

work of African-American children because it may not be communicated in a way that

the European-American teacher may understand. Schools are responsible for providing

this networking support, not just to select groups of students but to all students (Stanton-

Salazar & Spina, 2000). Teachers must also become more aware that networking for

success is a privilege they often unknowingly give to only select student groups.

The African-American Achievement Gap

African-American males are outperformed in almost all categories in schools

through the secondary level. Below are some of the statistics documenting such issues.

A promising beginning. The achievement gap for African-American students

does not start out as dramatically as the results show by the time secondary school is

reached. In the elementary grades, most African-American students perform well or are

showing encouraging signs of improvement. In 2003 and 2007, 27% and 39%,

respectively, of African-American fourth grade students in California scored at the

proficient or advanced level on their California Standards Test (CST), an exam that is

used by the state to measure each school's overall progress and performance (California

Department of Education, 2007; EdSource, 2008). While this is still considerably far

from California's overall fourth grade proficient and advanced percentage of 51%, the

12-point percentage increase from 2003 to 2007 nonetheless shows improvements are

being made. Additionally, according to the 2008 data presented by EdScource, two

predominantly African-American elementary schools in California posted exceptional

results. On their CST report, a report that shows the Academic Performance Index (API) as determined by an algorithm indicating performance in schools with the low score of 200 and a high of 1000, scores of 849 and 836 were produced by these schools while the state average for 2007 was 728 (California Department of Education, 2007). However, the vast majority of predominantly African-American schools in California have API scores ranging from 580 to 673. Reasons for this inequity have not been addressed although inadequate funding in predominantly minority schools has been a suggested cause for poor performance (Kozol, 2005).

The gateway courses and opportunities lost. The drop-off appears to dramatically increase in the secondary years of African-American youths' education. Nationally, in 2003, 61% of African-American eighth graders scored below grade level on their state examinations in mathematics (EdTrust, 2006). Reports also confirmed that in middle schools that were predominantly African-American (90% or more), 78% of teachers of math courses instruct outside their field of expertise (EdTrust, 2006). This is comparable to only 55% of middle school math teachers in schools with demographics of 10% or less African-American students (EdTrust, 2006). As a result, African-American students tend to get lower-quality instruction compared to their European-American counterparts.

For African-American students in California in 2007, despite early primary grade-level achievement, by 10th grade, the percentage of African-American students scoring proficient or advanced was 23% and, in 11th grade, only 22% (EdSource, 2008). Other groups such as European-American and Asian-American students consistently have 50%

or more of students scoring at grade level and even finish in 11th grade with 52% and 57%, respectively, scoring at their grade appropriate level (EdSource, 2008). Thus, despite the fact that African-American students in California were consistently behind their European-American and Asian-American peers in all grades, the gap widens as the grades increase. Clearly, African-American students are placed at a disadvantage as evidenced through the above mentioned test scores.

African-American males are particularly oppressed in their secondary mathematics education. When students enter into the secondary curriculum portion of their education, mathematics course sequencing becomes a critical part of getting ready for postsecondary school and other related opportunities. In terms of mathematics coursework taken in high school, research has shown that significant gains are made, on the individual level, in terms of college attendance and degree completion based on levels of advanced coursework taken (Adelman, 1999; Adelman, 2003). For all students as surveyed by Adelman (2003), 92.9% attend a university or other four-year college if their highest level of mathematics coursework was calculus. Following from this, 83.6% of those completing pre-calculus went to a university or other four-year college, 66.4% of those completing trigonometry, and 52.4% of those completing algebra 2. Additionally, of those completing calculus, 82.7% earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, followed by 74.9% of those completing pre-calculus, 62.1% of those completing trigonometry, and 40.3% of those completing algebra 2 (Adelman, 2003). For those whose highest mathematics course was geometry (assuming a traditional mathematics course sequence

of algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2, trigonometry, pre-calculus, and calculus), 55% earned no degree at all.

Specifically, for African-American students, research shows that mathematics coursework in high school most significantly indicates college attendance and degree completion than other variables such as overall GPA in high school or test scores (Adelman, 1999). According to Adelman (1999), of the African-American students that were surveyed, 45.1% earned a bachelor's degree. Of those, 72.6% were students that had completed mathematics coursework higher than algebra 2 in high school, which may include trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus. Test scores and GPA from high school did not have as significant of an impact on the percentage of African-American students completing their bachelor's degree. In fact, Adelman (1999) stated:

> Of all pre-college curricula, the highest level of mathematics one studies in secondary school has the strongest continuing influence on bachelor's degree completion. Finishing a course beyond the level of algebra 2 (for example, trigonometry or pre-calculus) more than doubles the odds that a student who enters postsecondary education will complete a bachelor's degree. (p. 18)

Riegle-Crumb (2006) also showed that for the many African-American males that fall short of their grade-level educational expectations, the failure is not their own but rather a larger systemic issue. According to her research, African-American students receiving an A or B in their first high school mathematics course do not receive the same rewards as their non-African-American peers (Riegle-Crumb, 2006). Essentially, "earning high grades does not have the same beneficial consequences for African

American males as it does for White males" (Riegle-Crumb, 2006, p. 114). Thus, African-American males are those "most severely restricted from getting ahead in school math" (Riegle-Crumb, 2006, p. 117) and, ultimately, in becoming college ready. African-American males in Riegle-Crumb's study were less likely to go on to successfully complete advanced level course work despite their previous performance in algebra 2. Riegle-Crumb was unable to determine why these trends occurred in her quantitative study. Some studies have also found that African-American males suffer from lower teacher expectations than other groups of students including their African-American female peers (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005).

More on the general secondary school decline. In 2007, 31% of African-American students at the secondary level scored proficient or advanced on their state exams (EdSource, 2008). African-American students were outperformed by Latinos (37%), European-Americans (63%), and Asian-Americans (77%). Additionally, less than 30% of African-American high school students in California in 2006 completed the 15 subject requirement courses (A-G courses) that make them eligible to apply to California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses (EdSource, 2008). One study found that nearly 20% of all African-American and Latino males fail their freshman year mathematics course (Riegle-Crumb, 2006). According to research done by Ogbu (1994), African-American high school students have grade point averages (GPA) almost one full point lower on average (1.92) than their European-American (2.74) and Asian-American (2.97) peers. More currently, in the 2006-07 school year in California, only 19.7% of African-American male 12th grade students completed the A-G

requirements compared to 30% of their African-American female counterparts, 34.2% of European-American males, and 55% of Asian-American males (California Department of Education, 2008a).

Even though African-American students attempt to enroll in college preparatory Advanced Placement (AP) classes at the secondary level, their population has been underrepresented in these college-level/college-preparatory courses (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). In Maryland in 2005, of the eligible 32,000 African-American 10th to 12th grade males in the state, only 1,229 attempted an AP examination (Wan, 2007). Once in these AP courses, African-American students score just above a score of 2 on average, a score not accepted by most colleges and is in fact the lowest average score of all subgroups in California (EdSource, 2008). Ultimately, high school graduation becomes questionable for many. In New York, while predominantly non-minority districts have 80% of their student populations graduating from high school in four years, predominantly African-American and Latino schools have 40% of their students graduate on time (Kozol, 2005). In California, in 2004, while 55% of African-American males graduated from high school, 75% of European-American males did; this disparity was particularly apparent in Oakland, California where the rates for European-American and African-American males graduating are 57% and 26%, respectively (Holzman, 2006).

More troubling is that many disadvantages affect African-American males more so than their African-American female counterparts. According to Conchas (2006), once the secondary years begin, it is critical that success is stressed as the "norm," especially to African-American male students (p. 60). As one study found, highly successful

African-American males in high school find themselves on the receiving end of negative attention from teachers, staff, and peers despite their academic accomplishments (Hubbard, 2005).

A gender issue also surfaces via the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education programs (Conchas, 2006; EdSource, 2008; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001). Conchas (2006) found that many teachers failed to push their African-American students as much as others. Others found African-American males were held down in a variety of ways, especially at predominantly European-American secondary schools (Duncan, 2005). Regardless, African-American students, especially males, consistently perform below most other subgroups in many categories. Acknowledgements of these community and school dynamics have done little to bridge the divide for these students. Perhaps it is time for a closer look into the fundamental realities practiced by society at large and their perception by African-American male students, as well as societal ideologies that may have kept all students from reaching their full potential.

The truth within the American educational system is simply that African-American males do not receive the same access as others and this unequal access will continue to promote unfair and unequal educational systems (Duncan, 2005). As Kalekin-Fishman (2004) noted: "Finding out how minorities are affected by alienation structured differentially, and how they are enticed into conditions of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normalless-ness, and self-estrangement or social isolation can supply guidelines to more effective schooling" (p. 428). In order to ascertain what these factors

may be, African-American males must be given the opportunity to express their opinions and tell the stories of their experiences during their educational careers, especially while they attended secondary school.

The Importance of Hearing African-American Male Voices

The persistence of oppression experienced by African-American males continues in all structures in society but most notably in America's schools (Bell, 1992). "It is time to 'get real' about race" and deconstruct the forces that promote inequality and subordination for African-American males in schools today (Bell, 1992, p. 5). The perceptions that African-American males have of their school experiences are shaped by what they perceive, which can best be exposed through telling the stories of these young men, recounting the structures and practices of their schools, and documenting their recollections of daily experiences within the educational environment. All too often, according to Crenshaw (1988), researchers and academics discuss "what is believed about Black Americans, not what Black Americans believe" (p. 11). Only when the voices of those that can provide expert testimony, African American males, are heard can the seemingly far-fetched dreams of an equal social society inch their way into reality.

Further, it is imperative that African-American adult males give their testimony. As Singley (2002) stated, it is crucial to involve participants in discussions about race who have "already demonstrated they would not tiptoe around the issue, but could stand up to the challenge to *stay focused on themselves, stay honest, and stay clear*" (p. xii). With more mature perspectives from those who have completed high school and can, in

hindsight, offer reflections on their secondary school experiences, more valuable information that can promote social justice may be put forward.

Via critical race theory, the stories of African-American post-secondary students can be heard in such a way as to inform concerning oppression and privilege as well as the ways in which it is endowed to certain groups, simply as a result of race, continues to inundate American society and, as a consequence, American schools. The voices of these men, using the methodology of portraiture to document the lives of experts, will demonstrate how the perceived "neutrality" (Bell, 1992, p. 6) that prevails in society as a result of less explicit forms of formal segregation and discrimination continues to plague progress toward equality for all (Crenshaw, 1988). Through a qualitative rationale, supported by critical race theory, African-American male post-secondary school student beliefs and perceptions can be fully and properly expressed.

African-American School Experiences Told by University Students

Looking back on experiences from the past as a collective whole can often bring clearer insight into the specific events being recalled. This is particularly the case for African-American university students retrospectively recounting experiences about high school. According to Card (2007), "college students have more skills to manage negative reactions to discussing their relationships" than do secondary school students. Further, "college students typically have considerable experience with answering questions and, consequently, may evidence greater endurance for interviews" (Catania, Gibson, Chitwood, & Coates, 1990, p. 348). Some groups, in particular, have had far less involvement in research studies to help improve their group's overall achievement. One

105

such group is African-American males: "Even less attention has been devoted to considering the dynamics among African-American male [post-secondary students], the population that is least retained among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in higher education" (Harper, 2006, p. 339).

Despite the paucity of focused study, African-American university males themselves may be best able to articulate their previous experiences especially when they are involved in social networks that provide support on their college campuses (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Harper, 2006). According to Harper (2006), "for African-American males, nowhere is oppression more commonplace than in schools" (p. 339). Further, he stated that those students who are achieving at high levels are often accused of "acting white" (Harper, 2006, p. 339) or as not representing themselves or their African-American counterparts as they should. Thus, "members of the [African-American university level] group consciously or unknowingly endorse the ideologies of the oppressor by communicating counterproductive and racist messages to other group members" (Harper, 2006, p. 338). Being involved in social organizations, however, seems to break this cycle for African-American male university students. One particular group that offers African-American males a support system while in college is the predominantly African-American fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi. "Kappa Alpha Psi's fundamental purpose is achievement" and all members "support each other and hold each other accountable" as one member expressed to researcher Harper (2006) in his study of eastern university African-American male students (p. 350). Harper's research also showed the link

between African-American male achievement at the collegiate level and student organization membership (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Harper, 2006).

Additionally, previous experiences articulated by successful university students (those performing well in school by not dropping out and staying off of academic probation at their particular university) provide valuable insight into the ways in which such success has been attained despite the odds. Lalas and Valle (2007) conducted a study in which university students from a Los Angeles area college were surveyed via journals to discuss their path to success. Lalas and Valle (2007) chose their predominantly minority group participants as a result of their "unique[ness]" in "stay[ing] in school and fight[ing] for their right to achieve a quality education" (p. 80). Lalas and Valle (2007) further stated:

> While it is equally important to hear the voices of less successful students, the examined experiences of the relatively successful participants in the current study provided the school contexts, personal attributes, and experiences the could facilitate their achievement in urban settings despite their low socioeconomic and/or ethnic minority backgrounds. (p. 80)

They also added, "critical implications could be gleaned from listening to the authentic voices of students using a social justice lens" (Lalas & Valle, 2007, pp. 75 – 76).

Retrospective Investigations

Card (2007) reviewed antipathetic relationships ("relationships marked by dislike on the part of one or both members" p. 33) using retrospective data from adults. In her study, she noted:

107

It is useful to retrospectively assess antipathetic relationships to garner information from the majority of individuals who have had antipathetic relationships at some point during their adolescence, rather than obtaining information from the minority of individuals involved in an antipathetic relationship at any one given time. (p. 36)

Card (2007) also stated that it is particularly advantageous to utilize a "retrospective method" within data collection since "it allows for the investigation of the temporal course of relationships" (p. 37). One study by Schroder, Carey, and Vanable (2003) also showed that "no significant discrepancies emerged" when looking at retrospective self-reports over varying time periods. Additionally, they found it best to have subjects retrieve information concerning the way they felt during particular time periods to begin with as opposed to recalling single events. "Longer time frames [such as the secondary school years] are likely to be more representative of an individual's behavior" (Schroder et al., 2003, p. 105).

Several other studies have utilized retrospective approaches to attain information from participants regarding specific events in their past. One study conducted by Maylor, Chater, and Brown (2001) involved 60 undergraduate students. The results from the study indicated that "functions obtained from retrieval over a day, week, and a year appear indistinguishable" (p. 166). Thus, "memory retrieval" functions the same "across different time scales" for retrospective memory (Maylor et al., 2001, p. 166). Another study by Catania et al. (1990) found that, particularly for "elements of recall," the "vividness and complexity of the behavior" being recalled influenced the information that

108

was articulated by participants (p. 344). However, other studies agreed that the time frame that participants are asked to recall is the most imperative component in gaining accurate recall information as well as the length of time participants are involved in the data collection phase of research. For example, Huston and Robins (1982) studied "relationship properties" (defined as "recurrent patterns of interpersonal or subjective events" p. 904) retrospectively and found that these patterns can only be established successfully via careful analysis by "aggregated [data] over a sufficient period of time" (p. 905). Huston and Robins (1982) stated: "sampling of events over a relatively brief period of time and then aggregating these events to index relationship properties may build a considerable random error" and results will be more accurate "by increasing the sheer quantity of time over which units of analysis are sampled" (p. 908). Cohen et al. (2005) also stated that using specific periods of time for participants to recall increases the accuracy and ability of participants to recall, especially when events are involving periods of time during adolescence. Specifically, Cohen, Kasen, Bifulco, Andrews & Gordon (2005) stated: "It is possible that validity may be harder to attain when adult narratives cover life periods of less dramatic developmental change than the transition from adolescence to adulthood" (p. 354). The period of time in which individuals attended secondary school might thus be a valuable time span to ask participants in a research study to recall, especially if participants are currently attending a university and have only been away from their secondary school for a few years.

  Limitations of retrospective investigations. According to Catania et al. (1990), the recall of events by study participants "is probably dependent on the length of the

recall period, the vividness of the event to be recalled, the difficulty involved in recalling past events, and the respondent's motivation for recalling past experiences" (p. 345). There are, however, other limitations that must be mentioned when dealing with retrospective methods. For example, "retrospective reports are subject to simple forgetting and "possible bias" (Cohen et al., 2005, p. 345). Schroder et al. (2003) noted the ways in which retrospective methods may involve specific errors:

> Memory error is affected by at least three factors that determine the demands of recall: (a) length of the reference interval, (b) level of measurement, and (c) frequency of the behavior being assessed. Furthermore, accurate responding is affected by individual limitations such as literacy skills. (p. 104)

Card (2007) added that retrospective data may be biased as a result of the "individual's distorted perceptions of relationships or willingness to report certain aspects of relationships" (p. 40) and that there may also be "distortion[s] of memories of relationships (especially when subsequent events occurring in a relationship alter perceptions of earlier stages of relationships)" (p. 41).

Addressing the limitations of retrospective investigations. Despite these limitations, researchers note the many ways in which these limitations can be both addressed and minimized to produce the most accurate results possible. Card (2007) discussed the advantages of retrospective approaches despite the possible issues:

> The distortions that may occur within one individual's retrospective reports can be viewed as subsequently meaningful, rather than as a methodological nuisance. Individuals are likely most directly affected by their own perceptions of

relationships, and the developmental effect of adolescent relationships may lie

most strongly in the memories of relationships that individuals carry with them

over time. (p. 41)

Catania et al. (1990) emphasized other aspects such as question order, word choice,

interview style, and anonymity. Specifically, their study suggested that when probing

participants about retrospective events, researchers must be careful to follow logically

their line of questioning based on what the participants discuss. They also stated that

word choice is a powerful way of reducing measurement error or error in recording the

accounts of participants. Researchers must be cognizant of participants' vernacular and

use it within the interview to ensure understanding by all parties and to reduce error in

reporting data (Catania et al., 1990). The study by Catania et al. also suggested that

"respondents are more likely to perceive face-to-face interviewers as credible" (p. 350) as

opposed to written or phone interviews and that "anonymity is a key element in

participation bias in studies assessing sensitive issues" (p. 355).

Huston and Robins (1982) suggested bias in retrospective studies can be reduced

by making a clear effort to "make demands on the memory [of participants] that are not

excessive" (p. 909). This may include not probing too deeply into specifics of particular

events or keeping interview sessions from being too lengthy. In order for Cohen et al.

(2005) to ensure that their data was as free from bias as possible, they used a test-retest

study to confirm their results after several years. Cohen et al. (2005) stated that it is

important:

To determine whether narratives carried out as much as three or four years later would continue to show the same monthly individual differences in developmental trend over this period that had been present in ratings of the original narratives. Because ratings were made blind to earlier narratives and ratings, high levels of test-retest agreement may be taken as evidence of validity of the method. (p. 346)

As a result of their retest, Cohen et al. (2005) confirmed that retrospective descriptions "were sufficiently similar in context" to the original testing several years prior, especially for participants near the age of 21 (p. 353). Another way of retesting earlier retrospective memories recorded of participants is to repeat previously asked questions to confirm that recalled events, feelings, and ideas have remained constant. This way, participants' recollections can be confirmed. Journaling may also allow for previously recorder retrospective data to be confirmed.

Further, no retrospective studies have been exclusively conducted to document African-American university male perspectives of high school experiences. Most retrospective studies that were found involved recounting sexual activities and relationship issues. However, using the guidance of these unrelated studies, some guidelines and suggestions have been given as to how to conduct such studies. By utilizing what has been done before using retrospective recollections, a more thorough and accurate study may be conducted.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the literature that discusses CRT as well as explicitly examining each of the components of CRT. Specifically, CRT literature has focused on the ways in which African-American males may be affected by race in their lives. Further, I have outlined the most current research as related to retrospective studies and their outcomes. The limitations of such studies have been mentioned as well as the ways in which researchers have addressed these issues. The chapter that follows outlines the complete methodological rationale and procedures used in the study including a background on portraiture.

CHAPTER THREE:METHODOLOGY

Being ethically responsible in conducting research entails capturing the full

essence of participants' responses, documents' contents, and situational components. This

chapter discusses the research methodology used (portraiture) in detail before moving on

to discuss how participants were chosen, the communities and schools the participants

came from, and other general data collection procedures used including safeguards

employed to protect participants. Near the end of the chapter, data analysis is discussed.

Before beginning further discussion of methodological procedures used within this study,

the research questions are restated:

1. How did African-American male university students experience racism within

   their secondary school setting?

2. How did the identified experiences affect the participants' identity

   development and emotional well-being?

My Agenda as the Principal Researcher

One fact is certain: the inquiry required for this study needed to be deep and

probing. It also needed to leave the ulterior motives of the researcher behind in

documenting the realities presented by data. While some research paradigms propose

experimentation, surveying, correlational studies, and rigorous qualitative methods, more

meaningful methodology may often lie within the simple power of inquiry (Hatch, 2002).

In order to ensure that such inquiry is obtained properly by the researcher, praxis

becomes an invaluable part of research. Specifically, the researcher must engage in

reflexivity, defined and explained by McMillan and Schumacher (2006) as "rigorous self-

scrutiny by the researcher throughout the entire process. The researcher's very act of posing difficult questions to himself or herself assumes that he or she cannot be neutral, objective, or detached" (p. 327).

Hybridity theory within research becomes an imperative part of responsible, ethical work, especially with CRT as the theoretical lens. Hybritiy, as related to research, is defined as "scholarship that depicts the education scholar as bicultural in terms of belonging to the world of research and the world of everyday experience" (Tate, 1999, p. 260). It entails showing how research conducted and results found can be beneficial to everyone, not just select groups; it allows the researcher to critically use results found within his or her everyday practice (Tate, 1999). Within the research that I conducted for this study, I was fully prepared to gather data and collect information until I had confirmed my findings via multiple interviews, observations, a focus group, and participant-optional journaling. The voices of African-American adult males were heard and carefully documented in hopes of making change within the American educational system and its schools.

It was also incumbent upon me to admit to my personal beliefs concerning research prior to beginning this study. Hatch (2002) discussed five research paradigms which researchers typically may categorize themselves into; they are positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, critical/feminist, and poststructuralist. Within the positivist paradigm, methodology often includes "experiments, quasi-experiments", and "correlational studies" (Hatch, 2002, p. 13). For the purposes of answering my research questions for this particular study, such means were unnecessary and were too rigid for

gaining the information I sought. In attempting to get a glimpse of the daily interactions that African-American males have had in interactions with, for example, peers and teachers coupled with perceptions of how their race ultimately plays a factor in these interactions, an experiment or survey was much too limiting. Additionally, the methodologies generally utilized by the positivist, constructivist, and post-structuralist paradigms do little in the way of intense praxis as required for such a complex topic as race relations in America. Any discussion of race or account of such must be carefully conducted via "transformative inquiry" that establishes the necessity for "critique that challenge[s] existing power structures and promote[s] resistance" (Hatch, 2002, p. 13). For this, qualitative methods were best.

The critical/feminist paradigm does this and fits securely within my belief set surrounding ontology, epistemology, and methodology used. Critical theorists believe that "the material world is made up of historically situated structures that have a real impact on the life chances of individuals" specifically when related to social class and race (Hatch, 2002, p. 16). I agree with McLaren (2009) when he stated that most facets of our lives including even simple phases such as childhood and adulthood are social constructions that deserve our attention. Some of society's constructions, especially related to race, are desperately in need of deconstruction as they produce stereotypical thinking and actions that ultimately do harm to the perceived "other" (Bell, 1992, p. 10). This links closely to my epistemological beliefs that assume, as suggested by Hatch (2002) that "knowledge is always mediated through the political positionings of the researcher" (p. 17). I must acknowledge, unlike some paradigms, that political forces

116

within my life take away from my ability to always be completely objective. Unconsciously, I came to the research with preconceptions about the urban high schools my participants attended, the university students I decided to have as my participants, and possibly even what I found. While I tried to dispel these preconceptions from my mind when I conducted this research, it cannot be denied that these ideas were still present if even in the very back of my thoughts.

The critical paradigm that used within my study also promoted the elements of hybridity theory and "dialogue between researchers and participants that can lead to social change that transforms the lives of the participants [as well as the researcher] in positive ways" (Hatch, 2002, p. 17). This study used qualitative research (roughly defined as "interactive, face-to-face research, which required a relatively extensive amount of time to systematically observe, interview, and record processes as they occur naturally") to ultimately document the ways in which African-American university males have experienced secondary school and their perspectives on their time there (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 340). As a critical theorist, I conducted a study that may be characterized in the following way according to Hatch (2002):

> Critical and feminist scholars produce critiques of the perceived material world in an effort to expose the structures that ensure the maintenance of control by those in power (e.g. capitalist economics for critical theorists). The object is to reveal for others the kinds and extent of oppression that are being experienced by those studied. With the exposure of oppression comes the call for awareness, resistance, solidarity, and revolutionary transformation. (p. 17)

As the researcher, I had to keep in mind my agenda and be cognizant of the ways in which it influenced my research. Peggy McIntosh (1990) clearly discussed her own critical self-reflection in her article concerning "white privilege" (p. 31). Though this privilege has been researched by several (Case, 2007; Kerhahan & Davis, 2007; Olson & Fazio, 2004), McIntosh (1990) described it best within her work. She stated:

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege…So I have begun an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks…My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us." (pp. 31 – 32)

In her work, McIntosh explicitly identified with her own privilege in terms of a series of inexplicit rules she can "count on" whenever she wishes (p. 31). She clearly discussed her own unconscious beliefs as she navigated her way through life and made mention of how she came to believe herself in some ways more "ideal" than others not in her European-

American group (p. 32). For McIntosh, her life prior to her understanding of her privilege was jaded by all the ways in which she and others in her group marginalized others without any sort of recognition or consciousness. She discussed later how, as a European-American, she felt that privileges had been distributed to her and that those privileges enabled her to have advantages over non- European-American individuals. She was filled with a sense of awareness regarding what she learned about her own privileges as a result of her race and discussed it openly in her writing; I tried to be as aware as she was while conducting my research.

My research looked at the narratives, perspectives, and daily exchanges that African-American university males recalled about their secondary experiences; this was undoubtedly influenced by my own privilege as a European-American. As a European-American female and teacher, I became more and more aware of the ways in which I found myself being given access, accountability, and responsibility as a result of my race. At the outset of my research, I was unsure of the proper ways to correct the possible subtle, unconscious ways in which I purported myself to be ahead of others as a result of my race. I believed, however, that by having a critical awareness of my meta-cognitive thinking about race, I would be better able to recognize when my own research methods, via actions such as questioning, probing, and interviewing, had turned into a communication tool of my privilege. Keeping this at the forefront of my mind while conducting research with participants that belong to another racial group, I sought to be as ethically responsible as I possibly could and encouraged participants to expose my lack of awareness to my own biases and narrow perceptions.

Through interviewing, journaling, and a focus group, my research sought to identify and document ways in which the views of society have been perceived, experienced, and even acted upon during the secondary school years of my African-American university participants. These men were asked to recall, using their more mature perspectives, how they were treated in high school and what their most vivid memories were. I sought to present the stories of these men in the hope that they will ultimately help society with the deconstruction of troublesome stereotypes that inhibit all people from learning, especially within secondary settings. Asante (1998) stated: "Transcendence, the quality of exceeding ordinary and literal experience, occurs in the African's response to nature and relationships, when personal and collective harmony is achieved" (p. 196). My research attempted to achieve this as its overarching goal for all students via careful documentation of the lived experiences of African-American males within their secondary educational environments. "The high levels of exclusion among Black children" within American education has far too long caused all students to suffer (Majors, 2001, p. 3). This study attempted to address such exclusion and to add dialogue to the continuing discourse regarding equity and equality in the educational institutions of the United States. Racism can be seen as both a system of oppression and privilege as it promotes the "rightness is whiteness" attitude so implicitly and explicitly forced into all facets of American culture (Leonardo, 2004, p. 484). It becomes incumbent upon researchers to document the voices of those that are often less heard as a result of their socially constructed place within society. "Stories (both fiction and nonfiction) can play an important role in scholarship" and can allow society to become more fully aware of

shortcomings in regards to its own racialized thinking (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006b, p. 62). Dixson and Rousseau (2006b) further stated:

> Because members of our society who have traditionally been silenced tell these stories, [counter-stories] serve to counteract the stories, or the grand narratives, of the dominant group and to challenge the status quo. Counter-stories can destroy the mindset that allows the dominant group to subordinate people of color. (p. 63)

This research was about uncovering the stories of African-American male secondary students that have been silenced, unheard, or have been remained untold. This study presents stories of young men that will hopefully allow others to see a glimpse, a portrait, of the days of their lives that were in their secondary education years. Their testimony illustrates the ways in which society has shaped their educational experiences. I sought to expose the ways in which the dominant societal group affected these young men and the ways these young men dealt with the messages they received and carried around with them during their secondary years in school. This research was not limited to the eyes and ears of the researcher community or the community where the research was conducted. This research is for all individuals committed to creating a more socially just educational system and, inherently, a more just and good society.

Portraiture: A Comprehensive and Cohesive Methodology

Because retrospective studies may involve some memory issues, a methodology that supports finding the value and relevance of stories told was especially appropriate. Lending itself nicely to retrospective studies as well as the critical paradigm outlined by Hatch (2002) is the portraiture method of data collection and analysis. According to

121

Featherstone (1989), portraiture is: "storytelling, close to ethnography, lively in its speech and capable of dealing with issues of quality and value. It is a conscious process of nesting stories in the dimensions of time and history and culture" (p. 376). Portraiture, a relatively new form of research collection and analysis, is vital to research surrounding race, especially pertaining to African-Americans. Through transformative inquiry, portraiture allows for all stories to be heard in a meaningful way that brings out the "goodness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 9) within every situation and promotes understanding of the whole circumstance being displayed. For African-American males, this scholarship could not have occurred at a better time. Featherstone (1989) cited the increasing number of "racist incidents" occurring in various educational settings and asserted that "[America] can ignore issues of race only by abandoning hope for democracy" (p. 371). Further, Featherstone (1989) noted:

> Apparently it is still hard for some Whites to accept the variety of the Black experience, and blaming the victim is a recurrent folk practice that often takes scholarly form. Even before Thomas Jefferson speculated that Blacks lack a sense of shame because they don't blush in a visible way, White Americans were treating Blacks as an invisible people. (p. 372)

Portraiture is a major contributor to the dismantling of troublesome stereotypes of people of color, especially African-Americans, since it allows for the complete picture and story of participants to unfold (Featherstone, 1989). Portraiture is a "new and path-breaking invention in the sense that it has been a purposeful and serious attempt to push the boundaries of interpretive inquiry, navigating borders typically separate disciplines,

purposes, and audiences in the social sciences" (p. 7). With the ways in which many African-American males disidentify themselves with academia (Osborne, 1997), exhibit belongingness and trust issues with those involved in their education (Gibson, 2005), and are often unrewarded for their strengths and skill sets (Foley, 1991), documenting each story of African-American males in its entirety becomes a fundamental step toward instigating change.

Portraiture allows for the portraitist to detail accounts of various settings that may never have been included otherwise. It does this while simultaneously revealing the "goodness" aspect of every situation (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 9). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997), "portraiture resists [the] tradition-laden effort to document failure" (p. 9) that is so often taken up by researchers who seek to find the root ideologies of groups of subjects and detail their pathological signs to collapse. Portraiture does not seek to give a "veneer of prettiness that hides the shortcuts, the laziness, and the superficiality," however that may seem to be indicative of proposing a "goodness" aspect to research (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9). Rather, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) noted:

> The portraitist does not impose her definition of "good" to the inquiry, or assume that there is a singular definition shared by all (this is not the case of the expert researcher defining the criteria of success or effectiveness and using that as the standard of judgment). Rather the portraitist believes that there are myriad ways in which goodness can be expressed and tries to identify and document the actors' perspectives. (p. 9)

Lawrence-Lightfoot is credited with developing portraiture. She and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) described portraiture as a research process that "requires careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the actors over a sustained period of time, then tracing and interpreting emergent themes, and the piecing together these themes into an aesthetic whole" (p. 12). Additionally, the authors delineated five facets that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) defined as being a part of the portraiture process: "context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole" (p. xvii). Each is described below.

Context. The researcher must always be focused on the "dimensions of the terrain" and all essential aspects of the setting (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 45). Institutions must be viewed in their relationship to others while always keeping in mind the ways in which the portraitist "sketch[es] herself into the context" (p. 50). It becomes imperative that the researcher not only identify fundamental and key aspects to the setting but that this must be done while the researcher is also contained in it. The researcher must be cognizant of how their presence reforms the context and how other relationships may become changed as a result of her inclusion. Specifically, documenting the content of the research setting and feelings involves "sketch[ing] the institutional culture and history" and making note of "signs and symbols in the physical environment that reflect the organizational priorities and goals" (p. 52).

Further, the portraitist must be aware of all changes and non-changes, loudness and silence, presence and non-presence within the settings in which she is actively participating. The portraitist "must scrutinize the environment for small and large

124

transformations" and note such idiosyncrasies as when an environment remains stagnant or changes when different people occupy space within it (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 57). "What gets left out is often as important as what gets included—the blank spaces, the silences, also shape the form of the story" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 10). Other important factors dealing with content collection and formation include gathering other documents including academic records and various school reports as well as providing a full and detailed context which includes historical, personal, and internal accounts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997).

Voice. The voice referred to here involves more than one; both the participants' voices and that of the portraitist are included in this facet of portraiture. The portraitist should be constantly questioning the meaning of observed actions, words, and details on a deeper level. The portraitist must note important details that may have been missing from previous records and narratives and must find ways to relate stories told within the context of history and the present culture (Featherstone, 1989). The researcher using portraiture must additionally note the ways in which body language and other such nonverbal communication form detail stories of their own, how mixed feelings must be noted and analyzed for their impartiality, and how patterns that are not immediately recognizable must be noted as they may lead to a more complete understanding of the research context and participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997).

The portraitist researcher must also be careful to maintain a critical eye on her own voice and the ways in which her own biases and history may blur the story being told. As McMillan and Schumacher (2006) discussed, the reflexivity involved in

qualitative research can often become uncomfortable for the researcher as it often forces the researcher to question him or herself and undergo self-scrutiny to ensure reliability and validity with the final output. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) noted that the portraiture process is particularly challenging when piecing together the final narrative as a result of the "vigilance to empirical description and aesthetic expression" coupled with a "careful scrutiny and modulation of voice" (p. 10). While the work of the portraitist will undoubtedly be grounded in the theoretical framework, it will also inherently be colored by the "prejudices and biases growing out of [the portraitist's] own life history" (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 95). However, ultimately, the final work of the portraitist will yield a study that is "deeply empirical, grounded in systematically collected data, skeptical questioning (of self and actors), and rigorous [in its] examination of bias" while simultaneously staying open to hear "discomforting evidence" (p. 85).

Relationships. Portraiture seeks the stories of participants that are often those not explicitly told. In trying to negotiate the relationships between individuals and institutional discourses within various settings, the portraitist "plays a more active listener role in the actor's storytelling" by "listening *for* a story rather than *to* a story" in the research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997, p. 120). The fluidity of all relationships within the setting, including those of the researcher must also be noted as well as the relationship boundaries that are negotiated or appear to have already been established (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997). The ever-changing and

126

evolving relationships that the researcher is able to uncover invariably become the central part of the research and help to accurately portray the setting observed.

In examining the relational aspects of a setting, the portraitist continues to bear in mind the aspects that are "good." Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) noted:

> Rather than focusing on the identification of weakness, we begin by asking what is happening here, what is working, and why? But in focusing on what works, on underscoring what is healthy and strong, we inevitably see the dark shadows of compromise, inhibition, and imperfection that distort the success and weaken the achievements. (p. 142)

These conventions uncovered within the relationships present within research settings allow for others to grow, especially those within educational arenas. "Teachers in our schools also need to know that, fundamentally, the work is moral and political, and that it goes on for a lifetime. Such a perspective nourishes the mind and keeps the spirit alive" (Featherstone, 1989, p. 373).

Emergent themes. The portraitist must begin by analyzing data via assessing common themes and verifying recurring symbols as the data analysis begins. As this research is conducted, the researcher must be prepared for changes within the original agenda as the presupposed theoretical ideas may be unfounded within the data collected. The process of coding becomes an intricate part of this process and must be an ongoing process for the portraitist (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997). Hatch (2002) more explicitly defined what is involved with the data analysis portion of portraiture, an

inductive analysis scheme. Specifically, Hatch (2002) outlined the process of inductive

analysis using the steps as outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Steps in Inductive Analysis

---

1. Read the data and identify frames of analysis

2. Create domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis

3. Identify salient domains, assign them a code, and put others aside

4. Reread data, refining salient domains; take note of where relationships are found

5. Decide if your domains are supported by the data and search data for examples that do

   not fit with or run counter to the relationships in your domains

6. Complete an analysis within domains

7. Search for themes across domains

8. Create a master outline expressing relationships within and among domains

9. Select data excerpts to support the elements of your outline[4]

Locating reoccurring themes via coding and the process of this inductive analysis can

become extremely challenging as a result of the researcher's previous knowledge and

theoretical framework. This tension must be recognized and dealt with as the researcher

---

[4] *Note.* "Doing Qualitative Research in Educational Settings," by J. A. Hatch, 2002. Albany, NY: State

University of New York Press.

struggles with the negotiations involved with coding. Further, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) stated:

> [The] desire for control and coherence and the actors' reality of incoherence and instability [must be managed]. The portraitist does not try to resolve this tension by choosing one side over the other. Rather, she works to maintain the tension and experience the dialectic between these two approaches to thematic development. (p. 192)

Once the coding aspects can be negotiated and coherently placed together in sequence, the final product can be extrapolated.

Aesthetic whole. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) wrote "there is much more to this business [of research in education] of creating portraits and telling stories. It is a quest for something missing from a good deal of popular scholarship in education and other realms" (p. 375). In order to put the content, voice, relationships, and emergent themes together in a cohesive way, the portraitist must determine how all the pieces of the stories that have emerged fit together. The finished product, what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) called the "aesthetic whole," must come together in "orderly, logical, and aesthetically consistent [in relation to its] parts" (p. 255). The finished product should "include the framing and sequencing of events and experiences and the articulation of a clear and consistent voice and perspective" (p. 256). Rather than leave the collected narratives open and without logical connections, the portraitist ends the stories being told by finding ways to highlight their strong points while simultaneously pulling all stories together.

Critique and Implications of Portraiture

While portraiture has certainly been gaining in popularity as in recent years, not all researchers find the agenda and logistics of portraiture without flaws. For example, English (2000) noted that because the readers of portraiture research "[do] not have access to the researcher's field notes, there is no basis to check whose story is being told" (p. 25). He added that if the researcher missed details, "the truth that emerges would only be a half-truth or three-quarters of the truth" (p. 23). However, portraiture does involve making note of all parts of a setting both explicit and implicit. Further, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) noted that it is imperative to consider all bits of observation and interview time as precious even within the silences; "[the portraitist] must anticipate the possibility that topics they consider relatively neutral may be experienced by the actors as emotionally charged and intrusive" (p. 140). With the relationships built between the portraitist and the participants, the process of collecting data and reporting it accurately within the final product becomes more reliable, valid, and relatively easy for the portraitist to do. English's (2000) same critique could be essentially given to all forms of empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative. While the qualitative researcher's agenda, theoretical perspectives, and history most certainly shape the aesthetic whole, one might also argue that quantitative researcher relying on correlations and other various numerical relationships does little to tell the full narrative of the topic being researched.

A second criticism English (2000) makes of Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture research method was "that there is only one truth to be discerned in the objective to

capture a single essence on the verbal canvas" (2000, p. 24). However, not only did

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) specifically state "there is never a single story told; many

could be told [and] the portraitist must be active in selecting the themes" (p. 10), but she

also clearly articulated how portraiture requires that the researcher be ready to hear all the

possible stories being told and that the researcher be "ready for moments of revelation,

insight, and vulnerability that suddenly transform the discourse and lead to unanticipated

rapport and intimacy" (1997, p. 139). Clearly, portraiture does not, in any way, attempt to

place limitation on the available data that is recounted in the aesthetic whole; rather, it

seeks to find ways to make use of it all through each information bit and the holistic

meaning.

Apparently disliking qualitative methods of research in general, English (2000)

also expressed concern over the "power relations between the researcher/portraitist and

the reader" and that the reader cannot access the raw data as reported by the portraitist (p.

22). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) noted: "the identity, character, and history of the

researcher are obviously critical to how he or she listens, selects, interprets, and

composes the story" (p. 11). However, she countered with the following:

> Even the most scrupulously "objective" investigations reveal the hand of the
>
> researcher in shaping the inquiry…Through rigorous procedures and
>
> methodological tools, the researcher tries to rid the work of personal bias that
>
> might distort or obscure the reality that he or she is recording. (p. 11)

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) commented that the researcher's "laboratory is not context free" (p. 42); it should be noted that every researcher's agenda, even the most ethically aware, is not context free either as it is not humanly possible.

Other insights on the use of portraiture. Encompassing all aspects of the situations being observed and researched is the essential methodological goal of portraiture. "Many [educational researchers] are looking for a way to speak of important matters in a human voice and to deal in a thoughtful and scholarly way with [the] commitments" and portraiture makes this a valid possibility (Featherstone, 1989, p. 375). Further, according to Featherstone (1989),

> We need a scholarship that can take voice and voices seriously. Our increasingly polyglot and multiracial society is sorely in need of teachers who know how to honor the stories of their students and to join them to wider narratives and larger meaning. We need to learn better how to build on these stories, and, when they clash with mainstream stories, how to explore the discrepancies, rather than assume pathology. (p. 378)

Data Collection

I attempted to utilize all facets of portraiture within this study. Portraiture allowed me to become an active participant within the educational spaces I observed while focusing on the "goodness" of the recollections, perceptions, and writings of the participants. Initially, a survey was going to be administered that would be analyzed quantitatively to illustrate the ways in which African-American males reflect on their perceptions of racialized agendas that may have occurred within their educational setting.

However, upon a more thorough examination of intended outcomes for this research, the narratives, stories, and observations of African-American males allowed for a more all-encompassing look at the lives these students had while in secondary school—a story that numbers along cannot tell. The aspect of "goodness" within portraiture is particularly important here since it allowed for participants' stories to be looked on in terms of what their stories can do to better society, not by utilizing deficit models. Additionally, since all participants had graduated from high school and were working on receiving a university degree, it was hoped that they would speak to their resiliency in the face of difficulties within their previous settings and highlight the positive that came from their good and bad experiences.

To begin, the university the participants attend has an office for African-American student services. The director of this office was contacted by myself via email and a meeting to discuss how participants would be selected was scheduled. Rather than select specific students from the African-American population at the university, the director suggested that she email every African-American student in her email contact database that was currently a junior, senior, or graduate student at the university. The director asked for me to type an email that asked for participants with the qualifications I requested. The email that was sent to the director and then forwarded to the African-American junior and senior students at the university with the request that only those who met the criteria as outlined in Table 5 below should respond. For the exact email that was sent to the university students, consult Appendix A.

Table 5
Criteria Mentioned for Perspective Participants

1. Male

2. Identify as African-American

3. 21-years or older

4. Attended an urban area high school prior to attending college

5. In good standing currently in terms of academics (2.0 or better)

I asked for students interested in participating in dissertation research regarding high school experiences who were willing to share their perspectives. For those who were interested, a meeting was arranged so that all those interested that contacted me could attend. The interested participants did not email the doctoral center assistant as directed in the email; rather, they chose to contact me directly and state their interest, explaining that they saw my contact information.

The director of the African-American student services also encouraged me to attend a bible study frequented by many, in her opinion, outstanding potential study participants including graduate and undergraduates. I attended the bible study and distributed flyers to all members in attendance including females. I encouraged females to get in touch with their male friends and tell them about the research. For a list of criteria mentioned on the flyer distributed, see Table 5 above.

The research conducted for this dissertation involved observations, interviews, a focus groups, and optional participant journaling. However, despite the many observations, dozens of interviews, and focus group that were held, the participants did

not use the journals that I provided them with. This is addressed further at the beginning of the next chapter. Thus, it was critical to utilize the tenets of portraiture to aid in reminding myself throughout the data collection phase to be flexible and to document all interactions and exchanges regardless of how I thought they might fit into the overall aesthetic whole. I am aware that the participants of this study had very different backgrounds, histories, and experiences and it was important for me to build a positive rapport and comfortable relationship with each. I had to be flexible with the comfort level and requests of my participants and give them the freedom to lead me through their stories in the ways they feel were important and necessary. In order to build a strong relationship with each participant, I needed to first share with them details about myself or allow them to ask questions about myself, my study, or other pertinent items in order for trust to be established. Finally, once the stories of the young men were told, confirmed, and triangulated using different means such as observations and a focus group, the rigorous task of coding and inductive data analysis began. The final documenting of the stories these young men told illuminated the ways in which race has played a role in their academic lives in a ubiquitous way.

The university community sampled. Los Angeles, California is an ever-changing place in terms of its demographics and community structure. African-American communities within Los Angeles are constantly evolving just as other communities, making it a challenge to select the best community in which to conduct research. Currently, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 Census, of the 39,315 people in Los Angeles zip code area of 90045, 6,580 (16.7%) are African-American as compared to

12.3% in the United States overall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Additionally, within Los Angeles, the median family income is $66,971 while approximately 652 families are below the poverty level. It should be noted that the Los Angeles area which falls within the 90045 zip code includes approximately seven miles across extending from Pershing Drive near the Los Angeles International Airport to La Cienega Boulevard on the east. From north to south, the region extends from the intersection of Hughes Way and Centinela Avenue to Imperial Avenue on the south (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The communities involved. The city where one participant's high school is located within Los Angeles County has a population of approximately 60,000 (City of Gardena, 2004). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 Census, in 2000, of the total 57,746 population, 18,372 identified as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). Additionally, 7,064 identified European-American, 15,010 identified as African-American, and 15,489 identified Asian. Other groups that were less represented in the city include American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and those identifying with more than one race.

In terms of socioeconomics, the median household income in Gardena in 2000 was $38,988 while the median family income was $44,906 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The majority of households were in the $50,000 to $74,999 range annually while the majority of families were in the same range as well. The majority of households contain four rooms and the majority of standing house structures were built between 1940 to 1989. The majority of homes range in value from $100,000 to $299,999. The median value of homes in this town in 2000 was $179,500.

The school that was attended in Gardena is called McIntyre High School. Students attending this school come from the surrounding areas such as Compton, Gardena, Carson, Huntington Park, Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Hawthorne. At the end of the 2007-2008 school year, McIntryre High School had an enrollment of 570 students. The demographic make-up of the school student population was the following: 55% African-American, 40% Latino, 3% Asian, 1% White, with the rest identified as other or multiple races. At the start of the 2008-2009 school year, the total enrollment was 615 students. The student demographics were the following: 50% African-American, 40% Latino, 3% Asian, 2% White, and the rest were identified as other or multiple races (L. McDorman, personal communication, November 24, 2008).

In terms of the staff at McIntyre, for the 2008-2009 school year, certified staff members on campus numbered 46. Of those, 60% identified as European-American, 30% identified as African-American, 5% identified as Latino, and the rest identified as other or multiple races. Of the 46 certified staff, 85% either have or are currently working on earning their master's degrees. Classrooms of all certified staff are equipped with one computer for the teacher. There are three computer labs, including within the library, and all classrooms have laptop/computer projectors for instructor and student presentations (L. McDorman, personal communication, November 24, 2008).

The participant that attended McIntyre High School did not however live in the Gardena area but rather lived in South Central Los Angeles' 90047 area zip code. In 2000, there were 47,105 people living in the 90047 area and an estimated 50,834 in 2007 (City-Data for 90047, 2009). Of those living in this area of Los Angeles, nearly 75%

were African-American followed by over 20% identified as Latino, and the remaining

population was made up of European-American and other ethnicities (City-Data for

90047, 2009). In 2007, the estimated median house/condo value in the 90047 area code

was $412,138 and the estimated median household income was $44,358 (City-Data for

90047, 2009).

Another participant also attended secondary school in the Los Angeles area. His

secondary school, Harriet Senior High School, is a public high school located in Los

Angeles' 90034 area code. According to 2008 STAR exam results, 45% of 9th graders

passed their exams with scores of proficient or advanced in their grade level followed by

42% of sophomores, and 45% of juniors (A. Harriet High School Profile, 2009). Harriet

was opened in 1931 and saw 3,119 students walk through its doors during the 2008-2009

academic school year (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009). The ethnic

breakdown for the 2008-2009 school years for Harriet High School was the following:

0.4% American Indian/Native Alaskan, 4.1% Asian, 0.9% Filipino, 0.3% Pacific

Islander, 30.4% African-American, 46.9% Latino, and 17.0% European-American (Los

Angeles Unified School District, 2009). In the year that the current participant graduated,

the 2004-2005 school year, the breakdown by ethnicity was the following: 0.5%

American Indian/Native Alaskan, 3.5% Asian, 1.0% Filipino, 0.4% Pacific Islander,

33.9% African-American, 41.5% Latino, and 19.3% European-American (Los Angeles

Unified School District, 2009). Further, in the 2007-2008 school year, 378 students were

classified as English-Language Learners, the attendance rate was 92.16% for students,

and the four-year graduation rate was 76.7% for all students (Los Angeles Unified School

District, 2009). For the academic year of 2004-2005 when the participant in this study graduated from Harriet High School, the attendance rate was 89.83% and the four-year graduation rate was 78.1% (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2009). Harriet High School also received Title I funding from the state government for educational services and had 1,398 students qualify for free lunch and 231 qualify for reduced lunch during the 2006-2007 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Despite attending a school in Los Angeles' 90034 area, the participant attending Harriet High School lived in Los Angeles' 90016 area code. While his high school is located north of the 10 Freeway between the freeway and Pico Boulevard, the two homes where he resides, those of his mother and father, are both south of the 10 Freeway between the freeway and Kenneth Hahn Recreation Park in Los Angeles. According to local city statisticians, there were 46,968 people in this zip code in 2000 and an estimated increase to 48,614 in 2007 (City-Data for 90016, 2009). The estimated median household income in 2007 was $37,872. The area is over 45% Latino and over 45% African-American according to ethnicity breakdown reports (City-Data for 90016, 2009). The remaining ethnicities include European-American, identify with multiple ethnicities, and Asian. The median home and condo value in the 90016 area code is $471,533 and median resident's age is 31.3 (City-Data for 90016, 2009).

Finally, the third participant in this study attended high school in Mississippi. The county where his high school is and where he resided is Whitmore County, which is one of Mississippi's 82 total counties (ePodunk County Profile, 2007). The median household income from 2000 was $20,636, the per capita personal income was $15,854. The

139

population is 30.5% European-American, 68.6% African-American with the remaining

ethnicities including American-Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian, Pacific Islander, Latino,

other, and two or more ethnicities identified (ePodunk County Profile, 2007). The

participant's high school has since been renamed to M.S.P High School where grades 8

through 12 are offered (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). In the 2006-2007

school year, 573 students were enrolled in M.S.P High School of which 570 qualified for

free lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). M.S.P. High School receives

Title I funds. In the 2006-2007 school year, 564 students of the total population were

African-American, 8 were European-American, and one was Latino (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2009). During the 2005-2006 school year, the average expenditure

per pupil in Mississippi's 149 districts was $8,205 whereas in California's 989 districts,

the expenditure was $12,509 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

At the present time, all participants are currently enrolled in Lotton University, a

private institution located in Los Angeles, California. Lotton was founded in 1911 and in

the 2008-2009 academic year, enrolled 5,509 undergraduates, 1,962 graduate students,

and 1,374 law students (Lotton University Facts, 2009). In the 2008-2009 academic year,

the average undergraduate tuition was $33,266 with room and board adding an additional

$11,808 (Lotton University Facts, 2009). Also in the 2008-2009 academic year, the

student population was comprised of the following ethnic breakdown: 1% American

Indian/Native Alaskan, 8% African-American, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Latino,

56% European-American, and 2% unknown or declined to state (Lotton University Facts,

2009).

Lotton University is located in the 90045 area zip code. The area's ethnic breakdown is predominantly European-Americans with over 50% of the zip code's population (City-Data for 90045, 2009). African-Americans and Latinos make up the next largest groups in the area followed by Asians and other ethnicities that make up small percentages of the total (City-Data for 90045, 2009). In 2007 in the 90045 area zip code, the estimated median house/condo value was $1,012,728 whereas the estimated median household income was $73,671 (City-Data for 90045, 2009).

The student participants. Attending a post-secondary institution requires students to maintain academically eligibility with grades above 2.0 (C). However, grades do not necessarily correlate with the skill with which students articulate their ideas and feelings. According to Harper (2006) and Harper and Quaye (2007), when African-American male post-secondary students have more social networking and peer support, they are better able to express themselves. Thus, these students with constant support and peer interaction opportunities were able to articulate their experiences more fully than younger undergraduate students.

The participants were contacted if they responded to the email sent out via the director of the office of African-American student services at the university they attended; once they responded, they were further considered if they attended a meeting with me that was face-to-face. They also had to communicate, once meeting with me face-to-face, that they were willing to share their secondary school experiences and perspectives in retrospect. As a result of their ability to speak in hindsight about their academic past and what has led them to their current standing, portraiture was given

141

further strength and potential to emphasize, as it stresses, the "good" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 9). These students provided the best details about the ways in which they, as African-American males, overcame adversity in order to become the successful students they currently are. Portraiture requests that "goodness" of narratives be emphasized; having participants that have been resilient lent itself nicely to portraiture as a methodology and the goal I was trying to be achieved through its use.

Including African-American male participants that did not attend college or university after high school may leave less room for positive responses as a result of extenuating life circumstances that may have also played a role with such individuals not attending post-secondary school. Additionally, students currently attending secondary school are unable to give a holistic look at their entire secondary experience since their experience has not been fully completed yet. Thus, the retrospective view provides more reflective and meaningful responses.

The participants that were selected for this study not only volunteered to participate, but also knew, as indicated on the informed consent form (see Appendix B), that there would be no compensation for their time. They were simply willing to share their expert testimony, within the context of this research, as to how their secondary school experiences and relationships helped to form their perceptions.

This study documents in detail the voices of the African-American male post secondary students selected regarding their perceptions of their academic environment and possibly racialized experiences while they were attending secondary schools. Since this was the case, there were specific criteria in place for deciding which students would

become a part of the participant group as well as a determination of the number of students to be sampled. Since a large amount of data needed to be collected for each participant, I selected three participants that fit within the specified criteria (see Table 5 and/or Appendix A). This was as opposed to selecting a larger number of students and, in turn, collecting less depth in terms of data due to overextending and trying to observe and interview a larger sample. Keeping the sample size small allowed for more one-on-one time with interviews, observations, and the focus group that were conducted in greater depth and produced more meaningful data.

After the prospective participants contacted me and I gained consent from the Institutional Review Board of the university, a meeting was arranged via email with each participant to meet at the university. At the meeting, prospective participants were asked to verify that they did meet all specified criteria (see Table 5 and/or Appendix A). Once participants confirmed this, I read the consent form as they read it for themselves. They each asked a few questions regarding length of the study and postponing interviews if they had something come up. After I discussed these details with them as outlined in the consent form, all participants signed and were ready to begin.

The informed consent form had been previously approved through the Institutional Review Board. Each participant approved of all information as detailed in the informed consent form by giving his or her signature. This consent form was explained orally to each participant prior to each participant signing it. Within the informed consent document, potential participants were made aware of the following: (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the potential risks of the study, (c) the potential benefits the

143

study may bring, (d) the alterations that they may request at any time during the research protocol, (e) the confidentiality of their responses, (f) the contact information of those that may want to correspond with at any time regarding their rights and the nature of the research, and (g) the ability to withdraw or ask for reduced participation at any time. Each of the above items is outlined in full in Appendix B.

This study involved three participants. Although the original intention was to select a maximum of seven participants, only three individuals met all five of the requirements, as specified in Table 5, and also agreed to do a multitude of interviews throughout the course of several months without any compensation. As noted previously, the director of the Office of Black Student Services (OBSS) helped me to recruit the participants. She emailed the entire African-American student body at Lotton once detailing what my study was about and giving my contact information. After only one participant was recruited this way, she re-emailed a select group of approximately 100 African-American male students on campus that she personally recommended for the study two weeks after she sent out her first email. She also encouraged me to pass out information cards to as many African-American students as I could on campus as well as to attend bible studies on campus with predominantly African-American members. I attended two bible study meetings and walked around campus more than three times distributing information cards during peak passing period times. I distributed over 200 information cards on campus. These cards detailed the participant requirements and gave my contact information as well as brief description about the study.

I initially had eight men to sign up. We met one evening in a common meeting area on campus. However, when I asked each of the men to confirm that they met all the requirements for the study, all but one was eliminated as a result of their ages. I was able to retain one participant, Noah, who promptly contacted several of his friends who were African-American who he believed would be old enough to participate. One of his friends, Joseph, agreed to meet with me; all the others Noah contacted said they were "too busy" or were simply not interested in getting involved.

I was also contacted by two graduate students after the director of the OBSS sent out her second email request to specific members of the African-American male community on Lotton's campus. One was able to participate (Peter) and met all the requirements of the study and agreed to all items outlined in the informed consent form. The other potential candidate I met with, however, refused to be audio-taped during interviews, focus groups, and observations. As a result, I had to eliminate this individual from participating in my study since I wanted to ensure accuracy in the narratives and details given by my participants word-for-word. Capturing each detail with perfect accuracy would have become too challenging without the assistance of audio-taped transcripts. This left me with three participants in total from Lotton university that (a) volunteered to be a part of the study without compensation and that (b) met all requirements to be a participant in the study (as outlined in Table 5). No other students from other universities were sought as a result of time requirements, convenience, and my own financial circumstances at the time this study was conducted.

As noted previously, I have changed all the names of the participants in this study. The first participant selected was Noah Bernard. He attended high school in an urban area and, at the time of the study, was in his third year of his undergraduate coursework in business at Lotton. He was the first to respond to both the email sent out by the director of the Office of Black Student Services at Lotton, and we also personally communicated face-to-face at a bible study held on Lotton's campus. Noah was selected because he was male and identified as African-American. He was also 21 years of age at the time of the study and had attended high school on the Los Angeles area. Further, in communicating with his professors as well as his showing me his current student status online, it was confirmed that he had well over a 2.0 academically. Finally, after hearing all about the study and reviewing the informed consent form with me prior to the start of the study, Noah was very much willing to participate, even without any compensation.

The second participant selected was Joseph Wyatt-Gomez. He attended high school in an urban area and was also in his third year in undergraduate studies related to liberal studies at Lotton University at the time the study was conducted. He responded to me via email regarding being involved in the study. Joseph was selected because he was male and identified as African-American. He was 21 years old at the start of the study and had his 22nd birthday in July while the study was still in progress. He attended high school in the Los Angeles area and informed me that he was in good standing academically. This was confirmed by his involvement in the resident assistant program (RA) on campus; individuals involved must have excellent academic standing to

participate. Like Noah, Joseph listened to every detail in the informed consent form and was enthusiastic about being involved as a participant.

The third participant selected was Peter Hansen. He attended high school in an urban setting and was in his first year of a graduate degree at Lotton in teacher education when the study was conducted. He was the third person to contact me via email regarding the study after the director of the Office of Black Student Services sent out the email to the African-American men she recommended. Peter was selected because he was male and identified as African-American. He was also over the age of 21 years old at the time the study was conducted and attended high school in an urban setting. He verbally communicated that he was in excellent academic standing at Lotton (above a 2.0) with his graduate studies in teacher education. When I described the study to Peter and went over the informed consent form with him, he was very intrigued and happy to be a participant.

Purpose of the study. Participants were made explicitly aware that their expressed actions, words, and other forms of communication would be used to document the ways in which their views expressed their high school settings and experiences. By formally noting the ways that interactions, exchanges, and other various means of discourse were communicated through the eyes of the participants, a more comprehensive view of how race plays a part in the lives of these students came into focus. Ultimately, with this increased clarity of experience within the educational setting for these young men, educators and students alike may gain heightened clarity about the ways in which some

students may be marginalized. As a result of this awareness or newfound clarity, all students will benefit socially and academically.

   Potential risks of the study. Although risks were expected to be minimal, there was a possibility of some social and psychological risks. Psychological risks may have involved feelings of anxiety, sadness, regret, and/or distress as a result of questioning that may evoke such feelings. However, protections to dismantle or at least minimize these psychological risks included the following: (a) the ability of the participant to withdraw from the study at any time, (b) the ability of the participant to limit his participation at any time, (c) the access to psychological support from the researcher at any time and/or from counseling service provided by the researcher at the request of the participant(s), and (d) the protocol which involves a thorough debriefing as well as a review of the researcher's perceived findings to ensure clarity, correctness, and accuracy. Additionally, participants were given several contacts if at any time they felt the need to communicate their questions or concerns with others regarding the nature of the research study they were participating in.

   Social risks included participants being ostracized by peers for being a part of a study conducted on campus. Students could have been unfairly stereotyped or judged by others as a result of their participation. Students could also begin to perceive themselves differently when being called on to add the aspect of participant to their many perceived identities within their typical educational setting, despite the retrospective character of their recollections. To guard against these social risks, confidentiality of all student information and data collected was observed unless the participant specified otherwise.

Participants' names were never used, unless participants specify otherwise, and all data

collected was always done efficiently and stored in a secure place. Further, participants

could have requested when and where interviews would take place. Participants could

have requested not to be interviewed in any setting or at any time in which they do not

feel psychologically or socially comfortable.

    Potential benefits of the study. Participants rejoiced in knowing that they have

assisted in adding to the literature that advocates a more socially just educational system.

They were contributors to the dialogue on awareness of issues of race and privilege

within schools that harm the academic achievement and overall development of all

students. By leading the researcher through careful retrospective narratives, stories, and

counterstories, the participants brought more awareness to the problem of marginalization

of students of color and the oppression of all students. This is the first step in finding

ways to socially deconstruct the institutionalized structures that promote privilege of one

group over another. By opening the door for equal and equitable access to a strong, fair

educational setting for students of all ethnicities, participants have been co-constructors

in the plight to achieve a more racially conscious and responsive society.

    Additionally, Delgado (1989) defined "outgroups" as "groups whose marginality

defines the boundaries of the mainstream, whose voice and perspective—whose

consciousness—has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized" (p. 2412). When a

member of an outgroup, such as a student of color, is given the chance to voice his or her

experiences and perceptions, "psychic self-preservation" is a potential benefit; it also aids

in deflecting feelings that may have long been internalized that "society thrusts upon

them" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2437). As African-Americans, my participants were, arguably, such a group; being a part of this study gave them the opportunity to "self-preserve" (Delgado ,1989, p. 2437).

Alterations to the study including the right to withdraw. Participants were made aware that they may, at any time, choose to alter the course of the study via requesting different questions to be asked, requesting interviews to be done at a different time or different place, requesting a shortened amount of interview time, etc. Participants were fully able to withdraw from the study and request time off from being interviewed at any time without any sort of penalty or uneasy feelings between them and the researcher. It was my job to document the voice of the participants following the participants' lead. Had any participant chosen to alter the expected course of action, it was incumbent upon me to respect such alterations. Further, participants were given several university persons to contact should they wish to terminate their involvement in the study.

Confidentiality of the study. The name of the school and the names of those participating within the study were never used within the finished work unless otherwise approved of by the participant. Additionally, precautions were taken to ensure that every bit of data collected was coded with no names during data collection as well as securely stored when they were not being used. The participants always had the right to request further precautions be taken in the event they felt this to be necessary.

Further, during the course of this study, all audio-tapes were transcribed immediately upon completion of interviews onto my personal laptop. The laptop was locked with a password that only I knew and was physically locked in a secure cabinet

with a key when not in my possession. Additionally, when interviews, observations, and the focus group session were transcribed, the participants' real names were not used. After tapes were transcribed, they were erased immediately.

Finally, at the start of each interview and focus group, participants were given the typed transcripts from the session before to confirm that what was said was documented accurately. Participants could have asked to keep the transcript themselves. However, they always handed them back to me when they were finished reviewing them. Additionally, all typed transcriptions never used participants' real names.

Contacting others about rights during the study. At any time, I could have been contacted by the participant to discuss concerns about the nature of the study being done. This contact could have occurred via phone, email, in person, and/or mail. Additionally, participants were given contact information for several of their university's officials including my chairperson, the doctoral program chairperson, the chair person of the main office of African-American student services at the university, and the academic dean of the school of education.

Compensation for participants. Participants in this study did not receive any monetary compensation, gift certificate or any inducement upon the termination of data collection. Student participants did, however, receive the journal for recording their thoughts throughout the interview process once all had been copied and documented by the researcher. After the study and data collection was complete, the participants were able to keep the journals they received at the beginning of the study.

After the three participants agreed to be involved formally and had signed the consent form, they were given a copy of the form they signed. From there, the first audio-taped interview commenced. The participants were asked to walk around the campus with the researcher pointing out particular points of interest and describing various areas encountered if they were able to during the first interview. During the observation, some introductory questions were asked to allow for the participant and me to get better acquainted. The list from which these questions can be found in Appendix C.

The data collected. The data collection techniques for this study included semi-structured interviews, observations, a semi-structured focus group, and optional participant journaling. The participant-optional journaling was simply for triangulation of data, whereas the interviews, observations, and focus group were used to address my research questions. For a specific list of questions that were asked within the semi-structured interviews planned for participants to address the study research questions, refer to Appendix D.

The three African-American male participants were asked to participate in observations, individual interviews, focus group, and optional journaling. As discussed previously, journaling was not done by the participants and is addressed further at the beginning of the next chapter. Observations included questions asked by the researcher throughout the observations when time permitted. For a list of these questions, refer to Appendix C. Observations were always audio-taped during the full time period as well as individual semi-structured interviews with each participant. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with a single participant present and myself. For a list of the

questions focused on the study research questions that were asked at these interviews, refer to Appendix D. The lengths of these interviews varied and interviews often became conversational in nature. Further, the focus group was conducted similarly to the semi-structured interviews. Some of the same questions asked of participants during their individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) were asked during the focus group session. Further, the focus group was used simply to confirm previously recorded data. This was also done both to probe the participants deeper about their experiences and allow for triangulation of data.

Additionally, during this process, participants were issued journals for optional journaling during the data collection time period. Participants were encouraged to use their journals but were in no way required to write down their thoughts. According to Schroder, Carey, and Vanable (2003), "the closest approximation to a gold standard [i.e. a study with little to no error in accuracy of reported data] are diaries [or journals] because they minimize demands of memory and promise most accurate results" (p. 117). The authors further stated, "because memory error is unlikely to occur [with the use of journals], one important source of inaccuracy in retrospective self-reports is minimized" (Schroder et al., 2003, p. 117).

Specifically, the data collection process commenced in the following way. First, after gaining consent from participants, an observation or interview began the data collection process. If the participant were willing to bring me on a campus tour of the university, the participant was asked to show me his favorite places to go on campus and show me around those areas. Two of the three participants (Noah and Joseph) began their first

interview with me with an on-campus tour of Lotton university; the third (Peter) chose to meet me for the first time at a coffee house. This was because it was more convenient for him. Further, since I was having trouble recruiting participants that met all the requirements, I was happy to go anywhere the perspective participants were willing to meet. Also, during this observation when time permitted, the participants were asked one to ten questions selected at random by myself (see Appendix C) to help me further get to know each of them. The campus tour was meant to help me also get to know more about the participant's personality. Further, this helped me in terms of later suggesting potential places for interviews to take place that would be more comfortable for the participant.

Next, observations continued until I spent a minimum three visits with the participant (with both observations and introductory interviews) learning about who the participant was and building rapport. With Noah, I did three introductory interviews totaling 205 minutes (3.41 hours) and two classroom observations totaling 370 minutes (6.16 hours). With Joseph, I did two introductory interviews totaling 110 minutes (1.83 hours) and one observation of 75 minutes in an on-campus bible study (1.25 hours). With Peter, I did two introductory interviews totaling 125 minutes (2.08 hours) and one off-campus observation at a local coffee shop he frequents often with friends totaling 45 minutes (0.75 hours). Thus, the total amount of time spent on getting to know the participants without asking any research related questions was 930 minutes (15.5 hours). I did not do the classroom observations with Peter or Joseph that I did with Noah because both Peter and Joseph's professors would not allow visitors into the classroom. Noah's professors did allow me to come in to class with him. Observations included my attending classes

with Noah and attending social events that the other participants regularly attended such as where they tended to have lunch, where the tended to meet with friends, and other organized meetings (Bible study). None of these were done without each participant's permission. During these observations, one to ten questions were selected at random by me and were asked when time permitted during each observation period (see Appendix C). These observations and introductory meetings were imperative for earning the trust of participants before more challenging and probing questions were asked during interviews and focus group.

Thirdly, semi-structured interviews were conducted regarding research question related topics with each participant. For the first research question, I held five interviews with Noah focused on this question. These five interviews conducted over one month totaled 240 minutes (4 hours). For Joseph, two semi-structured interviews were conducted specifically focused on the first research question. They totaled 110 minutes (1.83 hours). I also conducted two semi-structured interviews with Peter that specifically focused on Research Question 1. They totaled 105 minutes (1.75 hours). More semi-structured interviews were conducted with Noah than with Peter and Joseph for two reasons. First, he joined the study first so I had more time to spend with him than I did with the other participants. Secondly, at the beginning of this interview sequence, I did not feel Noah was answering the research questions. Thus, I needed to spend more time with him asking him to explain his responses more than with the other participants.

The questions that were asked during the semi-structured interviews were based on the research questions for this study (see Appendix C). A minimum of two interviews

were held relating to each specific research question with each participant. Not all questions that are presented in Appendix C for each research question were asked; after I conducted the second interview, I determined whether the narratives given by each participant had sufficiently answered the research question. If so, the next series of interviews focused on for the next research question. If not, the next interview continued to ask more questions related to the same research question. At these interviews, I brought a group of one to ten questions from the list for each research question as outlined in Appendix C. These interviews lasted a minimum of 40 minutes. Also, all interviews began with a review of the questions and topics that were discussed at the previous interview. The participant and I reviewed the transcribed text together. Each participant, at the start of each interview, was asked if there was anything he wanted to add from the previous meeting's discussion based on their own memory or based on what they had written in their journal.

As for the semi-structured interviews related to the second research question, a total of seven interviews were conducted with all three participants separately. Specifically, with Noah, I conducted three semi-structured interviews related to the second research question. These three interviews totaled 130 minutes (2.16 hours). With Joseph, I conducted two semi-structured interviews focused on the second research question. These interviews totaled 110 minutes (1.83 hours). Finally, with Peter, I also conducted two semi-structured interviews related to the second research question indicated in this study. These two interviews totaled 115 minutes (1.91 hours).

Additionally, a semi-structured focus group was conducted. The focus group was used for triangulation purposes and to allow for participants to help each other recall stories and memories they may have forgotten to mention previously. This focus group was the last interview done during the study and lasted for 70 minutes (1.16 hours). For a complete list of questions, refer to Appendix D. Questions were chosen based on responses from previous individual semi-structured interviews that I wished to hear more about from the group. I selected seven questions from the set in Appendix D prior to the focus group session coupled with ten follow-up questions about previous interviews. The focus group session lastly approximately one hour. Similarly to the semi-structured interviews, the focus group began with a review of the questions and topics that were discussed last time for each participant in written format printed out for the participants and me to examine together. The participants were asked if there was anything they wanted to add from the previous meeting's discussion.

Finally, throughout the data collection process involving the observations, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group mentioned above, participants were issued journals in which they could write about anything they recalled after they had spoken with me during an interview or met for an observation. They were encouraged to write at any time if there are any stories or memories they had forgotten to discuss during a recorded meeting. Data from the journals, if any, was to be used only for triangulation of data. As discussed previously, participants did not use the journals. This is addressed further at the start of Chapter Four.

Throughout the data collection process, I took field notes and recorded all interviews via audio recorder, always with the permission of the participants prior to the start of the recording. I also spent some time interviewing without taking notes to get an honest sense of the story the participants were telling through their words and actions to reduce participant anxiety. By letting participants know they were being listened to and by not constantly taking notes, they became more willing and trusting to share their voices. I also frequently asked participants to clarify their words and I would repeat to them what I had understood so as to ensure accuracy and to verify stories. This happened at the start of each interview and at the focus group mentioned previously, as well as throughout each session.

Further, although specific questions were planned for each interview (see Appendices C and D), discussions during interviews became conversational in nature as previously noted. Thus, questions were asked that are not specifically referred to in the interview protocol. My intention was to encourage participants to voice their reflections and carry on with their line of thinking in a natural way. Further, not all questions were asked.

Since this research used the method of portraiture, it was imperative that the participants' stories be heard and recorded carefully and accurately. To ensure this, participants were asked to read transcripts of their previous interviews at the start of each interview and at the focus group as mentioned above. At the start of each individual interview and the focus group, participants were also given the questions previously asked and were questioned as to whether they would like to expand upon anything that

was discussed during the last session. I also asked for clarification on topics discussed previously.

In total, 27 interviews and observations were conducted as well as one semi-structured focus group interview. These interviews, observations, and the focus group totaled 1,750 minutes (29.16 hours) of data. Data collection began in the middle of March 2009 and continued until the end of July 2009. After each meeting for the focus group, interviews, or observations had finished, the recorded meeting session was transcribed and stored within secure folders electronically and in paper format. Paper copies were secured in a locked cabinet and were shredded once they were no longer needed. Paper copies were only used for the participants to view and to ensure accuracy in the recording by the researcher. Once all data was transcribed, a more thorough analysis process began.

Data Analysis

It was imperative that all facets of portraiture along with the tenets of CRT were embraced within the analysis process. My aim was to tell the complete, documented stories of all my participants and the ways in which their educational experiences and perceptions had been shaped. As such, careful analysis of all transcribed notes was imperative. Since Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) recommend rereading transcribed notes a minimum of four times prior to coding, I did so.

A careful transcription of all audio recordings began the process; this was done for each interview on the date of each interview or the focus group. Upon looking at all observation transcriptions, I referred to both the transcribed notes from the observation as well as my field notes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) or reflections regarding the

observation that were also transcribed. After reading over all transcripts and notes once, I began the coding process of these observations. I began to identify domains that appeared to be present within the data and to code each. After following the same process with the transcriptions of interviews, the observations, and the focus group, I began to look for, as Hatch (2002) discussed, relationships between the domains that were eminent in the data collected. I began the second reading noting potentially overlapping domain areas and apparent flaws within the first reading of relationship structures between domains. Upon the third reading, my emphasis shifted toward finding similar structures and repetition within the relationships that develop. I also began to piece together each participant's story or stories on an individual level in a meaningful and logical sequence. The ways in which the narratives of each participant related to one another and/or were disjointed was also noted and was pieced together in a more logical structure. The fourth reading of all transcripts and notes involved evaluating the entire analyzed document for a thorough review of clarity and organization. Participants additionally were asked to review their portion of the story to ensure clarity and accuracy. All feedback from participants is included within the final document of this study. Finally, all research questions, using the guidance of CRT, were checked to ensure that all research goals had been met and addressed within the data collected and analyzed in this study. The last time I spoke with each participant via phone, I finally asked each why he or she did not use the journals that had been provided. One participant was unavailable for further comment, but two participants responded. The issues with the non-use of the journals as well as the

responses of the participants regarding why they did not use these journals are addressed in the next chapter.

Summary

Within this chapter, I have presented portraiture as the means of eliciting the authentic voices of my participants. Explicitly, I also discussed the ways in which participants were selected, how informed consent was obtained, and the general rights of the participants. I have also addressed the data procedures and data analysis strategies to be used. The next chapter explains in detail the findings with analysis from my data. Through the voices of my participants, personal stories unfolded detailing the accounts of African-American university males regarding their secondary school experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In order to understand the organization of this chapter, the research questions must first be recalled. The research questions, as presented previously, are:

1. How did African-American male university students experience racism within their secondary school setting?

2. How did the identified experiences affect the participants' identity development and emotional well-being?

Portraits of the three participants' lives are presented in this chapter. The stories of these men are covered prior to the discussion of the findings and analysis related to the research questions to give a thorough background about each participant. By providing accounts of the participants' families, previous educational experiences, and future goals, participants' responses and perceptions as related to the research questions presented later can be placed in context and, hence, provide deeper meaning. Undoubtedly, the life experiences of each participant prior to high school as well as prior to their present status has shaped their ways of viewing the world, their education, and their social perceptions. Providing a portrait painted by each participant assisted in making seemingly empty comments made by the participants into webs of content-rich messages related to the focus of this research.

To capture the essence of each participant, the words participants used within interviews and during observation times were used throughout this chapter. Further, had the participants utilized their journals, their written reflections would have been included here as well. However, despite being provided with journals at the start of the study, none

of the participants used them at all. At the start of each interview, as mentioned in chapter

three, I would ask each participant if there was anything they wanted to add from last

time or if they had written about anything they wanted to share from their journals. In the

first few interviews I asked these questions of each participant only to observe the

participants looking at me with remorse and informing me at the beginning of each

interview that they had not written anything down. After this happened over a dozen

times, I stopped asking about the journals and decided to let the participants bring up the

subject should they have something from them they wanted to share. I did not want the

participants to feel guilty about not having done any writing regarding our conversations.

I wanted them to feel comfortable and appreciated for the time they were willing to spend

with me. At the end of the study, I asked my participants why they did not feel the need

to use the journals during the study. While Noah simply told me he just did not have

time, Peter and Joseph expanded more on the reasons they had not used the journals.

Peter said he did not use his journal because he "felt [I] wouldn't get the truth of [his]

expression" if I simply recorded what he wrote down on paper. Joseph also told me that

he felt the transcripts I brought at the start of each interview were sufficient. He

additionally said he is sometimes "scared" to write his thoughts "because that makes it

permanent rather than when [he] just say[s] something and…can move on." Regardless,

the optional journaling was not utilized in this study as it was originally planned to be.

Thus, using the language of the participants from interviews and observations, the

experiences of these three talented, intelligent, and confident men is clearly articulated.

These stories show how these men have become the people they are today despite the

oppression that is constantly looming in their lives, especially within their secondary educational settings.

After the portrait of each man is given, a detailed account of their research-related responses is presented coupled with analyses. The portraits and narratives within this chapter give a look into the ways in which three men experienced oppression within their secondary school environments and how they have been transformed by these experiences in terms of their identity development and emotional well-being.

A Portrait of Noah Bernard

The first meeting I scheduled with Noah was at Lotton University where Noah attended at the time the study was conducted. I asked him to pick the time and place. He said he would prefer to meet on campus outside of the bookstore. We agreed via text messaging that he would show me around the campus he attends. He showed up exactly when we arranged and sat down next to me. Since I was the only person sitting outside, I guess he assumed that I must have been the researcher. I could tell he was a focused, organized student and person as soon as he sat down and said, "Hello, I'm Noah and I'm ready to go." After I went through the papers with Noah so he was aware of his participant rights, I noticed he seemed a little uncomfortable so I asked him to tell me some about himself and I shared a little about me before I began tape recording. He quickly seemed to relax after only a few minutes and seemed almost excited about being taped throughout the interviews.

Noah took me around his university's campus on the first day we met. I asked him to show me around so he decided to first show me the building where most of his classes

were held. In passing, he pointed out the library. I asked him if he went to the library as much as I remembered going there as an undergraduate to find a quiet place to do my own work. Noah laughed and, "not really". He explained that he only goes there, essentially, if he is forced to because a group he belongs to is meeting there or if he needs to quickly pick up a book. I inferred from this that he liked to be around others and that going to the library seemed a silly idea to him.

As we continued to walk to the building that he wanted to show me, he told me about some of the goings-on around the university campus that occurred recently or were scheduled to occur. For one, he told me about the upcoming bible study meetings and he tells me a little more about the Reverend that I met leading the bible study that both he and I attended. I was trying to recruit more males in my study that day. He told me that Magic Johnson was scheduled to come very soon and that the next day, Martin Luther King III was scheduled to speak the following week. As we walked, I noticed a variety of signs for events on campus. I found it interesting that Noah only told me about speakers that are African-American and bible study meetings that were attended by only African-Americans. This was certainly one way Noah maintained his African-American identity on his predominantly European-American university campus.

We finally arrived at the building and he took me inside. I was glad that he did not hold the door for me when I walked. This made me feel like we were going to be okay—that he did not feel that he had to treat me delicately the way I feel many other men feel they need to when in the company of a woman. He walked me through the main area and took me over to a door leading down a windy flight of stairs. He showed me some of the

classes in the downstairs area before taking me back up toward the middle section of the building where we had entered. As we walked up, I asked him where he thinks he probably goes the most on campus other than this building for his classes. He told me he usually frequents a building called the "Habit" since he can get food there, the "OBSS" (Office of Black Student Services) is there, and many African-American friends of his tend to congregate there. I also recalled that this same building was also the place where the bible studies usually occur.

For Noah, it seemed a requirement to have special places on campus where he knew he would be around other African-Americans. Whether it was events he attended or different social areas, once his classes were over for each day, it was important for him to leave the predominantly European-American spaces and immerse himself within the African-American community on campus. It seemed Noah needed to escape for a while.

As we continued on during our first interview, Noah told me that it was almost time for him to go to his on-campus job at the recreation center. While he still had time to chat, he suggested we start heading over in that direction. As we did, Noah told me about the service organization he is also a part of and about his fraternity, the "Kappa" fraternity. Not being a member of or knowing much about any Greek groups myself, it was intriguing to hear about Noah's. He told me how his particular fraternity had still not been officially recognized by Lotton because they failed to meet the requirements as specified by the university's president of the Greek counsel. As Noah told me later on, "It's his way or no way" he said of the European-American Greek counsel president that denied his fraternity's recognition on Lotton's campus.

When discussing his frustration regarding the denial that the Kappa fraternity received to be recognized on Lotton's campus, I noticed Noah's politeness and political correctness in addressing this topic with me. While I continued to probe him for several interviews about this, he continued to tell me, "The student population would not be able to support [us]" and "In our organization, we're official; it's just not recognized here on campus." He seemed to be insinuating that organized African-American groups were not welcomed on campus. I assumed he maintained a more neutral stance with me because of my own race; I was the same color of those that had told him and his fraternity no.

We eventually made it over to the recreation center. I noticed a turn-style and that students were swiping their identification cards to gain access to the inner part of the building. I asked how I would be able to get in. Noah told me not to worry and went to speak with the attendant working behind the desk. Noah said to the attendant who appeared to be European-American, "Can you buzz us in please?" She looked skeptically at both of us for a moment before finally noticing the campus recreation logo on Noah's shirt and allowing us to get in. I wondered if Noah had not been with me or if he had not had on his recreation shirt if he would have had more trouble getting in to where he needed to go.

Noah showed me all around the building both upstairs and downstairs. Since we still had a few moments before he had to go out to the field for supervision of a soccer game, we walked back toward the main upstairs portion of the building where there were chairs for us to sit and talk. As we walked, a younger looking tall African-American male came walking toward us. As he got closer, Noah said, "What's up Andy?" "What's up

sir?" Andy answered back and stopped as Noah and I approached. "About to play some ball?" Noah asked Andy. "Yes sir," Andy said and they gave a handshake to each other. At the time this occurred, I definitely thought it odd but did not inquire about the strange formality with which Andy addressed Noah. I later learned that this is typical behavior required of young men hoping to join the Kappa fraternity. For a fraternity that was not recognized on campus, the African-American men that were a part of this tradition certainly made sure that this underground group was alive, well, and maintaining all rules the organization required. It was almost inspiring to know that despite the setbacks these men encountered from university staff, they kept their group alive.

When I asked Noah more about his daily life, he told me a big part of it was commuting back and forth from his grandmother's home to the university campus. She lived in a fairly busy part of downtown Los Angeles and Noah said he enjoyed living with her. His only duties were to help her keep up the house and "take her to the doctor and stuff" when she needed to go. Noah seemed to indicate that it was a small price to pay to live in a nice house with his own room and freedom.

I asked Noah more about his family and he told me about how he has family in Los Angeles as well as Texas. He said that his family holds family reunions every year and that it is always fun to see everyone. They usually "do a big ol' fish fry," which requires that everyone find and catch their own fish and bring it to the house where the cooking occurs. Noah told me some of his relatives that are not from Los Angeles call those that are "city folks" and that there is often joking about the ability of relatives from Los Angeles as far as catching fish, milking cows, and performing other duties not

typically required of those living on a ranch. Noah does not care about the jokes from his relatives from Texas; he enjoys being with his family and doing things he does not get a chance to every day.

As we sat down in the recreation facility on his university's campus during our first interview together, Noah told me that he was a "people person"; "I like to make people laugh, to have an upbeat, fun, energetic atmosphere whenever I'm around," he told me. When I asked him how he thinks his friends might describe him, he said that they think he "always wants the spotlight on him" and that he is "loud, funny" and always ensuring everyone is having an enjoyable time. However, when I asked Noah how he thinks his family might describe him, he said that when he is around them, "I am a little different." In particular, Noah said that his grandmother with whom he lives would probably describe him as "sad all the time." "He told me:

> When I'm home [at her house], I'm just trying to relax or…getting ready to go out
> to do community service or getting out to do a program for BSU or something
> like that so she's always just like, "I don't see you smile" and all this…when I
> take her places, I'm there but I'm really not there thinking about all the stuff I
> have to do.

With reflections such as these, Noah explained much about the person that he currently is. In some ways, I began to see Noah as somewhat of a super-hero. When in the company of others excluding his family, Noah is involved, a leader, and a strong presence in almost every African-American organization on campus. He attends just as many parties as he attends his professor's office hours; he maintains around a 3.0 GPA at

the university and works several jobs on campus while also keeping a steady girlfriend, organizing Kappa fraternity events, and taking care of his grandmother. I wondered how long he could thrive with this going on in his life. Certainly, trying to handle all of these things at once while trying to up-keep a strong African-American image on a predominantly European-American university campus requires tremendous stamina. I can see Noah crafting each answer carefully for me even as we are speaking during this interview together. He is trying to give me everything that he thinks I am looking for just as he does for everyone else almost all time. The only people Noah feels he can let his guard down for are his family members even if they do not fully understand the pressures he endures.

Sensing that Noah was beginning to get fatigued from chatting and seeing that had little time left before he went to work, I decided to switch topics. I asked him to generally describe his high school in comparison to others around in his area. Noah also told me much about the differences between the high school he went to and the local public school called Union West in the area that was his district. At Noah's former high school, McIntryre, he said, "They [tried] to at least assume in us a character and I think at Union West, it's kinda not like that." He also described Union West as a "free-for-all," where at McIntryre "it was a safe environment" and he did not have to "deal with gangs and stuff like that." Noah is aware that he had more privilege than some others that did not get the opportunity to attend a private "safe" high school. He is aware that he may have been more easily able to "excel" academically as a result of being in such a place as opposed to the other local high school.

Noah did tell me that he often felt alone in high school since he was so devoted to his studies. He referred to himself as "the nerdy boy" and said, "People really didn't talk to me unless they needed to do their homework." He said that since he has come to Lotton's campus, he has transformed. "It's just like I became the cool kid on campus here…people always tell me… 'you know everybody' [and] 'everybody likes you'." I began to wonder again how everything Noah had become involved in had earned him this reputation. Although he seemed to be content with his popularity, I wondered at what cost it came to him being an African-American male on this European-American campus in this European-American world.

One of the last things Noah told me about was how he has, to some extent, lowered his own academic standards since coming to the university. While he was once in the running for Valedictorian his senior year in high school with above a 4.0 GPA, he is now happy to have a 3.0. He attributes this to always wanting to "lounge and socialize with everybody," as well as "doing Kappa stuff or community stuff." He says he knows he must improve his grades if he wants any chance at attending an Ivy League college for graduate school and that he must work harder in his last semester. He does not deny that it is a struggle when there are so many parties and friends to be with. As we ended our interview and I walked Noah out to the soccer field where he was about to begin supervising, I realized that Noah constantly negotiated between two worlds: one is a world of success and one is a world of mediocrity. While the expectations of African-American men in academia certainly must steer him into one world, he seemed to desperately be trying to be accepted by both.

For our second interview, we again met at the recreation center on campus where Noah worked. Since Noah told me about enjoying playing card games and chess in the interview, I decided to bring a chess board and pieces along with me for us to play after we were finished with our interview. Noah opted to sit over in front of the outdoor fountain where we could relax in partial sun and shade. After he skimmed over the interview transcripts from the previous time, I asked him to clarify a few points he had made previously. I then began to ask him about university professors compared to his high school teachers.

Noah described most of his current professors as "really nice" and "really open." However, there was one in particular that he talked about the most. "I don't know if he's racist…I don't want to say he's racist but it's just like little simple stuff," Noah began. I again was hit with the feeling that he was sugarcoating his response for me because I am European-American; it was as if he wanted to really say "this man is racist and here is my evidence." He went on to tell me more about the "simple stuff":

> There's another African-American in the class with me. We're friends, we're in the same fraternity, we kick it or whatever, we take his class, we sit in the back. That's the only class where I really sit in the back in 'cause I just don't feel like it's a welcoming atmosphere…so I sit in the back and he comes and passes papers out and just throws them at us on the desk…like the way he talks to me sometimes, it's like he's talking down to me.

With Noah's permission and with the permission of his professor, I observed Noah in his class while I collected data. In my notes from that day, I wrote about how

Noah and his friend from his fraternity, the only other African-American male in the class, sat together in the second to the last row. Throughout the class, they shared notes and helped each other when they could if one of them missed what the professor said or needed further explanation. At one point, the professor asked the class to mention items on McDonald's menu. Noah raised his hand and the professor called on him. Noah offered "Chicken sandwich". The professor seemed like he was going to write it on the board but then wrote "chicken nuggets" instead. It was unclear if he misheard Noah or just decided he wanted to discuss a different menu item than what Noah offered.

At a later point in the class period, the professor began talking about décor that people put inside their cars and he mentioned dice as decoration on people's rear-view mirrors. Noah mentioned, "That's a ticket!" under his breath when the teacher said this; I thought about how Noah mentioned he was constantly pulled over by police officers. What others consider to be flashy alterations to their car, Noah found to attract police attention. I was sure his professor probably was not aware of this. During the break in the class, the professor ran off to get a coffee and appointed a female student to make copies of the handouts he provided at the start of class; in the beginning of class, the professor ran out of copies when he got to Noah's row.

While I noticed these small ways in which the professor was perhaps "racist" as Noah suggested, Noah later assured me that the professor never acknowledged him as much as when I was present. He told me he sometimes wants to offer his opinion or take a guess on questions but believed he would either be ignored or he would be scorned in front of his peers for getting the wrong answer. He told me:

Knowing how he is, I don't really typically want to answer questions…I was

surprised that he was calling on me like…I'll look back and make sure that he's

really talking to me or stuff like that. I guess it's discouraging kinda but I can't let

him not let me get my participation points.

Noah believed that the difference in treatment was because his professor knew he was

being watched by myself perhaps. He said, "I really doubt that a teacher is gonna say all

the things they are comfortable saying seeing all the same faces, then you see a new

face…and you don't know why they are there…I don't think you would be your total

self."

After we were finished discussing the "racist" professor, I asked Noah to tell me

more about what people say about him; he provided me with an "example" of how he is a

people person and how he is someone that people enjoy having around. He and a friend

went to a sorority party that they were invited to for a predominantly Latino female

sorority group. He said it was "awkward" at first since he and his friend "were the only

Black people in there" but he quickly decided to change his attitude. "I started salsa

dancing and stuff and [more of] my friends got there and they were sitting at first but we

got them up, dancing, and brought them drinks," he told me. "You know, some people

would be like… 'why did I come to this party? Latinos…this is not the type of music I

listen to' but…we made the best of it…it was fun," he recalled to me. Noah was not

afraid to navigate into different social spaces.

He went on to tell me about all of the plans for his future. For one, he wanted to

purchase many different properties because "it's wealth in real estate." He also told me

174

he wants to do this so he can "have collateral if [he is] trying to buy something else." Owning many properties would also allow him to "not be limited to just stay in one place all the time." He further told me that he wanted to go back to Mexico and he also wanted to travel to Europe and Australia. Clearly, Noah knew that there are many things he wanted to experience all over the world and that he did not wish to ever be confined to living in Los Angeles. He wanted more.

I also found it especially interesting when I asked Noah who his role models were when he was growing up. He told me he does not have any but there were some individuals that he enjoyed following as a result of what they accomplished. One individual was a young man from the boy-scout program Noah was involved with. The young man went to a prestigious private high school in Los Angeles and proceeded to attend a renowned Ivy League university. He also broke many records while he was a track athlete in high school. Another young man from Noah's church was also a standout to Noah; Noah discussed how he, too, attended a very well-known Ivy League university and played the organ before he left for the university. Noah heard later on that he recorded a CD and was getting involved in the music industry. Noah respected individuals that seemed super-human. He wanted and appreciated both being involved in academia as well as being an entertainer. In discussing the young men that he looked up to, I saw how similar Noah was to them through his above average grades and his many social involvements.

After I had asked Noah all I needed to for the interview time, I asked if he wanted to play a quick game of chess before he left to work. Within only a few minutes, he said

"check mate" and our match was over. I was clearly out of my league with Noah. He told me he plays all the time with others, online, and on his phone. I packed up the board and my papers and I walked with him over to the recreation center. As we walked, a young man came up behind us kicking a soccer ball and said hello to Noah. He had dark skin and his features suggested that he was perhaps blessed with a diverse heritage. Noah commented to his friend that he noticed he had trimmed his hair. "Change!" his friend said mimicking the campaign slogan of President Obama. He and Noah both exchanged smiles; they had a moment of pride together as they perhaps imagined that there were much better things to come and there were things to believe in again as African-American males.

The third time we met, I observed Noah in another class. I was somewhat irritated with myself for getting what Noah told me confused once we got there. My intention was to observe the "racist" professor again; when I got there and I asked Noah about this professor to confirm, Noah told me that this was a different professor who he respected. I stayed since every moment I had spent with Noah so far had been a tremendous learning experience.

When the class before his finally let out, I followed Noah into the medium-sized classroom in the basement of the building he showed me before. He walked all the way around the room until he sat down in the second of three rows near the end. The only other African-American in the class sat directly in front of Noah in the first row. They appeared to know each other but were not close friends. The rest of the class sat on the other side of the room near the main door and, despite the professor's desk and podium

being in front of Noah and the other African-American student, the professor spent the

majority of the first part of class speaking to the other side of the classroom. In fact, the

professor addressed Noah immediately at the start of class and at the break in the middle

of class. However, during lecture, he did not face in our direction once for over an hour. I

had it recorded in my notes; the class started at 4:25 p.m. and the professor did not make

any eye contact with Noah until 6:10 p.m.

During the class period, several interesting events occurred. At one point, the

professor was speaking about situations that simply would not work in the business

world. He then said, "You wouldn't put a redneck in the middle of the inner city, right?"

to the class. Noah's eyebrows rose for a moment and he starred at the professor but he did

not say anything; he then looked down again and continued making notes. I wondered

what type of people the professor assumed lived in the "inner city." Is that not a good

word for us to start phasing out? I wondered what he thought about such a comment so I

asked him later on. He said, "I'm used to professors saying crazy stuff…I don't really

pay much attention to it. I'm just like 'Okay, whatever.' Sometimes, it's just a little

shocking the examples he uses or whatever. That's what catches me off guard." I again

noticed Noah trying to down-play what he believed to be insensitive comments in my

presence. While he generally liked this professor, he was "shocked" by the words he

used; I believe Noah wanted to tell me more but because of my race, he found it difficult

to express how he really felt. I also suppose I should have probed him more, but I did not

want to upset the comfort level we had with each other. If he felt he needed to be discrete

about various stories he described to me, there was certainly a reason. I believe it was because I am European-American.

The professor also gave an example later on in class about how important it is to be professional in business environments, even when everyone involved seems to be acting familiarly. He gave an example of a businessman who went to Japan for networking purposes. He joined with a group of Japanese business people for drinks one evening and had too much to drink himself. He proceeded to make rude comments and did not make a satisfactory impression on his colleagues. The professor told the class about how this man lost all of his potential connections with the Japanese businessmen because of his actions that one evening. Another student in the class said, "That's it?" to the professor asking in a joking tone why the American lost his connections. Under his breath, Noah nodded his head and said, "That's all it takes" implying one small mistake in judgment could mean losing a great deal. I believed Noah felt the pressure everyday as an African-American on this predominantly European-American campus since he was such an accomplished individual. One small mistake could not only be devastating for him, but could be for the entire African-American community on campus.

Once the class finally ended at 7 p.m., I walked with Noah through campus and asked him a few questions about his class and the professor. He told me about how he got organized for the class and he proceeded to tell me about how he navigated through the course with a passing grade without purchasing the $170 textbook for the course. To start studying for his professor's final, he was going to check the textbook out of the library. I asked him if he was worried another classmate might check it out before him since I had

utilized a similar strategy when I was in college. He said he was not; "I just tell somebody cause someone [I know] works there so I just tell her to move it off to the side," he told me. Noah made a connection with his friend at the library; he clearly knew how to network and be a standout student without having to spend a fortune every semester.

We finally began to make our way out to the edge of campus where there was a meeting place; Noah heard there was going to be free food for individuals that were in the TLC program, a program organized to entice African-American prospective students to come to Lotton. As we approached, several of Noah's friends did as well. We stood outside the meeting hall and continued to chat. His friends joined us as we continued but at a certain point, I could tell it was time to leave. It was not that I felt uncomfortable; it was that I could tell Noah needed to relax with his friends. He had spent his whole day keeping up his appearance around the European-American campus and, in the afternoon, spent his class with me sitting next to him for three hours. It was time for him to relax; I left and hoped that the food arrived soon so he and his friends could enjoy it.

The fourth time I visited Noah, before we began delving more deeply into the research questions together, he asked that I interview him at his grandmother's home. When I first drove up, Noah was standing outside speaking with another young African-American male about his age. When I parked and walked up, Noah introduced me to the other man before he left; it was Noah's cousin. Noah informed me he had stopped by to check out the new car that Noah recently bought from a fraternity brother. It was a used bright blue 2002 Mitsubishi Lancer with 80,000 miles on it. Noah was excited about it

even though he described it as "a little hood." When I asked what he meant, he said it was "hood" because it had Lamborghini doors that folded up to open, it was bright blue, and it had televisions in it. This communicated to others a certain flashiness the owner possessed and that the owner of the car must have money to spend.

Noah's grandmother's house was a lovely blue home in Los Angeles with a large porch. Noah showed me all around. He showed me all the rooms as well as his grandmother's pets including her adorable new puppy named Lady Bug. We wandered through the back door leading to the backyard and garage where I heard more dogs barking. The backyard was mostly grass with an eclectic variety of plants all around the edge in planters. Noah pointed out the strawberries and tomatoes he was helping with and he also named a variety of other plants; his knowledge of plants was impressive. He pointed off to the side of the house and said he and his cousins used to "make forts in the Elephant Ears" in the summers when they were younger. Noah also told me that he moved to his grandmother's house because his stepfather's sister moved to the United States from Mexico. While he was living in the dorms at Lotton, she moved into his room and when he was ready to leave campus at the end of his sophomore year, there was nowhere to go. His grandmother offered that he stay with her and he did.

After Noah showed me all the furniture he collected and stored in his grandmother's garage for when he can move out and get a place of his own, we wandered back inside. We sat in the living room next to the porch where we could see the street. During our interview, Noah's grandmother arrived home from a class she was taking with a friend. She walked in and Noah introduced us. Her friend followed her in and Noah

rolled his eyes and smiled saying how much she loved to show off Lady Bug. Noah told

me that he generally did not have any problems living with his grandmother and that

taking care of her was easy. He said sometimes she mistook him for his uncle Richie that

is deceased. When she called him "Charles" on occasion, he said she always apologized

and corrected herself. He said he thought she mistook them because Noah's late uncle,

like Noah, was always very involved in various activities and was always involved in

social engagements.

During our interview, Noah told me more about the professors he had at Lotton.

He told me about one professor that he very much disliked. "He would just regurgitate

the information [from the text],…he had no personality, [and] when he would try to crack

jokes, they would be inappropriate," Noah said; "It made the learning environment very

uncomfortable." Noah went on to say he would make inappropriate remarks to female

members of the class and there were allegations made against him before he worked at

Lotton of child molestation. "That has been my worst experience so far but I got through

it with a B," Noah told me. I wondered if Noah saw a double standard here; if this

professor were African-American, would he have been able to keep his job at the

university? I wonder if Noah ever wondered why he must always hold himself to such a

high standard, whereas the infractions of others that are not African-American are

overlooked.

Related to his, Noah also told me about how advisors of the Black Student Union

at Lotton recently told African-American student leaders on campus, including Noah,

they were not doing enough for each other and the community. Noah told me about a

recent retreat for those involved in the TLC program, the program designed to encourage African-Americans to attend Lotton. At the retreat, he said they were given the following message from their adult advisors:

> We expect more from you guys. There's a dire need in our community; the Black community needs to come together. Ten people going to a BSU meeting when there is over 300 African-American students is unacceptable. There's five positions on the E-Board and only four people applied. Why are [you] going to so many parties when [you] can't honestly raise your hands and say we're giving 110% in the classroom?...Our ancestors died so that [you could have] the chance to go to college and we're not even.

Noah said it was a difficult message to hear but he felt he could be doing more. I thought back about my own college experience and recalled how I felt the same; in fact, I knew many of my friends from college, mostly European-American, that would have said the same thing. Although I knew I could do better, I enjoyed my college experience. If that meant I did not maintain the above average grades I had earned in high school, so be it! I was living and learning to live a life of happiness. I wondered what it must feel like, as an African-American, to have no room for error; no room for letting loose in college. Why are these students getting so much pressure go "110%" all the time? Noah was a member of numerous boards and groups on campus, was taking five different classes at the time I interviewed him, and held several jobs on campus. However, because he was African-American, this was not enough. The pressure imposed on African-American males at the college level, especially this predominantly European-American university, was

ubiquitous and attacked these young men from all angles. Nothing was ever good enough to change the stereotypes that have been slated in stone regarding the African-American male.

A Portrait of Joseph Wyatt-Gomez

Meeting a participant for the first time in a public place is always a little uncomfortable for me. Being a little shy myself, I have to work up the nerve to start approaching people and asking them if they are who I am looking for. I also often wonder about my own perceptions of appearance and try not to focus on people looking like the voice I heard on the phone. My usual nervous experience was cut short when I walked into the student coffee shop on campus where Joseph decided he would like to meet for the first time; Joseph said to me, "Are you Lauren?" with a smile on his face. When I told him I was, he said, "Cool to meet you" and he excused himself for a moment while he bought a water. Once we sat down and started chatting, I immediately felt at ease with Joseph. It felt as if I had known him for a very long time.

As we sat in the coffee shop on Lotton's campus that day, I was astonished and pleased with how much Joseph was willing to tell me about himself. While I felt Noah decided to get involved with my study and be a participant because of his thirst to experience new nuances in his life, Joseph's motives were much different. Joseph almost seemed as if he felt called to do this; for him, it was an aspect of service he felt he needed to do. This was the same with the way he believed he came to Lotton University. He told me: "Lotton sent me a free application…I'm very religious-based…I'm Christian so I looked at this like it was a sign from God." He further told me he ended up at Lotton

because they offered a teaching program. After briefly thinking about becoming a baseball player, a barber, and a chef, Joseph finally settled on being a teacher. He told me he "didn't want to go into it for money" but wanted to do "something [he] was really passionate about." When he learned that he was passionate about kids after helping with his aunt's fourth grade class, he knew teaching was his calling.

Within our first five minutes of interviewing for the first time, I also asked Joseph to describe himself. He first told me he was "humble." He explained further how this attribute affects him internally and externally in terms of relating with others:

I'm very, very humble…almost to the point where people don't like it because they say I don't take credit for anything but then at the same time…it's this wonderful thing people are always talking about. But at the same time, it's really hard for me because it's like then if I don't get credit for some of the stuff I do, I get angry about it cause I feel I deserve it but I'm not willing to give myself credit.

Though I would certainly never describe myself as religious, my elementary years in Catholic school reminded me of a passage from the Bible about being humble. In the gospel of Peter, it says: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (New International Version Bible, Book of Peter 5:6, 2010). Aside from being self-described as "religious" and "humble," Joseph was also very patient. He believed that when his creator was ready to give him what he deserved for his service, it would be done. I do not recall being so patient at his age.

Joseph also told me about his mother and about how "family-oriented" he was. "I've gone through a lot of stuff…my mom is the single most important person in my life without question because of all she went through…she had me at 15…we went through the single parent household, homeless times, and everything to where I am now," Joseph told me. In that interview, I believed I had misunderstood Joseph so I did not ask him to tell me about his experience of being "homeless." In fact, I thought that I must have misheard him when he said it. When I listened to the tape and transcribed the first interview, I realized that I had gotten it right and that it was in fact his experience. I asked him about it more the next time we met. Unfortunately, during the second interview without my knowing, the batteries on my tape recorder died. But, in my notes I took shortly after the interview, I wrote how he confirmed he and his mother were homeless for a time. While they never actually had to sleep out in the street, they went from family member's house to family member's house until his mother was finally able to save up enough to rent her own apartment.

Within this interview, I realized that Joseph was mature beyond his 21-year old age. He was a parent to and for many, including his own father. He felt the need to tend to everyone. Because he was "family oriented" and knew the cost of tuition would be a financial strain on his parents, he decided to become a resident assistant (RA) on campus. "I mean $10,000, that's a lot for this expensive school," Joseph told me about being in the RA program to help with his tuition. "It's what I could do to help contribute so I took it primarily for that reason," he said. Being an RA was a parenting experience within itself. Joseph told me some of his experiences:

185

The freshmen are really needy. They just like popping into your room, they like having you there…I've had situations where I've had to talk to parents, calm parents down…residents getting into flights, residents drinking, or long nights…you get calls from public safety…like at three in the morning, "you need to come to the hall or come to the commons room cause one of your students passed out"…I mean the first six weeks that's the most key time in a freshman's career at Lotton cause its those six weeks that determine whether the student is gonna be here or not.

Having to be responsible for so many individuals seemed not just difficult; it seemed overwhelming, especially as a student trying to tend to his own grades and well-being simultaneously.

He also said, however, that being an RA actually helped keep him busy and not worrying about his family back at home at the other end of Los Angeles. "I have a lot of home responsibilities," Joseph told me. He said, "My dad…he just went through a divorce and he depends on me as his oldest son to get things done." While he described his mother, who is African-American and just married for the first time, as a person with whom he can "be at peace," Joseph described both how much he adores his Latino father but how much work being in his life involves.

In a later interview, Joseph and I got off track and began discussing the relationship he has with his father in more detail. He told me they were only recently able to talk about what went on since his father got divorced from his most recent wife. "We developed a relationship and the way he described it to me was that sometimes people put

you in such a trap or a box that you don't know how to be yourself," Joseph said about his father and his ex-wife. "She hated the fact that my dad's family embraced my mother as if she was one of them," Joseph also said. "He wasn't man enough to tell her anything [different]." Clearly, being pushed out of his father's life for so many years hurt Joseph. He seemed just reluctantly appreciative now that he was allowed into his father's home and could sit on his couch without any problems.

Joseph said that he and his father have a much improved relationship now but he still has much more parenting to do when he goes to his father's house compared to his mother's. He told me:

> When I go to my mom's house, we'll talk…I'll be able to express everything to her…like I can just sit there…whereas when I go to my dad's its like I gotta come help. I got a younger brother, he's going into the Marines…so I gotta make sure he's staying out of trouble…my younger sister who's going through her teen years…she's doing all kinds of wild and crazy things so trying to keep her in check and just being as a support for my dad because he's not really equipped…he's hasn't been equipped to be a parent…he's never had to be a parent. He's always had wives or my mother to bring up the children that he has.

Thus, Joseph felt the need to step in and be the parent for his father to his younger brother and sister. I was both shocked and amazed by his maturity and his sense of urgency in taking care of his younger siblings. Joseph was a young man who took discipline and respect very seriously and almost felt sorry for his father's inability to be the "man of the house" for the other children. To say that Joseph has had to grow up too soon would be

an understatement. At his age, I was out in bars and at parties, meeting new people, and getting monetary support and encouraging words from my parents. I considered what it must be like to have to become a servant of the university through being an RA in order to pay tuition. Not only that but when off-duty as an RA, Joseph felt the need to rush home to make sure all the family's affairs were in order. These are matters that no 21-year old should have to grapple with.

I further wondered about how he continued to be a parent figure even when he saw his father not being one for the other children. Is the father not who the son learns the most from in their life in most cases? Joseph clearly saw his father was, to some extent, drowning as a result of relying on women in his life to tend for the children. I thought about how much courage it took for Joseph to step in for his father in his parenting absence in keeping his brother and sister in line. I was astonished about how he saw his father's choice of action and deliberately chose to be different. Joseph gave me a glimpse in our first interview together why he deviated from what he saw his father doing and he told me more about it in a later interview. But, the first time we spoke, he mentioned he was tired of being hurt by other men. He said, "I don't make many male friends. I've always had issues with that…obviously cause my dad but not being able to trust men in general because like every man that I've been close to has kinda like gone off on their own way so its been hard to make male friends overall."

The last words Joseph reiterated to describe himself were that he was "religious based." He said being this makes him want to help and give back to others through community service opportunities and teaching. He also discussed how it helped him get

more involved in the African-American community on campus. He told me about some of his many involvements: "I'm in [a service organization on campus], I'm actually on the [executive board], I'm the social chair there, TLC I do that, I'm very involved in that actually and…I'm an RA so that in itself is a big mentorship thing." Joseph was certainly very involved on campus and I noticed much of what he did involved trying to help other university students succeed. His parent-like quality was certainly very evident. He seemed to make it his task to raise everyone, no matter what toll it took on him.

We spoke a little about Joseph's high school, Harriet, in our first interview together. It seemed to be the time in Joseph's life when he realized there were differences in class and, more importantly, where he stood amongst all of it: "In middle school, you wear uniforms but in high school, you have to think about clothes…there was a lot of people at Harriet that were really well off like I'm middle class you know? Nothing special." He also told me about other schools in the area and about their class demographics; there was one in particular that he described as "at the top as far as like class" he was not accepted into in the Los Angeles area. He then said that Harriet High was "a close second."

He told me in a later interview how it was obvious some students had better treatment than others at Harriet as a result of their class status. He told me how the music academy at the school always seemed to cater to the most elite students. "The music academy and humanities people had the two biggest offices in the counselors' offices," he told me about the counseling area; "the music academy was like the rich kids' school."

Joseph seemed to be very aware of differences in terms of money and power that he saw beginning in high school. I wondered if perhaps because he felt like he was "nothing special" in terms of class, if he felt that he needed to make up for it by getting so involved or being an outstanding student like he currently was.

Joseph further told me about how he was often not taken seriously by his peers in high school. While he had one very close friend and co-player on the baseball team named William, he seemed to speak about how often he felt like a joke. Of his and his friend's image in the eyes of others, Joseph told me:

> We were the heaviest…we were the fat boys, the heavy kids…people would call us that and there was a stigma with that like, "Oh, you're funny"…not many people would be like, "you're an athlete"…the biggest thing we differed on that I noticed was education…like I busted my butt even though people thought I was dumb as a doorknob.

Though Joseph somewhat laughed when he told me about it, I wondered how it must have felt consuming these messages in school while simultaneously being ignored by his father.

Fortunately for Joseph, his mother was a strong support for him through out the time he grew up and continuing through the present. He spoke of her multiple times during our first meeting together and discussed how she was the reason, aside from God, for all of his successes. "My mom was like, 'I'm not gonna lose you to the streets' like so many of my male family members," Joseph said as he told me about his mother's side of the family and her reasoning for being so supportive of everything he does. In our second

interview, Joseph told me one uncle on his mother's side and three on his father's side were currently incarcerated for a variety of charges; some included murder and attempted murder. His mother tried to keep him away from being in the same predicament. "Academics were strongly emphasized in my [mother's] household," Joseph told me. "She just constantly made it so that I would just be doing work…this is her working two jobs…coming home, picking me up from the babysitter…staying up to two in the morning and waking me up like 'you missed these two'," Joseph told me about his mother checking over his work. Joseph attributed his success in school from his early years to the care his mother gave him and her pushing him to do well in school. "I approached everything like I could do it and my mom instilled that in me…that's where I built my confidence that I was smart…I was intelligent…I was different from most boys my age," Joseph told me in near the end of our first meeting. From what I could tell from our introductory interview, Joseph was different from many men his age.

As noted previously, when we met the second time, I was disappointed to note when I got home to transcribe our interview that the tape recorder's batteries had died. While I quickly tried to write down everything I could recall, I was devastated that I had gotten a chance to spend some time with Joseph and not get all of his words down as he spoke them. However, our third meeting made up for my disappointment when we discussed everything from Lotton's diversity issues, to President Obama, and to Dwayne Wade. During the second interview, Joseph asked me to meet him in his dorm room where he was the resident assistant. He asked me to do the same the third time. As with

the second time, when I walked into his room, he had the television on to a sports event and was relaxing in his lounge chair watching.

We discussed a little about the basketball game that was on and our favorite players. Since I moved to Los Angeles, I noticed that despite there being two main professional basketball teams there, a majority of individuals favor the Los Angeles Lakers over the Los Angeles Clippers. I assumed this was true for Joseph so I asked him how much he had been following the Lakers this year. He said he had not at all and that he was more of a Clippers fan. I found this intriguing and fitting for the person I saw Joseph was. He seemed to always want to go against popular opinion. If his family members were getting into trouble, he would forge ahead with his academics; if his father was not showing him by example how to be a supportive parent-figure, he would go out and figure out how to be that parent-figure himself. Thus, even if everyone in Los Angeles was cheering for the expected world champion Lakers' team, Joseph was going to cheer for the underdog Los Angeles Clippers. Joseph had always gone against the grain; it seemed to have made him the man that he was.

In our third meeting together, Joseph told me much more about his personal independence. As we watched the basketball game, I asked him if he felt like he was given the same opportunities as everyone else was in high school. He told me, "I won't say that there wasn't any help given to me. I didn't reach out or try to go after them because I just felt like I could go out and do that on my own." Joseph's response showed he also trusted very few adults or friends in high school. It seemed as if he grew up feeling like he was the only one that was going to make opportunities happen for

192

himself—that he could never rely on others. Certainly, his relationship with his father may have supported this thinking. He also said that "everybody [he] tried to reach out to had something negative to say"; thus, he chose not to ask anyone for extra help at all when he was younger.

Since being at Lotton university however, these situations changed. Joseph told me about how after his first semester at Lotton, he was placed on academic probation. Joseph attributed his poor grades that semester to going to school as well as trying to keep a full time job at an athletic shoe store in a local mall. "It was that independence…not wanting to ask my parents of money, not wanting to ask for financial help…trying to support myself cause I felt like that's what was necessary so that's why I kept working," Joseph told me. To his surprise, when he found he was on academic probation, several individuals on campus "called [him] into their office[s]." He received a tremendous amount of support from his counselors and support staff in the BSU and was soon back on track with his grades with an on-campus job. "I basically burnt out; stopped going to classes, 8 a.m. classes not working out for me, it was rough," he told me about that time. He still recalled those who supported him at the university and got him accustomed to what he needed to do to be successful at the university level. "It's a totally different dynamic being here," Joseph said of the support he received. I noticed during that visit a fish tank that I had not noticed during the second interview. Joseph had a few fish swimming around with decorative lights and fish tank paraphernalia. He told me an older student mentor named Robbie from the TLC program gave it to him. When I asked about it, Joseph stared at the fish and a look of calmness came over his face. There

193

appeared to be individuals within the African-American community at Lotton that made it their business to ensure that African-American males like Joseph were able to succeed. I was glad that this individual named Robbie had caught Joseph in time; sometimes, its important to remember simple things about what it takes to get by. If it means watching fish swim for Joseph, I am glad that he found a way to relax amidst the life of leadership he lead.

Joseph told me much about his mental processes and maturation during our third meeting. He told me that he realized from a young age that he was and had to be "[his] own man." He told me:

> I was the role model for everyone else. That's when it really switched to me being the leader of the family. [My] uncles that had failed and all these kind of people and so that's when I began to mature. My mom started working, making a lot more money so that's why I started getting home, cooking for myself, doing my own laundry. I've been doing my own laundry since I was ten…I didn't really have anybody to look up to…I mean Jesus Christ but other than that.

Joseph said he did not realize that he was the leader until a female friend noticed and told him what she observed. He said she told him "'Nothing goes unless [your family] asks you first and if something goes wrong, you're the first one they call'." He further learned of his leadership role within his family when his godfather told him recently how important his graduation from Lotton would be. "'You don't understand but when you graduate from college, you're not just graduating for yourself. You're graduating for all the people that are younger than you, cousins, sisters, everything'," Joseph said of his

godfather's words. Such comments were no doubt meant to inspire Joseph but they also forced him to become the head of a family at a very young age. Regardless, Joseph continued to try to be the leader and man that others expected and needed of him.

Being there for his family, however, was an internal burden for Joseph. There are certain goals he had for himself in his life that required him to leave Los Angeles and, essentially, his entire family that needed him. "There's life outside of LA," he told me. "I'm starting to consider going to Chicago for a year to do some post grad service after I graduate but…the need of my family," Joseph said as his voice and mind seemed to trail off. He also said:

> We've had so many family members just like leave and go do their own thing, just forget about family. You wind up no really liking those people because they become individuals sometimes. It's hard for me to be mad at those people cause sometimes, you have to take care of yourself. Other people aren't gonna take care of you.

I wondered if Joseph would ever seriously consider his last thoughts as advice for himself. From what he shared with me, Joseph's selflessness was unmatched by many; the answer was no.

When an individual gets into a difficult situation, some believe that there are really only two choices for the individual: fight or flight. Through Joseph taking on family responsibilities without complaining, taking on being the first from his family to graduate from college, and being a parent figure for his siblings, his choice was clear. He tried to build upon what already existed within the family and make his own

contributions as well. However, doing everything he did certainly put a strain on what he was personally able to accomplish for himself. At his age, it was difficult to fathom that he should feel the need to sacrifice his personal goals for the good of his family. He felt that going to Chicago might not be the best idea for him since his family would not be able to self-sustain without him. Joseph was truly a servant for others.

Joseph did not see the same servitude occurring within the walls of Lotton's community, especially with regards to African-Americans and other minorities. In his eyes, the university understood the public appearance need to have minority students. He told me some about the unfairness he has witnessed and how the university uses minority students to "look good" in the eyes of others. He told me:

> [Lotton] has their place for Black and minority people…what would school be like if there was a Black president? You have to think about it. I don't know. It's weird. They want Black people here, they love us, they want us…why? Because we make 'em look good. People come to campus, visit us, they show us off a little bit, you know what I'm sayin'. They know what they're doing.

Joseph told me how this happens and, in the midst of all of it, minority students are still kept held down on campus as a result of what they must do to stay at the university. He specifically said, "You see people that work their butt off…the students that are minorities and struggle and have to do student worker [programs]…if you look at the student workers, the majority of them are minorities."

Joseph saw the university environment at Lotton did much to, essentially, keep certain individuals such as African-Americans and other minorities from succeeding at

the rate of their European-American counterparts. He saw the dynamics at the university functioning in such a way that the status quo of minorities in the larger society remains intact; their place was secure under that of European-American society. He showed here that he felt the university used minorities as puppets to show how "diverse" they were when, in fact, Joseph thought they are far from it. "They talk about diversity like they have 11 Black students,… 13 Asians,…and 22 Latinos…then they have 1,000 Caucasian-Americans," Joseph told me in our third meeting. "When you have 1,000 Black people, 1,000 Mexicans, Latinos, 1,000 Asians, 1,000 White people, that's diversity," he told me. According to Joseph, the university kept African-Americans and other minorities at their disposal and brought them to the forefront when it was convenient for them to do so. He felt that the university has done nothing in the time he has been there to increase its diversity. He even felt oppressed by Eurocentric dominated notions and behaviors. "We have our little overnights, Asian overnights, Black overnights, Latino overnights,…but for white students, this campus is yours," Joseph told me near the end of our interview. "Everything is geared towards them like…Greek life…there's a few Black people peppered into fraternities and stuff but the majority of what you're gonna see is White people," he continued. As he discussed this with me, he hardly took a moment to catch his breath. It was as if he had been holding these thoughts in for a very long time. For him, Lotton was a microcosm of the larger society; a small community mimicking the notions presented by the world outside its walls. For Joseph, European-American supremacy remained alive on his campus and as well as in the world he lived in.

197

As he described, he felt that Bell's (1980, p. 523) notion of "interest convergence" was prevalent at Lotton. He also saw it elsewhere, especially in politics and through the behaviors of the country as a whole. In our third meeting, he spoke much about President Obama. For one, he said his election appeared like a gift from "White people." "It's still the White government way of being like, 'Look here Black people, we're gonna give you one. Shut up now'," he said. However, he simultaneously does not like the response to becoming elected that he has seen from Obama and several other high profile African-American leaders. "[Obama] tries to say it was like our victory…saying all American people when he really knows that this is a victory for the African-American people," Joseph told me. He further said, "I think often people are afraid to bring up race." He also told me about what he recalled from the day Obama was elected:

> It's like acknowledge that this is a win for Black people! A story I can remember, I was in the gym. I was playing basketball and…I stopped what I was doing cause I wanted to see the fact that he won but I saw people cry. I saw people ecstatic that he won, just like damn near ready to just end their life like their life is complete and I'm just like…where is his acknowledgement of all this? It was like Black people appreciated that he was Black more than he did.

It was difficult hearing Joseph say this. I was shocked since I knew that Joseph knew how much may go into being a leader and the difficult decisions on simple public relations movements that become so critical. I did understand, however, how proud he was and how much just a small acknowledgement to the African-American voters and supporters might have quenched Joseph's need. Unfortunately for President Obama, he too lived in a

Eurocentric centered society. I could only imagine the criticism he would have received had he done something at his inauguration like put on a dashiki. America was evidently ready for an African-American president but whether America was ready for one that was proud to display his heritage was another matter.

It seemed there were many influences that caused Joseph to be distressed with the many individuals he chatted with me about, including Colin Powell and Condolezza Rice—"educated Black people" not vouching for their race. The more I spoke with Joseph, it appeared that he saw there was a ranking order for African-Americans. Further, for Joseph, it seemed he was conflicted by this because, for African-American leaders not to "vouch" for other African-Americans, it meant perhaps they just were not worth being vouched for. Even within his family on both the African-American and Latino sides, he saw his family members vouching for a few individuals from other groups but not supporting entire racial groups. He told me about his family:

> It's funny cause when two families are attached with different races like my family—one is Black, one is Mexican—they'll make exceptions. They'll make exceptions for one person but they won't make exceptions for the race. The Mexican side of my family loves my mom. She's Black…my abuelita will call my mother her daughter. That's how much she loves her but any other Black person, it's like, "Shhiiit." But, it's the same way, like we love Mexican people on the Black side of my family. We love our Mexican people but outside of that…

In Joseph's family, there seemed to be "tokens" of racial groups that were worthy of being recognized but that vast majority of certain racial groups were not. These ideas

permeated through society as a whole and caused individuals such as Joseph to concern themselves so much with stereotyping and trying to make themselves worthy of recognition that they lost sight of what truly matters. In Joseph's family, there was so much emphasis placed on determining which Latinos and which African-Americans were standouts that go against the stereotype that European-American supremacy was never questioned and continued to divide minority groups. The Eurocentric reality kept African-Americans and other minority groups fighting amongst each other and stereotyping one another to preserve their diminished standing in society. Through Joseph getting angry with African-American political figures for not "vouching" for his race and his family finding fault with other minority groups that are not within their own circle, European-American supremacy continued to spread its damaging messages throughout society.

As we closed our third meeting together, I was delighted to have met such an intelligent, reflective individual in Joseph. I had met Noah first and although Noah and Joseph were quite similar in many ways such as they both were involved on campus, were good students, had supportive families, and were religious, they were different in terms of the worlds they had come to know and try to infiltrate. Whereas Noah had lived most of his life amongst African-Americans and had only recently been exposed to being a minority and existing in a predominantly European-American community at Lotton, Joseph was a part of two worlds before coming the university. Although Joseph said he identified more with his "Black side" because "once you tell someone you're even a little Black, you're Black," he also knew the Latino community well and had learned much

from the Latino side of his family. These dynamics and the time Joseph had undoubtedly spent observing both worlds seemed to have lent him a more experienced lens when entering the third world of European-Americans at his university. His insights and critical thought on issues of race were astounding and after our third meeting, it was difficult to wait for our next meeting.

A Portrait of Peter Hansen

The first time I met Peter, he asked if it was acceptable to meet at a coffee shop in a busy restaurant area in Inglewood. When I sat down outside the shop and waited, I realized that I had forgotten my cell phone in my car far away in the parking lot. My usual anxiety when meeting someone new for the first time was now intensified since I did not want to run back to get it; what if I missed him? Not knowing how to contact him, I started walking around to patrons in the shop that looked fairly young, male, and African-American. None of them were Peter. I went back out to the front and waited.

As I waited, diagonal from my table and the door was a group of seven African-American older men. They were chatting about their work and their wives while they smoked on cigars and drank their coffee on a beautiful Friday evening. One came over to my table and asked if I wanted to join them since I was sitting by myself. I declined but was pleased at the man's politeness. A younger man with a huge afro came up to the group and chatted with them for a few minutes. They all laughed a little and he walked into the coffee shop. When he came back out a few minutes later with his coffee, he sat down at my table and said, "You must be Lauren" with a big smile. I introduced myself and began chatting with him about the study.

As I got to know Peter more during our interviews both off and on tape, I became increasingly fond of our meetings. While we chatted about my study and the related questions I had, we also discussed everything from the "disease" of Hollywood to dating women in Los Angeles. We also chatted much about his career as a teacher and his impressive command of vocabulary made me wonder why he was studying to be a science teacher instead of an English teacher or a writer. Peter had an especially powerful presence as a result of not only his tall stature but also his thoughtful comments and reflections. It was my pleasure to have been given the opportunity to meet him through this study. Like the other participants in the study, even after meeting Peter just once, it felt like we had known each other for a long time.

Within our very first meeting, I learned much about the person that Peter was. When I asked him to describe himself, he told me that he was often "misunderstood" so I asked him to explain why this was the case. He said:

> Born in the Mississippi Delta, the son of two Ph.D's, which is an extreme rarity in those parts, father was a college professor, mother was an elementary school administrator and…basically went to school with the poor kids my whole life.

From the beginning, he let me know that he knew he was born into privilege with his parents both being two well-educated individuals. However, he was surrounded by others that were not as privileged as he. Further, during the first meeting, he told me, "Sometimes you do the white thing like travel, use correct diction, expose myself to different things,…beating the health curve, and just other avenues that pretty much…other African-Americans don't have as much access and information about."

Clearly, Peter was aware that he had more options available to him than many other African-Americans he grew up with. He recognized there are many less fortunate individuals that did not have as many options as he did as a result of his parents' accomplishments. Rather than choose to blend in with the others, Peter decided to continue along the path his parents laid for him—one that involved traveling and experiencing new things. In speaking with Peter, it did not seem as if he was saying he was better than anyone he knew; he said these statements matter-of-factly as if he was just telling me how things were.

The first time we met, he told me that he had considered moving many places to start his life and go to graduate school. He told me that many African-Americans have chosen to start lives for themselves in Atlanta. He told me:

Atlanta is…the new Black Mecca. It was great, it was an opportunity for the African-American. You could pretty much start with nothing and find your way but it [has become] so oversaturated with people and the opportunities now are slim…Some people went and now are comin' back home.

Peter told me that there were reasons for attending Lotton in Los Angeles as opposed to moving elsewhere such as Atlanta where many people he knew had gone. Essentially, he felt that in Atlanta, African-Americans did not need to prove themselves; they would be hired for jobs and considered for various opportunities based on their own merits especially since African-Americans were the majority. However, because Atlanta had become such a popular spot for African-Americans to start their lives, it had become "oversaturated" and the opportunities had gone away. For someone as intelligent as I

could tell Peter was with his degree, perceptive outlook, and analytical thinking, I was somewhat surprised that he did not want to still give Atlanta a try. He certainly must be qualified for many jobs there. However, at the same time, I could see how he was willing to give Los Angeles a try. He was confident in his abilities to survive in a European-American dominant city and society.

As a graduate student, Peter told me how he had taken on work as a substitute currently for many local high schools around Los Angeles. He said there was a close comparison between his high school and some of the schools he substituted at. "Charter schools are a joke," Peter told me later during our first interview. Of his own high school, Peter told me:

> [It was] underachieving,…low expectations, ill-equipped, limited, opportunities
> were next to nothing…while it was amazing to go to college...I mean actually, it
> is but…its not like the second coming and you're around some people, their
> parents are about ready to have a heart attack cause their child is going to a
> community college…and the disappointment when a lot of students who thought
> they had 4.0's really didn't have 4.0's across the board.

Peter said the same low-expectations and messages spread at his former school continued within the Los Angeles schools he substituted at. He told me about how he sees students getting promised that their achievements were worth more than they really are; that they could get into college and succeed when the basics were being ignored. He told me:

> Green Dot has these commercials like, "They're gonna go to Cal State
> Northridge"…let's be realistic. You can just go apply and get into Cal State

Northridge. Its not hard…we're going to historically Black colleges in the south…they are open door policy! What are you doing except having overcrowded classrooms, taking away from the public schools and increasing your bottom lines.

He found charter schools staff members telling students they can attend college difficult to fathom when he saw what many students were doing in the classroom. For him, he saw a decline in education and what students were producing. For Peter, in order to be praised for academics, "You need to know how to actually write a sentence, write a paragraph, write an essay or paper." He continued to see the public and charter school system passing children along without the proper tools they needed to succeed. He saw this as "the powers that be still formulating students to be better workers" in the workforce after they were done with their schooling. When I asked Peter to tell me more about the "social reproduction" he saw in schools, he told me, "People gonna make you better workers. You're gonna get up early, work this many days a week, and we're going to work the same schedule your parents work so get used to that." I could see that Peter had certainly put much thought into the dynamics and psychology of the education process. It seemed to make perfect sense based on his upbringing in coming from two parents very involved in education. He had undoubtedly many opinions on everything from pedagogy to creating a high-functioning, productive school environment.

When I asked Peter how his schooling at Lotton was going in his graduate program for new teachers, he said he was enjoying it thoroughly and was learning a great

deal. He said much of what he was learning was finally allowing him to classify constructs that he was aware of previously. He told me:

> I thought I knew or kinda had an idea or it's really kinda been brought to light but you find out what schools really are there for instead of what we're really doing with the schools like social reproduction, bilingual capabilities, bilingual fairness,…and it brings to light what you should really know…not what you think you know and something you might have an idea like, "This isn't right" but you can't put your finger on what it is like, "Oh, this is what it is" so…that's [how it] goes.

I was glad to hear that there was so much Peter was learning since entering the teacher program at Lotton. In speaking with him, I saw that he was very passionate about education and believed there were things he could personally do to help improve it within one school and within the field as a whole. When I asked him where he saw himself in ten years, Peter told me he would hopefully be "in [the] curriculum instruction department with LAUSD" or something of that nature. It seemed he would be a perfect fit.

When we parted after our first meeting at the coffee shop where we had agreed to meet, I asked Peter when and where we could meet next. He asked that we meet a week later at a small bread and sandwich store across town near Lotton University. I found it interesting that Peter, unlike Noah and Joseph, wanted to meet in public places. He never asked to show me where he lived like the others had. I thought that he perhaps was not comfortable with me yet and wanted to keep our meetings away from his place of

relaxation. Regardless, I was just happy to get the opportunity to meet with Peter. I felt lucky just to be with him and get his insights.

During our second interview at the sandwich shop, we began to discuss where Peter was born in Mississippi and he described the surrounding areas for me. I brought with me a map of Mississippi and he pointed out where he grew up. I showed him where I was for a wedding almost a year ago in Mississippi. He told me all about that area including how the rock group Aero Smith had visited there and as well as the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) circuit. He went on to tell me more about the demographics in Mississippi as he was growing. Of people that were not as well off as his family, he said:

> All they know is what they see on television. They're afraid to have…when I [came to LA], I told no one because you have many people who aren't used to traveling or stepping outside of their comfort zone. They can't even perceive to go past the south east region [of the state]. I've been out…all over the entire country so I know I've done amazing things.

For Peter, traveling was a big fascination of his. In fact, during the time he was a participant in my study, we had to take two weeks off because he decided to go to Europe with a friend of his. Peter was the type of person that always wanted to be experiencing new things; he was not satisfied with the simple nuisances that occurred in everyday life at work and in people's homes. He longed to learn about much more and on a much grander scale. At some point in his childhood I imagined, his mind was opened to all of the opportunities that the world had to offer. He jumped at every chance he got.

Peter knew he was very different from the other children he grew up with. The people he knew as a child had learned, in a sense, to fear what they had not seen and to stay contained in their own world. This set Peter apart from others; he told me, "[Where I grew up] if your father drove trucks, that was a good job and when they saw me and both my parents were doctors, I was always treated differently cause they couldn't relate to me." He told me, again, that he thought this thinking was reinforced for many at the high school level. "These kids, they go to this poor high school,…you're probably taught that blue collar work is the saving grace of us all," Peter told me as he continued to explain on how social reproduction was just as powerful in America's schools as anywhere else in society. Being a child of privilege in a not so wealthy area, Peter's eyes were opened as to how a system could work to continue to keep various groups in their places. He did not seem saddened by what he knew to be true in education or the "social reproduction" he saw that keeps children from succeeding; he just seemed to have always known what he needed to do for himself to succeed and not like those that chose to live a life that was stagnant. He was an opportunist and he took every chance he got to branch out into other, more interesting, and new avenues.

Not surprisingly, when we began to discuss the dynamics of Los Angeles and his experiences had been since he moved here from Mississippi, I was astonished by how well he had reflected and characterized some of the exact thoughts I had since moving here. He described Hollywood as a "disease" and said, "The farther you are away from Hollywood, the less stressful it gets and…the city is amazingly selfish." He talked about his shock at the proximity between wealth and poverty. He told me:

It's evil…I mean you have the hood maybe five miles away from Beverly Hills…

This is south central or south LA…right over here its La Cienega, Beverly Hills

and [you're] thinking this should be a million miles away…then, USC…once you

step on campus, you step into a whole 'nother universe…once you step off

campus, "Lord! Here we go!"

I had often wondered about this facet of Los Angeles although I had never discussed it

with anyone. It was interesting that Peter called it "evil" as if there was something that

needed to be done to end this living amongst polar-opposites. I assumed he was alluding

to the fact that there must be a way for a wealthy institution to give more back to the

surrounding community. But, he again told me that these things happen and it was "the

evil of a big city." He told me more about this:

In some cities, people stab you in the back but in LA, they stab you in the chest

and make you think its okay and you might think its okay and they'll tell you like,

"No, this doesn't hurt" and I'll be like, "No, it *does* hurt"…this is something you

really have to peel away at its core…people say New Yorkers are rude. I say,

"No, they are just brutally honest…at least you know where you stand."

I imagined what it must have been like moving into Los Angeles. Being a fast-paced city

that was also inundated with fashion, beauty, and Hollywood, Peter was exposed to many

experiences that had been painful for him to accept about other human beings. He had

been internally hurt by others since being in Los Angeles. He had also realized that many

individuals would do anything to make a name for themselves including steal, lie, and

cheat. These experiences, I imagined since they had for me as well, hardened him

209

somewhat. He was perhaps not as innocent and naïve as he was before moving to Los Angeles. The experience of living in Los Angeles forced individuals to grow up and acknowledge the ugliness in other human beings. As I thought about how our experiences had been similar, I began to realize perhaps why Peter had not offered to have the interview where he stayed. Although it seemed to me that we had connected quite well, he did not want to be judged by anyone. I did not blame him; although we never discussed it, I understood.

The third time we met, we joined again at the sandwich shop we met at the second time. Although we began chatting about some of the things he recalled about his high school experience, we also began discussing Peter's parents and their divorce that went on while he was in high school. Peter called his father an "egomaniac"; he did not tell me about how the bickering started but he did say that during his high school years, that was the "fighting time." Of his father, Peter told me:

> He had issues. We don't get along. Its always about him and that's what I asked, "Mother, did he do this?" She said, "He's just a spoiled baby. He'll never grow up."…It's all about him and we had moved…when we realized he wanted to get a divorce. I could get out of high school early so he wouldn't have to pay child support. I was like, "Is this what it is?"…I was like, "Evil genius!"

Peter was pushed by his parents, mostly his father, to get through high school quickly. In fact, at the beginning, he skipped a grade level. He graduated high school with a diploma at the age of sixteen so, as he puts it, his father could "get this pass on [his] mother" and not have to pay for Peter anymore. Peter has since grown closer with his mother. He

helped her with a cancer scare recently and she was fortunately able to battle successfully. He rarely spoke with his father.

While it seemed Peter was obviously distressed, as any child would be by the divorce, he also adopted a rather adult way of viewing all of the proceedings. He looked at his father as childish and selfish; he also saw how his father deliberately forced him to finish school early, whether he was ready or not, in order to benefit his own plans. Although Peter could certainly use these life experiences as excuses not to progress on his own endeavors, he did not. In fact, he told me what he learned through the whole divorce:

> Life doesn't care. It took me some years for this whole wisdom to come about. I mean if I want to live in society and live comfortably, I can't give up…I mean giving up is [a] really, really comforting idea…I mean, isn't it really easy to just stop and go to the beach and just live the rest of my life…but I don't like sleeping on concrete so that's a problem.

Peter took it upon himself to continue his life journey despite being a product of divorce. Much like Joseph, he had taken in some mistreatment from his father and has consciously chosen not to let it get him down. He makes things happen for himself.

After he finished high school at the age of 16, Peter told me that his mother would not allow him to go away to a four-year university because she just felt he was too young. Peter, enrolled in a community college and transferred after two years to a four-year college to work on his degree in Biology. While working on his undergraduate degree, Peter joined a "historically black fraternity." Since I knew Noah was a part of one and

that Joseph was strongly considering joining the same as Noah, I asked Peter how involved he was with his fraternity. Unlike Noah and Joseph and the several other men I knew personally that were a part of the Kappa fraternity, Peter was disillusioned by the experience. Although he was a member of the historically African-American Alpha fraternity, he did not speak fondly of what he recalled. He said:

> I was caught up in the image of what fraternities used to be. The commercial that they give you and it took a while to realize that, "Man, I believe the hype." I was thinking, "Oh, I could be cool if I do this with the organization" but then it's like, "These people don't know me." The fraternity was in a whole disarray and it's a joke. The fraternities have lost their way and they have now become just big pyramid schemes. They always want more members and they always want their dues. There are at least 100,000 people in these organizations and if you get $10 from each person,…there shouldn't be any problems or issues with these programs in African-American communities but it gets worse by the day.

It was interesting to hear these comments from Peter for several different reasons. First, it was a stark contrast from what Noah and Joseph told me about their experiences with fraternity life. It was interesting to hear another side of how these organizations worked that was perhaps not as productive as many may think. Secondly, Peter discussed how these organizations professed to give back to the community monetarily; for Peter, there was no evidence of this. He saw these groups as not only scamming the communities but scamming their own members through membership dues. What was perhaps most interesting was to hear how Peter had a soft spot. When he said he thought he should join

212

because he would be "cool," I was surprised. He seemed so independent and did not worry about other people's opinions. It surprised me that he had ever thought this way. Of course, he was a few years older than my other participants. Perhaps the time had allowed him to step back and reflect on what his fraternity days had really meant to him. I wondered and hoped that Noah and Joseph would not look back some day and think the same.

Once Peter completed his undergraduate degree in Biology, he took a year to teach and work before deciding to come to Lotton for graduate school. He told me about how he continues to navigate his way through school, substituting, and dating in pursuit of having a "comfortable" life. Once I heard that he was interested in teaching, I told him that a high school science teaching position I knew had opened up at a local school. At first, he seemed very interested but he later declined. He told me he wanted to focus on his own education, and although I felt he would have a tremendous impact at the school, I understood. There was much more Peter had to accomplish for himself in life. While he tried teaching, through our first three discussions on and off the record, I could tell he had more to offer at the administrative level outside the classroom rather than within it. Peter knew this too. Coming from a home where education and educational policy was discussed ad nauseam, Peter was certainly almost forced to become interested. However, his initial forced interest had turned into something much more; Peter loved learning and he seemed to want to help others to see how wonderful learning new things could be. He was going to take every opportunity he could to make the joy of learning a reality for others.

The Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Schooling

Racism in schools toward African-American males manifests itself in insidious, subtle ways. One major way in which this has occurred, as seen through the evidence in this study, has been via race and gender being intertwined. The data in this study showed that being both African-American and male carried with it a host of stereotypes, implications, and expectations. While young male individuals learned what was acceptable in terms of their masculine identity through social constructs and other social situations, African-American males learned to carry themselves differently. As Pierre (2007) noted, "There's something different about the way a black man has to walk in the world" (p. 43). Because they are African-American, these males learned the following: (a) in order to be successful academically, being inquisitive and exercising critical thinking skills are inappropriate; they must follow the rules of authorities and not question what they learn, (b) they must reduce themselves to their physical capabilities; African-American men belong in sports, not academia, and (c) they are "second-class citizens," are looked on differently as African-American men (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277), and are always behind European-American society. Each of these messages is described in greater detail below.

"This is how it works!" African-American males are habitually silenced within their schooling environments especially at the secondary level. The participants in this study described that they were very rarely prompted to think critically for themselves or to use their imagination to inspire deeper thinking. Rather, they were often asked to "regurgitate" information. They learned that, in order to be successful as African-

American men in the educational setting, they needed to be quiet and follow the rules set for the classroom. While following rules is arguably usually a positive, the extent to which these men were forced to do this caused them to think less creatively. This ruled out more innovative thinking, even though the men in this study were extremely capable of such. By educating in such a way and teaching African-American males specifically to utilize only a small fraction of their mental capacity, European-American supremacy is preserved successfully.

Noah spoke about one teacher he had as a senior that he disliked tremendously. He described the teacher as "unorganized," "junky," and "messy" and said he generally "didn't like how he ran the class." Noah also told me that this European-American teacher would "point people out and tongue lash" them for classroom behavior. In particular, Noah did not like this man because he often felt like he was being targeted for the "tongue lash[ing]." He said:

> There's been many times when he pulled me off to the side in class [and] after class and talked to me like, "You're a good student but you can't be messing around, goofing around in class…joking around with other students. They're not trying to learn. I see that you know the information, you do your homework." He was telling me not to challenge him in class and…those little sessions made it kinda worse.

The teacher became agitated with Noah's inquisitive nature toward his class. He also became upset with Noah when Noah asked him about assignments and assessments the class had recently taken. Noah told me further about his experiences with this teacher:

We take a test. We'd be like, "Okay, when are we going to get our test back?" I figure after a week, he'd have them done so I'd go up and ask, "When we getting our test back?" and… he'd just be like, "Don't worry, you'll get it. Don't worry, you'll get it" and then continue his lecture. The next time we have the class he'd say, "No, they're not done. Don't even worry about it. When they are done, I'll let you know." So, after a while, I just wouldn't even ask, worry about it anymore.

The teacher communicated to the students including Noah that there are more important things for him to concern himself with than assessing how well the students understood the content of the course.

When the teacher pulled Noah aside and told him not to "challenge" him during class, a power dynamic was established. The teacher took on the role of master and all-knowing leader while the rest of the students in the predominantly African-American classroom were his subjects. Further, he told Noah specifically that he should sit quietly and observe what he was being taught. The teacher was informing him that if he, as an African-American male wanted to be successful, it meant he must lose his inquisitive identity and stop questioning his European-American instructor. The teacher further implied that the other members of the predominantly African-American class were animalistic and cannot be controlled; however, Noah was smart and he had a chance to be successful unlike others. But, Noah could only be a success if he, in more ways than one, kept quiet and followed the rules. From Noah's response, that is exactly what he learned to do. He stopped questioning his teacher just so he could get by. He learned his place as a successful African-American male.

Peter also told me how he felt he had learned that just following the rules was what he, as an African-American male, needed to do to be successful in the classroom. He communicated this when I asked him what he felt the best advice was that he received while he was in high school. Peter told me:

> I got it from a weed head, gang banger who had great grades. I was like, "How did you get great grades?" and he was like, "'cause I do what the teacher tell me to do"…I was like, "That's the best advice"…he was a class clown but it was like, "How did you pull this balancing act?"…I was like, "Yes! This is how it works!" and he was like, "Yeah, just pay attention…just do what the teacher tell you to do…just follow the directions."

This peer showed Peter how, as an African-American male, a "balancing act" is possible. By being a rule follower and doing what authority figures ask, the African-American male can in fact receive rewards in academia such as good grades and the teachers' praises. Kozol (2005) discussed the differences in learning processes that go on within different schools; he discussed how in well-funded schools, students get pushed to think creatively. Students in well-funded schools were encouraged to be innovative and come up with new ways of considering how to handle various situations (Kozol, 2005). This was not what Peter described. At his school, his fellow African-American male peers learned to succeed by being rule followers. They were not encouraged to think creatively and were, in turn, restricted to thinking at only the minimal critical thinking level. While upper level thinking skills require performing classroom activities that involve instructions to "construct", "create" and "develop" (Overbaugh & Schultz, 2010),

217

African-American males are simply asked to "list", "duplicate" and "repeat"; these are the lowest level of critical thinking skills according to Bloom's taxonomy, developed in 1956, that described the "levels of intellectual behavior important to learning" (Overbaugh & Schultz, 2010). Instruction that does not stimulate African-American males to utilize their own creative thinking preserves European-American dominance in the educational setting.

Gause (2005) discussed how African-American males have been taught throughout the years to expect less from themselves in the classroom and to simply do as they are told. Gause (2005) stated:

> Throughout American history, black males were not, in fact, expected to be able to fulfill the ideal male gender role. Indeed, it was made abundantly clear that severe repercussions would follow if they made serious and persistent efforts to do so. Exercising power, at the economic, political, social, and cultural level, was not only not expected it was fervently opposed. (p. 20)

Gause (2005) further discussed how the "iron ceilings" (p. 20) that exist in the educational setting for African-American males teach these young men their restrictions within the Eurocentric society in which they live. Further, Gause (2005) noted that African-Americans as a whole group are looked on with low expectations. Thus, what Noah and Peter described in terms of learning to both keep quiet and follow rules to be successful was particularly fitting; as African-American males, they were being prepped for the work force and, as some would argue (Noguera, 2003), prison (Children's Defense Fund, 2007). Gause (2005) specifically said: "When educating black children,

the culture of this group as a potential force for political, economic, and social development is given very little attention during the schooling process" (p.21). Because of their race and gender, African-American males such as Peter and Noah are systemically taught that they simply do not belong.

This evidence also speaks to how the centrality of race, a tenet of CRT, continues to affect the conduct of school business (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002) through guarding access to knowledge from African-American males. Stanton-Salazar (1997) noted that minority students are constantly faced with institutionalized marginalization within their academic settings. One of the five ways Stanton-Salazar identified the way students of color are marginalized within their schools is through discouragement when attempts at improving behavior and performance are made (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). For Noah, his teacher asked him to stop "challenging" him in the classroom; for Peter, he learned that there was not anything extraordinary he should do to receive accolades. Peter learned he just needed to do what he was told. As a result, these individuals experienced a lack of enjoyment towards learning that some other groups enjoy, and are forced into deficit thinking models. Further, as noted by McLaren (2009) previously:

> Knowledge acquired in school—or anywhere, for that matter—is never neutral or objective but is ordered and structured in particular ways; its emphasis and exclusions partake of a silent logic. Knowledge is a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relationships. (p. 63)

There is nothing objective about Peter's learning to follow what his teachers told him to do or Noah's learning to keep quiet when he was learning something in the classroom. These African-American males were systemically targeted and subtly taught that knowledge is essentially not something that their race or gender should acquire in the ways other racial groups are allowed. This is preserving the second-class status of African-American men within the educational setting and beyond. "It is in fact the ultimate example of European rationalism" when society uses measures of the dominant group and various social constructions to maintain their power and push the perspectives of people of color to the side ever so discreetly (Asante, 1988, p. 80). This was undeniably the experience of my participants.

"Athletes get away with a whole lot." For the African-American males in this study, being an academic was overtly discouraged. In fact, the only avenue that was positively encouraged for all these young men was athletics. Racism manifests in such a way that African-American men feel compelled to be athletes. By discouraging every other avenue these young men might chose to take, European-American supremacy remains in tact by confining African-American males to represent themselves with only their physical capabilities.

All three of the participants in this study discussed how they were largely disheartened from being involved in academia. They were all lead to believe, during their time in secondary school especially, that they did not belong in the world of the mind. They came to believe that sports were what African-American males were expected to do. They learned that if they were athletes, they would receive rewards such as respect

from teachers and other adults. If they were not, they would not be noticed. The participants discussed with me how racism and a collection of stereotypical constructs were passed along in the classrooms of their respective high schools. These participants were overtly and covertly taught to utilize their physical bodies and ignore academics entirely.

Noah spoke about strict rules and unfairness much during our interviews from what he recalled about high school. He discussed the strict rules in place especially for young men regarding keeping a clean, trimmed appearance. He told me about one of the rules in particular:

> No facial hair…and a lot of people were developing and stuff…a lot of people were starting to develop facial hair…it got to the point where they would do like random checks and if you got caught, you would either have to go home or use these messed up clippers that one of the male teachers had with no alcohol or nothin'…you could catch all kind of diseases…sometimes they would miss me cause I had a little baby face.

He further told me about how some of these rules were different for some depending on their athletic status. In general, athletes were always given the best treatment and had rules bended for them the most. He told me:

> Athletes get away with a whole lot and teachers don't say anything cause they are athletes and they perform well so they have good representation for the school…I just think that sometimes teachers really put up with stuff they don't have to like makin' jokes, trying to talk to girls, and girls tryin' to talk to them…teachers

really shouldn't have to put up with that…they don't do that with regular students like if I would have done that, I'd be out of the class…I would have been out of the class in a hurry.

These incidences send a detrimental and discouraging message to every African-American male that experiences them. For Noah, he and his male peers were in an environment where following the rules was more important that anything else. Those in authority were teaching them to conform and taught them to get ready for a future full of consequences if they do not follow the rules. They were pushed to fall into these stereotypes, otherwise they would be seen as not conforming and they would undoubtedly suffer. As for the message spread by promoting athletics, this was offered as their way of conforming in a world full of rules for them. They were being taught that they could become an athlete and receive praise and have rules bended for them; they could receive good treatment if they entertained. But, if they did not (if they are just "regular" or an anomaly), they needed to prepare for the consequences. Essentially, for the African-American male, the choice that is presented here is simple: be an athlete or entertainer or you are not being African-American. There is no room offered here to encourage free thinking, to encourage African-American young men at this age to start thinking differently about their future options, and starting their own legacy. The exploration that could occur is silenced by strict and almost inhumane rules. However, respect is shown for African-American males showing their best talents through physical strength. African-American men, like Noah, are given the ultimatum that they must depreciate themselves to their bodies or be prepared for a life of non-acceptance by

everyone in society including their own African-American counterparts. This life of restricted options will occur literally or in the subtle ways society chooses to impose it.

Joseph grappled with learning how to be a man since he was ten years old. Not having a close relationship with his father and losing all the men close to him in his life to jail or to their own endeavors, Joseph learned on his own that he needed to take care of himself and, as an African-American male, needed to carry himself a certain way. For Joseph, because of his race, he learned that he needed to work harder than most. In high school, Joseph told me how he allowed his grades to slip in one particular semester to prove to himself he could get back to his usual A status. When I asked him more about this, he said it was a challenge he wanted to give himself, like entertainment. He later clarified there was more to it than one might suspect. He told me:

It's important that people see me as confident in myself because I think, as a minority, I think if you see a minority that's confident in their education, that's rare. It's like, "Oh, I can be confident in my athletics and stuff" but to be confident in my intelligence…I want to set an example for others.

As an African-American, Joseph felt that people did not think he was capable of being a smart human being. Although he did not tell me exactly where he learned this message, it was clearly conveyed to him strongly while he was in high school. He learned that those in the dominant society did not believe minorities belonged in education. Joseph failed his classes, only to come back on his own and pass with an A. He was conducting his own experiment to prove dominant society's hypothesis false. However, Joseph did not seem to have done this only to prove others wrong. He wanted to prove it to himself more

than anything. This message that he, as an African-American, was not fit for education had undoubtedly penetrated him deeply. Being an accelerated student all his life until getting to high school, hearing such messages left him with something to prove.

In the second portion of his statement, Joseph showed, like Noah, that as an African-American male, he was told to reduce himself to confidence in his physical capabilities. The emphasis he received not to dabble in education was powerful. He believed that minorities are pushed into sports as a way of keeping them out of upper level academia. Thus, he felt the need to prove this message wrong and said, "I want to set an example for others." In high school, he did this by finishing near the top of his class and going off to a four-year college while many of his peers did not, such as his best African-American friend, William, who chose to become an entertainer and comedian rather than attend college.

The picture Joseph painted the image the African-American male should adhere to was clear. As Hunt (2006) noted, African-American males are never given the opportunity to be judged based on intellect. Rather, to be considered masculine, Hunt (2006) stated African-American males are pushed towards sports, guns, and selling drugs. According to Hunt (2006), the African-American male is not praised for his accomplishments, especially when these accomplishments occur within academia. Through what Joseph learned in high school, African-American males own the world of sports. African-American men are to be strong basketball players, powerful football players, and talented baseball players. Joseph learned that the world of the mind and intellect were reserved for European-American society. The problem for Joseph was that

he was always strong academically and was not given a chance to play baseball in high school. This left him no choice but to try and prove himself through his intelligence. This was why Joseph felt the need to fail his classes in the beginning of a semester and finish with A's by the end. When Joseph was in high school, he discovered that the world he wanted to be a part of was not meant for people of his race or gender according to European-American society.

In high school, Joseph learned that as an African-American, he was expected to be involved in athletic contests and not academic decathlons. This is a clear example of how he experienced gendered racism in his high school. European-American supremacy discredits the intelligence of African-American males by encouraging confidence in a physical skill set that is not necessarily fitting for all. Joseph felt forced into a mold in which he did not fit; where he felt the most comfortable, he constantly felt he did not belong. European-American supremacy works in insidious ways to keep young men such as Joseph confused and channeled into arenas that are inappropriate for them. The messages that Joseph learned in high school worked to keep him and other African-American males reduced to their physicality and in their place under European-American society.

Peter discussed that, as an African-American male, he felt pushed toward athletics from all angles, even when he was in the academic setting. He told me about one of his African-American male teachers that constantly put athletics first and academics second. He told me:

> Mr. Miles was my algebra teacher…he was also the basketball coach so he would talk to us about the basketball game, then he would teach stuff the last ten minutes of class and give us a test and be upset that we all didn't pass…it was just ridiculous.

What Peter discussed showed how the teacher attempted to steer the priorities of the classroom toward sports instead of math. This emphasized the notion that it was in fact true that African-American males were to be involved in athletics. They were surrounded and immersed in it; it was simply an expectation. For the African-American male, academia was not as important and would not advance the African-American male as much as being an athlete could.

Peter further told me about the overall emphasis on sports such as football for African-American males at his high school. In one interview, he told me:

> Football in the south…its huge…there is really nothing to do besides football and its all about "so-and-so this" and "so-and-so that." A lot of teachers put the kids on pedestals and when you're in this social thing where all this and that revolves around this kid that's in 9th grade,…you'd be more inclined to put him on a pedestal too…as much emphasis is put on sports and football in general,…if we could put this much emphasis on education…it's so much on sports that so many people…miraculously dream of going pro…you have some kids like, "You can't go to this school or that school but you can go pro and get in."

Peter began to discuss how he felt overlooked and perhaps underappreciated somewhat for being more of an academic than an athlete; he also seemed confused throughout his

226

high school period as he grappled with understanding why the world of school always revolved around the world of sports despite being within the academic setting. For an African-American male, even those who attempt to become more strong academics, sports is constantly being forced down their throats. This force-feeding of sports from teachers, parents, and other adult figures keeps African-American males contained under the thinking that their only purpose is to be a source of entertainment by showing off their physical capabilities, not their intellectual talents. Thus, learning to be an entertainer, the African-American male is almost forced to take on such characteristics as "aggressive posturing" (Henry, 2002, p. 114) in order to get recognition.

Within predominantly European-American schools and schools that are well supported monetarily, students are taught various subjects such as math, science, and English, just like within lower performing schools such as the one Peter described as being in his experience from high school. However, within these well-funded schools, students might often ask their teachers why they should take the time to learn various topics and their teachers will try to support their curricular choices. As Peter described within his "98% Black" high school, this was not that case. Teachers talked about sports ad nauseam, whereas other adults were more into "social things" involving which athletes might "go pro" some day. Further, those that succeeded athletically were "put on pedestals" by everyone in the athletic and academic community. For Peter, it made the choice very clear: be an athlete and entertainer or be forgettable.

Gause (2005) discussed the "commodified bodies" of African-American males in detail (p. 23). He stated that African-American men are characterized as "super star

athlete[s], indignant rapper[s], menacing gang member[s]" and "movie star[s]" and these roles are where the "conflicting claims about (and for) black masculinity are waged" (p. 23). Further, because these men are "typecast" this way, there are limited ways in which their masculinity construct is formed. Their image includes one of strength and powerful athletic capabilities, and they are never recognized for anything else. He also stated, "For most young black men, power is acquired by styling their bodies over space and time in such a way those their bodies reflect their uniqueness and provoke fear in others" (Gause, 2005, pp. 19-20). Through their involvement in sports, African-American males shape this image. They are made to feel that this is the only choice they have. As described by the participants, it is no wonder they feel this way since the message to get involved in athletics is constantly ingrained in their minds.

As African-American males, these men are taught not to challenge Eurocentric reality and to become puppets of the dominant race's world. By staying restricted to athletics and receiving such messages from all angles, African-American young men continue to be controlled. As Ferber (2007) noted previously, African-American male athletes are almost always shown to be under "the control of whites" (p. 20). He stated:

> Although African-American men have been very successful in certain sports, they are rarely found in positions of power and control—as coaches or owners. Within the industry, they are largely under the control of white men. Success in the field of athletics does nothing to undermine the historical propensity to reduce Black men to their bodies. (p. 20)

African-American men are taught to be controlled. Despite this, one of the tenets of CRT states that the theory serves to challenge Eurocentric reality (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002), the evidence here showed that the European-American dominated world continues to be maintained. Through teachers, both African-American and others teaching their young African-American male students that sports should be their path, these men's capacities are being reduced. Their image is set; they are to be examples of strength, not examples of intellect or any of the other infinite attributes that European-American men are given the chance to try. European-American supremacy remains intact.

"Work[ing] twice as hard as this white kid." The participants discussed how they were often subjected to African-American male stereotypes while in high school as well as other systemic messages that implied they were not only different but were "second class citizens" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277), especially in academia. The evidence showed how these men: (a) must struggle with not fitting into African-American male stereotypes, (b) are given ultimatums and often forced to chose between living as they wish versus conforming to dominant group norms, and (c) being forcefully pushed out of being accepted by the dominant group through actions committed at the secondary school setting. The racism these men discussed was pervasive and it attacked them at their core. They were taught that, as African-American men, they were to be strong, even "hypersexual", (Ferber, 2007, p. 16), and adopt European-American norms if they wanted to be successful, and to stay out of academia.

When I asked Noah about people that he had problems with in high school, he said there were not that many people. He did say, however, that he knew certain people made fun of him for various reasons. In one interview, he told me, "I really didn't have any enemies or whatever…they knew who I was…called me 'little smart boy'." During the same interview, he also told me about a female friend of his that used to call him "little brother" in high school. Since being in college, he hinted that their relationship had changed and that he had driven out to her college to visit her once. He told me "she doesn't call me that anymore" and smiled.

All of these names coupled with the other messages about athletics being more important than academics must become confusing and irritating, such as the adjective "little" to describe an African-American young man who was learning the stereotypes of his gender and race, which are to be strong, athletic, and "hypersexual" (Ferber, 2007, p. 16). The "little" label made Noah feel he was not fitting in or doing what he should. When paired with the word "smart" and "boy" especially, it seemed that those calling Noah this were communicating that he was not only not fitting the African-American mold, but he was not even a man yet. Additionally, Noah's female friend calling him her "brother" implies that she was not interested in anything further than a friendly relationship. These names imply that Noah was not as physically dominant as other African-Americans, that he was sadly more interested in education and intelligence than showing any physical skills, and he was still a child. The truth for Noah was that he seemed to be more grown-up than most and took responsibility for his academic learning. He told me about how organized he was, how he tracked down teachers and staff when

he needed to, and he tried to be respectful of the female students he cared for by listening to them and being generally cordial. The details he shared with me, and the way I observed him respecting and caring for his family and friends, made me think that in high school he was probably the most mature young man on his campus.

When an African-American young man at the high school level is called names such as "little smart boy" and "little brother" while simultaneously being bombarded with so many other messages about what he ought to be as an African-American male, it is personally frustrating. It makes young African-American men want to prove themselves more than ever. They might try to prove themselves as men by working out physically hard to bulk up or by becoming promiscuous. Regardless, he is an individual trying to fit into a stereotype that he is not. Many African-American men like Noah are forced into proving themselves using such means.

Joseph told me about a man that he looked up to when he was in high school for guidance not only on how to become a better baseball player but on how to be a better man. On a more positive note, Joseph spoke often of how much he enjoyed his junior varsity baseball coach from high school. "His last name was Mizzuno but he looked Caucasian but it was always a big mystery [what race he was]," Joseph told me about his coach. He also told me about some of the things he recalled that the coach made the team do. He said:

> Every time we ran, we'd have to say dedication, determination, discipline, and
>
> desire; these were the four D's…were like our motto and these things were just
>
> like implanted in us. That's something that really stuck with me…that dedication,

determination, discipline, and desire…and he just really instilled in us kinda like

that sense of manhood. Like if he saw any of us with our hats on on campus, it

was 25 push-ups,…if our pants were sagging, it was 25 pushups. He just really

instilled that sense of manhood and responsibility to us.

Joseph also told me that his coach always emphasized "looking nice" while on campus
for the players on the team as well.

Although all these messages certainly seem harmless, for a young man the

process of learning to be what society informed him to be as an African-American man

got convoluted. With regards to being African-American, this coach taught Joseph and

the other players on the team to reject being like their peers with "sagging pants" and

hats. He taught them to be men by having a clean appearance, being physically strong,

and taking discipline when discipline was needed. All of these messages were given to

Joseph from a man whom he presumed to be European-American. While the other

players on the team perhaps took these messages as learning tools and building blocks for

constructing themselves as men, for Joseph, these lessons went much further.

As an African-American male learning these ways of being a man, Joseph has

been bombarded with the binary choices. He was given the following options: (a) he

could stay how he was and continue do well in school and, when that did not materialize,

"go to the streets" with all the other "saggy pants" and hat wearing kids or (b) he can

adopt what this European-American male was showing him how to do and be personally

successful through the "four d's."

What the coach taught all of the young men on Joseph's junior varsity baseball team in high school was certainly not meant to be detrimental to anyone's development. However, through the eyes of an African-American male young man, these lessons continued to make him aware of his limited options: to conform and be like the European-American male or to do what "everyone else" in the African-American community is doing—"frontin'" and "tryin' to be a player." With pressure from other African-American peers not to conform and to essentially choose a route that would not lead to personal success, Joseph faced a difficult choice.

Joseph also spoke about how his junior varsity baseball coach would often tell him that he was being "lazy." "He always used to tell me 'You're being lazy! You're being lazy! Better be working out!" Joseph said that his coach used to tell him. As he told me this, I also found this difficult to imagine. From what I knew about Joseph, he was one of the most hardworking people I had met. Although I did not know Joseph in high school, I imagined that he had not deviated too much from the person that he is now. He told me, he was doing adult, independent chores at the age of 10. Thus, it troubled me to hear him accept his coach telling him he was being "lazy" and that he should be "working out" and doing more to better himself. Hearing this as an African-American man sent the message that because of race, Joseph had to work harder than the others. Though Joseph welcomed these comments at the time, I wondered about the subconscious messages that Joseph interpreted. He told me himself in a previous interview, as an African-American man, "Why do I always have to work twice as hard as this white kid?" This had been one of the many instances that caused him to feel this way.

As Pierre (2007) stated, "There's something different about the way a Black man has to walk in the world" (p. 43). I wondered if Joseph's baseball coach helped in this or just made his direction more difficult to mold. I also wondered what it would be like for Joseph if he had been coached by an African-American male. I wondered if such a man could have been a better example for Joseph as he sought out how to be an African-American male in a European-American dominated society.

Joseph also told me more about the dominant group norms he was constantly exposed to in high school. He spoke about how he was almost exclusively taught through a Eurocentric lens and how, for him, the only way to get a different take on the world and events was to hear it from someone of his own race. "Everything that we do is from one perspective in the classroom. It's always from the White perspective. We have our Black History month and our Caesar Chavez day…but what about everything else?", Joseph told me during one of our interviews. It reminded me of what he told me about Lotton and the student body when he had told me about how there are Asian overnights, Black overnights, and Latino overnights for the new incoming students. However, he told me that for the "Caucasian" students, "the campus is [theirs]." Saying this, it was as if he was saying these holidays are one to two days out of the year; European-Americans get the other 363 days.

Joseph previously discussed with me how difficult it was as an African-American male to be confident in his education. To be aware that he was receiving curriculum that helped the development of European-American children, but leaving his culture out, was distressing. This is further evidence of the way Eurocentric reality promotes academia for

some and actively works to keep others, such as African-American men, out. While Joseph may not know exactly why many African-American males ("everyone else") chose a life "on the streets," being bombarded with messages centered on European-American pedagogy makes the picture more clear. How can an African-American male with adequate academic skills glorify academia when he learns through the curriculum delivered that he has no place in it and he is better suited for a life in sports? What choices do these men have?

For Joseph, it took an African-American teacher showing him what the expectations for African-American males were. "Some black teacher would [come along] and tell you about it," he told me as he described for me what the "talented tenth" meant. I asked him to clarify what he meant in an interview; he was shocked that I had never heard of the term before. He calmly explained it to be as if me was reading it out of a Webster's dictionary:

> Its basically a term that they used…10% of African-American people are smart people…out of every 10 African-American people, you'll get 1 smart Black student…basically that was smart enough to be successful or smart enough to do stuff...so basically, 1 out of every 10, 10 out of every 100, 100 out of every 1,000, you know, those people that would be smart, would do something with their life.

As if there was not enough pressure already, Joseph made it clear that he knew what European-American society thinks of him and his African-American male counterparts' chances in life. It was difficult and depressing to consider living a life where the expectations were practically non-existent. European-American supremacy works on a

daily basis to ensure that African-American males do not only fail to succeed in academia, but it also works to keep African-American men feeling that they do not belong in education in the first place.

These pieces of evidence serve to show how the centrality of race, as a tenet of CRT and coupled with gender, continues to serve as a "primary organizing principle" for the African-American male (Foley, 1991, p. 78). Because of Noah's interest in academics in high school, his entire sense of manhood was called into question when his peers call him "little" and "boy." Thus, they questioned whether he was African-American as well as a man. Joseph was forced to choose between a world of being "on the streets" or a world of success that would ultimately require him to adopt European-American norms. Since he felt habitually disengaged from the classroom as a result of Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy, however, his choice was not always transparent.

For younger students of color, discouragement from learning in the classroom comes from many different angles. As Ladson-Billings (1999) stated, "indignities are skimmed over in the classrooms that purport to develop students into citizens" (p. 19). These indignities come from fellow classmates messages regarding being "uncool" to messages from teachers in the form of curricular choices and content chosen to be discussed as well as content discarded. Race and gender continue to keep African-American males situated stagnantly along the racialized continuum; they are situated so that they are capable of moving laterally but not necessarily up to the status where the dominant group resides. The participants in this study indicated that they have experienced this ceiling. The participants further suggested, especially Noah, that being

an African-American male who is successful in academia means not being a part of a world that has been stereotyped as African-American. As Guase (2005) asked, "What situations does black masculinity create for those brothers who refuse to play the game?" (p. 19).

The Role of Intraracial Messages in Schooling

While racism in schools often spreads from the dominant group to students of color, it also manifests through messages spread intraracially from one student of color to another. The evidence from this study showed the extent to which racism influences society. The constructs of racism are so powerful that African-American males learn to accept the lowered expectations of themselves as disseminated by European-American society. They internalize these powerfully debilitating constructs and communicate the negative messages they have come to live by to each other. As in the case of the study participants, the evidence showed that racism was often perpetuated from their fellow African-American classmates and adult African-American male role models. It is imperative to note, before continuing, that the underlying reason for the racism African-American males experience from each other is not a construction they created. Rather, the racist messages that African-American males spread amongst each other about each other has been constructed by European-American supremacy. Supremacy of the dominant group involves ensuring that those that are not a part of it continue to struggle amongst themselves and with one another. Thus, people of color will always remain too preoccupied with their own intraracial issues to fight together against their oppression. The intraracial, color-on-color racism that the participants described in this study was

seen through four main ways: (a) ridicule and discouragement for being involved in academia, (b) exposure to what being an African-American man involves, (c) self-segregation from African-Americans that are "products of the system", and (d) alienation as a result of status and skin tone. Each of these major categories is described below.

"You don't want to be one of the smart kids!" One form of intraracial racism that participants discussed originating from fellow African-Americans were messages involving discouragement and ridicule toward academia or being involved within one's own education. This type of racism the participants described experiencing in high school made them feel as if they were abandoning their own racial group while simultaneously adopting the norms of the dominant group. This racism made participants feel less capable in their educational settings, as well as less comfortable in expressing who they were. Peter and Noah described their battles with the messages they received from fellow African-American males regarding what they were expected to achieve or not achieve in the classroom, as well as what their appearance should be as an African-American male.

Noah discussed that he was taught to be afraid of academics as an African-American male. When I asked him about any particular teachers he disliked during his freshman year in high school, he named a teacher that he did not take a class from that year. He named a science teacher who older students, including his cousin had told him about. He said all he ever heard about the class was comments such as "Oh my gosh! This is so hard!" and "Yeah, I'm getting a D" from upper classmen. Noah said that he thought, "Oh my gosh, I know when I take that class, I know I'm gonna have a problem." He said he even heard that "good students" were getting C's and his cousin, who was a

senior when Noah was a freshman, told Noah that the class was "terrible." Noah said he took his cousin's comments lightly since he did not think his cousin was a good student. However, even having acknowledged this, he was afraid and not looking forward to the science classes he would take as a junior and senior.

Noah's cousin and his friends may not have done well in this teacher's science class as a result of the difficulty of the class as well as their own work ethic. They never mentioned to Noah that this teacher was unfair or that they felt he was prejudicial towards certain students. They simply continued to inform Noah of the difficulty of the class and that it was impossible to earn an A or B in the course. The message these individuals passed along to Noah was that they, as African-American men, were incapable of passing difficult courses. These young men had undoubtedly experienced some form or oppression previously and were not given a chance to recover or improve within the academic setting. Consequently, when faced with this challenging course and challenging teacher, these men were giving up. They imposed their feelings of giving up and the idea that excelling academically was a lost cause onto Noah.

The message that Noah learned from his older peers was that certain feats simply were not attainable for the African-American male, especially when these feats were posed within the educational setting. What these men may have experienced previously leading them to pass along this negative message when faced with a challenge was unknown. Perhaps teachers previously had constant low expectations for them in general; or, maybe at some point, a teacher overtly or covertly communicated to each of these men that they simply were not going to learn up to their own expectations. Regardless of

what happened, they learned they would not be able to overcome certain barriers no matter how hard they worked. Consequently, some of them gave up and, undoubtedly, felt troubled by it. As a means of keeping themselves in good company and helping themselves to accept what they could not overcome, they spread the message to others, like Noah, that some feats were simply not worth trying for as they would never be successfully undertaken. While Noah certainly defied these messages and was in the running for Valedictorian his senior year, the message was stated for him clearly: there is a ceiling for African-American male achievement in academia.

When I asked Peter to tell me more about why he felt he was picked on by many of the other African-American male students at his school, he told me:

I was dumbing myself down to fit in which is easy to do but hard to get out of…but it was survival too…Lord, God! You don't want to be one of the smart kids…I tried to hide it. I tried not to dress like a geek, God have mercy. You can have great grades but you don't have to dress like something out of a book.

Peter described the pressure he felt to conform and prove that he was not "a geek" and did not conform. He suggested that it would be a mistake to "dress like something out a book," referring to dressing in a way that his fellow classmates did not dress to mimic European-American society. He was in fear of being labeled a "sellout" or as "acting White" (Gibson, 2005, p. 587; Ogbu, 1992, p. 10) not only because of his academic performance, but also because of the way he dressed. As an African-American male, he was expected not to dress with European-American norms but rather to be a baggy jeans-wearing kid, typically associated with African-American appearance (Ferber, 2007;

240

Henry, 2002). Peter expressed the binary pressure he felt as an African-American male:
He had to be African-American or conform to the European-American world and be
ridiculed by his peers forever.

Noah provided another example of how racist messages were disseminated in
high school amongst the African-American community. Noah described to me how his
peers learned to live with the stereotypical African-American male image. They believed
that wearing certain clothing was imperative to fitting the image that society had
imposed. Noah explained how he was treated for not fitting in with the stereotype:

At first, I didn't have any problem with the uniforms, until like I was ridiculed or
talked about cause my pants was too tight or whatever…but I guess that goes
along with the territory…kids always make fun of each other…everyone used to
talk about [me], "Your pants are too tight."

What Noah described as "kids always making fun of each other" was perhaps much more
when it occurred amongst African-American males. Because of the stereotypical images
imposed on their race and gender, these men learned to have a rough image. Baggy
clothing was critical in communicating who they are: men that are not interested in
academics but are instead consumed with living dangerously and more importantly, not
doing what European-American society accepts. According to Hunt (2006), African-
American males earned their masculinity; society forces these men to fit into
stereotypical images involving selling drugs, having guns, and having many women. The
appearance of baggy clothing was one way to communicate this imposed masculinity.
African-American men reject norms of the dominant society and attempt to be as

different from society's glorified image as possible. Through wearing baggy clothing as opposed to form-fitting clothes, African-American men communicate that they have their own identity and it is clearly separate from what European-American men are doing.

Thus, when Noah came to school with what I imagined to be pants that fit him at his proper weight and height, his African-American counterparts "ridiculed" him for conforming to European-American society and not taking on the image that these men had embraced of themselves: baggy pants-wearing kids with no interested in their education whatsoever. This is born out of a racism that is subtle and pervasive. African-American men create their own identity through their appearance, such as wearing baggy clothing. Society holds African-Americans men to be "second-class" citizens (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277) and provides images of African-American men expressing themselves in these styles plastered anywhere and everywhere people can see it. These images are, then, labeled "threatening" (Ferber, 2007, p. 17), "violent" (Ferber, 2007, p. 22) and "aggressive" (Henry, 2002, p. 114). African-American men are forced into a system that may never accept them. The only shred of pride they have left is a distinctive look; unaccepted by others or not, it is their own. When an African-American male comes to school wearing clothes that are typically associated with European-American society, he not only appears to be embracing the dominant culture but he is, in a sense, rejecting his own. Unfortunately for Noah, I believe he simply wore what his parents were able to provide him with.

Racism again plays a central role when used to imply that African-American males must take on a certain image and are not expected to perform well academically

when courses get difficult. This is another example of race being used as an "organizing principle" (Foley, 1991, p. 78) in education, and a central theme of CRT (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). Further, the study participants indicated they felt pressured not to conform to dress that would insinuate adopting Eurocentric norms. As a result of their race, they learned to have a "diamond in the back, sunroof top, digging in the scene with a gangster-lean profile" (Gause, 2005, p. 22). More critically, this message has been communicated to them from other African-Americans. This oppression is so great that it works to have African-American males inform each other of their own confines and low expectations. When these men wear baggy clothes, they send the message to others that they are "aggressive, hypersexual, threatening, and potentially violent" (Ferber, 2007, p. 16) as African-American males are stereotyped to be. Consequently, they learn from their peers that their appearance is unacceptable when it communicates anything else; they must continue to communicate to others that they are different and, by fitting into the mold European-American society has created for them, they remain "second class citizens" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277).

In his work, one scholar recently shared a story about the "image" of the African-American male. Whiting (2009) shared a story that a colleague told him with regard to the African-American male stereotype. He stated:

> School personnel were transporting Black students to an awards event in which students were to be honored for outstanding academic achievement. One Black male, a junior named Keith, approached the school van dressed in baggy pants, an

overly large sweatshirt, and a headband. Upon entering the van, he proceeded to pull off the outer layers of his outfit to expose a crisp dress shirt and creased khaki pants. He swapped tennis shoes for casual shoes. Before anyone could question him, the young man asserted: "I have an image to maintain." (p. 225)

As the author stated and as Noah showed through his story about his upperclassmen friends informing him that he cannot, as an African-American, achieve in certain academic spaces, "being smart isn't part of that image" (p. 225). Whiting (2009) goes on to discuss the "scholar identity" that he defined as an identity "in which Black males perceive themselves as academics, as studious, and as intelligent or talented in school settings" (p. 227). He also stated that this identity is often unavailable to these young men and they are not given access to it in the first place. As was seen through the evidence of the participants in this study, one major way was by African-Americans ridiculing the "scholar identity" (Whiting, 2009, p. 227) amongst each other; so ingrained is their oppression that they feel the need to ensure that their stereotypical image remains in tact. This is the only way many young African-American men feel they are able to be true to themselves. Thus, oppression is spread from one African-American male to another.

"Like…grown man…you know?" High school is certainly a critical time developmentally for young adults. For African-American males, it is a time when they learn the most about masculinity from each other as well as from African-American adult males that are in their lives (Whiting, 2009). Racism manifests itself at this time when African-American males communicate to younger African-American young men that being a man involves owning expensive objects, that physical abuse is sometimes

244

necessary to control others, and that athletics are, again, the most acceptable avenue for African-American males. Adult African-American males spread this message along to their younger counterparts. Thus, oppression continues as the young men learn to embrace the meaning of being an adult in the African-American adult male body. The evidence from the participants in this study suggests that this form of racism remains alive today in high school settings.

Throughout the times I interviewed Noah, he spoke much about the boys' Varsity basketball coach who was also the dean of discipline at his high school. He spoke quite a bit about this coach and changes in their relationship over time. The coach, named Coach Payne, was African-American. Noah told me that at first, he "hated him for the longest." This was because he felt that he was always unfairly targeted by Coach Payne when he was acting as dean. Noah said this began as a result of his family's past at the school:

> I had three different cousins that went there over the years…but, [when] my cousin Robbie went…Robert was really good at basketball and Coach the dean wouldn't let him play for the team…he went to all the workouts and all that stuff and he wouldn't let him play…my auntie got really mad and went up there and had an argument with him and…so on the first day of school,…Coach was like, "Oh, you a Bernard boy?" and I was like, "Yeah" and…like that [was] it.

Noah said for two years, he was targeted by the dean and was even demoted to the freshman basketball team, even when he felt he did really well in his tryout as a freshman. He told me, "I stole the ball from Joe [during the tryout]! He was supposed to be the best or whatever…then, I got cut." Noah said he was devastated.

But, during his junior year, Noah's relationship with Coach Payne changed. Noah began tutoring the boys on the varsity basketball team. He helped them to pass their classes and was even asked by Coach Payne to become the senior manager of the team. "I got to sit in on the practices and stuff like that and even when I started to get into trouble, he would look out for me like 'just get to class' and 'don't worry about this detention, just get to class'," Noah told me. He also said that much went on during closed-practices that was eye-opening. For one, he recalled when Coach Payne got physical with one of the players: "One day at practice, Coach Payne punched Daniel and they were really about to fight." After reflecting on Noah's comment about this, I asked Noah in a later interview why he never thought of speaking up to another adult about what occurred during practices. He looked at me blankly and apologetically. "I don't know," he said. "I just really don't know," he said as he drifted off for a moment. I felt as if I had made him feel like the incident was somehow his fault. I promptly chose to move on to something else.

I asked Noah what his most memorable moments were in high school. One that he remembered the most fondly was when the boys' varsity basketball team won a California section title while he was helping tutor and manage the team. "Once we won and that buzzer went, I remember it just went crazy…people jumping all over, Coach Payne was going crazy, it was crazy and then all the pictures and stuff. I ended up being in most of the pictures," Noah told me. Noah was a part of the team.

The dynamic of Coach Payne extended beyond being just a dean and coach to the young African-American men both on his team and generally on campus. He also

appeared to have been a father figure, especially for Noah. In order for Noah to get accepted by this man, he had to cower and comply with what the coach needed him for. This was the only way for him to inch his way onto the team and be a part in the team's victories, even though he himself perhaps did deserve to be on the court. Through the sheer number of times Noah mentioned this man in our interviews, it was clear that this man was an important figure in his life during his high school years. It seemed almost as if this coach brutalized Noah mentally for two years before finally giving him the affection and recognition that Noah was seeking. Despite Noah despising him in the beginning, gaining Coach Payne's affection was worth it because it was affection from an athletic, African-American, accomplished adult male. Noah mentioned nothing about his biological father during our interviews.

The messages that Coach Payne taught Noah and his peers in high school about being an African-American male were several: (a) African-American men can be harnessed through physical abuse and can use it to harness others and each other, (b) mental abuse will happen; it must be accepted and toughed out, and (c) athletic accomplishments and involvements are more acceptable than academic endeavors. Noah witnessed a fellow African-American male peer and member of the basketball team be physically violated by the coach. Yet, neither he nor anyone else at the practice that day said anything about what occurred. He said the coach did not threaten them not to tell, but not speaking was certainly implied. These young men all wanted to prove their manhood and brotherhood by keeping quiet and honoring the discipline that they felt was necessary for their African-American counterpart. Further, although they were all certainly

somewhat in shock after this instance and the many others that Noah hinted at occurring during practices, they felt the mental turmoil was a necessary part of growing up and becoming a strong African-American male.

Finally, Noah got the rules bent for him and was allowed to be involved with the team as a result of the help he gave to the basketball players through tutoring. He was not accepted for his own academic accomplishments but, through helping athletes, he was given accolades and was allowed to be a part of the team, which he desperately wanted. From an African-American adult male and authority figure at Noah's high school, Noah learned that being an African-American man meant being tormented before being accepted. While Noah's torment was cerebral, he also saw how it could become physical. Coming from a fellow African-American male and father figure, it is a particular challenge for males not to begin believing in this. When the oppressor is one's own skin color, the torment perhaps seems necessary and acceptable. It is hard to see that this torment stems from a deeper message that the African-American male oppressors and father figures have come to learn: African-American men will never be fully accepted by the European-American supremacist society.

Joseph also told me a story from high school about when he had been picked up by his African-American friend William's father. He told me about how embarrassing it was to get picked up in an old beat-up van. He told me what happened:

> Will's dad is like pretty well off and he drives a [Cadillac] Escalade…an Escalade on 20 inch rims…like…grown man…you know?…his dad would pick us up from school on regular school days cause he lived down the street…one day, his dad…I

didn't know but his dad [also had] a green van…like a green old school van and when we got picked up, everybody was there [out in front of the school]. Everybody was there! It was me, him, and his older brother, and they were just like, "Oh no! We gotta run! We're ginna have to run down there," and I was like, "What are you guys talking about? I don't see your dad" and they were like, "See that green van over there, that's the green machine." That's what they called it. So we ran over there…and we all just dived in.

For Joseph, being a "grown" African-American man meant owning a Cadillac with expensive accessories. Having a family, "old school" van made others think of family and practicality—things that, for Joseph, an African-American male should not present to others. The message the Joseph's friends communicated was they were embarrassed by their father's car and, since Joseph was riding with them, he should be too. This is a further example of extra pressure that African-American males receive in a European-American dominated society in which they are trying to fit in. Joseph felt embarrassed and did not want to, as he expressed earlier, be associated with African-Americans not in the "talented 10th". He wanted to be different from those individuals and it seemed his friends did too. It seems funny that something such as a car could mean all of these things. However, for African-American men, it means everything.

I thought about this situation some more after this particular interview. I thought about my own experiences in high school and how I had an average car while some people I knew had fancy, flashy cars with all sorts of interesting accessories. I recalled that I had been envious and even embarrassed of what I drove to school. For a European-

249

American person like me, however, this embarrassment was temporary and served more as incentive to work harder in order to one day afford what others could. For the African-American male like Joseph, the embarrassment meant more. For these men, European-American supremacy already attempts to strip them of their intelligence and the many other opportunities they might be eligible for had they been born into the dominant racial group. This leaves African-American men feeling as if they must prove their success despite the odds and that they have made comfortable lives for themselves. Showing the many extravagant things that one owns is certainly a way to prove individual success to society; driving or being seen in an "old school" green van was most certainly the opposite.

Through the evidence given here, the participants showed how Eurocentric reality has yet to be questioned and challenged as CRT advocates (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). Crenshaw's (1988) discussion of the laws the were passed in the country was similar to the images that are perpetuated from the African-American adult male to his younger counterparts; she stated: "people think that they are confirming reality—the way things must be [via following antidiscrimination laws]" but instead, society is blinded by the structures that come with these laws and, in the end, "the entire order is never seriously questioned" (p. 8). The same is true of the messages that African-American males must drive flashy cars, be physically and mentally aggressive, and be involved in athletics. A "very narrowly defined masculinity" has crept its way into society regarding African-American males in the past several decades (Henry, 2002, p. 119). African-American masculinity is

absorbed by African-American adult males who pass it along to younger men when they are in the most prime developmental time in their lives—high school.

"[Those] typical south central kids." Color-on-color racism was evidenced through the ways in which the participants described themselves versus their African-American male peers while in high school. The participants described how they often distanced themselves from other male peers because they felt different from them or that their peers were just "products of the system." Especially since all the participants interviewed were very high achieving academics while in high school, they often mentioned that they stayed away from the young men of their race who did not seem to be on the same goal-oriented path they were. As discussed earlier young African-American men often ridicule each other for being involved in their own educational development, and those that choose to buck the trend distance themselves from others on their own. Regardless, this distancing serves to keep Eurocentric norms and European-American dominance intact because it promotes intra-racial conflict and separation rather than a union to fight the common European-American oppressor. The binary choices that African-American males are given cause them to split from one another; racism ensures that being a "token" and being a "typical south central kid" or "product of the system" are the only options for African-American males. As Gause (2005) stated:

> The stigmatization of African-American males has been embraced by not only
> European-Americans, but by African-Americans as well. The dominant culture

continues to perpetuate negative imagery of African-Americans through media,

film, and music…This imagery further perpetuates the demise of the African-

American male. (p. 28)

Because of the oppression that African-American males experience, they sometimes feel

the need to be critical of one another.

Joseph learned to separate himself from other African-American males, especially

those who were not doing what he believed to be correct with their lives.

Joseph told me:

I feel like if I didn't have confidence or didn't have a strong self-esteem, I feel

like I would have been just like everyone else you know. I feel like I would have

ended up on the streets you know, tryin' to front and like be a player and stuff and

tryin' to have self-confidence in that.

He further expressed here that this is the way of most African-American males.

Continuing to expose this dynamic between himself and his other African-American male

counterparts showed European-American supremacy at work again. In keeping African-

American males from looking down on each other rather than coming together despite

their accomplishments against the common Eurocentric enemy, dominant society

maintains their supremacy.

In this statement, Joseph further expressed the choices that African-American

males at the high school level were forced to make that affected the rest of their lives. If

they were not confident in their academics or their athletic talents, they were steered

toward joining a gang, selling drugs, or living a life on the street. The binary options

presented for these young men were both drastic and troublesome. Unfortunately for the African-American male, high school appears to be the time when these critical choices are made. It certainly became increasing difficult for these young men to make choices about following their passions when they were bombarded with messages about where they belong. No young man at the high school age should have to make such drastic decisions. However, European-American supremacy forced it upon these young men.

Peter told me much about his troubling high school experiences. During one of our interviews, he told me about the difficulties he had with many of the other students at his high school which he described to be "98% Black." He told me about how a fellow African-American peer named Christopher was always trying to beat him up and cause trouble for him. He told me:

> We just never got along…he used to pick on me…[he said to himself] "I'm ginna go mess with [Peter]"…I remember his father died and that caused him to get a little worse cause his father was someone who could keep him on the right path…[he saw] Ph. D's and a big house. Some people just don't like that…some people just don't like you cause you're happy…He always wanted to blame me for the way life was going sometimes and I was like, "I have nothing to do with it."

Peter attributed his family's success as well as his personal academic success to be the major reason for Christopher's disdain for him in high school. Regardless, this is an example of one African-American male feuding with another with no provocation.

Christopher felt the need to turn on another peer who he saw being successful and Peter learned to keep his distance from African-American men like Christopher.

Christopher seemed to have had, from what Peter described, a difficult childhood and young adulthood especially with his father passing away. While Peter said he learned to respect his father's discipline and perhaps, at some time, knew how to be respectful of others, his life took a terrible turn. As a result, rather than uniting with other African-Americans to become more successful and challenge Eurocentric reality, Christopher chose to continue to fight amongst those in his own race to feel better. Such actions serve to keep African-American males divided and continue to preserve European-American dominance in society.

Further, for Peter, this attack from another African-American male taught him to separate himself from other African-American males that he saw not as successful as he and his family were. In separating himself from other African-American males, the system that continued to offer African-American males a binary way to live their lives remained intact. For the African-American male, there is no gray area or in-between way to live and exist in the world; as an African-American male, one can either live by the laws and rules of European-American dominant society or one can live as the "other" (Bell, 2004, p. 19; Bell, 1992, p. 10; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 16; Yosso, 2002, p. 94) in a much diminished fashion. As with the other participants in this study, Peter learned through experiences such as this not to identify with some people that are of his own race. Though Christopher was certainly hurt by the events that occurred in his life, what he prompted Peter to feel and think was equally distressful. It is the fault of the dominant

society that racism occurs and that all men and women are not treated equally as a result of their race. The dominant society is equally responsible for instigating young African-American men to turn on one another rather than uniting to fight their common enemy; this is European-American supremacy at work in its subtle but piercing capacity.

I asked Noah if, during his time in high school, he ever spent time at any of the other local high schools in his area. I could tell from where his grandmother lived that the public school Union West was close by. I knew little about Union West High School other than that it had a large student population being in a populated area in Los Angeles. When I looked up Union West High to look at their demographics, I found that the student population was currently 73% African-American, 26% Latino, and 1% other (School Tree, 2010a). There was also another local public school close by that Noah spoke of, especially since both his mother had gone there and his younger brother was a senior there at the time we interviewed. That school was Miller Senior High School and their student population demographics showed there was a 58% African-American student population, 40% Latino population, and the remaining 2% were other (School Tree, 2010b). I mistakenly did not ask Noah which school was in his district; I do not know which he would have had to attend had he not gone to the private Catholic school he attended. Had he lived with his grandmother, I deduced in looking at district lines he would have attended Union West.

He told me he consciously chose never to attend any events at either school close to where he lived "even though [he] was right down the street." He told me, "You hear it in the news all the time like 'a shooting broke out at a football game with Union West

versus Miller'." He also said there was always "potential" for there to be a physical altercation. He told me he heard it from his brother that was attending Miller High during the time I interviewed Noah; he said, "My brother would be like 'there was a fight about such and such today…some kids from Union West came up there'." Thus, he said he did not ever want to attend any events out of fear that he might get hurt. If there was a fight, Noah did not want to be involved at all: "I would just do my own thing…not be hangin' around [Union West] and just get killed or something like that."

In a later interview, Noah further told me about that he felt he was always safer at his school and that people there were less likely to get into altercations and fights. Although Noah said his school had a fair-sized number of both African-Americans and Latino students, he said both groups mingled well; "We didn't ever have no Blacks versus Mexicans stuff like that," Noah told me about McIntyre. But, he assured me that there was plenty at Union West and Miller. Noah told me that sometimes there were "race wars" and that African-American males and Latino males would attempt to cause harm to each other: "The Mexicans would be like 'we're gonna shoot a Black person today'." He continued to show the difference between the private predominantly African-American populated school students and those that attended the local public schools.

In making such statements about not wanting to attend events and different student groups generally getting along better at his high school, Noah separated himself from others; he often used the phrase "product of the system" throughout the interviews to describe "typical south central kids" that were all around in his neighborhood. Through such statements, he implied that some African-American men were different than others;

256

while some "f[ought]" and looked to inflict harm on others, he was not one of those African-American men. He heard many stories about the fights at sporting events, "gang" influences to be dealt with, and other threats individuals made on each other at the local public schools. However, he never saw these occur with his own eyes; he simply learned to stay away from his own racial group with limited proof to support why he was choosing to do this.

This communicates that for Noah, he believed there was a group of African-American men that were wrong, violent, and generally bad living near him. They were simply too dangerous to be around and he did not want to associate with any of these individuals, even if they were "just right down the street". He seemed to negatively stereotype other African-American males with the statements he made. He truly believed he and the other African-American males at his school were more well-mannered than any others at public schools near him. This implied that there is some order in his mind for African-American men; some were better than others.

This is a message that was not begun by young men such as Noah. He learned this in living in a European-American supremacist society and through messages he learned about African-Americans simultaneously. Many of these messages, as discussed, were perpetuated in high school when he was mentally mature enough to start forming opinions; at that time Noah began to believe he was a better man than other African-American men were. The Eurocentric, patriarchal society maintains its strength by spreading messages about African-American males so that these men spend more time arguing and rating each other rather than spending their time challenging Eurocentric

257

reality. By creating a rift within the African-American male community, European-American dominant society effectively and easily maintains its status.

Is Noah a bad person for speaking ill of his counterparts at public schools such as Union West and Miller? Certainly not. His thinking and comments were merely a result of the constructs he has learned about African-American men while living in a racist, patriarchal society that consciously spreads messages to keep the African-American male down.

CRT assumes essentially that all actions are racialized (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). The evidence these participants gave of distancing themselves from other, more troubled African-American young men was no different. These participants learned in high school that they had two polar options: they could be successful or they could turn to what "everyone else was": "aggressive, hypersexual, threatening, and potentially violent" (Ferber, 2007, p. 16). These young men were only presented with these binary choices as a result of being African-American. Their race meant that these were their only choices. Challenging dominant society, also part of CRT's framework (Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002), remains undone with the evidence shown here from participants. These young men showed that they must distance themselves from the others that were not as accomplished as they were. Thus, European-American supremacy continues to thrive by dividing the oppressed.

Though not mentioned previously in the background literature for this work, Hall (2007) discussed the mentality of "Black conservatives" and how they were essentially modern descendents of the "house" slaves during the time of slavery. Hall stated that today these "Black conservatives" continue to do harm to the "Black masses." He stated: "Their assigned task [the Black conservatives] is political denigration of the Black masses" (p. 570). The oppression shown through intraracial tension that Hall described in his work is similar to the evidence found in this dissertation. Just as Hall's (2007) "Black conservatives" found ways to disengage from their fellow African-American counterparts, I found that my participants often felt the need to separate themselves from others that they felt had been made into "products of the system." The cruel hoax of American racism is ingenious. African-American men turn against each other so much so that they are unable to ever come together to fight their oppressor. This oppression stems back to slavery. It keeps the rift in the African-American male community alive; European-American supremacy is again preserved.

"They'd be like, 'what are you?'." Intra-racial racism also manifests through the way African-American young men separate themselves based on physical attributes such as their skin color. Although I only found one piece of evidence from one participant addressing this form of color-on-color oppression, I felt compelled to present it here as a result of my experience in teaching. As I described in the beginning, I first began teaching at a predominantly African-American populated school in Los Angeles. I recall vividly the daily teasing that went on between African-American males and females regarding their skin color, what their skin color meant about them, and where they stood

socially as a result. Thus, when Peter discussed how he was often ridiculed for his appearance and, more specifically, told me it was his skin tone, I knew this evidence had to be included.

As noted previously, European-American supremacy keeps African-Americans males segregated from one another based on their life choices, especially when it comes to whether they have chosen to do sports and whether they have chosen to become involved in developing themselves within academia. Self-segregating as a result of physical appearance was also noted previously as Peter and Noah both discussed being ridiculed for their appearance. Other evidence from Peter shows that African-American males may also distance themselves from one another based on their skin. This is yet another example of racism keeping the oppressed absorbed in their own intra-racial conflicts so that European-American dominance is never put into question.

Peter discussed with me being ridiculed often, not just by Christopher, but by many others at his "98 percent Black" high school. He told me about a time when he was in the gym and "everyone" started picking on him. He said "somebody just started making fun of me" and he was forced to leave humiliated and "embarrassed". When I probed him more about why he was "made fun of" so much, he told me:

> I think that I just looked different. They think you're biracial and a lot of people
> don't see that in some parts of the south…they see something different…they're
> not even exposed to certain intelligence that there may be something
> different…you are dark-skinned, light-skinned…you don't see that everyday; that
> was me…they'd always be like, "What are you?" and I'd be like, "I'm Pete."

Peter told me it might be difficult for me to comprehend since, growing up in California, "you've seen everything." Perhaps I had but it was also intriguing to note that skin tone was used as a means used by African-American males to self-separate and, again, create distance from one another.

I thought originally that African-American men looking down on others was a result of their complexion and due to a simple fact: If one's skin looks more like those that dominate society, one will inevitably have higher status. However, I learned there was a richer history than this leading back to slavery. In his discussion about "varieties of house negroes," Kelley (1998) discussed how Malcolm X often referred to some more successful leaders in the African-American community and the "better class negroes" (p. 420) as "house slaves", "Uncle Tom's," "Nincompoops with Ph. D.s," and "sellouts" (p. 423). These "better class negroes" as Kelley (1998) described were also typically associated with having fairer skin than those that were poor and were not in the "black bourgeoisie" (p. 419). As described by another, there were "house negroes" and "field negroes" (Lucaites & Condit, 1990, p. 12); "field negroes" were those who "'slaved' from sunup to sundown," (p. 12) thus, giving them a darker skin tone.

In Peter's account of his treatment as a result of his skin color, he was treated as a "house negro" and "sell-out" by his other African-American male peers. They insinuated to him that he was not really a true African-American as a result of his skin complexion; that he was perhaps closer to being European-American than African-American. Such behaviors undoubtedly forced Peter to further distance himself from his African-American peers or else attempt to prove himself as African-American to the others.

It is interesting that constructs formed during the time of slavery manifest themselves today in the classrooms of America's schools; what Peter described was that some African-American males continue to have intra-racial conflict as a result of biological factors that cannot be changed or controlled. European-American supremacy, while it used to show its face on plantations, is in full effect on the schoolyard. Young African-American males find fault with each other and find reason for conflict with each other as a result of a century-old construct created by European-American society.

The Effects of the Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Schooling

While experiencing racism in and of itself is certainly damaging, it is further devasting to examine some of the lasting effects of these experiences. Phinney et al. (2007) and Tse (1999) discussed the stages of ethnic identity development that individuals encounter as they develop. This progression through their proposed stages is no doubt hindered when experiences such as those previously described within this study occur. These experiences cause a host of internal turmoil for the individual. The second major focus of this research was to examine how the racism experienced by the participants involved in this study caused lasting change in terms of their identity. As mentioned previously, the participants communicated how they learned the following: (a) in order to be successful academically, being inquisitive and exercising critical thinking skills were inappropriate; they must follow the rules of authorities and not question what they are taught, (b) they were to reduce themselves to their physical capabilities; African-American men belong in sports, not academia, and (c) they were "second-class citizens", are looked on differently as African-American men (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p.

262

277), and were always lagging behind European-American society. Below is a discussion of the way each of these three facets changed the identity development of the participants forever.

"[They] still have that plantation mentality." The participants described how the governance they saw within their secondary school educational environments changed who they were. Being African-American males, they were silenced within the educational setting and made to feel as though they simply did not belong in academia. They described previously that they felt the only way they could be successful was to be quiet and simply follow the rules. As a result, the participants continued to fall silent when they experienced microaggressions and other such acts of racism both in and outside the academic setting. As African-American males, their high schools taught them to be quiet and accept the treatment they received.

Within his portraiture presented previously, Noah discussed his professor whom he did "not want to call him racist" but seemed to have certain "interesting" tendencies in the classroom. When I observed him in this professor's class, I noted how awkward the environment felt. When I asked him what he did to combat troublesome behaviors such as that which he experienced from this particular professor, he told me that it was not something he even considered wasting his time on. He told me that he knew he could approach the professor but "It's really not gonna make a difference"; "I'd rather just let it be…not even have the conversation. I'll just leave it alone," Noah added. He also told me about the "ignorance" of students on Lotton's campus towards "Black people." He told me one instance had occurred recently:

We were working up at the rec center…I was refereeing in one of the games
and…I don't know how he thought it was a joke…this one guy was like, "Yeah,
go get my bag, slave." And, I was like, "That's not funny. What? That's not funny
at all." But, you know, I wasn't tryin' to get in trouble at all. It made me mad
but…sometimes little stuff slips out…you can get mad about it but its not gonna
solve anything really.

The systemic oppression almost seemed like it had gotten worse for Noah since he
graduated. At first, he felt the need to silence himself in his predominantly African-
American populated school setting; as a university student, he felt he could not say
anything for fear of "get[ting] in trouble" or perhaps causing a scene. His learned silence
in the face of microaggressions has carried over to college and caused him not to speak
out against offensive behavior on his now predominantly European-American campus.
Thus, racism is preserved.

Joseph echoed similar sentiments. He still felt silenced in the classroom as a
university student; even though he was aware of how he, as an African-American male
was being marginalized, he still had a difficult time speaking out and questioning his
oppressors. He told me:

There's this guy that's in my class that's the most annoying guy in the world. He
just talks way too much and he's a white boy and he gets away with it and no one
ever says anything to him and one time I told him to "Shut up" in class you know
what I'm saying? He just really made me mad one day. But in another class, I was
talking to one of my friends; she's an African-American young lady and I was

264

talking to her about this book that we were reading and my teacher was like, "Oh, do I need to separate you two?" And, it was just like, "We were just talking about the book actually" and it was just weird cause like that guy constantly talks and talks and talks and talks…but then for the smallest thing like, as far as like when it comes to something else, like when someone of color is talking in class, it's like, "What are you doing?"

Joseph discussed how he had seen members of the dominant group evading the classroom rules while he, as an African-American male, was required to keep quiet. The rules still applied to individuals differently as a result of race and gender; and, despite his awareness of this, he felt powerless to speak up effectively.

Peter described it as "social reproduction" as well as a "plantation mentality." Perhaps because he was a few years older than Noah and Joseph, he labeled the oppression he has felt and continues to see within educational environments for African-American males. As he described in his portraiture before, he saw the psychology that continues to work to keep African-Americans and other minorities in their "place" in society. "People gonna make you better workers," Peter told me about how schools were centers for "social reproduction" especially for minorities. As for "plantation mentality," Peter told me that it involved individuals thinking that "White is right." "You're happy to see the slave master…This person may be good or bad but just the fact that they are White, hey, we're gonna be behind them," he told me. While I certainly did not wish to say that Noah and Joseph had what Peter called "plantation mentality," their continued silence seemed to perpetuate it and continued to keep the plight and fight for the African-

American male as an unimportant issue. These men learned to follow rules and to allow microaggressions to continue while saying little to combat them. While it was not their job entirely to correct this problem, their continued silence did not stir action either. Further, even though Peter identified with certain psychological dynamics of why African-American men do not speak out against the racism they encounter, he, too, did not offer a way to correct the issue.

The mentality of the oppressed showed through the absence of not speaking out on the part of the participants. Theirs is a world where race continues to be a "primary organizing principle" (Foley, 1991, p. 78) that creates a ceiling through which nothing will effectively puncture it. As such, these participants' ethnic identity development was affected. Both Phinney et al. (2007) and Tse (1999) developed stages of ethnic identity development. Phinney et al. (2007) reported the stages of ethnic identity to be the following: diffuse, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved (p. 479). According to the stages she proposed, Noah and Joseph most likely fit into her third highest stage called "moratorium" (p. 479) since they both have explored their ethnicity but are still somewhat "ambivalent" with regards to expressing the questions and concerns they have with belonging to their ethnic group. Their continued silence in the face of racialized comments was evidence of this. This began when these men learned, as African-American males, they needed to follow the rules and keep quiet if they wanted to be successful in high school academia. For Peter, he is at Phinney et al.'s (2007) ethnic identity stage called "achieved." Although he did not discuss speaking out much, he thought about why he as well as others were silent sometimes when racial

microaggressions occurred. Further, although he did not share any evidence with me, his demeanor and courageous persona led me to believe that he would have no problem standing up for himself now.

Tse (1999) similarly developed ethnic identity stages. As noted previously, her stages include ethnic unawareness, ethnic ambivalence/evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity incorporation (Tse, 1999, p. 122). The study participants seemed to show evidence of all three of Tse's top stages including ethnic ambivalence (e.g. not standing up for oneself in the face of a microaggression currently), ethnic emergence (e.g. allowing oneself to get upset for not saying anything in the face of microaggressions) and ethnic identity incorporation (e.g. Peter's beginning in thinking meta-cognitively about what causes such identity conflicts). Clearly, all these participants were at different levels of ethnic identity development, and as a result, were in different places in terms of their own personal well-being.

"Books are important!" The participants all stated that education is important for them despite all the messages about athletics they heard in high school. Although they were bombarded with hearing and seeing that athletes were treated better and that being physically capable in athletic contests was an expectation of African-American men, these men did not allow themselves to fall into this stereotype. The men were forced out of being on the athletic teams they wished to play on in high school; for Peter and Noah, it was the varsity basketball team coaches that did not allow them to make the team; for Joseph, it was playing on the varsity baseball team. I do not doubt these young men were not good athletes; rather, it seemed they were forced out due to the politics and favoritism

267

on the part of the coaching staff at their respective schools. Regardless, and despite the hardships this caused these young men, it forced them to turn elsewhere for acceptance; as a result of their upbringing and a few inspiring teachers from time to time, these young men chose to focus on their education. Perhaps as a result of clearly being disallowed to fit into the stereotypical role they longed to have, these young men bucked the system entirely and chose to focus their sights on what no one would expect—their education.

Joseph told me that he had to constantly reminded himself in college what his purpose was. When he reminded himself, he always felt a wave of relief and his motivation improved. He told me, "I'll have this thought like 'Who am I doing this for?' and I'll be like 'I'm doing this for myself…I'm doing it for those that are coming after me'." Joseph has realized that even if he cannot contribute and make his family proud of his accomplishments on any athletic field, he can make even more of an impact by being the first to graduate from college. Getting to know Joseph, I felt that his getting discouraged from playing baseball in high school may have been a blessing in disguise for him. He learned to become confident in something other than his physical capabilities. As a result, he will undoubtedly have many, many accomplishments to share with his family over the years to come.

When Peter and I discussed schooling in Los Angeles and his future, we discussed schools he felt would be best for his children if he started a family any time soon. Besides telling me that he wanted to see his children at a school where "everyone can understand how to get along or there are some that do get along," he also told me he wanted them to attend a school that "instill[s] in them the tools they need to see that we can do the work

on our own…so that they have a good experience with whatever club they want to do…whatever sport they want to join." His placement of the importance of joining an athletic team was second to his future children's use of critical thinking skills and becoming proficient at other various group activities. While Peter was pushed toward sports from all angles in high school and at the same time denied access on the basketball team, he communicated that he felt betrayed by the teachers that did not come to class to teach the curriculum they were employed to. As a result, Peter longed to be around academia; he wanted to be centered around major metropolitan areas with good universities around since they inspired him to think more deeply and kept him "fresh." This is not to say Peter turned toward academia as a result of the hardships he encountered and the physical stereotypes that were employed during his high school time. These points are discussed and offered for those interested in pondering where Peter might be currently had he received a powerful educational experience in high school void of athletic stereotyping toward African-American males. As Peter noted himself, "[education] does set you free."

Noah looked back on the athletic stereotype imposed on African-American males at the high school age with disgust. He told me:

It goes back to product of their environment…tryin' to be cool…all it takes is a couple of students who people look up to and whatever that small group sees as the pinnacle of what high school is, its that…[my classmates] really didn't care about the books…it was all sports "Oh, I gotta play good so we can get scholarships to school"…it was never on books…people don't want to think for

themselves basically. They just want to follow…I wasn't one of those

people…[made] up my own mind about stuff…like books are important!

Being forced off the basketball team, Noah was forced to rely on other areas of

confidence in himself. He saw some rewards in education and chose to do what he

needed to receive them. Although Noah still helped out at the recreation center on the

university campus and loved to watch sports, he made them into a form of entertainment

for himself, not something he must relate to personally. For Noah, the effects of the racist

messages he heard were devastating, especially since he did not fit into the mold that the

messages promoted while in high school. However, since he has matured and has gotten

into college as a result of his own academic merits, he has seen the short-sightedness of

these views he struggled with in high school. The question still remains: what could Noah

have accomplished up to this point in his life had he not been bombarded with such a vast

array of negative messages towards the African-American male that caged him into a box

he personally did not fit into?

According to Phinney et al. (2007) as noted previously, ethnic identity

development requires both commitment and exploration. Phinney et al. (2007) defined

commitment as: "[Commitment involves] clear feelings of belonging to one's ethnic

group, together with positive attitudes and pride in the group. Commitment implies

feeling comfortable with one's group, even though there may be awareness of problems

associated with group membership (e.g. discrimination)" (p. 479). As for exploration as

noted previously, Phinney and Ong (2007) added, "Exploration is important to the

process [of ethnic identity development] because without it, one's commitment may be

less secure and more subject to change with new experiences" (p. 272). It was evident in the responses of the participants since getting older that they are able to live comfortably with whom they are despite the fact that they are not athletes. They have acknowledged how African-American males are forced into this stereotype, and they try to resist it. For Peter, this means he will try to encourage his children to focus more on academics than he did. As for the effects of intersectionality of race and gender as related to messages about being involved in athletics and not academics, these participants showed that they will not make this their reality. Each of these participants became their own intelligent, African-American male academic. It can only be speculated how much more they may have influenced the African-American community, as well as all levels of academia, had they been given the message to think more critically instead of practicing their batting swings and jump shots.

"Alright, brotha." When the participants described racism within their secondary schools with respect to their race as well as gender, they also provided evidence showing the following: (a) they struggled with not fitting into African-American male stereotypes, (b) they were given ultimatums and often forced to chose between living as they wished or conforming to dominant group norms, and (c) they were forcefully pushed out of being accepted by the dominant group through actions committed during their secondary school experience. As a result, these young men now described how they self-segregate and often stay around only those in the African-American community at the university level. Perhaps because of the pressure to join the dominant group norms or because of being given so many ultimatums in high school, these men clearly found solace in staying

amongst other African-American men as friends and companions. They do not want to be involved with Eurocentric centered practices or persons. Thus, racism worked perfectly to continue to keep the racialized order intact and to keep African-American males on a different social level than others.

I noticed this when Noah began taking me on a tour of Lotton University the first time we met there. As we walked and he showed me all the places he frequented the most, he told me about all the African-American speakers that came on campus that he went to see. He also told me about the predominantly African-American populated Bible study, which he and I both attended together once, and about the "historically Black fraternity" he was a part of on campus. In fact, there was only one group, a service organization that he was a part of that had predominantly European-American members. Even within that group, he knew he was one of the "tokens" and that the group had historically pushed for only European-American members. Noah clearly maintained his separation from European-American groups and persons on campus, even though they made up well-over half the student body.

Even Joseph, although he was not involved in Noah's fraternity, he told me about his interest in being a part of the group at Lotton. He told me:

> You see Greeks and its like party, party, party, but it's a whole different thing when you get into the African-American Greek community. They are more focused on the individual people they pick…a lot of times, it's a four-year thing and after that, it's like, "I'm not a member anymore" but when you join an African-American Greek organization, it's way different. You're there for life.

Joseph told me the only reason why he had not pledged the fraternity recently was because he had to take care of an ailing grandfather during the pledge time. He, too, told me about all of his involvements on campus within the African-American community. The only way in which he typically seemed to be inundated by the dominant European-American presence on campus was through his time working as an RA on campus. However, for the most part, he spent his time with people like Noah and other African-Americans working hard within the BSU to improve both the number and the experience of African-Americans on Lotton's campus. He too seemed to separate himself as much as he could from the dominant culture on campus.

Peter also told me about joining a "historically Black fraternity" but he was less pleased with the results of that experience. As mentioned in his portraiture, he felt the experience had been a "pyramid scheme" and was reluctant to call himself a member of the group anymore. Off the record, when we were walking back to our cars one day, we discussed inter-racial dating. He said he thought he was ready to try it but was not entirely sure. He told me for the time being, he would rely on dating older women instead. By this, I assumed he meant older, African-American women. Thus, he too showed how he continued to maintain intra-racial familiarity and did not appear fully comfortable branching out to connect with other racial group members. This further showed the effects of African-American males being forcefully pushed into accepting dominant group norms that they do not wish to follow while in high school.

Since these men were now out of high school and had more freedom, they elected to find spaces where they were more comfortable; they found this comfort within the

273

African-American community. According to Phinney et al. (2007) and Tse (1999), this is a part of upper level ethnic identity development although these young men are certainly not what Phinney et al. (2007) would call "achieved" (p. 479) or what Tse (1999) would call her highest level of "ethnic identity incorporation" (p. 122). This is because none of these men were seeking to "resolve many of their ethnic identity conflicts" (Tse, 1999, p. 122). Rather, by joining predominantly African-American populated groups and places, these men show how they were potentially "look[ing] to the[ir] ethnic homeland group for acceptance," a trait of Tse's (1999) "ethnic emergence" phase (p. 122).

According to Phinney et al.'s (2007) ethnic identity development scale however, these men exhibited a much lower level developmentally speaking. In the stage which Phinney et al. (2007) calls "foreclosed", "individuals express pride and a sense of belonging" but with little action to further explore their own choices as related to this sense of belonging (p. 479). The men in this study were intelligent, confident men that showed a tremendous amount or pride and ownership in all they had achieved. However, by segregating themselves from other racial groups, they allowed the messages of racism that they received while in high school to maintain their hold. European-American supremacy remains strong and these African-American men continued to be those who dominant society has a strong grip.

The Effects of Intraracial Messages in Schooling

The racism encountered by African-American males from European-American society affects the way African-American males treat each other. The oppression these men experienced was so insidious that these men communicated African-American male

274

stereotypes to one another, often unconsciously. There were three major ways in which participants' articulated the effects of intraracial messages experienced in high school and how these affected their identity development and emotional well-being. These ways are the following: (a) inclination to stay within one's racial group, (b) awareness of intraracial pressures that continue to afflict one's racial group, and (c) rejection of intraracial pressures experienced. Each of these is described in more detail in the following sections.

      "The campus is yours." All participants discussed intraracial messages and their feelings about being pressured from other African-Americans to live up to various stereotypes including the inclination to stay within one's racial group. The effects of intraracial messages were also experienced by participants through the racial groups they saw on their high school campuses and the segregation that was so apparent as a result. Experiencing this led participants to be more cognizant of segregation as university students as well as their participation in it. Peter described being in California. He told me he could not understand how people used the term "melting pot" often when they are describing the demographics of Los Angeles. He thought Los Angeles was incredibly "segregated" and also said, "It is not a melting pot, it's a salad bowl."

      For Joseph and Noah, I noticed their group affiliations on campus tended to be with other African-Americans. Both were a part of the Executive Board, a panel for decision-making that affects the African-American student body, and the Black Student Union (BSU). In fact, during my time interviewing the participants, Noah was elected to be president of the BSU at Lotton. They also both helped with the mentoring program for

incoming African-American freshman at Lotton. Noah and Joseph both held strong

positions within the African-American community at Lotton and were both ready and

willing to take responsibility for their decisions. However, their influence did not extend

much farther beyond the African-American community—the community being no more

then 200 people in any year at Lotton.

Despite being both African-American and Latino, Joseph told me he tended to

associate with the African-American community more on Lotton's campus. "I was just a

lot more taken in by the Black community," Joseph told me of the African-American

community at Lotton. Noah felt the same. However, the young men did join the Crimson

Circle, a predominantly European-American service organization group. "You're gonna

be the token Black guys," Noah told me some of his friends told him about his and

Joseph's affiliation. All participants communicated their experiences about what it meant

to be African-American and the expectations for racial group membership. It was

pleasing to see that Noah and Joseph forged past this invisible boundary and decided to

get involved in a service organization they wanted to be involved in despite its traditional

group demographics.

According to Joseph, it was imperative that such steps be at Lotton to improve

diversity and segregation issues on campus. While he mentioned that a strength of his

former high school was the diversity among the students, he said diversity at Lotton has

been defined incorrectly. He said:

Lotton talks about diversity but they don't know nothing about diversity. They

talk about diversity like they have 11 Black students and 13 Asians and 22

276

Latinos and they think that's diversity. Then, they have 1,000 Caucasian-

Americans. They think that's diversity. When you have 1,000 Black people, 1,000

Mexicans, Latinos, 1,000 Asians, 1,000 white people, that's diversity.

He also mentioned that a reason for this lack of diversity was the communication to

minority group students about scholarships available to them. He said:

The whole stars have to be aligned, the moon has to be blue, and you can get

some random scholarship. As far as different communities, what do we have?

African-American Alumni Scholarship, Mexican-American Alumni Scholarship,

the Latino Scholarship; that's not much. People get one thousand, two thousand,

maybe three thousand dollars…when they are already in 20 to 30 thousand dollars

[of] debt.

Joseph became increasingly aware of what he saw as unfairness with regards to tuition

and funds available to minority students. "I bet if you researched who has the biggest

scholarships at this school, they are probably all white," Joseph said. But, like Noah,

Joseph felt that at the current point in time at Lotton, this was just how things were.

As African-Americans, these men felt they must stay loyal to their African-

American group, an illusion which certainly continued to develop while they attended

their secondary schools. What was interesting was the awareness the participants had of

what Peter called the "salad bowl" (as opposed to a "melting pot") that existed in their

lives; the participants have taken steps to pierce it. However, while Joseph and Noah's

leadership was felt amongst those in the African-American community at Lotton, the

overall student body continued to remain unaffected by these transformational young

men. Their reach was limited and these young men know it as evidenced by Joseph's comments about "White students" essentially owning the campus; although being in authority can be a great thrill, this knowledge took something away from it.

Further, ethnic identity development continued to show that the participants were most likely a part of Phinney et al.'s (2007) "foreclosed" stage (p. 479) or Tse's (1999) stage she called "ethnic emergence" (p. 122). Just like with the effects of the intersectionality of race and gender, the effects of intraracial messages sent by other African-Americans caused these young men to look more toward their own group for comfort rather than reach out to anyone else from other racial groups. As Tse (1999) noted previously, the turn may come as a result of rejection from trying to enter the dominant group. Thus, Tse (1999) noted, there may be some resentment built toward the dominant group at this time. This happens through the messages that African-American males spread to each other about the dominant culture. Although they are correct that European-American supremacy serves to keep them as "second class citizens" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 277), sending these intra-racial messages to each other preserves the separation caused by race and reinforces that people are best left separated along racialized criteria.

"We love our Mexican people but…" The participants commented that they were still aware of the pressures that afflict the African-American male community. Joseph told me that he saw others continuing to impose stereotypical views on one another regarding race. Some he experienced within his own family. As an African-American, his identity continued to develop as he explored the ways in which members

of his own group made judgments about each other as well as other racial groups. This was often distressful to Joseph especially since he shared both Latino and African-American heritage.

Joseph told me he felt race divided people, especially African-Americans and Latinos. He told me how his family negotiated when it comes to his Latino father's side and his mother's African-American side:

> They'll make exceptions. They'll make exceptions for one person but they won't make exceptions for the race. The Mexican side of my family loves my mom. She's Black; my abuelita will call my mother her daughter. That's how much she loves her. But any other Black person, its like, "Shhiiit." It's the same way…on the Black side of my family. We love our Mexican people but outside of that…you know.

The way Joseph said the word "shit" made me laugh. He emphasized it full of attitude and with a look on his face of disdain as if he summed up *you are not welcome here* and *you are not good enough* all in one little word. But, it certainly was no laughing matter. Joseph hammered his point home: race had and probably would always be a major factor in his life.

While the intraracial messages the participants experienced in high school were certainly noticed, they also made participants more aware of present microaggressions they were bombarded with on a weekly if not daily basis simply as a result of being African-American. This is not to say certainly that racism experienced in high school was a necessary part of these participants' development. Rather, having had these intraracial

interference experiences coupled with a few positive influences, as discussed previously, participants were given the chance to see this racism more clearly for what it was. As older men now and because they were given some encouragement in high school, these participants continued to be better equipped to identify these intraracial pressures and deal with them in a way that was personally productive.

Peter told me about what Foster (2004) called "uncle-tomming" (p. 375) and the pressure to under-perform academically (Ogbu, 1992; Springer, 2002). For Peter, many slanders came from other African-Americans. On being ridiculed by people of his same race, Peter said, "[If you are] using correct English, you're considered being a 'sell-out' cause we don't want you to do anything that the White man is doin'." As noted by Phinney et al. (2007), Peter demonstrated his commitment to his identity as an African-American man by being aware of implications about his racial group. By staying aware of the pressures that were often imposed by one person to another in his racial group, Peter was better able to discard these messages and move in directions that were suitable for his own life. Peter showed here his heightened level of ethnic identity development and well-being by speaking up for himself and becoming more aware of what his race means in terms of stereotypes and what he encounters. According to Phinney et al. (2007) and Tse (1999), this is exhibiting heightened levels of identity development; Phinney et al. (2007) might identify Peter's actions and thinking as "achieved" (p. 479) since he has shown that he has thought critically about the implications of his race. Further, I felt this may have been a reason why Peter always seemed more relaxed than the other participants and opened up to me throughout our discussions; his well-being appeared

more intact. As Phinney (2005) stated, "The extent to which young people have explored and resolved issues related to their ethnic group membership is a factor in psychological well-being" (p. 190).

"Products of the system." All participants described imagining themselves to be different from the stereotypes about their racial group. They rejected the intraracial pressures they continued to experience. They also worked tremendously hard to be different from other African-Americans they knew or saw who appeared to be perpetuating stereotypes about African-Americans via their lifestyle. The identity development of these participants within this arena continued to show their commitment to their racial group; they were aware of the implications of group membership, but they also attempted to push the boundaries of these implications and form their own personal identities while remaining proud of their racial identity. This undoubtedly was one of the reasons why these young men were all so successful. Such thinking may not have formed had these men not had some positive encouragement in high school amidst all the negative messages they were forced to endure that hindered progress in their education.

When I first asked Peter to describe himself to me, he said he is "positive, assertive, confident, proactive; at time confused, misunderstood, and distracted." When I asked him to tell me in which ways he was "misunderstood," he told me it was because he was a little different. Since his parents both have doctoral degrees, he had always been a "fan of education." Unlike the other children where he grew up, he said, he and his family used to "travel [and] use correct diction" and generally take up "other avenues" that some "other African-Americans [did not] have as much access and information

about." According to Peter, he did not ever fully fit in when he was younger. Although his parents divorced while he was in college, Peter did not let the "drama" get him down. "I am not going to be…18, 19 with two kids hoping I can find a dead end job…I want something for myself," Peter told me about his rationale during his college years.

Noah also commented on being different from his perception of many other African-American males. During our interviews together, Noah referred to some African-American males as "products of the system." He told me that he believed some students "just get down" and think "everything is against [them]." " 'I might as well make the most of what I know how to do and that tends to be sometimes how they become products of the system," Noah told me about other African-America students. Noah distanced himself from those in his community who did not value education as much as he did.

All participants also discussed how they found ways both mentally and physically to break free of the intraracial messages they had learned previously and that continue to infiltrate their racial group. Joseph described for me what he called his "maturation process" since when he was in high school. He said:

> I [used to] think of things with a victim-mentality and not really…put forth the effort or really change my mindset…if something doesn't go right, look at myself first rather than looking at others…like my uncle who is in jail that I haven't heard from in like ten years though we were super close…why don't I write him a letter instead of waiting for him to write me, you know?

Joseph's discussion showed he felt disconnected from others and feels that other African-Americans, including himself at a younger age, blamed others for shortcomings. Like the other participants, Joseph wanted to break free from the stereotypes that have been placed on the African-American race for far too long.

Both Noah and Peter talked about one major way they were different from others their age and race. This difference was their experiences traveling. During the time in which interviews were conducted, Peter took out a loan in order to go on a trip to Europe for two weeks with a friend. He said it was a wonderful experience and he wanted to go back soon. He believed that without an education, however, he may not have been able to enjoy the experience or even go on the trip that he did. For Peter, education continues to have a deeper impact on his life and in what he sees everyday. Peter also told me that many of the people he knew growing up were unable to have the opportunities to travel as he did. "One of the disadvantages of being poor is that you have no place to go," Peter said of those he grew up with.

Noah also told me about some of his travel experiences from years ago. Using the language of Kozol (2005), he said he always felt that he was fortunate to have the chance that to travel. Noah told me, "Inner-city kids…haven't been outside the city of Los Angeles…I've gotten to travel to different states and just see different things in different parts of the world." Noah indicated that his high school educational experience coupled with his knowledge as a result of traveling gave him a new perspective: "It's just different when you see different types of people or different types of struggles…you just

see it like 'Dang! I guess I don't have it so bad. I need to make the most of this opportunity'."

Both Noah and Peter indicated that being exposed to other ways of life had broadened their view of the world. They also noted that many African-Americans of their age did not get the same chance to have such an experience. Peter also imagined where he may move in the future; for him, happiness will be achieved as long as he lives somewhere near universities. When I asked him why this was important to him, he told me, "There's more open-minded people in the college areas…you always have options, there's always a place to go for dialogue about something." He also said colleges and universities are epicenters that "draw industry", give "exposure", and provide "opportunities" and "possibilities." Peter also said universities were places where people will be open to change and differences. "Accepting differences amongst people, bringing in new things and always having things available…[these things] help out a lot to get you out of your little comfort zone…it helps you to stay fresh," Peter told me about life around universities.

Through descriptions by the participants regarding learning to take the intraracial messages and, to some extent, reject them entirely, they showed a tremendous amount of personal ethnic identity development. They showed that they have not only explored what it means to be an African-American male, but also that they have the commitment necessary to healthfully involve themselves in their own growth as African-American males (Phinney et al., 2007). As a result of the participants' creating their own images of success for themselves personally and letting their personalities dictate their next moves

in life, Phinney et al. (2007) would call their ethnic identity development stage "achieved" (p. 479). This is because through these participants' actions and thinking, they have reacted to the messages of intraracial stereotyping in a proactive way—by communicating a "sense of belonging, positive attitudes, commitment, and involvement with [their racial] group" (Phinney et al., 1997a, p. 178). According to Tse (1999), this thinking communicates the stage she calls "ethnic identity incorporation" since the participants showed that they could be their own individual while simultaneously identifying whole-heartedly with their racial group. They understood the implications of group membership and they were happy to embrace who they were entirely.

Achieved Development and Ethnic Identity Incorporation

As discussed in the previous sections, all participants discussed the ways in which both their identity development and well-being were affected as a result of high school. Their high school experiences certainly impacted their identity development and well-being. According to Tse (1999), the highest level of identity development, called ethnic identity incorporation, involves the ethnic minority individuals joining their ethnic American group and resolving their ethnic identity conflicts. Phinney et al.'s (2007) ethnic identity development stages are similar to Tse's (1999). According to Phinney et al. (2007), the most advanced stage of ethnic identity development is entitled achieved development and involves the presence of both commitment and exploration in one's ethnic identity while simultaneously "understanding implications of group membership" (p. 122). Participants showed achievement of both Tse and Phinney et al.'s highest identity development stages. However, evidence was also there that despite the

participants' development strides and improvements in well-being since high school, a glass ceiling existed. Despite their advancement, Eurocentric reality continued to make a lasting impression on their minds.

In understanding the effect of these experiences from their secondary environments on their identity development and well-being, participants discussed ways they have achieved Phinney et al.'s (2007) notions of exploration and commitment to their ethnic group as discussed previously. In terms of exploration, participants cited finding ways to overcome feeling like a victim, using learning experiences to broaden their knowledge of their ethnic group, exploring deeper self-discovery mechanisms, and questioning the microaggressive actions and words they currently experience. As for commitment, participants explained that they learned to see the differences offered in educational quality between predominantly minority schools versus predominantly European-American schools, sought belongingness within the African-American group, and spoke for themselves sometimes when microaggressive behaviors were exhibited. The resulting well-being advancement for participants included evidence exhibiting self-reliance, personal inner prosperity, and proactive behaviors in dealing with life.

However, within all of this evidence of personal progress for all participants, the participants' portraits of both their high school experiences and how these affected them suggests there was another force at work that continues to hinder the conditions necessary for personal development and well-being for African-American males. All participants spoke about refusing to be "victims," did not want to be "products of the system" and considered themselves to be leaders for their race. This mentality expressed the struggle

that these men continued to grapple with despite their success. Through hearing the voices of these participants, it was clear that racism is alive and continues to be maintained. The notion of race continues to be a central organizing principle in society (Foley, 1991). The participants were aware that because of their race, society constantly expects less of them. Especially as African-American males, the evidence showed that these young men have been exposed to "claims of objectivity and meritocracy [that] camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant group in United States society" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2). Through the participants communicating their struggle to be different from other African-American men of their age, they communicated the oppression that crafts their every move. They communicated that aside from themselves, they see a majority of other African-American men failing; they feel that they too are judged as if they were "products of the system" themselves even though they are "success stories."

Though evidence supports that these participants were aware of the "interest convergence" (Bell, 1980, p. 522) in their lives and the pressure of being "token[s]" of their race, their continued success, passion, and achievements cannot be denied. These young men showed that despite the racism that disturbed their development and well-being in the past, the future remains bright. While Noah wanted to own property and start his own business, Peter wanted to earn his doctoral degree and help improve the overall educational system; for Joseph, it was imperative that he give back to his community by teaching at the elementary level and being an administrator. These young men expressed the desire to lead—not to be led and follow the paths of others. The desire for greater

achievement shows they are no longer content with receiving what the Eurocentric

society around them is handing out; they want to take what they want.

Summary

This chapter began by reviewing the research questions and focus of this study.

Portraits of all participants as well as the narratives they gave to answer the research

questions followed. The next chapter offers further discussion regarding the findings that

were presented in this chapter, the implications of this study, and offers suggestions for

future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to answer the following questions: (a) How did African-American male university students experience racism within their secondary school setting? and (b) How did the identified experiences affect the participants' identity development and emotional well-being? The perceptions, stories, and counter-stories of the participants were gathered through observations, interviews, and a focus group meeting. As described in Chapter Four, the participants communicated the racism they experienced in various forms as well as the effect this racism had on their identity development and emotional well-being.

While the findings from this research have been described and analyzed in chapter four, it is imperative that a few additional details are known about both the findings and what was subsequently not found while conducting this work. This chapter will begin with discussion regarding the findings from this study. This is followed by the implications and significance of the portraits of these young men as well as discussion of the recommendations for this field of study.

My Research Experiences

Conducting this research as a European-American. After I became fully confident in the subject I wanted to research and the questions I wanted answered, I began looking for sites to interview students. Originally I was going to interview high school aged students but was glad, after looking into the literature more, that a retrospective approach would be better, both to get more mature perspectives and to get perceptions after the participants had been removed from their secondary school

environments for a while. Regardless, when I was still considering interviewing high school aged students, I began going around to local high schools in the Los Angeles area to inquire about interviewing their students. The first high school I went to, after giving me much consideration, declined because of the nature of the questions I wanted to ask the students. The second school I looked into simply did not respond at all. When I went to the third school district's headquarters, I was sent back and forth between two buildings twice before finally getting in touch with a woman who physically took the copy of my proposal that I had printed out for them. She told me they did not allow researchers in their school but assured me that she would at least look it over and get in touch with me in a few weeks. I knew as soon as she left me standing there that my report I had prepared for that district was going straight into the trash. Had I waited for a response, I would still be waiting.

Though this entire dissertation process has been a learning experience for me, I certainly learned much in my initial search for participants. Certainly, no school or school personnel want to be labeled "racist" and I knew from the first school that the reason I had been denied was because I had been completely open about my agenda of exposing the racist behaviors and actions that continue in schools today. If I were in charge of making such a decision, I cannot say that I would not at least be skeptical myself. The second school's not contacting me was not such a shock considering the State of California's education budget at the time I inquired. This LAUSD high school was no longer able to fund a committee that would look at research proposals such as my own. That, I could understand. But, it was perhaps the third school district I asked that taught

me the most. When I walked into the district office of this predominantly African-American district, I was an outsider; there were no doubts about it. Every person I spoke to looked at me seemingly with disgust and when I began to describe my study to the many people I was pushed off to, it became increasingly clear that I was not welcome there.

I was upset when I left that district's office knowing I had just wasted many hours of my time. However, when I got home and thought about what I had experienced, I knew there was a history there to be told. It did not matter how much I, as a European-American, professed to be attempting to better the educational system for all students specifically African-Americans. People of my race have and continue to oppress people of color through not only subtle but also explicit means. I did not and I still do not blame this district for essentially, through their silence, saying no to allowing me onto their grounds. The history that plagues us all will take a long time to deconstruct and change.

Racism or oppression? Perhaps one of the most intriguing parts of doing this work began in its initial phases. Since I began getting more in tune with my own racialized thinking, I felt more and more comfortable using strong words like racism to describe what I was reading in the literature and within my research questions. Within small groups and circles of people to whom I had read my work, I was often told that my language was too strong—that racism was not the correct word. "Call it oppression," a friend told me as he read my first research question. More than one person told me this. Although the professors involved in supporting my progress and work embraced my strong statements, I have not forgotten those initial comments from others about my

discourse being, for lack of a better term, too racy for any reader's eyes. I was intrigued how at the discomfort a word could convey and make people feel, and how much people felt it needed to be diluted.

This is perhaps precisely why I felt an emphasis on CRT was so necessary for this research. While gender, age, and class certainly give cause for oppression, it seemed that some research I reviewed became convoluted when the object became defining the source of the problems with the factors involved. Race must be a central focus in order to ensure that it stays at the forefront as CRT proposes (Foley, 1991). The other factors (gender, age, class, etc.) certainly have their place in the creation of major societal problems including those within the American school system. However, I would argue, with the support from this study, that there is something deeper at work; just as W.E.B. Du Bois stated, race is not dead in America as cited in Smith et al.(2007); it is being taught and reinforced more than ever in America's schools.

Further Discussion of Findings as Related to CRT

CRT finding and non-findings. In reviewing the data found through this research, four out of the five tenets of CRT were found and supported by the data given by participants. To recall, the five tenets of CRT according to many researchers (Foley, 1991; Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002), are the following: (a) the centrality of race, (b) challenge to Eurocentric reality, (c) use of interdisciplinary lenses, (d) commitment to social justice, and (e) centrality of expert knowledge. I adhered to these tenets throughout this study including my use of portraiture as my methodology and also found these tenets to be true

according to participants' interviews, observations, and the focus group. Though centrality of race, challenging Eurocentric reality, being committed to social justice, and centrality of expert knowledge were all supported through this research, the use of interdisciplinary lenses was not as strongly evidenced. Below, each tenet is discussed in further detail along with its role in this study.

Tenet 1: Centrality of race. The participants discussed the microaggressions they experienced as discussed by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007), their often hostile academic learning environments as a result of their race (Gordon & Johnson, 2003), and the many agendas they felt were propagated to further European-American privilege within their settings. That race was a central deciding factor in the education as experienced by these men while in high school is plainly evident via the stories they described in this research. The racism they experienced communicated that their race inherently should lead them to lower educational outcomes. These participants were not only aware of this but were forced to suffer internal consequences as a result of these reduced expectations despite their remarkably success.

What was not found within the stories as told by participants was concrete evidence regarding lack of educational achievement, lower test scores, etc. as discussed in the literature review in this research, namely data collected from institutions such as the California Department of Education (2007), EdSource (2008) and other experts such as Solorzano and Ornelas (2004), Adelman (1999, 2003), and Kozol (2005). These experts and institutions, as described previously, document quantitatively the differences between achievement for African-American males and all other various subgroups. In

most studies, research indicates that African-American males are outperformed by almost every other subgroup especially as they get into the middle and upper secondary grade levels (California Department of Education, 2007).

Within this research, I found limited discussion of these more objective statistics for these participants personally. In fact, for the most part, participants discussed their resilience in school at all grade levels despite the interference they encountered. In fact, Noah told me some about being an honors student and being in the running for Valedictorian when he was a senior at his school. Peter also told me much about being moved up a grade, and Joseph spoke often of his superior grades in high school compared to others in his classes. However, anecdotally, there seemed to be much commentary at times from participants regarding their feelings toward the academic performance of their fellow African-American male peers. Noah indicated to me during one interview that his high school practiced tracking and that "the regular classes" were not very rigorous or challenging. While Peter echoed similar sentiments about "regular" classes, Joseph's story regarding recently going back to his former high school to speak indicated that achievement for minority students is an issue. Joseph told me how frustrated he was not only by what was happening for the students, but also that the school community was doing so little to support these students. Thus, while the statistics supporting the centrality of race tenet of CRT were not evidenced within the personal experiences of these participants at the individual level, their stories did indicate that they are aware that their race is a constant factor in determining their achievement of African-American students in general.

Tenet 2: Challenging Eurocentric reality. Participants described how their schools were underserved and how they themselves were underserved. Attending predominantly African-American populated schools, Noah and Peter described first-hand that their educational environments were often lacking and they always longed for something better. They also indicated they knew more enriching educational environments were out there, but they were reserved for those who had the knowledge of them and the means, like "white people." Their narratives document ways in which their schools continued to be places of oppression.

A facet of challenging Eurocentric reality currently within schools, as discussed in the literature review of this research, includes challenging the increasing frequency of placing African-American students into special education programs as a means of maintaining segregation between races in school and ultimately preserving European-American dominance within educational environments (Blanchett, 2006; Conchas, 2006; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Toler-Williams, 2001). None of the participants described this phenomenon although it has been well documented in many other studies. In fact, as mentioned previously, Peter personally discussed being promoted one grade level while Noah and Joseph often told me that their honors and advanced level status was challenging for them. Further, there was no discussion in any interview of participants knowing of other African-American peers being affected by this trend. Thus, although there is clear documentation of African-American overrepresentation in special education programs as outlined previously, the participants had no such experience with it.

Tenet 3: Commitment to social justice. In answering Research Question 2 regarding the ways in which participants felt they were affected in terms of their identity development and emotional well-being as a result of the racism they encountered in high school, they emphasized that correcting these matters would require a strong commitment by everyone involved. The participants noted that teachers needed to become more aware of their pedagogy, both that which is explicit and that which is hidden, in order to create an opportunistic learning environment for all students, not just African-Americans. They also discussed their difficulties in dealing with the microaggressions that they had previously experienced as well as those that they experience currently. As Noah explained, it is his job to help educate everyone, both fellow African-Americans and other groups alike regarding issues involving microaggressive behaviors.

As the researcher conducting this study, I also had to remind myself throughout this process that my overarching goal was to expose both the racism that these men detailed as well as the effects the racism had on them. As Noah stated, a pressing need is to make people (including myself), aware of what is still going on within America's schools for African-American students. Without being conscioencious in my reflections and ensuring that I was deconstructing the messages I was privy to from my participants, I knew this study would have little impact in the field of education.

Tenet 4: Centrality of expert knowledge. One of CRT's tenets, to ensure that the centrality of expert knowledge is maintained, is also a requirement of the methodology selected for this research, portraiture. As discussed previously, portraiture involves capturing the "voice" of the participants including messages that are said and unsaid or

296

implied within each context (Featherstone, 1989). Lawerence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann-Davis (1997) argue that the voices of the oppressed must be heard in order to promote social justice and accurately present one's findings. While I interviewed these three African-American men, I kept this at the forefront of my research the entire way. Although I originally speculated about conducting a simple survey or using a quantitative methodology to answer my research questions, essentially regarding racism against African-American males in school and its subsequent effects on them, I later saw how much would be missing without their true, uninterrupted voices. As a result of getting their inside accounts documented, I feel this study was very much strengthened.

A particularly special moment in collecting all the data I could from my participants happened one day when I was interviewing Joseph at his mother's house. During that week, I had already interviewed him twice and was getting the feeling that he might be getting irritated by the intrusion I was causing on his life. As a result, I told him that I felt we were almost finished with our interviews and that there were most likely only going to be a few more. He looked at me and told me that he actually really enjoyed talking with me and that, for him, it was actually "therapeutic." I relished knowing that he felt as if he was able to get these troubling matters out of his mind and put them into words. I can only hope that Peter and Noah felt the same.

Tenet 5: Use of interdisciplinary lenses. CRT states that one must use a multitude of lenses when critically examining race (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Some of these different lenses may include gender, age, sexual orientation, class, etc. I initially discussed African-American masculinity in the literature review thinking that the data I

would get would not only discuss race but would be definitive in discussing a difference between being an African-American male versus being and African-American female. In short, I believed that lenses of race and gender would ultimately help in answering my research questions.

Although race was highlighted throughout the interviews, there was little data given by the participants that discussed their masculinity and how they think it may have been involved in their experiences within their secondary school settings. In fact, even when I asked for the participants to explicitly explain how they think their experience may have been different in high school had they been African-American and female, the participants commented on how it would be difficult to stay away from cliques formed by other girl groups, etc. They said little about their own gender being a cause of discrimination. They all exclusively seemed to focus more on the race aspect as the source of problems within their school environments previously. This is certainly not to say that gender is not a significant factor in the treatment these participants received. Rather, it was not explicitly evident in the data and was not the primary focus in the findings of this research.

Other findings based on previously noted literature. Aside from looking at the tenets of CRT and how they were supported and upheld throughout this study, the previously regarded literature was evidenced in the data in several other ways. Looking at all the data from a more macro perspective, interest convergence, as discussed by Bell (2004), was evident at many levels. Via the stories regarding the misuse of rules, poor schooling environments, and low quality of educational staff, the participants showed that

these young men were subjected to educational environments that did not often have their best interests at heart. Their stories as an aesthetic whole, detail ways in which they are kept down and, even when they enjoyed small educational victories, were held in lower regard behind the dominant Eurocentric group.

The men also discussed, as noted in the literature review, that there was segregation in all their schools whether it was organized by students or based on the populations of their schools. Additionally, participants described various types of power structures they saw within their environments and how these structures were impenetrable and unchangeable from their perspective. These young men also discussed the chronic low expectations they often felt and how they ultimately would all agree that, as African-American males, "there's something different about the way [they must] walk in the world" (Pierre, 2007, p. 43). This included dealing with interference in stride and finding ways to overcome it so that it did not hinder their advances in education and in other realms.

Finally, the stories the participants told supported how these young men had shown both commitment and exploration to their race (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Observing the stories as a whole illustrated both their efforts to learn about their racial group and their awareness of the implications of group membership that exploration and commitment, respectively, called for according to Phinney and Ong (2007). Such was further evidenced in their descriptions of the experiences within education, the African-American male experience, as discussed in the literature review of this study. Through both the evidence of interference as well as the evidence suggesting support and

299

encouragement, participants described their feelings of belonging, relationships with teachers, peer influences, and opportunities missed. All of these were discussed as critical in understanding the educational experiences of the African-American male according to Gibson (2005). They did not, however, discuss the achievement gap, as noted previously by many researchers (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Adelman, 1999; Adelman, 2003; Kozol, 2005) that exists for African-American males. Although the achievement gap for African-American men cannot be denied, for these participants, this was not their reality.

Implications

As discussed in one of the tenets of CRT, Eurocentric trends must always be challenged (Foley, 1991; Smith et al., 2007; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2002). After conducting this study, this is especially evident. We continue to exist in a European-American supremacist society where people of color are constantly marginalized simply as a result of their being the "other" (Bell, 2004, p. 19; Bell, 1992, p. 10; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 16; Yosso, 2002, p. 94). As discussed by Bell (2004), change must start in America's law formation and the purpose behind laws that are created; it is imperative that "interest convergence" is not a force behind each bill and piece of legislation passed in the United States (Bell, 1980, p. 523).

However, the purpose of conducting this research was never been to exclusively focus on legalities although there are certainly many that must be called into question. Rather, this research looked at the secondary educational environments of African-American males, exposed where they felt the presence of racism and microaggressions, and examined how this presence affected these young men in terms of their identity

development and emotional well-being. It is imperative to examine anti-racist efforts within America's schools. These implications are discussed further below.

Teacher education and profession reshaping. Teaching is certainly no easy task. The State of California led the nation not only in setting standards for each subject matter level for students, but also in setting standards for teachers. In California, a set of standards has been adopted that applies to teachers called the California Standards for the Teaching Profession that were outlined and disseminated in 1997 (California Department of Education, 1997). These standards have been designed to help teachers "prompt reflection," "formulate professional goals," and "guide" their personal teaching practices (California Department of Education, 1997, p. 1). The State Department of Education further addressed the notion of "diversity of teaching in California" and stated that teachers in California are responsible for "serving the most diverse population of students in the history of education" (California Department of Education, 1997, p. 1). The standards listed for teachers are posed as questions for the teachers reviewing them and include questions such as "How do I encourage all students to describe their own learning processes and progress?" and "How and why do I select and use learning materials and resources that reflect the diversity in my classroom?" (California Department of Education, 1997, p. 7, 13).

Of particular interest is the standard entitled "Standard for Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning" that asks questions of the teachers such as "How and why do I help students become respectful of others who may be different from them?" and "How and why do I model and promote fairness, equity,

301

and respect in the classroom?" (California Department of Education, 1997, p. 8). This standard and the questions it asks are certainly well-intentioned and invite those that observe it to think critically about the environment they construct for students in their classrooms. However, the effectiveness with which teacher education programs propagate these standards must be examined. The standards certainly do not need change and new teachers certainly do not need any more requirements in order to become certified. The necessity, however, is a change in the ways these specific standards are modeled and taught to the teachers that ultimately must model them to their students.

This change will require a reshaping of the ways in which the standard's key element, to "establish a climate that promotes fairness and respect," is taught within teacher education programs (California Department of Education, 1997, p. 8). Many institutions offer teacher education programs that include a course in multi-culturalism and regard this class to be the means of meeting the standard for teaching fairness in the classroom. However, anti-racist coursework and thinking need to be interwoven throughout any quality credentialing program via courses, coursework, and assignments. For one, teacher credentialing candidates must be asked within their coursework to write and reflect critically about their own internal racism and stereotypical thoughts. They must be asked and must be willing to share these thoughts with their colleagues. A fundamental examination of these deeply held beliefs may expose candidates' personal internal racism. Once exposed, candidates both together and individually can begin to work on ways of correcting this thinking. One fact is certain: without acknowledging

one's own deeply held perspectives toward race, there is no reason for meta-cognitive change and, thus, racism is preserved.

Secondly, it is imperative that teacher-credentialing candidates be exposed to coursework that is specific and thorough in its use of CRT. This is not to say that a new course must be created; rather, perhaps the current multi-culturalism courses need to be reshaped. CRT recognizes race as a central facet in society and it is imperative that teacher candidates are exposed to this. It is saddening to see that most institutions reserve such courses for appropriate doctoral programs and law schools. Those that deal with the youngest and most fragile minds on a daily basis—the teachers in America's schools— are currently provided with lukewarm curriculum that often brushes over matters of race. It is, in fact, teachers that could benefit from CRT coursework the most; their views are disseminated and taught to a much wider audience. To kept these courses for those that are only able to afford them or are in an elite group academically maintains a power dynamic that keeps racism and class-ism in tact perfectly.

Finally, embedded within coursework for teacher-credentialing candidates, there must be assignments that actively call on these individuals to place themselves into spaces of discomfort. This means asking candidates to, after thinking critically about their own racism, find a place where this thinking is not as accepted or where one's race is not the predominant population in the area. For example, teacher candidates that believe in pro-choice could attend pro-life meetings or attend social events where they are the only one of their race present. This steady immersion into different social spaces may allow candidates to experience the alienation that some students often feel as well as give a

glimpse, into a predominately European-American female teacher-credentialing candidate base, regarding the way it feels to be "other" within a group (Bell, 2004, p. 19; Bell, 1992, p. 10; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 16; Yosso, 2002, p. 94). Although such experiences may not perfectly expose dominant group thinking, this may at least offer candidates a first glimpse of a life different from their own that is affected by a racialized society.

Teacher recruitment. As evidenced in the data found in this study, it is incredibly important for African-Americans, especially males, to receive instruction from someone who is not only supportive but who is also African-American. The participants discussed enjoying being in "pro-Black" classes as well as receiving support from their teachers in general. Although previous studies have suggested the need for African-Americans in the teaching profession, this study's findings expose the need even more (Lynn, 2001). Being those that students are around the most frequently, teachers must be advocates for the students they serve. They not only teach students subject matter, but they are also responsible in part for teaching students about society and social dynamics through both their explicit and implicit messages. It is increasingly apparent that African-American young men would receive meaningful benefits from being taught by fellow African-Americans, specifically men. Thus, it is crucial that credentialing programs focus on attracting African-American men to the profession. This is, of course, true for all racial backgrounds. Teacher education programs must be more responsible in recruiting teachers that represent the racial demographics of their students. While it is clear that a host of other issues are at work that keep individuals from beginning a career in teaching, including teacher pay and general regard for the profession itself, real progress can begin

304

in the category of teacher recruitment when programs become more responsible and start training more teachers that will advocate for all students.

Student voice and ownership in their own education. In looking further at the evidence in the data of this study, it is clear that students need to be more included in decisions regarding their own education. The men in this study communicated that they felt helpless to make change, that leadership at their secondary schools was often lacking, and that they were often given little support when they needed it most. For these men, it was not until getting involved in this study that they were really given the time and space to reflect on the practices that went on at their secondary school sites. Most of them were disgusted when they told me in detail about the ways in which they were marginalized in their education at the secondary level. Each of them noted that their education had taken on more meaning personally since being at Lotton through being able to voice opinions regarding professors, courses, and general leadership issues.

Further, just like educators, all students should get the opportunity at all levels of their education to receive curriculum that is explicitly interwoven with CRT. It is imperative that this curriculum is not simply reserved for those who can afford it or for those who have been fortunate enough to advance further than many in their educational careers. Using the tenets of CRT to frame curriculum for students, all will benefit and may begin to at least explore the centrality of race in society and its subsequent effects. This curriculum is vitally important for students from racial backgrounds that have been historically marginalized. It will allow these students to acknowledge and articulate their feelings in a more coherent, factual way that will inherently force others to listen.

Student evaluations and feedback. All students must be given more of an opportunity at the secondary level to communicate frequently with school personnel about what they enjoy and what is facilitating their educational experience. While this happens briefly once a year at some schools sites or once every few years when a school is going through its accreditation process, it must happen weekly if not daily. Students should be involved in their own education by being able to give frequent feedback to their educators and to other school leaders. This can be done both formally or informally but, regardless, the feedback students give must be considered and discussed. Without giving students the opportunity to help in changing school practices for the better, they have little say about their schooling, and they will inherently become increasingly disinterested in their own education.

Recommendations

There are many ways in which this field of study can be expanded upon and improved. For one, though it has been proven that African-American males are often in the lowest performing categories according to their academic performance statistics (California Department of Education, 2007; EdSource, 2008; Kozol, 2005; EdTrust, 2006; Adelman, 1999; Adelman, 2003; Riegle-Crumb, 2006; California Department of Education, 2008a), African-American females' statistics certainly need improvement as well. For example and as mentioned previously in the literature surrounding the African-American achievement gap, in the 2006-2007 school year, only 19.7% of African-American males completed the A-G requirements compared to 30% of their African-American female counterparts (California Department of Education, 2008a). Therefore,

although this subgroup is not struggling the most, they are sometimes found to be underperforming. This deserves to be looked at in further detail. In addition, the small ways in which African-American females do currently outperform their fellow African-American male peers deserves further consideration as well. Why is it that more African-American young women than men tend to be more academically successful currently? Are the women receiving more support from an unknown source? Are they catered to more in the classroom as a result of their gender in a predominantly feminized education structure? The answers to these questions may begin to be addressed if they are focused on in a later work.

Another recommendation for further studies is for African-American males to be given the chance to offer their experiences while focusing more on their gender and masculinity as well as any struggles with class that they may have had. While this study was guided by the theory of CRT, it may be interesting to note that gender and class may have played a role in the marginalization of these students. Participants mentioned some aspects of their struggles with class in terms of having to attend schools that were not as good as others. While this is certainly a race issue, there is no doubt that issues of class exist here as well. These issues deserve further consideration, especially in determining how these issues may have prompted various educational outcomes for students of color.

Finally, an additional recommendation for this field of study is for Latino students to receive more focus from a racialized lens similar to CRT within research that involves them. Especially in California with its rapid growth in the Latino population, the need is increasing to serve this rapidly growing student subgroup. While some studies are

beginning to address these students' needs via examining test scores quantitatively, as well as through various qualitative means, there is certain to be much discussion regarding the achievement gap and literacy issues when comparing Latinos with other subgroups. The talented researchers that embark on this incredibly necessary exploration must not allow their work to get convoluted. The race issue in the United States for Latino Americans is pervasive and must be exposed. Thus, it is imperative that researchers on this topic do not fail to use the tenets of CRT as an aid in examining how race has played a factor when analyzing the causes regarding the continuing marginalization of this population.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented further discussion of the findings and implications, and includes recommendations for this field of study. It is hoped that this research, in general, will promote antiracism and reflection upon the actions and behaviors we, as a society, engage in on a daily basis. I hope that you are able to reflect, as I will continue to do, about the privileges that are held by some in society. Just as I hope to do for the rest of my life, I hope you will explore and consider the ways in which we act along racialized lines in our daily lives. Without this self-examination and critical reflection, we will continue to limit our experiences and perpetuate our ignorance.

Though some may argue that ignorance is something to be valued, the data from this research shows that when people fail to learn and explore meta-cognitively their reasoning for acting in certain ways, it really does hurt others, especially when the others come from a historically marginalized population as a result of their race. Change must

occur within the laws that govern society and maintain its functioning along racialized lines. These laws will then trickle down into schools and eventually into the classrooms where young minds can be awakened. The participants in this study have shown many ways in which they have experienced racism within their secondary school environments. They have also shown that these experiences have affected their identity development and emotional well-being. Though these young men have been incredibly resilient, their stories communicate the suffocation they live by when attempting to move on and do more with their lives. Worse, they feel they must live this way forever.

Race certainly is not a dead issue in our society and it will take lifetimes for real change to occur. In the meantime, we can all begin to take small steps to create a more antiracist society that expands the Eurocentric one we currently welcome and implore. Specifically, within our schools, we can teach our students better by teaching them about the current implications of race and by encouraging students to explore who they are and what they have learned. As responsible individuals, everyone must become more cognizant of our thoughts and actions. As one of my participants told me, we must "check [our] motives at the door." I am far from perfect but I will try the best I can to do this. I hope you will too.

Appendix A

Email Communication with Perspective Participants

Hello,

My name is Lauren Fissori and I am working on my dissertation research at LMU. My research involves examining, retrospectively, the experiences that African-American male students had while they were in high school. Specifically, I am interested in discussing relationships between peers and teachers as well as discussing perceptions that were formed during the high school years.

I am looking for students that: (a) are male, (b) identify as African-American, (c) are 21-years or older, (d) attended an urban area high school prior to attending college, and (e) are in good standing currently in terms of academics (over a 2.0).

If you are interested in being a part of this study and qualify based on the above mentioned criteria, please contact the assistant director of the doctoral center Elizabeth Polidan at epolidan@lmu.edu. Please send her an email stating that you are interested in participating in Lauren Fissori's reserach study and include your full name, email address that you check most frequently, and phone number.

Thanks so much for your time.

~Lauren Fissori

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Date of Preparation: February 27, 2009
Loyola Marymount University
Portraits by African-American Male University Students: A Retrospective Study
Researcher: Lauren Fissori

I hereby authorize Lauren Fissori to include me in the following research study: Portraits by African-American Male University Students: A Retrospective Study.

I have been asked to participate on a research project which is designed to explicitly identify and document my experiences as they were perceived by myself while I was attending my secondary school(s) and which will last for approximately five months.

It has been explained to me that the reason for my inclusion in this project is because I am male, have identified as African-American, and am currently attending a university. I understand that if I am a participant, the procedures will involve the following: observations lasting a minimum of 30 minutes, a minimum of five semi-structured individual interviews lasting a minimum of 30 minutes, and a minimum of five semi-structured focus group interviews lasting a minimum of 30 minutes.

Additionally, the researcher will also provide me with a journal to document in writing reflections I have at any time during the research process; I understand that using the journal is optional. The researcher will record, via audiotape, all interviews and observations. These tapes will always be stored in a safe place for my own privacy and will only be transcribed immediately once an interview or observation has taken place. After the transcribing has taken place, the tape will be erased. My name will never be used when transcriptions occur; a code name will be used instead. I understand that the researcher's laptop is locked with a password and that it will be physically locked in a secure cabinet when it is not on the researcher's person. I have been assured that the tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed after their use in this research project.

I understand that if I am a subject, I will be asked to participate in the observations, interviews, and focus groups as described above. I will also be given a journal if I wish to write down thoughts I have forgotten or wish to write about rather than speak. I understand that I withdraw from this study at anytime.

The investigator will contact me via email or phone and set up a time that is convenient for me to meet with her so that interviews, observations, and focus groups can be conducted. I understand that I can decline any meeting that is not convenient for me.

These procedures have been explained to me by Lauren Fissori. She is currently working on her doctoral studies and has successfully completed the NIH web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Subjects" given by the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research.

I understand that I will be audio-taped in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will not be disclosed. I have been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I understand that I have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

I understand that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: psychological risks may involve feelings of anxiety, sadness, regret, and/or distress as a result of questioning that may evoke such feelings. However, protections to dismantle or at least minimize these psychological risks will include the following: (1) the ability of the participant to withdraw from the study at any time, (2) the ability of the participant to limit his participation at any time, (3) the access to psychological support from the researcher at any time and/or from counseling service provided by the researcher and/or LMU at the request of the participant(s), and (4) the protocol which involves a thorough debrief as well as a review of the researcher's perceived findings to ensure clarity, correctness, and accuracy.

Social risks may include being ostracized by peers for being a part of a study conducted on campus. I may be unfairly stereotyped or judged by others as a result of my participation. To guard against these social risks, confidentiality of all student information and data collected will be used. My name will never be used and all data collected will always be done and stored in a secure place. Further, I may request when and where interviews, focus groups, and journaling may take place. I may request not to be questioned in any setting in which I do not feel psychologically or socially comfortable doing so. I will also be able to request times that are convenient for me to meet and be interviewed by the researcher.

I also understand that the possible benefits of the study are rejoicing in knowing that I have assisted in adding to the literature that works for a more socially just educational system. I will be a contributor to the dialogue on awareness of issues within schools that harm the academic achievement and overall development of people of color. By leading the researcher through careful narratives, stories, and counter-stories, I will have brought more awareness to the experiences of African-American males specifically within their secondary school environment. By opening the door for equal and equitable access to a strong, fair educational setting for all students, I will be involved in the plight to achieve a more racially conscious and responsive society.

I understand that Dr. Edmundo Litton, who can be reached at elitton@lmu.edu or via phone at (310) 338-1859 directly or (310) 258-4670 to schedule an appointment, will answer any

questions I may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study. Further, I may contact Dr. Gail Buck, the director of the Office of Black Student Services (OBSS) at gbuck@lmu.edu or via phone at (310) 338-5808.

If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained.

I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice to (e.g., my future medical care at LMU.)

I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study.

I understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent except as specifically required by law.

I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question that I may not wish to answer.

Some of the information with which I will be provided may be ambiguous, or inaccurate. However, I will be informed of any inaccuracies following my participation in this study.

I understand that I will receive no compensation for my involvement in this study. The only item I can keep after all writings have been documented is the journal issued to me by the researcher at the start of the study.

I understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact John Carfora, Ed.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 338-4599, John.Carfora@lmu.edu.

In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form.

Subject's Signature_____ Date _____

Witness_____ Date_____

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Individual Questions
For Observations

Please note: These questions will be asked during observations when time permits. More questions than these presented may be asked to simply allow for the participants to further explain and expand upon their responses. These questions serve as a guide to starting all interview and focus group conversations. These questions may not necessarily be asked in the order they are presented here. Some questions are very similar for triangulation purposes. Not all questions presented here may be asked. Approximately five to ten questions from this list will be selected for each observation.

Questions:
1. How would you describe yourself? How do you think others would describe you?
2. How would you describe your home life? The people you live with in the house?
3. What story/stories can you tell about your family? What are some of your fondest memories? Any not so good ones you care to share?
4. How would you describe the high school you attended? In comparison to other schools?
5. How would you describe your friends from high school? Compared to people you do not consider your friends? Compared to the friends you have now at the university?
6. How has your schooling been for you? Describe to me how your educational career has gone since the day you can remember. Are there any stories that stand out from pre-school? Elementary?
7. What did you used to always want to be when you were younger? What are your goals for the future now?
8. Describe your life outside of school while you were in high school. How would you characterize it?
9. What are your hobbies now? What were they in high school?
10. What did you do for fun outside of school when you were in high school? How about now?
11. What are your perceptions of how you are doing in school and why do you think it is that way? How did you do in school when you were in high school?
12. Do you believe high school was a success for you? If so, how so? If not, why not?
13. How do your teachers treat you personally in and out of classroom? How did they treat you when you were in high school?
14. How do you think other would describe you now like your friends? How about your current professors?
15. Where do you see yourself in ten years? How will you/may you have gotten there?

16. Did you believe you have the same opportunity as everyone else when you were in high school? Why or why not?
17. What person or people did you look up to as a mentor or role model on campus (if anyone) when you were in high school? What about now?
18. What has been your worst or most negative experience while you were in high school? Why was it so bad for you personally?
19. What do think were you high school's strengths and weaknesses/areas for improvement? What about at this university?
20. How much do you trust in your professors and what they teach you? Explain.
21. How do you think success is easiest achieved?
22. How would you characterize your peer relationships currently?
23. What resources do you know are available to you/people you could go to if things really started going bad for you? How do you know they are there for you?
24. Do all of your professors seem to expect the same outcomes/have the same expectations for everyone? How about when you were in high school?
25. How would you classify the relationship you have with your professors? With With your parents? With your friends?
26. What were your expectations for yourself when you first came to this university?
27. What were/are your expectations of your professors?
28. What were some key motivating factors that got you through to graduation in high school? Why do you come to school everyday? What did you feel your purpose was in finishing and doing your work to get there?
29. Are you happy with your course selection so far since you've been here? Do you feel like you are "on track"?
30. How far along did your parent(s) get in their education or are they still going?
31. How are you informed of what's going on all the time academically? Socially?
32. How would you rank your level of effort towards academics on a scale of 1-10? Why that score? What about when you were in high school?
33. Do you feel like the curriculum you receive suits you? Why not or why so?
34. What students do you feel are held on a high pedestal at this school by teachers? By students? By teachers and students?
35. (carrying on from the question above) What behaviors (actions and attitudes) do these people have/show?
36. Who are the role models in your life?
37. What factors in you life will contribute to making a successful future for you? What things won't?
38. Which is your least favorite class you have taken so far since you have been at the university? Why? What about your favorite? Why?
39. Prior to college, has there ever been a teacher that you really trusted and felt you had a close relationship with? What made you trust that teacher?
40. What are your plans for your mathematics course next year? How was that decided?
41. Which class do you think you are doing the best in currently? How do you know?

42. How did you think this year was going to go for you at the start of the year and how has it ended up for you thus far?
43. What's the biggest decision you've made so far today? So far this month? So far this year? The last five years?

Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Group Questions

Please note: These questions are for the semi-structured interviews. More questions than these presented may be asked to simply allow for the participants to further explain and expand upon their responses. These questions serve as a guide to starting all interview and focus group conversations. These questions may not necessarily be asked in the order they are presented here. Some questions are very similar for triangulation purposes. Additionally, not all questions presented here will be asked.

Research Question 1:
1.) How did African-American male university students experience racism within their secondary school setting?

Related Questions:
1. Describe a time(s) when you felt supported by your teacher(s).
2. Describe a time(s) when you felt supported by your peer(s).
3. (related to questions one and two) How did you feel when this happened?
4. (related to questions one and two) What were you better able to do as a result of the support you received? What did you accomplish that you may not have otherwise, if anything?
5. Describe your least favorite teacher from high school during your first year there. What is one reason for this being your least favorite teacher and/or can you share a story about him or her?
6. Describe your least favorite teacher from high school during your last year there. What is one reason for this being your least favorite teacher and/or can you share a story about him or her?
7. Describe your most favorite teacher from high school during your first year there. What is one reason for this being your most favorite teacher and/or can you share a story about him or her?
8. Describe your most favorite teacher from high school during your last year there. What is one reason for this being your most favorite teacher and/or can you share a story about him or her?
9. Who was your favorite teacher in high school of everyone you took classes from? Can you share any stories about that person? What did you like so much about that teacher?
10. Describe your best friend(s) from your first year in high school. What is one story you recall about them?
11. Describe your best friend(s) from your last year in high school. What is one story you recall about them? Is this the same person as when you were a freshman? If so, how or why did things change?
12. Was there anyone you did not get along with? If so, who? If not, why do you think it was that you generally had no issues with anyone.

13. Was there any one group or more that you did not get along with? If so, what group(s)? If not, why do you think it was that you generally had no issues with anyone.
14. Give some examples of the rules and school policies you recall from your freshman year. What did you think about the rules?
15. Give some examples of the rules and school policies you recall from your senior year. What did you think about the rules?
16. Describe each of your teachers in detail. What are their general attitudes? Behaviors? What is it like in each one of their classes on a daily basis in general?
17. Describe your closest friends. What are their attitudes? What do they act like in class? How do they do in school as far as you know? How do they act outside of class?
18. (related to question 17) How are you similar to these traits of your friends? How are you different?
19. How would you describe your previous school? Socially? Academically?
20. What do you think of the rules that are in place at this school?
21. Can you describe a time when you or a peer got in trouble because you or they broke school rules? What happened? Were they treated fairly? What were the circumstances?
22. What was a typical school day like for you? Describe it from the time you wake up to when you go to sleep.
23. Describe a typical day for a typical student at your previous school. What will most likely go on during the course of their day?
24. Can you describe a time when you were not very happy during your high school years? What went on to make you so unhappy? If not, what kept you as happy as you could be for all four years?
25. Describe how you felt about your friends.
26. Describe how you felt about the people that you have classes with. What were they like?
27. Think about your teachers. How and what did you learn from each of them?
28. Think about your principal(s) and vice principal(s). How and what did you learn from each of them?
29. Think about your dean(s) and academic counselors(s). How and what did you learn from each of them?
30. What's the most memorable moment you had while in high school? Describe it. what happened?
31. (related to question 30) How do you think others might describe the same event? Teachers? Prinicipal? You peers?
32. Why and how did you come to have the friends that you became most close to? What lead you all to be in the same group together?
33. Have you ever had any troubles with your friends? If so, what happened between you? What were the circumstances? If not, how was it that things stayed positive between you?

34. Do you have problems with any of the kids you don't consider to be your friends. If so, why? If not, why do you think things are not tense?
35. (related to 34) Can you describe a specific circumstance to support your beliefs here?
36. Describe the ways in which you and your friends acted in school and the things you usually did when you are outside of school. Are they the sam? If so, why and/or how? If not, why are you different?
37. What were the different social groups that you usually saw? Which one(s) were you a part of? Describe each. Can you tell in stories about these social groups?
38. What were the other groups on campus? Why did you not associate with these groups? Describe them.
39. Who was your favorite person on campus? Can you tell any stories to support why this is the case?
40. Who was your least favorite person on campus? Can you tell any stories to support why this is the case?
41. What do you think your teachers are like outside of school?
42. Do you believe that your teachers care about you? How do you know that they do/don't? Explain.
43. What's the best piece(s) of advice you ever heard while you were in high school? What's the best advice you think you could give anyone regarding this school?
44. Do you feel that your teachers liked you? How did you know this? Explain.
45. Can you describe a teacher that was neither your favorite nor your least favorite. Why does s/he not make it into your top list for least favorite or most favorite?
46. What did your friends do to let you know that they cared about you/didn't really care about you? Explain. Can you tell a story to support that?
47. Were you ever humiliated when in high school? If no, did you ever see it happen to someone else? What were the circumstance? Explain.
48. What rules did teachers have in their classrooms? What about them did you like? What didn't you like? Are they followed? Can you explain with a story?
49. What were school assemblies like? What usually gets discussed? How do you feel about them? Were you usually engaged or listening? Explain how a typical assembly would progress.
50. Can you describe any particular assembly or school sponsored activity that was especially meaningful or memorable to you? What happened? Why does this stand out to you?
51. Describe your relationship with your academic counselor(s). Can you explain using a story that best characterizes the person that s/he is and/or your relationship?
52. Were the rules at your high school generally followed? Explain.
53. Were you afraid to get in trouble at school? Why or why not?
54. Who held the most privilege at this school? Why did you think this? Can you explain using a story?

55. What, if anything, were you afraid of at school? Who were you afraid of? Explain. If you were not afraid of anything or anyone, how did the school create that safe feeling for you?
56. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Research Question 2:
2.)How did the identified experiences affect the participants' identity development and emotional well-being?

Related Questions:
1. What motivated you while you were in high school? Can you tell a story about it?
2. What did not motivate you while you were in high school? Can you tell a story about it?
3. Describe how you felt when you were a freshman. What did you like about high school? What did you not like?
4. Describe how you felt when you were a senior. What did you like about high school? What did you not like?
5. What were your teachers' instructional styles like? Can you describe a few? How did you respond to them socially and/or academically?
6. What were your peer interaction styles like? How did you interact with friends? How did you respond to each other?
7. Who did you choose to hang out with and why?
8. What groups, clubs, teams, etc. did you become a part of? Why did you join them?
9. What social events run by the school did you attend when you were in high school? How did you feel while attending these?
10. What social events not sponsored by the school did you attend while in your high school years? How did you feel while attending them?
11. How did you feel about the rules at school?
12. How did you feel about the rules within each of your teacher's classrooms? What made you feel this way? Can you tell a story related to this?
13. Do you feel like the rules within teacher's classrooms affect how you perform? How? Explain.
14. Do you feel like the rules within the school in general affected the way you are able to act? How? Explain.
15. How did classmates of yours act during class? How did you act? How do you think they would describe you? How do you think your teachers would describe you?
16. How did the way you act in class affect/alter/enhance/degrade your academic performance? Explain.
17. How did the way your peers act in class affect/alter/enhance/degrade your academic performance? Explain.
18. Was there cheating at your school? How much? Why do you think it did or did not occur? Can you tell a story related to this?

19. Do you think you always respected your teachers? How? Can you explain with a story?
20. (related to question 18) Do you think your peers would have said the same thing about you? Why or why not?
21. (related to question 18) Do you think your teachers would have said the same thing about you? Why or why not?
22. Do you think others respected the teachers and staff at your high school? How? Explain.
23. As a freshman, what did you feel was your purpose for attending high school? What gave you this purpose?
24. As a senior, what was your purpose for going to high school? Was it the same as it was freshman year? If so, why do you think it did not change? If not, how did it change?
25. How did you feel when you only had one month left of high school to go? What did you do? Can you tell any stories about that time?
26. How did you feel when high school ended and you graduated? What did you do? Can you tell any stories about that time?
27. What do you think your peers expected of you? How did they make you feel?
28. Explain how you feel you and your friends used to get along. Can you support what you are saying with a story?
29. Explain how you feel you and your teachers used to get along. Can you support what you are saying with a story?
30. Explain how you feel you and your counselor(s) used to get along. Can you support what you are saying with a story?
31. Explain how you feel you and your school staff (principal, dean, janitors, etc.) used to get along. Can you support what you are saying with a story?
32. How did you act towards teachers that you knew supported you and cared for you?
33. How did you act towards peers that you know supported you and cared for you?
34. How did you act towards other staff (janitors, principal, counselor, dean, etc.) that you knew supported you and cared for you?
35. (related to questions 32, 33, and 34) How did you act towards those that did not?
36. Did you ever speak out when a teacher said something disrespectful or inappropriate to you? If so, what were the circumstances? Can you explain what happened?
37. Did you ever speak out when a peer or friend said something disrespectful or inappropriate to you? If so, what were the circumstances? Can you explain what happened?
38. Did you ever speak out when a staff member (counselor, principal, etc.) said something disrespectful or inappropriate to you? If so, what were the circumstances? Can you explain what happened?
39. If you could give some advice to teachers at your previous school, what would it be?

40. If you could give some advice to students at your previous school, what would it be?
41. If you could give some advice to your principal at your previous school, what would it be?
42. If you could give some advice to your counselor at your previous school, what would it be?
43. How did you stand up for yourself when you felt threatened or put down?
44. What advice would you give to parents of students at your previous school?
45. Do you plan to have kids? Have nieces? Nephews? Would you encourage them/want them to attend your previous school? Why or why not?
46. Do you feel like if you were different, your school experience in high school would have been different? That is, how would it have been different for you if you were female? Gay or straight? Latino? European-American? Asian-American? How would it have been different? Can you support what you are saying here with a story?
47. If you could have given advice to yourself before you started high school sitting where you are now, what would you have said?
48. How did your high school experience shape who you are now?
49. How did your most memorable teachers shape who you are now?
50. How did your most memorable peers shape who you are now?
51. Think of another nearby high school or schools to the one you went to. What do you think it would have been like to go there?
52. Think of your personal best asset. How would it be different, in your opinion, if you had gone somewhere else?
53. Think of your personal best asset. How have you learned it and how was it enhanced or remained during your high school years?
54. What did your teachers teach you about society during your high school years? Can you tell any stories related to this?
55. Did you trust in the information your high school teachers gave you? Why or why not?
56. Think back to senior year just before you went to college. How would you have defined justice?
57. What did you learn about fairness while in high school? Can you tell a story related to this?
58. How did you see yourself in relation to others and other groups on campus? Why?
59. Is there anything else you want to add?

REFERENCES

A. Harriet Senior High School. (2009). Retrieved from
    http://www.hamiltonhighschool.net

Adelman, C. (2003). *Postsecondary attainment, attendance, curriculum, and
    performance: Selected results from the NELS:88/2000 postsecondary education
    transcript study (PETS), 2000.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education
    Institute of Education Sciences.

Adelman, C. (1999). *Answers in the tool box: Academic intensity, attendance patterns,
    and bachelor's degree attainment.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of
    Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Asante, M. K. (1988). *Afrocentricity.* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Asante, M. K. (1998). *The afrocentric idea.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Asante, M. K. (1991). The afrocentric idea in education. *Journal of Negro Education,
    60*(2), 170-180. Retrieved from www.journalnegroed.org/archive.html

Banning, M. (1999). Race, gender, and classroom discourse. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle,
    and S. Villenas, (Eds.). *Race is…Race isn't.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bell, D. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma.
    Harvard Law Review, 93(4), 518-533. Retrieved from
    www.harvardlawreview.org/issues

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism.* New York:
    NY: Basic Books.

Bell, D. (2002). Epilouge. In B. Singley, (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black and
    White writers confront their personal history* (p. 327-335). Chicago, IL: Lawrence
    Hill Books.

Bell, D. (2004). *Silent covenants: Brown vs. board of education and the unfulfilled hopes
    for racial reform.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Blanchett, W. J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American students in
    special education: Acknowledging the role of white privilege and racism.
    Educational Researcher, 35(6), 24-28. Retrieved from www.aera.net

Book of Peter (2010). Peter 5:6. In W. H. Keller. *New International Version Bible.* Grand
    Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Bronson, P., & Merryman, A. (2009, September). See baby discriminate. *Newsweek,* 52-60.

California Department of Education (1997). California standards for the teaching profession. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/te/

California Department of Education (2007). Overview of California's 2006-07 accountability progress reporting system. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/documents/simschl06b.pdf

California Department of education (2008a).State accountability report card for 2006-2007. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sc/documents/reportcard0607.pdf

California Department of Education (2008b). Academic Performance Index (API). Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/

California Department of Education (2008c). CST science reference sheets. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/cstsciref.asp

California Department of Education (2008d). Dropouts by ethnic designation State of California for the year 2006-2007. Retrieved from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DistGrad.asp?cSelect=1964733--LOS+ANGELES+UNIFIED&cChoice=DstGrdEth2&cYear=2006-07&cLevel=District&cTopic=Graduates&myTimeFrame=S&submit1=Submit

California Department of Education (2008e). 12th grade graduates completing all courses required for UC and/or CSU entrance. Retrieved from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DropoutReporting/DropoutsByED.aspx?cDistrictName=State&cCountyCode=00&cDistrictCode=0000000&cSchoolCode=0000000&Level=State&TheReport=dEthnic&ProgramName=All&cYear=2006-07&cAggSum=StTotGrade&cGender=B

Card, N. A. (2007). "I hated her guts!": Emerging adults' recollections of the formation and maintenance, and termination of antipathetic relationships during high school. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*(1), 32-57. doi:10.1177/0743558406295783

Case, K. A. (2007). Raising white privilege awareness and reducing racial prejudice: Assessing diversity course effectiveness. *Teaching of Psychology, 34*(4), 231-235. Retrieved from http://teachpsych.org/top/topindex.php

Catania, J. A., Gibson, D. R., Chitwood, D. D. & Coates, T. J. (1990). Methodological problems in AIDS behavioral research: Influences on measurement error and participation bias in studies of sexual behavior. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*(3), 339-362. Retrieved from www.psychologybulletin.com

Chapman, T. K. (2006). Pedaling backward: Reflections of Plessy and Brown in Rockford public school's de jure desegregation efforts. In A.D. Dixson & C.K. Rousseau, (Eds.). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Children's Defense Fund. (2007). America's cradle to prison pipeline. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.childrensdefense.org

City-Data for 90016. (2009). 90016 Zip Code detailed profile. Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/zips/90016.html

City-Data for 90045. (2009). 90045 Zip Code detailed profile. Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/zips/90045.html

City-Data for 90047. (2009). 90047 Zip Code detailed profile. Retrieved from http://www.city-data.com/zips/90047.html

City of Gardena (2000). Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000. Retrieved November 23, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://www.ci.gardena.ca.us/teleworksPDFs/censusdata.pdf

City of Gardena (2004). Demographics, housing and labor pool. Retrieved from http://www.ci.gardena.ca.us/discover/demographics.asp

Cohen, P., Kasen, S., Bifulco, A., Andrews, H., & Gordon, K. (2005). The accuracy of adult narrative reports of developmental trajectories. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 29*(5), 345-355. doi: 10.1177/01650250500147709

College Board (2009). About AP. Retrieved from http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html

Conchas, G. (2006). *The color of success: Race and high-achieving urban youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Constantine, M. G. (2007). Racial microaggressions against African-American clients in cross-racial counseling relationships. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.1.1

Constantine, M. G., & Wang, D. W. (2007). Perceptions of racial microaggressions among Black supervisees in cross-racial dyads. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(2), 142-153. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.2.142

Crenshaw, K. W. (1988). Race, reform, and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimation in antidiscrimination law. *Harvard Law Review, 101*, 1331-1387. Retrieved from www.harvardlawreview.org/issues

Darder, A., & Flores, R. D. (2009). After race: An introduction. In A. Darder, M.P. Baltodano, & R.D. Flores, (Eds.). *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (p. 150-166). New York, NY: Routledge.

Davis, D. M. (2007). The Los Angeles riots revisited: The changing face of the Los Angeles unified school district and the challenge for educators. *Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, 42*(3), 213-229. Retrieved from www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t775653643~db=all

Davis, J. E. (2001). Black boys at school: Negotiating masculinities and race. In R. Majors (Ed). *Educating our Black children: New directions and radical approaches.* New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative. *The Michigan Law Review, 87*(8), 2411-2441. Retrieved from www.michiganlawreview.org/information/archive

Delgado, R. (1990). When a story is just a story: Does voice really matter? *Virginia Law Review, 76*(1), 95-111.

Delgado, R. (1991). Brewer's plea: Critical thoughts on common sense. *Vanderbilt Law Review, 44*(1), 1-14. Retrieved from http://law.vanderbilt.edu/publications/vanderbilt-law-review/archive/index.aspx

Delpit, L. (2002a). No kinda sense. In L. Delpit, & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.). *The skin we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 31-48). New York, NY: The New Press.

Delpit, L. (2002b). Introduction. In L. Delpit, & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.). *The skin we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. xv-xxvi). New York, NY: The New Press.

Dillard, C. B. (2008). Re-membering culture: Bearing witness to the spirit of identity in research. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 11*(1), 87-93. Retrieved from http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713443511

Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2006a). Introduction. In A. D. Dixson, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2006b). The first day of school: A crt story. In A. D. Dixson, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., Kawakami, K., & Hodson, G. (2002). Why can't we just get along? Interpersonal biases and interracial distrust. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 8*(2), 88-102. doi: 10.1037//1099-9809.8.2.88

Duncan, G. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narrative, inequality and the problem of epistemology. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 93-114. doi: 10.1080/1361332052000341015

Edmonds, J. C., Moore, R. G., Williams, H. M., Cox, Jr., T., Drake II, L. M., Fernandez, … Evans, D. J. (2000). Can equal opportunity be made more equal? *Harvard Business Review,* 138-158. Retrieved from http://hbr.harvardbusiness.org/archive

EdSource (2008, May). Raising African American student achievement: California goals, local outcomes. *EdSource*, 1-24. Retrieved from www.edsource.org

EdTrust (2006). African-American achievement in America. Retrieved from http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/9AB4AC88-7301-43FF-81A3-EB94807B917F/0/AfAmer_Achivement.pdf

English, F. W. (2000). A critical appraisal of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's "Portraiture" as a method of educational research. *Educational Researcher, 29*(7), 21-26. Retrieved from http://edr.sagepub.com

ePodunk. (2007). Quitman County profile. Retrieved from Web: http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=19985

Featherstone, J. (1989). To make the spirit whole. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 367-378. Retrieved from http://www.hepg.org/her/past

Ferber, A. (2007). The construction of Black masculinity: White supremacy now and then. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 31*(11), 11-24. Retrieved from http://jss.sagepub.com/archive

Ferguson, A. A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of Black masculinity.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Foley, D. (1991). Reconsidering anthropological explanations of ethnic school failure. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 22*(1), 60-86. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/3195890

Ford, D., & Harris, J. (1997). A study of the racial identity and achievement of Black males and females. *Roeper Review, 20*(2), 105-110. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/ed/tblofcontents80.html

Fordham, S. (2008). Beyond capital high: On dual citizenship and the strange career of "acting white." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 227-246. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0161-7761&site=1

Foster, K. (2004). Coming to terms: A discussion of John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory of minority academic achievement. *Intercultural Education, 15*(4), 369-384. doi: 10.1080/1467598042000313403

Fullan, M. (2003). *The moral imperative of school leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gale, T., & Densmore, K. (2000). *Just schooling: Explorations in the cultural politics of teaching.* Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

Gause, C. P. (2005). The Ghetto sophisticates: Performing Black masculinity, saving lost souls, and serving as leaders of the new school. *Taboo,* 17-31.

Ghee, K. L. (1990). The psychological importance of self definition and labeling: Black versus African-American. *Journal of Black Psychology, 17*(1), 75-93. Retrieved from http://jbp.sagepub.com/archive

Gibson, M. (2005). Promoting academic engagement among minority youth: Implications from John Ogbu's Shaker Heights ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18*(5), 581-603. doi: 10.1080/09518390500224853

Gordon, J., & Johnson, M. (2003). Race, speech, and a hostile educational environment: What color is free speech? *Journal of Social Philosophy, 34*(3), 414-436. Retrieved from http://www.heldref.org/pubs/soc/about.html

Hall, R. E. (2007). Rooming in the master's House: Psychological domination and the Black conservative. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*(4), 565-578. doi: 10.1177/0021934706288145.

Harper, S. R. (2006). Peer support for African-American male college achievement: Beyond internalized racism and the burden of "acting white." *Journal of Men's Studies, 14*(3), 337-358. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3510

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity expression and development among African-American male student leaders. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(2), 127-144. Retrieved from http://www.jcsdonline.org/home.html

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in educational settings.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Henry, M. (2002). He is a "Bad Mother *$%!#": Shaft and contemporary Black masculinity. *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 114-119. Retrieved from http://www.heldref.org/pubs/jpft/about.html

Hermes, M. (1999). Research methods as a situated response: Toward a first nations' methodology. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, and S. Villenas, (Eds.). *Race is…Race isn't.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *Bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Holzman, M. (2006). *Public education and Black male students: The 2006 state report card.* Cambridge, MA: The Schott Foundation for Public Education.

Hubbard, L. (2005). The role of gender in academic achievement. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18*(5), 605-623. doi: 10.1080/09518390500224887

Hubbard, L., & Datnow, A. (2005). Do single-sex schools improve the education of low-income and minority students? An investigation of California's public single-gender academies. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 36*(2), 115-131. Retrieved from www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm

Hunt, B. (Producer). (2006). *I am a man: Black masculinity in America* [Youtube picture]. (Available from Youtube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOQZqCGHctE)

Huston, T. L., & Robins, E. (1982). Conceptual and methodological issues in studying close relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 44*(4), 901-925. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0022-2445

Kalekin-Fishman, D. (2004). Diagnosing inequalities in schooling: Ogbu's orientation and wider implications. *Intercultural Education, 15*(4), 413-430. doi: 10.1080/1467598042000313430

Kelley, R. D. G. (1998). House Negroes on the loose: Malcolm X and the Black bourgeoisie. *Callaloo, 21*(2), p. 419-435.

Kerhahan, C., & Davis, T. (2007). Changing perspective: How learning about racism influences student awareness and emotion. *Teaching of Psychology, 34*(1), 49-52. Retrieved from http://teachpsych.org/top/topindex.php

Kluger, R. (1975). *Simple justice: The history of Brown v. board of education and Black America's struggle for equality.* New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation.* New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Kunjufu, J. (1990a). The vanishing African-American teacher. *Black Collegian, 20*(4), 160-164. Retrieved from http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4710606

Kunjufu, J. (1990b). 21st Century opportunities. *Black Collegian, 21*(1), 21-23. Retrieved from http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4710606

Kunjufu, J. (1991). The male academy: In whose interest? *Black Collegian, 22*(2), 44-46. Retrieved from http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4710606

Kunjufu, J., Giovanni, N., Gates, Jr. H. L., West, C., & Daniels, R. (1996). The challenges we face. *Black Collegian, 26*(3), 28-31. Retrieved from http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4710606

Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Just what is critical race theory, and what's it doing in a nice field like education? In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, and S.Villenas, (Eds.). *Race is…Race isn't.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2002). I ain't writin' nuttin': Permission to fail and demands to succeed in urban classrooms. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, and S.Villenas, (Eds.). *The skin we speak: thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 107-120). New York, NY: New Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3-12. Retrieved from www.aera.net

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. F. (2009). Toward a critical race theory of education. In A. Darder, M. P. Baltodano, & R. D. Flores, (Eds.). *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 167-182). New York, NY: Routledge.

Lalas, J., & Valle, E. (2007). Social justice lenses and authentic student voices. *Educational Leadership and Administration, 19*, 75-102. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED418478&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED418478

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(3), 3-15. doi: 10.1177/1077800404270955

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Hoffmann-Davis, J. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leonardo, Z. (2004). The unhappy marriage between marxism and race critique: political economy and the production of racialized knowledge. *Policy Features in Education, 2*(3, 4), 483-493. Retrieved from http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pdf/freetoview.asp?j=pfie&vol=2&issue=3&year=2004&article=4_Leonardo_PFIE_2_3-4_web

Los Angeles Unified School District. (2009). School Profile: Harriet SH-Complex. Retrieved from http://search.lausd.k12.ca.us/cgi-bin/fccgi.exe?w3exec=school.profile.content&which=8686

Lotton University Facts. (2009). Quick facts. Retrieved from http://www.lmu.edu/about/Quick_Facts.htm

Lucaites, J. L., & Condit, C. M. (1990). Reconstructing <equality>: Culturetypal and counter-cultural rhetorics in the martyred Black vision. *Communication Monographs, 57*(1), p. 5-24.

Lyden, J. (Producer). (2008). *Black masculinity: Dueling images of power* [Internet radio Broadcast]. New York: National Public Radio. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96785017

Lynn, M. (2001). *Portraits in Black: Storying the loves and the pedagogies of Black men educators.* Unpublished dissertation, University of California Los Angeles.

Majors, R. (2001). Introduction. In R. Majors, (Ed.). *Educating our Black children: New directions and radical approaches.* New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Malveaux, J. (2002). Race, rage, and the ace of spades. In B. Singley, (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black and White writers confront their personal histories* (p. 101-110). Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.

Malveaux, J. (2006). Culture and Context: The plight of Black male students. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education, 23*(5), 27. Retrieved from http://www.highbeam.com/Diverse+Issues+in+Higher+Education/publications.aspx

Maylor, E. A., Chater, N., & Brown, G. D. A. (2001). Scale invariance in the retrieval of retrospective and prospective memories. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review, 8*(1), 162-167. Retrieved from http://pbr.psychonomic-journals.org/content/by/year

McIntosh, P. (1990). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Independent School, 49*(2), 31-36. Retrieved from http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/Journals/getIssues.jhtml?sid=HWW:EDI&id=02826

McLaren, P. (2009). Critical pedagogy: a look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, M. P. Baltodano, & R. D. Flores, (Eds.). *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (pp. 61-83). New York, NY: Routledge.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education: Evidence based inquiry.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

National Center for Education Statistics (2009). School district demographics system: Mississippi. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/ed/index.asp?st=MS

Neufeldt, V., & Sparks, A. N. (1990). *Webster's new world dictionary.* New York: NY: Pocket Books.

Noguera, P. A. (2003). Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment: Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory in Practice, 42*(4), 341-350. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip4204_12

Ogbu, J. (1990). Minority education in comparative perspective. *Journal of Negro Education, 59*(1), 45-57. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/archive.html

Ogbu, J. (1992). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. *Educational Researcher, 21*(8), 5-14, 24. Retrieved from http://edr.sagepub.com

Ogbu, J. (1994). Racial stratification and education in the united states: Why inequalitiy persists. *Teachers College Record, 96*(2), 264-298. Retrieved from http://www.tcrecord.org

Ogbu, J. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review, 36*(1), 1-35. Retrieved from http://www.springer.com/education/journal/11256?detailsPage=aimsAndScopes

Ogbu, J., & Simmons, H. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 29*(2), 155-188. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0161-7761&site=1

Olson, M. A., & Fazio, R. H. (2004). Trait inferences as a function of automatically activated racial attitudes and motivation control prejudiced reactions. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 26*(1), 1-11. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0021-9029

Osborne, J. W. (1997). Race and academic disidentification. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(4), 728-735. Retrieved from http://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=browsePA.volumes&jcode=edu

Osborne, J. W. (2001). Academic Disidentification: Unraveling underachievement among Black boys. In R. Majors, (Ed.) *Educating our Black Children: New directions and radical approaches* (pp. 45-58). New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Overbaugh, R. C., & Schultz, L. (2010). Bloom's taxonomy. Retrieved from http://www.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/Bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm

Phinney, J. S. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority Group adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 9*(34), 34-49. doi: 10.1177/0272431689091004

Phinney, J. S. (2005). Ethnic identity in late modern times: A response to Rattansi and Phoenix. *Identity: An international journal of theory and research, 5*(2), 187-194. Retrieved from http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t775653653~db=all

Phinney, J. S., Cantu, C. L., & Kurtz, D. A. (1997). Ethnic and American identity as predictors of self-esteem among African-American, Latino, and White Adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26*(2), 165-185. Retrieved from http://www.springer.com/psychology/child+&+school+psychology/journal/10964

333

Phinney, J. S., Ferguson, D. L., & Tate, J. D. (1997). Inter-group attitudes among ethnic minority adolescents: A casual model. *Child Development, 68*(5), 955-969. Retrieved from http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0009-3920

Phinney, J. S., Jacoby, B., & Silva, C. (2007). Positive intergroup attitudes: the role of ethnic identity. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 31*(5), 478-490. doi: 10.1177/0165025407081466

Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 271-281. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271

Pierre, R. E. (2007). The young apprentice. In K. Merida, (Ed.) *Being a Black man* (pp.31-44). New York, NY: Public Affairs Books.

Pitts, L. (2002). Crazy sometimes. In B. Singley, (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black and White writers confront their personal histories* (pp. 21-28). Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.

Riegle-Crumb, C. (2006). The path through math: Course sequence and academic performance at the intersection of race-ethnicity and gender. *American Journal of Education, 113*, 101-122. Retrieved from http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/aje/current

Roach, R. (2007). Seeking out success. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education, 24*(15), 14-17. Retrieved from www.diverseeducation.com

Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, V., & McLaren, P. (2003). The Strategic centrality of class in the Politics of "Race" and "Difference". *Cultural Studies<-->Critical Methodologies, 3*(2), 148-175. doi: 10.1177/1532708603252311

School Tree (2010a). Crenshaw senior h school. Retrieved from http://california.schooltree.org/magnet/Crenshaw-Senior-High-009269.html

School Tree (2010b). Dorsey (Susan Miller) senior h school. Retrieved from http://california.schooltree.org/magnet/Dorsey-Susan- Miller-Senior-H-009289.html

Schroder, K. E. E., Carey, M. P., & Vanable, P. A. (2003). Methodological challenges in research on sexual risk behavior: II. Accuracy of self-reports. *Annals of Behavorial Medicine, 26*(2), 104-123. Retrieved from http://www.springer.com/medicine/journal/12160

Singleton, G. E., & Hays, C. (2008). Beginning courageous conversations about race. In
M. Pollock (Eds.), *Everyday antiracism* (pp. 18-23). New York, NY: The New
Press.

Singley, B. (2002). Introduction. In B. Singley, (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black
and White writers confront their personal histories* (pp. xi-xvi). Chicago, IL:
Lawrence Hill Books.

Smith, W., Yosso, T., & Solorzano, D. (2007). Racial primes and Black misandry on
historically White campuses: Toward critical race accountability in educational
administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(5), 559-585. doi:
10.1177/0013161X07307793

Solorzano, D. (1992). An exploratory analysis of the effects of race, class, and gender on
student and parent mobility aspirations. *Journal of Negro Education, 61*(1), 30-
44. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/2295627

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2001). Critical race theory, racial
microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African
American college students. *Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60-73.
Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/archive.html

Solorzano, D., & Ornelas, A. (2004). A critical race analysis of Latino/a and African-
american advanced placement enrollment in public high schools. *The High School
Journal, 87*(3), 15-26. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb139

Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2001). From Racial Stereotyping and Deficit Toward a
Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education. *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), 2-8.
Retrieved from http://www.eastern.edu/publications/emme/previous.html

Springer, K. (2002). Talking White. In Singley, B. (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black
and White writers confront their personal histories* (pp. 71-78). Chicago, IL:
Lawrence Hill Books.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the
socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review,
67*(1), 1-40. Retrieved from http://www.hepg.org/main/her/Index.html

Stanton-Salazar, R., & Spina, S. (2000). The network orientations of highly resilient
urban youth: A network-analytic account of minority socialization and its
educational implications. *The Urban Review, 32*(3), 227-261. Retrieved from
http://www.springer.com/education/journal/11256?detailsPage=aimsAndScopes

Stinson, D. (2008). Negotiating sociocultural discourses: The counter-storytelling of academically (and mathematically) successful African-American male students. *American Educational Research Journal, 45*(4), 975-1010. doi: 10.3102/0002831208319723

Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2007). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*(1), 72-81. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.13.1.72

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271-286. doi: 10.1037/0003- 66X.62.4.271

Tate, W. F. (1999). Conclusion. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, S. and Villenas, (Eds.). *Race is…Race isn't.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Tatum, A. (2005). *Teaching reading to Black adolescent males: Closing the achievement gap.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Tatum, B. D. (2002). Choosing to be Black-The ultimate White privilege. In B. Singley, (Ed.). *When race becomes real: Black and White writers confront their personal histories* (pp. 215-224). Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books.

Tatum, B. D. (2008). Cultivating the trust of Black parents. In M. Pollock, (Ed.). *Everyday antiracism* (pp. 310-313). New York, NY: The New Press.

Thompson, G. (2002). *African American teens discuss their schooling experiences.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Toler-Williams, B. (2001). Ethical leadership in schools servicing African-American children and youth. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 24*(1), 38-47. Retrieved from http://www.tese.org

Tse, L. (1999). Finding a place to be: Ethnic identity exploration of Asian-Americans. *Adolescence, 34*(133), 121-138. Retrieved from http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/622849/description#description

Tse, L. (2000). The Effects of ethnic identity formation on bilingual maintenance and development: An analysis of Asian-American narratives. *International Journal of Bilingual Educaiton and Bilingualism, 3*(3), 185-200. Retrieved from http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t794297780

United States Census Bureau (2000). Zip Code Tabulation Area 90045. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFFacts?_event=&geo_id=86000US90045 &_geoContext=01000US%7C86000US90045&_street=&_county=&_cityTown= &_state=04000US06&_zip=90045&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useE V=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=860&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=null&_ci_nbr=n ull&qr_name=null&reg=null%3Anull&_keyword=&_industry=&show_2003_tab =&redirect=Y

University of California (2009a). "A-G" subject area requirements. Retrieved from http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/ag/welcome.html

University of California (2009b). Statewide eligibility. Retrieved from http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergrad_adm/paths_to_adm/f reshman/state_eligibility.html

Valenzuela, A. (2008). Uncovering internalized oppression. In M. Pollock, (Ed.). *Everyday antiracism* (pp. 50-55). New York, NY: New Press.

Vann, K. R., & Kunjufu, J. (1993). The importance of an Afrocentric, multicultural curriculum. *Phi Delta Kappan, 74*(6), 490-491. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6952

Wan, W. (2007). Achievement gap closing for Black students: Statistics show disparity higher in middle schools. *Washington Post Online.* Retrieved from http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access/1276189011.html?FMT=ABS &FMTS=ABS:FT&date=May+24%2C+2007&author=William+Wan+- +Washington+Post+Staff+Writer&pub=The+Washington+Post&edition=&startp age=T.1&desc=Achievement+Gap+Closing+For+Black+Students%3B+Statistics +Show+Disparity+Higher+in+Middle+Schools

Weaver-Hightower, M. (2003). The "Boy Turn" in research on gender and education. *Review of Educational Research, 73*(4), 471-498. Retrieved from http://rer.sagepub.com/archive

Whiting, G. (2009). Gifted Black males: Understanding and decreasing barriers to achievement and identity. *Roeper Review, 31*, 224-233. doi: 10.1080/02783190903177598

Winant, H. (2000). Race and race theory. *Annual Reviews Sociology, 26*, 169-185. Retrieved from http://arjournals.annualreviews.org

Yosso, T. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 93-107. doi: 10.1080/713845283

Yosso, T. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of
      community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 8*(1), 69-91. doi:
      10.1080/1361332052000341006