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Still Runnin' the Underground: A Critical Case Study of an Adolescent African American Male Reflecting on School

Dalisha Shante Williams
University of South Carolina

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Still Runnin' the Underground: A Critical Case Study of an Adolescent African
American Male Reflecting on School

by

Dalisha Shante Williams

Bachelor of Arts
University of South Carolina Aiken, 2010

Master of Education
Columbia College, 2012

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Accepted by:

Allison Anders, Major Professor

Gloria Boutte, Major Professor

Michelle Bryan, Committee Member

Kara Brown, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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DEDICATION

To my mother and my late grandmother, Delorse Henry and Mary Montgomery. I would

not be the woman I am today had it not been for God's grace in gifting you two to me.

Thank you for all of your sacrifices and your love. I love you both dearly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge, my Creator, Father, and Lord. You knew me before you formed me in my mother's womb. You set me apart to be Your daughter. I am forever grateful to know You, be known by You, and be loved by You. Thank You for making me new and Your promise to one day make all things new. The Lord has been gracious to me and blessed me with many people along the way who believed in and encouraged me throughout this journey – too many to name. Thank you all for your kindness and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

Despite the vast amount of research on effectively educating African American students, there are few studies capturing the educational narratives of African American students, and specifically Black males, in their own words. Much of the literature focuses on dismal statistics and outcomes concerning African American male students. Drawing upon Woodson's (1933) timeless critique of the miseducation of the Negro, Afrocentricity in education (Asante, 1987; King & Swartz, 2014,2016) emancipatory pedagogies, and Ladson-Billings' (1994) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, this study explores one adolescent African American male's reflections on school. Using a critical case study methodology, one participant, Merrick, participated in four semi-structured in-depth interviews. From a coding analysis, I developed four themes: (1) meaningful work for Merrick, (2)the impact of teachers on Merrick, (3) Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness, and (4)Merrick's idea of being known. Implications for curriculum writers, teachers, teacher educators, and civic partners are presented.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2015, I was enrolled in a critical race theory course and assigned the task of creating a racial justice project. For my project, I hosted a critical book club after school, in which the students and I read excerpts from *Young, Gifted, and Black* and *The Miseducation of the Negro*, and then analyzed their meanings in reference to the current state of affairs for Black people. I chose sixth-grade students because I was their mathematics teacher. All of the students were 11-years old when we started the book club. There were two boys and one girl in the group.

Initially, I wanted to work with three boys. Unfortunately, the third male I had selected to join the club was expelled from school as I was sending out permission forms. I had a particularly good relationship with the parents of the students included in the book club. As I decided on whether or not to replace the expelled student, I thought about my relationship with parents of the sixth graders. Because I had an excellent relationship with one of the female students in my course, Ciera (pseudonym), I decided to include her in the group. I also selected her because I viewed her as gifted and talented, but not by dominant school standards.

For instance, Ciera was pensive and meticulous in my mathematics class, but in the hallways she exhibited high levels of verve (intense energy) (Boykin, 1994) and personality, which often resulted in her getting into trouble. Unfortunately, the teachers on my sixth-grade team did not recognize her verve and outgoing personality as a cultural

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asset (Milner, 2012). Instead, they viewed her behavior as a liability. Some teachers discounted her intelligence because of her perceived inability to "behave." These deficit perspectives also clouded teachers' judgment as they discussed Kobie and Jamal (pseudonyms)—the two males in the critical book club. I chose these students because I knew the opposition they faced based on conversations with other teachers.

Teachers used deficit terms to discuss Kobie, Jamal, and Ciera. Their social studies teacher often discussed the way their behaviors were oppositional to his expectations, but he never discussed their brilliance. I wanted the students to be aware of the ways in which teachers perceived them. I did not want this awareness to result in some form of acclimatization to the teachers' perspectives, but I wanted the students to understand the power dynamics involved in their disciplinary records and how this related to teachers' perspectives of them.

The three students and I met for four weeks during the spring semester to discuss the historical antecedents of our racially stratified society, as to provide them a frame for the recent (circa 2013) killings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, the mass incarceration of African Americans, and other sociopolitical issues. For the next school year, 2015-2016, I did not intend to continue the book club. It was emotionally taxing trying to serve as both the students' teacher and facilitator of the afterschool club.

I began to hold higher expectations for those students than others and was crushed when they exhibited behaviors I deemed antithetical to those who participated in the critical literacy club. For example, I expected that once my students understood the maligning of Black intellectual thought, they would work hard to highlight Black scholastic achievement.   However, that was not always the case. So, I believed there to

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be a tension between the complexity of the material and the age of the students. In actuality, I experienced a gap between the students' and my expectations. I was upset because my expectations were not met. This focus on my expectations was counterproductive for doing work with students. Struggling with these feelings, I convinced myself of tabling the afterschool club. However, during the 2015-2016 school year, I had the privilege of meeting Merrick. Our encounter led to what would become the pilot for this study.

Merrick is currently a freshman in high school and was at the time an eighth grader. He was in the second section of my math elective course. Although my class was titled "Math Elective", it was a euphemism for enrichment or remediation. Merrick picked up on this and shared, "When I first came in here, I thought I was like retarded" (personal communication, 2016). Given his perception of my class, he exhibited dismissive and resistant behaviors regarding class participation and completion of class assignments.

Aside from what seemed to be a lack of motivation in my class, Merrick also used racial epithets to address the White students in the class and me. For example, upon entering class one day, he called his White classmates "crackers." As I discussed the inappropriate nature of his comment, he called me an "oreo" (Black on the outside and White on the inside) in the conversation. Instead of writing a referral for him, I began to probe the origins of these signifiers in his world. Briefly, he told me about his father's role in teaching him about racial inequities. He mentioned that his father served in the U.S. Army and during his time there was treated unfairly because of the color of his skin. Merrick did not provide specific examples beyond this brief commentary.

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During Black History Month, our school hosted a series of "Moments in Black History" highlights during the morning news show. One day, Merrick critiqued the news show for only highlighting popular figures in Black History. He wanted to hear quotes and stories from the likes of Huey Newton, of whom he quoted, and Tupac Shakur. I encouraged him to write to the organizer of the Black History Month program at our school, sharing his insights. He did. Merrick's critical and social consciousness inspired me to host the afterschool meetings again, which served as the pilot study (which will be discussed in Chapter Three) for this study.

From my perspective, I witnessed Merrick transform as he participated in the meetings (see APPENDIX C for further description). Before we began the afterschool meetings, Merrick was failing the majority of his classes, including mine. However, through our conversations about race, it was obvious that Merrick was capable of critical, intellectual engagement. Moreover, after meeting for a couple of weeks, Merrick announced, "I want to go to college to study Black studies like you do." Merrick began to actively participate in our math class. He took risks in offering suggestions to solve problems, and began to lead the class as we worked together on assignments. Ultimately, Merrick's "F" grade in my class increased to a "C" by the end of the semester.

Merrick's intentional enacting of a socially and critically conscious Black identity was a key indication to me that "African American children are not passive recipients of the negative identities imposed on them" (Martin, 2009, p. 136). Indeed, many are often keenly aware of the deficit rhetoric that assaults their identities (Martin, 2009). As a result, students may ponder: (a) why take school seriously when my intellect may not be taken seriously? (b) why commit to outstanding intellectual work if it is likely to be

undervalued or devalued? or (c) why work hard if these activities do not address one's status as a member of a historically oppressed people? (Perry, 2003; Martin, 2009).

How students choose to enact their multiple social identities includes dispositions that they hold about themselves as learners (Martin, 2009). Martin (2009) defined mathematics identities as "the dispositions and deeply held beliefs that individuals develop about their ability to participate and perform effectively in mathematical contexts and to use mathematics to change the conditions of their lives" (pp. 136-137). Teachers and their instructional practices have the ability to shape African American students' mathematical identities. Merrick's belief that his placement in my class relegated his intelligence to a level of inferiority is one example of this. Throughout Merrick's involvement in the critical book club, he was able to reshape his initial deficit-based mathematics identity into a positive identity.

1.1 The Issue in Context

1.1.1 National context. According to multiple studies, African American students excel when taught in culturally relevant ways (Boutte & Hill, 2006; Emdin, 2016; Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Morris, 2004). Unfortunately, school instructional strategies and content remain largely Eurocentric (King & Swartz, 2016). Likewise, schools serve as microcosms of the larger society, a society in which white supremacist ideology and various actors have sought to relegate African Americans to second class citizenship in this country (King & Swartz, 2016; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015; Swartz, 1996).

Indeed, schools function as a chief institution of social reproduction, seeking to maintain power hierarchies that privilege the interests of White elites. For African

Americans and other people of color, schools oppress and malign through instructional strategies, content, and school practices (Yosso, 2002). Therefore, it is not surprising that although scholars (Boykin, 1994; Boutte, 2016; Boutte & Hill, 2006; Emdin, 2016; Hale, 1983; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995) have admonished educators to teach African American students effectively using culturally relevant pedagogies, teachers in schools continue to use instructional strategies incongruent to the distinctive needs of African American children (Boutte, 2016; Perry, 2003).

      1.1.2 Historical Context. Africans and their descendants have been and are still marginalized in the U.S. From the capture and chattel enslavement of Africans by the European 'settlers', Africans, and now African Americans, remain oppressed under a system of white supremacy (Asante, 1987, 2007; Butchart, 2010). Even in schooling and educational systems, white supremacist ideology is endemic (Watkins, 2001). Watkins (2001) explicated the history of white supremacy in the south by noting that after the South's defeat in the Civil War, northern businessmen seized control of the nation's economy through industrialization. To protect their economic interests, many northern philanthropists situated themselves in southern politics, including conversations about how to educate formerly enslaved African Americans.

      Northern philanthropists sought to rebuild the South through the maintenance of the racial hierarchy of the times; thus, placing African Americans as second class citizens to Whites. In addition to serving the economic interests of the philanthropists, maintaining this racial hierarchy seemed fitting for Blacks as some philanthropists believed African Americans to be intellectually inferior to Whites. The result of these factors was the accommodationism curricular orientation. The accommodationism

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curriculum emphasized vocational training, physical and manual labor, 'character building', and a social science course purporting racial subservice for Blacks (Watkins, 1993). The social science course represented the origin of what Woodson (1933/2012) referred to as "the miseducation of the Negro". since it emphasized the necessity of white supremacy, given the alleged accomplishments of Whites throughout history (Watkins, 2001). Not only did this course elicit claims of scientific racism, but it also dismissed all accounts of African epistemologies, histories, and knowledge production.

The omission of African epistemologies, histories, and knowledge is now an endemic trademark of the curriculum in U.S. public schools (Swartz, 1996; King & Swartz, 2016). By omitting African knowledge bases and privileging Eurocentric knowledge, schools reproduce the racial ideology that galvanized slavery, Jim Crow, racial terror towards Blacks, the mass incarceration of Blacks, and the unpunished acts of police murders and violence against Black bodies. Swartz (1996) explained the effects of the curriculum

> In the US this continuous internalization of the Eurocentric 'standard' through 13 or more years of schooling has the power to limit the life chances of many students because, as Morrison (1992) and others point out, such knowledge contains supremacist codes that are embedded in language and able to influence textual imagination and meaning (p. 398).

African American students see their ancestors in textbooks portrayed as enslaved and disempowered victims, with small triumphant appearances, usually highlighted during February (Black History Month), and the narratives of the same and limited number of 'heroes' of the race. Consequently, African American children may

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internalize these skewed cultural representations in ways that damage their self-efficacy and esteem as intellectual beings with agency (Asante, 2007; Perry, 2003).

Many scholars have discussed the necessity of teaching in culturally affirming ways, to include drawing upon African history and epistemologies (Boutte, 2016; King, 2005; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009). Nevertheless, African American children continue to suffer in U.S. public schools as they are subjected to distorted histories and pedagogies incongruent with their ways of being (King & Swartz, 2014; 2016). It becomes clear that education is not neutral, and in the U.S. schooling practices and curriculum mirror Eurocentric ways of being and knowing (Boutte, 2016). For instance, almost all experiences discussed in U.S. classrooms are told from the standpoint of white perspectives and history (Asante, 1991). King and Swartz (2014) asserted, "social studies knowledge continues to use *hierarchal* national narratives with a fixed and pre-determined order of leadership based on hegemonic patterns and unquestioned practices that position European/White people and their favored descendants above all 'others'" (p. 29).

Consequently, the agency and self-determination of African people and their descendants are omitted from standard school knowledge. Fundamental Afrocentric concepts such as collective consciousness, collective responsibility, and the anteriority of Classical African civilizations are rarely the foundation of U.S. classrooms. Instead, U.S. classrooms thrive on individualism and competition, both Eurocentric fundamentals. Hence,

> How alien the African American child must feel, how like an outsider! The little African American child who sits in a classroom and is taught to accept as heroes

and heroines individuals who defamed African people is actively de-centered, dislocated, and made into a nonperson, (Asante, 1991, p. 171).

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

1.2.1 The issue. Black ways of knowing and scholarship are still largely absent from P-12 and higher education canonical studies (Gordon, 1994; Grant, Brown, & Brown, 2016; King, 2005; King & Swartz, 2016). Stories of African Diasporan peoples and histories are often disjointedly interjected into school curriculum and are frequently told in distorted and disparaging accounts (Boutte, 2016; Fenwick, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2003; King & Swartz, 2016). Within the curriculum, to include books, textbooks, and other educational artifacts, African American students are not provided with 'mirrors', in which they can see their lived experiences reflected in a positive way, and 'windows', that allow students to learn about the lives of others (Boutte, 2016).

African American children are subjected to narratives that do not highlight the agency and self-determination of their ancestors (Asante, 1991; King, 2005). For example, rebellion and revolts among enslaved Africans are rarely included in the traditional curriculum (Boutte, 2016). Similarly, the history of independent Black education and African American intellectual traditions are also missing in the traditional curriculum (Perry, 2003). These distortions, omissions, and inaccuracies have been detrimental of African American public school achievement and excellence (Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Swartz, 1996).

1.2.2 My Positionality. Since childhood, I possessed an affinity for Black culture, particularly the agency Black Americans illustrated in the Civil Rights Movement and in the formation of the Black Panther Party. I am not sure from where

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this affinity came. I was not raised in a household where Black agency was explicitly expressed. I did, however, attend all Black schools from age three until first grade. I was raised in an African Methodist Episcopal church, where I saw Black leaders I respected. Ultimately, I was always surrounded and raised by a Black community that I admired and revered, which I believe contributed to my love for Black community and culture.

Upon entering public school, I experienced my first White teachers. My second and third grade teachers were White and I do not recall much about them. The public schools I attended were integrated, but in my classes most of the Black children befriended each other and the White children did likewise. Although we went our separate ways, there was seemingly no tension between the Black and White children in our classes. Fourth and fifth grades were housed in a separate elementary school than my second and third grade classes. The Black population at the new elementary school was larger than at my previous elementary school. At my new school, High Valley Elementary School (pseudonym), I had Black teachers for both fourth and fifth grade, and it was a wonderful experience.

My fourth-grade teacher, Ms. Edison (pseudonym), was a young, African American teacher with swag[1](stylish confidence). The best part of her class was the introduction of the "Ziggy" book series. The "Ziggy" series was a collection of stories about the adventures of an upper elementary-aged Black male.   It was the first time I read stories about a Black child, like me. Ms. Edison also possessed the verve exhibited within the walls of my home and church. She was the first Black teacher to whom I related and from whom I was excited to learn. Likewise, my fifth- grade teacher was a

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[1] Adapted from merriam-webster.com

great role model and encourager. Mr. Hopkins (pseudonym) was a Black male in his late-20s. I loved the way Mr. Hopkins code-switched with our class. He would speak to us in the Black regional dialect of our city, then teach us grammar lessons using what is considered 'standard English'. When I became a teacher, I strived to emulate Mr. Hopkins' teaching philosophy.

When I left High Valley Elementary School, I went to Fork Mill Middle School (pseudonym), where only one out of my 12 teachers from sixth to eighth grade was a Black woman. In sixth grade, I lost the community I felt from being in Ms. Edison's and Mr. Hopkins' classes. I also lost the academic support. I was Mr. Hopkins' first all A-honor roll student for the entire school year, but in middle school, I struggled with mathematics and science. My mathematics teacher and chorus teachers seemed to hate me and love the White children in my classes. My chorus teacher would often talk to the Black students in class in an unpleasant tone, while offering words of adoration to our White counterparts. After a year-long battle with my chorus teacher, I left singing with the chorus, because she seemed to be against me and constantly wrote referrals for my tardiness to class, despite my mom coming to the school to prove my tardiness was a result of their error in timing the walk from the sixth grade building to the chorus building.

It was also in middle school that I physically attacked a White student because she supported George W. Bush in the 2000 election. Jessica Portion (pseudonym) was the "smartest" girl in my middle school class; eventually, she would graduate as the valedictorian of our senior class. She was also a trained ballet dancer and the infamous teacher's pet. Knowing her "greatness" in the sight of teachers and other adults, Jessica

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paraded around middle school with an air of superiority. She also made it known that her "Papa", or grandfather, did not like Black people. Jessica and I often engaged in classroom debates; I engaged because I wanted to show the adults in that building that Jessica Portion was not the only smart girl around. I also felt like Jessica thought she was smarter than my classmates and I because she was White and I believed her family had taught her that given the prejudice of her grandfather. Therefore, the argument about George Bush and Al Gore was about more than politics for me, it was about personhood. Underlying my animosity towards her was an inclination that she supported George Bush because he did not support the advancement of African Americans (that was my belief-- not a 'fact'). I left middle school declaring to myself, "White people ain't better than me!" and I set out to prove it.

In high school, I realized that there was racial stratification among different types of courses. I participated in honors classes and found myself pondering, "Why are there only a few Black students in here?" My school was at least about 60 - 70% African American, but African Americans comprised only about 10% of my honors classes. I knew there was nothing wrong with Black children intellectually, for I am Black, my family is Black, my friends are Black and we are intellectuals with a fervor for learning. At that point, I began to think African Americans were being maligned and banned from intellectual and academic pursuits. I knew more African American students should have been included in our honors courses. I had Black friends who were brilliant, but were only in college preparation courses, which were lower than honors classes. I did not understand the multiple contextual factors such as socioeconomic factors, white

supremacy and issues of policy and power, but I did understand there was a substantial disparity in the number of Black children in my honors classes than White.

This curiosity about the school achievement within the African American context led to a career in education. I started as a middle school teacher with a teaching philosophy towards education for racial uplift. I began my career back in my hometown, Smallville (pseudonym), at a school designated as one of the worse schools in the U.S.[2]. Back home, it was rumored that Cove Middle School (pseudonym) was built for children who lived in less affluent neighborhoods and in subsidized housing. In that particular school district, there were two other middle schools where many military and more affluent families sent their children. To protect their statuses, it has been said that this school was built to keep the less affluent and 'unruly' children separate.

Cove Middle School was about 90% African American in student population. I was recruited to teach at the school at a career fair hosted by my college. At the time, I had no recollection of the rumors about the school. I thought, "This is great! I'm from Smallville, they're (my students) from Smallville. I'm Black, they're Black (I knew a large population of Black students attended this school). This will be great!" Indeed, it was great. I became family with my students, I gave them rides home, stayed after school to work math problems out, to this day I have stayed in contact with a little girl, whom I affectionately call Little One and she calls me 'mama'.

I moved on to teach at two schools in Charpital (pseudonym), another predominately Black middle school that was also listed as one of the worse schools in U.S., and a more heterogeneous middle school with a few magnet programs that served a

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[2] This was based on a list that was circulating the internet circa 2010.

majority of White students. As I worked in these schools, I experienced the vibrant personalities of Black children. I also experienced what I considered to be the mishandling of their verve and swag. I witnessed teachers verbally relegate Black children to life in the criminal justice system, as well judge the intelligence of Black students based on their language usage and style of dress. At one school, I heard a teacher often tell our Black male students they were headed to prison based on their reading MAP scores. She would also tell them that in jail their sagging pants made them available for rape. The social studies teacher I referenced earlier was obsessed with Kobie's hair (which was styled in the popular look, the "dirty fro" -- where the hair is grown into an afro, then pieces of the afro are coiled to stick up in various directions. Although the style appears to be free falling, it is intentionally groomed in such a way, as many of the men who sport the look still go to the barber from line ups along the edges of their hair. He said Kobie looked like a "pickaninny", a derogatory caricature of dark-skinned Black children. These experiences led to an interest in understanding the ways teacher attitudes impact student achievement among African American children.

Consequently, I enrolled in a doctoral program that led to studies focused on culturally relevant pedagogy, critical race theory, and emancipatory pedagogies. Drawing from each of those frameworks, in my work with African American students, I endeavor to re-member (or reconnect knowledge from that the past that has been silenced or distorted) (King & Swartz, 2016) history in ways that present Africa and African peoples' lives in the dignified ways that they deserve. My goal is to uncover and critique histories of oppression throughout the Western world and to encourage resistance to social inequities and the perpetuation of the status quo.

Although, I come to this work advocating for an Afrocentric perspective, where African people and histories are centered in the dialogue about educating African American students, I do so with an awareness that I am carrying residual Eurocentric ways of thinking. For instance, I believe I instinctively embody some of the African ways of being Boykin (1994) recorded, such as: affect, expressive individualism, and orality, and exist within Afrocentric concepts like collective consciousness, collective responsibility, and as a subject with agency.

However, white perspectives have also largely influenced me. Before enrolling in a course on educating African American students, I believed the best way for African American children to be successful in schools was to assimilate to what I had learned as normative school behaviors such as, immediate obedience without question, quietness, and stillness. Further, I frowned upon those students who did not understand the necessity to assimilate. It had not occurred to me that the African heritage and essence of African American children deserved to be honored in the school setting (and society at large), just as the European cultures had always been exalted. Asante (1987) observed a similar tension with DuBois,

> Despite his intense love for African people, DuBois was not Afrocentric (DuBois, 1961:142). He studied African people not from an African perspective but from a European one which employed Eurocentric methods to analyze and study black people. Few African scholars of his era, if any, could break out of the tightness of European thought. (p. 16)

Although I live in an era decades after DuBois, I too, wonder if I will be an African scholar who can break from the tightness of European thought. This has become

increasingly challenging as I continuously recognize the gaps I possess in knowledge of African and African Diasporan history, culture, and knowledge. Consequently, I can find myself centering Eurocentric narratives with Africans on the peripheral. In relation to schooling and my students, early in my career, I bought the lies of the 'Standard English' argument in relation to intelligence and looking at difference as deficit because I found my own experiences at the intersection of race and a middle class socioeconomic status. I would wonder why "those" Black people talked like "that", dressed like "that", or acted like "that." As a teacher, I sought to conform my students' behaviors to school 'appropriate' behaviors which often translated to white middle class "norms", such as speaking 'proper English', wearing a certain type of clothing, and listening to 'acceptable' music and finding pleasure in "innocent" activities such as playing with Legos as opposed to hanging out in the neighborhood together.

I had developed a 'colonial mentality', which attributes positive characteristics to the colonizers, in this case, people of European descent, and believes the colonized people, my people, myself, African Americans as subordinate or deficit (Halagao, 2010). Although I loved *my* Black people, those mentioned earlier as my community, I trafficked in a colonial mentality that made certain expressions of Blackness, those I was accustomed to and those that largely assimilated to middle class white norms, acceptable and others not.

Colonialism is the conquest and domination of people, cultures, and resources (Williams, 2005). Every aspect of colonial life is used to destroy the culture, language, and spirit of the colonized so that they willingly accept their subservient role to the colonizers (Williams, 2005). In the U.S. context, Africans and their descendants have

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been colonized. Europeans have sought the subservience of Blacks since the inception of this country and have used every aspect of life to destroy our personhood to do so. Halagao (2010) explained,

> When a people are colonized, they become subjects – acted upon by the colonizer. They have lost their identities. Their histories and cultures are stripped from them to the point that they do not even know their yearning and desire for this knowledge. It is almost as if a hole is dug out of one's character (p. 506).

As I write my dissertation, I am simultaneously discovering my own history while seeking to share it with others who look like me and have felt the sting of colonization. I still fight against deficit perspectives and am challenged to delve into the literature to recover the Black intellectual traditions that have been kept from us.

As I seek to re-member the omissions and distortions of Black history in the U.S., I do so as a sort of coup. I use the term coup here because African American scholars and others have for decades discussed the importance of drawing from the wellspring that is African and African American culture to support academic excellence in Black students; however, decades later, curriculum and school practices are still largely Eurocentric (Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2016) and academic achievement and quality of life measures are still dismal for African Americans (Delpit, 2012; Morial, 2016). Educational institutions do not seem to care enough for the well-being of Black children to change institutional practices. Therefore, I view my purpose as inspiring and mobilizing teachers who care to take matters into our own hands and overthrow the reigning power by being equipped ourselves with the knowledge of Black agency and likewise equipping the next generation. I am no longer looking to schools and teachers to

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treat Black children fairly. Instead, my students and I will draw upon our own agency to create the promising futures we so desire. Reminiscent of our ancestors, we will not ask our oppressors for freedom. We will take it ourselves.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, I wanted to explore Merrick's school experiences from elementary to high school. Next, I examined the context of Merrick's middle school where he participated in critical race-oriented meetings after school. Lastly, I explored whether the meetings impacted Merrick.

1.4 Research Questions

Given the contextual nature of this study and the use of the researcher as the key instrument of interpretation, I used a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods are useful for studies that focus on understanding participant's experiences within natural settings (Creswell, 2014). I used a qualitative design, specifically, a critical case study, to uncover Merrick's perspectives and experiences across multiple schooling contexts. Case study is defined as inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). One of the aims of this study is to center Merrick's narrative. Accordingly, Asante (1987) asserted that analysis of African American culture should exist within Afrocentric epistemologies. Therefore, this critical case study is situated in an Afrocentric critique of the European notion of universality in which many public schools operate.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What was the context of the middle school Merrick attended while participating in the afterschool meetings?

a. What local curriculum was used in Merrick's eighth grade social studies course?

b. How did/does Merrick make meaning of the context and curriculum?

2. What is Merrick's schooling narrative?

3. How (if at all) did the afterschool meetings affect Merrick?

1. 5 Significance of the Study

African American men have grim outcomes on most quality of life indicators (Howard, 2014; Noguera, 2008). Black men are undereducated, have high rates of unemployment, are over-incarcerated, have disparate health conditions, and ultimately lower life expectations than any other large racial/ethnic group in the U.S. (Howard, 2014). The current school curriculum perpetuates white supremacy (Asante, 1991; King & Swartz, 2014; 2016) and therefore dismisses, maligns, and ultimately relegates African American students to a lower status in society. Swartz (1996) suggested emancipatory pedagogy as a response to deconstruct and refigure master-scripted and hegemonic school narratives and curriculum. As Swartz asserted in her germinal work on emancipatory pedagogy and 'standard' knowledge, through the Eurocentric curriculum, students and teachers learn and perform their social assignments or status quo placements according to raced, classed, and gendered knowledge transmitted through the curriculum. This curriculum privileges the life chances of White students and limits the life chances of students of color.

Much of the literature and practice focuses on raising the sociopolitical consciousness of teachers and equipping them for teaching in multicultural ways (Boutte,

2016; Emdin, 2016; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009). While it is important to equip teachers with the ability to engage critically with the selection and consumption of literacy for the classroom, it is equally important to help students understand the persuasion and ideology of arguments and artifacts presented through literary mediums to include the school curriculum and educational discourse.

Ladson-Billings (2014) critiqued the neglect of raising sociopolitical consciousness in the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy. This study is significant as it illuminates the case and consequence of a teacher and student embarking upon the journey to freedom through critical engagement with the traditional curriculum and emancipatory pedagogy. More powerfully, the story of this young scholar dispels the common discourse around the disengagement of Black boys in school.

1.6 Delimitations

I conceived this study from a previous action research project. The afterschool meetings discussed in the sections are the impetus for interviewing Merrick to understand their impact on him. The afterschool meetings took place in the spring of 2016, specifically March through April. Interviews with Merrick took place in the spring of 2017. By interviewing him in the spring and summer of 2017, I intended to capture how the critical race curriculum impacted his first year of high school, if at all. The afterschool meetings took place in an urban middle school in the southeastern region of the United States, where I formerly served as a teacher and Merrick attended as a student. The current study is still situated within the community in which the former school is located. During our first interview, Merrick was a student at the district's alternative high school. He returned to the community's high school for the duration of our interviews.

Merrick was the only participant in the present study. Merrick's interest in social justice for African Americans inspired the second year of the afterschool club from which this inquiry originates. Further, Merrick's academic engagement and behaviors changed during the club meetings. I was intrigued by his transformation as I made sense of it. I wanted to hear Merrick's voice concerning his educational experiences before, during, and after the critical race curriculum. The voices of African American males concerning their educational experiences have often been dismissed (Howard, 2014; Noguera, 2008). I attempt to privilege the vital revelations Merrick has to offer.

More than privileging the African American male voice, I centered this research around the African American male experience in public schools because they are suffering in public schools (Howard, 2008; Howard, 2014; Noguera, 2008). Unfortunately, the persistent underserving and underachievement among African American males has become a normal part of schooling as usual (Howard, 2008). It is not only important to illuminate the voices of African American males, but it is also equally important to help them identify, resist, and dismantle the oppressive structures and ideologies that purpose their demise.

1.7 Limitations

This research has implications (further discussed in Chapter Five) for ways educators can think about the incorporation of emancipatory pedagogies within their classrooms or school environments. Although the aim of this research study is not generalizability, it is important for educators to understand the role of the relationship between teachers and students when engaged in emancipatory work. One limitation of the study is the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Merrick admired

me as one of his favorite teachers, or what would be known as an elder when thinking in an emancipatory frame (King & Swartz, 2016). According to King and Swartz (2016), elders are revered and respected by their students and students trust elders to use their authority and knowledge to empower and equip them (students), not to oppress and silence. My positionality had implications for the way in which Merrick shared his experiences during interviews.

For instance, at the beginning of each interview, Merrick wanted to spend time catching up. During our first interview, he lost focus during some of the questions, because he was excited to tell me about things he had experienced since I had been his teacher – even though much of what he shared had little to do with my interview protocols. These conversations were nice for me, and Merrick seemed more comfortable as the interviews progressed; it seemed like our old times in the classroom. However, I think at times Merrick was distracted from the conversation I had hoped to have. Other times, I think he was trying to say things he thought I would like to hear, because he knew the focus of my research from our time together in the afterschool meetings. Subsequent research may be conducted in the area of uncovering the role and relationship of teachers who function as fictive kin and elders to students in the context of emancipatory and race-based education to explore a similar dynamic.

One other limitation of this study is the evaluation of only Merrick's social studies curriculum. There is indeed space to grow students' sociopolitical consciousness in other subject areas including: math, English/Language Arts, and science (Boutte, 2016). However, I focused on Merrick's social studies curriculum in this study because

the critical race curriculum I used in our afterschool meetings focused on the historical antecedents of race and racism in the U.S.

1.8 Terms and Definitions

- The terms *African American* and *Black* are used interchangeably.

- *Afro-* prefixes are used to identify specific practices, beliefs, and proverbs originating from the African episteme.

- *Black subservience* is defined as the forced efforts to relegate people of African descendant in the U.S. context to lower positions in society through curricular and schooling orientations and white supremacist ideology.

- *Emancipatory pedagogies* are processes of teaching and learning that seek to contest, resist, and reconstruct dominant patterns of knowledge bases (Swartz, 1996). Specifically for this project, "dominant patterns of knowledge bases" refer to Eurocentric epistemologies. Conversely, emancipatory pedagogies are centered in Afrocentric epistemologies.

- *Euro-* prefixes are used to identify specific practices deriving from a European episteme (King & Swartz, 2016).

- *Traditional curriculum* refers to K-12 knowledge bases that are monocultural in content and pedagogy and largely representative of Europeans and their ideals. Minoritized groups such as women, indigenous peoples, African and African Americans, and Asian cultures are largely invisible and misrepresented (Swartz, 1996).

1.9 Dissertation Layout

To conclude this chapter, I provide a brief outline of the remaining Chapters. Chapter Two begins with the conceptual framework guiding the study, along with an exploration of the theoretical literature and empirical studies significant to framing the study. I begin Chapter Three with a discussion of the pilot study that influenced this work. Also, in Chapter Three, I outline my epistemic orientations that inform my methodological orientations and describe the methodology and methods used to conduct the study. Finally, I present the findings in Chapter Four and discuss these in Chapter Five. An epilogue that includes analytical reflections follows Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO:

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades, scholars have called attention to the necessity of drawing upon African epistemologies and knowledge to effectively educate African American children (Boutte, 2016; Boykin, 1994; Gordon, 1994; Hale, 1986; King, 2005; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009; Woodson, 1933/2012). Unfortunately, years after the conceptions of transformative pedagogies such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and critical race pedagogy (Lynn, 1999), many African American students remain in classrooms where teachers continue to omit African histories and neglect to incorporate African ways of being and knowing into the school curriculum (Boutte, 2016). Consequently, academic achievement on standardized measures among African American students remains consistently low (Howard, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Milner, 2017). Ultimately, what is at stake here are the social and material lives of the Black children failed by a school system that fails to address their humanity by teaching in culturally relevant and emancipatory ways.

In this chapter, I present the conceptual framework for my study. I begin by tracing the origins and definition of the miseducation, as defined by Woodson (1933), of Black children in the U.S. context to unpack my proposition for an emancipatory pedagogy. Next, I discuss the importance of Asante's (1991) Afrocentric approach to educating African American children. I end by discussing Ladson-Billings' (1994)

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conception of culturally relevant pedagogy and the necessity of an explicitly Black pedagogy to educate African American students.

2.1 Origins of the Miseducation of Black Children

Pertinent to addressing the miseducation of African Americans in the U.S. context, but not to be fully expounded upon here, is the issue of slavery in this country. To understand the ideological underpinnings of the current education system that privileges the voices and cultural norms of peoples of European descent and places Africans and their descendants on the periphery (Asante, 1991; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016), one must revisit the history of African Americans in the U.S. Europeans first brought Africans to the U.S. for the sole purpose of exploited labor.

As slavery increased throughout the 'colonies', European slave owners continued their system of chattel slavery under the assumption of white superiority. More pointedly, the founders of this country never intended to afford Africans and their African American descendants natural or human rights or citizenship, only roles as subservient laborers or property (Harris, 2005). Even after the end of the Civil War and supposed emancipation of enslaved Africans by the 14th Amendment, white supremacist ideology persisted and pervaded the culture in various ways including the nation's laws, economy, and the schooling system (Asante, 1991).

2.1.1 Colonial and colonizing education for Blacks. Historically, the education of Blacks in the U.S. correlated with white political interests and the labor market. For descendants of the once enslaved in this country, education became the new tool of oppression. Watkins (2001) chronicled how schools perpetuated a system of racial subordination. He presented an ideological investigation of the construction of colonial

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Black education through biographical studies of eight White architects who funded and shaped Black education (Watkins, 2001).

These White architects--Samuel Armstrong, Franklin Giddings, James Phelps Stokes, Thomas Jesse Jones, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Robert Ogden and William Henry Baldwin, and J.L.M Curry--were chosen because of their contributions to Black education during a time of national reconstruction, from the late 1800s to the early 1920s. Watkins explored their lives in order to tell the story of the ideological and sociopolitical environments that shaped each architect, as well as each architect's ideation. Watkins (1993) explained,

> Black curriculum theorizing … is inextricably tied to the history of the Black experience in the United States. … The dynamics of colonialism, American apartheid, and discriminatory exclusion have been political in nature. Among their objectives have been containment, the maintenance of a cheap labor force, and all the social benefits that accrue to a society structured on privilege and stratification (p. 322).

Beyond the promise of social and economic privilege for Whites, the rise of scientific racism fueled various conceptions of Black education in the early twentieth century. This ideology is captured by the work of philanthropist, Samuel Armstrong. Watkins (2001) centered Armstrong in the narratives of the White architects of Black colonial education. A proponent of segregation in the South, Armstrong viewed education as the means to subordinately situate newly freed Blacks in the new sociopolitical and economic order (Watkins, 2001). Given his belief in the natural inferiority of Blacks, Armstrong developed the Hampton Institute, a schooling model that

would, "provide training in character building, morality, and religion to 'civilize' the 'childlike' and 'impetuous' Negro" (Watkins, 2001, p. 48).

Armstrong's ideology and curriculum maintained the status quo within the South, where Blacks were subservient to Whites and depended on sharecropping to survive. Although Hampton Institute was a normal school, designed to prepare schoolteachers for the South's Black educational system, it had a strong focus on manual labor. Armstrong's belief about 'civilizing' the Negro included a focus on hard, manual labor that would prepare blacks for a subordinate role in the New South.

In Anderson's (1988) classic book, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, which critically examined the history of southern Black education from reconstruction to the Great Depression within a political, cultural, and economic context, he noted that, "the school's [Hampton] faculty believed that a particular combination of hard work, political socialization, and social discipline would mold appropriately conservative black teachers" (p. 36). Armstrong expected to pass on his ideology of black subservience through the training of his teachers and the transmission of their training to their own students. Believing Blacks were immoral and irresponsible, Armstrong wrote against Black politicians and advocated that "proper" reconstruction could take place only when Blacks were removed from positions of power. Armstrong's (1872) publication, *The Southern Workman*, became popular among northern philanthropists and southern Whites who supported elementary school and normal school education but opposed Black higher education, equal job opportunities, equal political rights, and civil equality.

I highlight Armstrong's ideas in this framework because they would evolve into the curricular orientation known as accommodationism. Accommodationism was arguably the most widespread curriculum orientation for Blacks with remnants and consequences for the schooling of African American children today (Watkins, 1993). The accommodationism orientation aligned with a political and racial agenda of subordination among Blacks (Watkins, 1993). Characteristics of this curriculum orientation include(d): agricultural education, vocational training, and character building (the 'civilizing' and 'socializing' of the 'barbaric Negro'). This type of schooling promised the so-called moral and social 'advancement' of Blacks but insisted on barring Black participation in politics. One proponent of Armstrong's racial domination through education was Booker T. Washington (Anderson, 1988; Washington, 1901/2011).

Washington, who was formerly enslaved, attended the Hampton Institute and became the model pupil for the type of teachers Armstrong desired--a Black educator purporting subservience (Anderson, 1988). Washington (1901/2011) revered Armstrong, "It would be difficult to describe the hold that he had upon the students at Hampton, or the faith they had in him. In fact, he was worshipped by his students" (p. 20). Washington (1901/2011) praised Armstrong for his unselfish efforts to transform Negro schools.

Consequently, Washington modeled his educational philosophy after Armstrong and later founded Tuskegee Normal School in Alabama. After moving to Tuskegee and observing the Black community there, Washington was left with "a very heavy heart" (p. 45), believing the work necessary to uplift them "seemed almost beyond accomplishing" (p. 45). He "saw more clearly than ever the wisdom of the system which General

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Armstrong had inaugurated at Hampton" (p. 45). Washington advocated for an education that would empower Blacks to use the work of their hands and not be determined to "live by his wits" (p. 45). He believed Blacks' training in manual skills would lead to economic prosperity and ultimately participation in American civic life.

2.1.2 Objections to Colonial Education from Black critical scholars. W. E. B. DuBois (1903/1994), a renowned Black scholar and a contemporary of Washington, critiqued Washington's position, stating, "Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission" (p. 30). DuBois (1903/1994) openly criticized Washington's educational philosophy as one that sought work and money but disregarded the higher aims of life such as self-respect, humanity, and civic participation. According to DuBois, Washington asked Black people to give up political power, insistence on civil rights, and higher education.

DuBois (1903/1994) argued that for American civilization to flourish, both Black and White men would need to receive a collegiate education. He argued that Blacks would not be content serving as an "ignorant, turbulent proletariat" (p. 64). For DuBois, the function of education for Blacks was threefold: (1) it must maintain the standards of popular education; (2) it must seek the social regeneration of Blacks; and (3) it must help in the solution of problems of race contact and cooperation. DuBois desired that Black people engage their own social problems and solutions through study and thought. He advocated for self-determination through an education that would do more than "induce black men to believe that if their stomachs be full, it matters little about their brains" (p. 66).

Similarly, in his definitive book, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Woodson (1933/2012) advocated for the collegiate education of Blacks but not the popular education for which DuBois supported. DuBois (1903/1994) desired that education for Blacks be commensurable with those offered in leading New England institutions such as Harvard University and Yale University where they could access classical knowledge. However, Woodson (1933) critiqued the knowledge disseminated to Blacks in these institutions, noting,

> The 'educated Negroes' have the attitude of contempt toward their own people because in their own as well as in their mixed schools Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton and to despise the African (p. 6).

Woodson explained that although Blacks were receiving an education, it was the type that produced self-hate and a perceived inferiority of Blacks in relation to others.   Woodson discussed the colonization of the mind that led Blacks to believe in their inferiority.

> The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His *education* [italics added] makes it necessary. (p. 3)

Of the educational process he concluded,

> The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while,

depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples (p. 3).

More recently, Swartz (1996) noted, "In the US this continuous internalization of the Eurocentric 'standard' through 13 or more years of schooling has the power to limit the life chances of many students" (p. 398). Swartz (1996) argued that the hegemonic school curriculum aids teachers and students in determining their social assignments within the raced, classed, and gendered hierarchies in U.S. society. These positions privilege the life chances of Whites and serve to limit the life chances of Blacks. Howard (2016) contended "the basic dignity that all students deserve has been denied for countless numbers of Black children" (p. 102).

Persistent disparaging data concerning academic outcomes for Black children have become normalized throughout the country (Howard, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015a, 2015b, 2015c), gaps between Black children and their non-Black counterparts remain chronic in key areas: access to high quality, early childhood education opportunities, and reading and math scores. Additionally, Black children are less likely to be represented in Advanced Placement and Honors courses (College Board, 2012), less likely to be referred to gifted and talented classes (Ford, 2010), and most likely to be in classrooms with underqualified teachers (Darling Hammond, 2010). Unfortunately, these trends are not new and have been around for more than four decades. "What has become more prevalent is an increasing degree of brazen indifference and even direct violence toward Black children in U.S. schools" (Howard, 2016, p. 103).

2.1.3 Black subservience. The works of Watkins (1993, 2001), Washington (1901), DuBois (1903), and Woodson (1933) briefly explicate the path to the current state of education for African American children in the U.S. context. The ideological arguments around Black education illustrate the creation of a schooling system that continues to disenfranchise Black children. Since its inception, mass schooling prepared for Black children, outside of the Black community, has sought to perpetuate black subservience. Based upon Watkins's (2001) biographical work on the White architects of Black education, I am using the term, "black subservience," as it relates to education and ultimately the positions of Black people in the larger society.

For the purpose of this study, black subservience is defined as the forced efforts to relegate people of African descent in the U.S. context to lower positions in society through curricular and schooling orientations motivated by white supremacist ideology. This conception of black subservience revisits Watkins' work on colonial education. Watkins (1993, 2001) defined colonial education in the southern United States as a system that fostered political accommodationism, 'character' training, and industrial education among Blacks as through schools like the Hampton Institute. Among my professional and personal audiences (my students, friends, and family), the idea of colonial education is distant because such a tool has been a covert function of oppression. It has been covert in the way that ideologies that purport black subservience were ingrained in teaching and school philosophies, but appeared to serve Blacks towards social mobility through education. From the enslavement of Africans to the Civil Rights movement, Africans and African Americans have pursued learning as a way to claim humanity, work for racial uplift, and liberation for the people (Perry, 2003).

Accordingly, after the Civil War, Blacks in the South rallied for a public education system (Anderson, 1988). I argue that the White architects of Black education capitalized on this desire to learn by funding schools for Black communities, but advanced their own agendas of education for black subservience. Consequently, there are testimonies of Black men like Booker T. Washington who revere White school leaders for providing them with "opportunity", when in reality; the opportunity they received was one that fostered an inferior role in society. Thus, today African Americans may still acclaim these historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as places were Blacks were purposed to flourish. In my own experience with my family, friends, and students, few, if any, know the history of colonial education in some HBCUs, like Hampton University and Tuskegee University.

Therefore, conversations about colonization through education are not happening because many believe that education is still the "great equalizer of the conditions of men," having not explored the history of Black education in this country. Hence, I use the term black subservience to appeal to my audience to understand the history that impacts the current state of affairs for African Americans. I argue for using the term, black subservience to emphasize how normal schools, institutes, and later the U.S. public educational system have worked to perpetually disenfranchise the academic opportunities for Africans Americans, consequently, diminishing economic mobility for many African Americans, and relegating many Black people to lower standards of living.

Woodson's (1933) analysis and assessment of the educational process that causes Black people to despise themselves and revere other races, specifically White people, are

the impetus for my teaching philosophy and the pedagogical orientation undergirding this research. Woodson critiqued the academic knowledge base as one that produced the thought of inferiority in Blacks by the omission of African history and the heralding of all things white (King, Davis, & Brown, 2012). As a solution, he suggested a new program that begins with the scientific, mathematical, historical, artistic, and linguistic study of Africans. Such a program would empower Blacks to self-determination beyond the role of their oppressors (King, Crowley, & Brown, 2010). As he himself puts it,

> The program for the uplift of the Negro in this country must be based upon a scientific study of the Negro from within to develop in him the power to do for himself what his oppressors will never do to elevate him to the level of others. (Woodson, 1933/2012, p. 104)

Woodson suggested that in the subject of literature, Black students should not spend all of their time studying Shakespeare, Chaucer, and other Anglo-Saxons, but should also direct their attention to African folklore, philosophies, and proverbs. Woodson (1933) did not advocate for this dismissal of the contributions of other races. Instead he argued, "but we should give equally as much attention to the internal African kingdoms, the Songhay empire, and Ethiopia, which through Egypt decidedly influenced the civilization of the Mediterranean world" (p. 104). Drawing upon Woodson's new program, where the study of Africans and their descendants are centered, I suggest the use of Afrocentric curricular orientations to combat the black subservience that current curriculum orientations perpetuate.

2.2 Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is defined as "a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture transcontinentally and trans-generationally" (Asante, 2007, p. 2). A critique of intellectual hegemony, Afrocentricity is a perspective that centers African thought, specifically in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas (Asante, 2007). Asante framed his argument for Afrocentricity upon the way Africans have been viewed as peripheral to Europeans. For example, in the U.S. the story of Africans begins within a discourse of the European slave trade. According to Asante (2013), this narrative asserts Africans as important only because of Europe. Historically, Africans have been viewed as objects or victims, never positioned as subjects of human history (Asante, 2013; Hilliard, 2003; King & Swartz, 2014). In contrast, the call of Afrocentricity is that we (Africans and those of African descent) view ourselves as actors and insist we are viewed as actors.

African-centered scholars (Asante, 1987; 1991; 2007; King & Swartz, 2016; Woodson, 1933/2012) do not seek to essentialize African culture or undermine the validity of other cultures and their traditions (i.e., Eurocentric intellectual traditions); however, they advocate for the Afrocentric approach that explores non-European experiences and ideas. Asante (1991) explained that Eurocentric thought hinges upon the European experience as universal and normative, while other realities are group-specific and therefore less human. In sum, this Eurocentric rationale perpetuates the system of white supremacy that governs our society.

In contrast, the Afrocentric perspective is a way of thinking that affirms African people, thought, history, and culture, and serves to delegitimize myths of African

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inferiority (Lynn, 2004). Although Africa and African people are centered in Afrocentricity, it is not the same as Eurocentricity. Eurocentricity is based on white supremacist and hierarchal notions that protect the privileged status of Whites, "Unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity does not condone ethnocentric valorization at the expense of degrading other groups' perspectives" (Asante, 1991, p. 172). Ultimately, a goal of Afrocentric scholarship is to replace the universalized knowledge of the hegemonic and hierarchal European episteme with democratized knowledge, by locating Africa and African people at the center of phenomena, as opposed to the periphery (Asante, 1980, 2007; King & Swartz, 2014).

For decades, scholars have argued for the Afrocentricity of Black students to be realized in teaching and learning (Asante, 1991; Boykin, 1994; Hale, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 1995; King, 2005; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016). For example, after detailing various Afrocultural expressions, Boykin (1994) named the implications of Afrocultural expressions for learning among African American children, stating, "if we…acknowledge the social cultural integrity of the African American experience; …, then we can make significant progress in more effectively schooling African American children" (p. 248). If we are right about the role culture, specifically the culture of marginalized peoples, plays in educating children, then major consequences will continue to follow for our African American students if the landscape of pedagogy in public education does not change.

2.2.1 Afrocentricity in education. Afrocentricity is located within Africology, the Afrocentric study of African concepts, issues, and behaviors (Asante, 1987). Africology is interdisciplinary, and therefore Afrocentricity has been used in multiple

disciplines and theoretical frameworks, including education (King & Swartz, 2014, 2016). Asante (1991) and others (King, 2015; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016) esteem Woodson's ideas as the foundation of the Afrocentric idea in education. In education, scholars argue Afrocentricity as an avenue to foster academic excellence in Black children (Asante, 1991; King & Swartz, 2016). Asante (1991) declared that Black children have suffered immeasurably due to the dislocation of Africans and African Americans in the traditional school curriculum.

School curricular content often centers the perspectives of Whites, which can consequently leave the African American child feeling like an outsider. Asante's (1991) solution is an Afrocentric educational setting in which African American children can see themselves "not merely as seekers of knowledge but as integral participants in it." (p. 171). King and Swartz (2014, 2016) draw upon Asante's work to present an Afrocentric praxis of Teaching *for* Freedom. They use an African worldview as the foundation for an Afrocentric theoretical framework that consists of Afrocentric concepts, culturally informed principles, and emancipatory pedagogies.

Teaching *for* Freedom. In accordance with Asante's (1987, 1991, 2007) quest to center Africa and Africans in history, King and Swartz (2014) began their work with positioning Africans and African Americans as subjects of human history by unearthing silenced and distorted narratives, or engaging in the work of "re-membering" (reconnecting silenced or distorted knowledge from the past). Without multiple narratives, we are left with a grand narrative, hierarchical in nature, that purports a fixed and predetermined order of leadership that positions European/White people and their

descendants above all "others" (King & Swartz, 2014). Such a narrative has impeded and continues to be an obstacle to democracy in this country.

King and Swartz advocate for heterarchal narratives, those that explain a *shared* past without the hegemony of a singular grand narrative. Although postmodern, postcolonial, and cultural historians have contested the limitations of Eurocentric descriptions, children are still subjected to one-sided and distorted grand narratives that celebrate Europeans and marginalize all others. As a response to the grand narratives purported through PK-12 schooling, King and Swartz (2014) introduced an Afrocentric culturally informed praxis, the translation of Afrocentric scholarship to pedagogical contexts, of historical recovery that produces knowledge about all cultures to democratize knowledge. The three praxes in which historical recovery is situated are: (1) emancipatory pedagogy; (2) Afrocentric theoretical concepts; and (3) culturally informed curricular practices. They define emancipatory pedagogy as, "a question-driven approach to instruction that liberates all participants from "agreed-upon versions of knowledge" (p. 34).

King and Swartz (2014) listed these six culturally informed principles that are linked to specific Afrocentric theoretical concepts: (1) inclusion, which refers to content in which cultures and groups are represented in more than token ways and centered as subjects of accounts; (2) representation, which refers to comprehensive portrayals of individuals or groups that provide enough information to avoid distorted or stereotypic characterizations; (3) accurate scholarship which asserts that when omissions are avoided and relevant knowledge included, curricular can accurately reflect the past, rather than appropriate it; (4) indigenous voice refers to the curricular portrayal of cultures and

groups through the voice and experiences of members from their group members who were present; (5) critical thinking asserts that when students have adequate information to develop questions, and see connections and patterns, they can identify areas of significance and produce knowledge; and (6) collective humanity asserts that all cultures and groups are normative based on knowing that all of humanity is one – even though equity is not presently a social reality.

Each of these culturally informed principles can be linked to specific Afrocentric concepts—the second type of praxis recommended by King and Swartz (2014): collective responsibility, centrality, self-determination, people with agency, reclamation of cultural heritage, and the anteriority of classical African civilizations. The third and final praxis is practitioner inquiry. Practitioner inquiry asks classroom teachers to reflect on, "What worked, what didn't, and what can I do differently?" (p. 43). Ultimately, the goal of all three praxes is to democratize knowledge by readjusting who controls historical content and who controls ideas about effective teaching and learning.

More recently, King and Swartz (2016) introduced Afrocentric emancipatory pedagogies that connect with the culturally informed principles discussed above. Culturally informed instruction using heterarchal accounts necessitates the use of culturally framed pedagogies. King and Swartz (2016) assert that the culturally informed principles used to "re-member" content also inform emancipatory pedagogies so that teachers and students experience the six principles through content and instruction. The emancipatory pedagogies are: (1) eldering refers to teacher-student interactions led by teachers' knowledge, expertise and wisdom, where students experience their position as learner with dignity; (2) locating students refers to the idea that students' cultures inform

how to engage them in learning, which necessitates centering students in the classroom and learning process; (3) multiple ways of knowing refers to the use of several ways of knowing to interrogate topics; (4) question-driven pedagogy refers to engaging students through thought-provoking questions that build on their knowledge bases; (5) culturally authentic assessment refers to an evaluation of student learning through community-informed standards; (6) communal responsibility refers to consideration for each other, working together for the good of the community, and responsibility for each other (King & Swartz, 2016).

The Teaching *for* Freedom praxis is significant to my dissertation research because the afterschool meetings I hosted with my students were purposed to provide heterarchal accounts of history as we sought to understand the inequities of today. King and Swartz (2014, 2016) begin with liberation from "agreed-upon" and incomplete versions of official school knowledge, as did my project. Additionally, their work is relevant to this research because they explicitly name and define the intersection of African-informed principles and teacher practices.

As I reflect upon my own journey to African consciousness and centeredness, as well as teaching, I recognize my embodiment of the culturally informed principles and emancipatory pedagogies they name. For example, I conducted the afterschool meetings understanding African Americans are people with agency and seeking the reclamation of heritage knowledge. However, at the time of the meetings, I did not have the vocabulary to name those principles as parts of the framework of the study. Using the Teaching *for* Freedom praxis helps me name and interpret the principles and practices I embodied in my work with Merrick and the other boys. Furthermore, the six Afrocentric culturally

informed principles are foundational to other scholarship in the Black intellectual tradition from which I drew, such as culturally relevant pedagogy.

2.3 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

I will briefly discuss the role of culturally relevant pedagogy in the formation and fruition of this research project. I begin with a discussion of various conceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy. I draw upon Ladson-Billings' (1994) conception of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings' drew upon Asante's notion of Afrocentricity and Collins' Black feminist epistemology in her approach to uncover what could be learned from African American students, their parents, and teachers that would maintain the integrity of their culture and worldview. Namely, she declared, "we worked with the assumption that African American students and their parents demonstrate normative behavior and that they act rationally, making decisions that make sense" (p. 180).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) can be defined as practices that empower students towards academic achievement through the affirmation of cultural identity and the use of critical perspectives of school and societal inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Using Ladson-Billings' conception of CRP, three dimensions are essential: (1) academic achievement; (2) cultural competence; and (3) critical consciousness. Engaging students in a curriculum that appreciates African American culture and uses it to build on new and global knowledge bases contributes to academic achievement. Cultural competence is the vehicle used to engage students in learning, by drawing upon their cultural strength and fostering pride in themselves, their culture, and the culture of others. The third dimension of CRP, critical consciousness, allows students to critique social inequities to

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which they and others are subjected. Working from the accurate narratives of their African histories, Black students are able to understand their current position in society and conceive ways to improve their lives, communities, and world.

Other conceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy such as Gay's (2000, 2002) culturally responsive teaching and Paris' (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy have developed since Ladson-Billings' (1994) study of successful teachers of African American students. Gay's (2002) culturally responsive teaching focuses on a multicultural approach to educating culturally diverse students. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as, "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). Gay's approach prioritizes teaching (Aronson & Laughter, 2015), whereas, Ladson-Billings' original study focuses on the sociopolitical consciousness of both teachers and students.

More recently, Paris (2012) argued for a culturally sustaining pedagogy that purports to ensure the maintenance of languages and cultures of youth of color in schools, including African Americans, Latina/o, Indigenous American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander American. However, scholars (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Boutte, 2016; Powell et al., 2016) argue that culturally relevant pedagogy in its first iteration has yet to be widely implemented in the PK-12 context.

Currently, my research is situated within Afrocentricity and seeks to explicitly address issues of social inequity for African American children, an original aim and intent of Ladson-Billings' germinal work. Moreover, at the outset of the afterschool group Merrick participated in, my research was situated in critical race theory (CRT).

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Critical race scholars explore the relationships among race, racism, and power and seek to dismantle inequities between Black and Brown populations and White populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Given the endemic nature of racism, eminent critical race scholar, Derrick Bell (1992) asserted that social structures and institutions such as the educational system should be evaluated to determine the racism embedded within. Soon after, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced critical race theory into the field of education, using race as an analytic tool to understand school inequity. Given Ladson-Billings' consistent critique of racism as a salient feature of public schooling decisions, my perspective most aligns with her conception of culturally relevant pedagogy.

2.3.1 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0? Although Ladson-Billings' (1994) work centered the academic achievement and sociopolitical consciousness of African American children, over the years, her work has been coopted in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sleeter, 2012). For example, Ladson-Billings (2014) lamented of the way culturally relevant pedagogy has been conceived in practice.

> Despite the apparent popularity of culturally relevant pedagogy, I have grown increasingly dissatisfied with what seems to be a static conception of what it means to be culturally relevant. Many practitioners, and those who claim to translate research to practice, seem stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture. Even when people have demonstrated a more expansive knowledge of culture, few have taken up the sociopolitical dimensions of the work, instead dulling its critical edge or omitting it altogether. (p. 77).

Indeed, Ladson-Billings (2014) indicted practitioners and teacher educators on the misappropriation of culturally relevant pedagogy for the dismissal of the sociopolitical consciousness tenet, which fosters in students a voice of critique for inequitable structures, including that of an educational system predicated upon racist ideology. I agree that when teachers think of culturally relevant instruction, they seldom take up the notion of institutional critique, because in my experience, rarely do teachers critique societal structures for inequity, because the majority of teachers I have encountered benefit from some set of privilege, whether it be race, class, gender, or each of them.

Similarly, Sleeter (2012) discussed four simplistic uses of culturally responsive pedagogy that marginalize the potential of the pedagogy: cultural celebration, trivialization, essentializing culture, and substituting cultural for political analysis. Pertinent to my work are her critiques of cultural celebration and substituting cultural for political analysis. Cultural celebration is an understanding of culture that disconnects it from academic culture. For example, bringing in hip-hop music to engage students, but not engaging the wealth of literary elements nestled within hip-hop music. Sleeter (2012) lamented, "Substituting cultural for political analysis involves maintaining silence about the conditions of racism and other forms of oppression that underlie achievement gaps and alienation from school, assuming to attend to culture alone will bring about equality" (p. 571).

Ladson-Billings (2014) and Sleeter (2012) both critiqued the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in practitioners' use of the pedagogy to confront inequities in a raced, classed, and gendered society. Moreover, they highlight the use of superficial notions of culture and the belittling of non-European culture to foster academic rigor.

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Likewise, although I agree with the basic tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, I have found myself resisting it as a singular conceptual and analytical framework in this project because I feel the need to work from a paradigm that is explicitly Black. An explicitly Black approach implies that we draw upon African ontology and epistemologies to focus on the racial uplift of Black people, which is the foremost argument of Afrocentric scholars. African Americans have been marginalized in numerous ways, even to the point of having theoretical conceptions of our own, for our own well-being, be coopted to fit mainstream interests. As a graduate student, culturally relevant pedagogy was my first encounter with a liberating pedagogy. Even then, I had not possessed the frame for Afrocentricity, but I had been searching for a theory that respected the humanity of African Americans and drew from our experiences to lead in our educational process.

Throughout my journey, I located two such theories, culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and critical race theory (Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, as I began to study more, I became dissatisfied with culturally relevant pedagogy in mainstream discourse. I was dissatisfied with the fact that many of my colleagues in the PK-12 arena had no frame of reference for culturally relevant pedagogy and in academic articles, the pedagogy had been used to talk about multicultural education in various contexts (i.e., English Language Learners and international contexts). However, in applying the framework to various contexts, researchers and teachers, forgot or ignored the plight of the Black child for whom the pedagogy was conceived. While I believe culturally relevant pedagogy is

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universal to *all* learners, I am discouraged by the fact that there are still so many Black children, whom the work originally celebrated and centered, suffering in schools.

In the same vein, I drew upon critical race theory (CRT) in education as an interpretive frame for critiquing the institution of education, only to find that scholars make a profit from discourse about CRT, specifically scholars in education have been talking about CRT but not putting the theory into practice (Stovall, 2016), and Black children are still drowning in a national sea of apathy from school stakeholders. Another complaint I have against the use of both culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory is the fact that the theories were conceptualized by Black folk and for the Black struggle. In spreading them, across multiple contexts, many have forgotten the legacies of these theories and the fact they were birthed from the pain of real lived experiences, which only leave room for thoughtful action and not ivory tower pontification.

Initially, I wanted to abandon any mention of culturally relevant pedagogy from my dissertation study, but as I wrote my initial findings about Merrick's transformation in my class, I saw them as representative of the three components of Ladson-Billings' (1994) culturally relevant pedagogy. I returned to her study, to find her epistemology based in Afrocentricity. Ladson-Billings' (1994) work is important to this study because it is the work that influenced my teaching paradigm and led me to raise the sociopolitical consciousness of my students. Her conception of culturally relevant pedagogy inspired me to engage in critical work with my students. I argue that even after more than 20 years since its conception, culturally relevant pedagogy still has the potential to transform the pedagogy of teachers and the lives of African American students.

This conception of culturally relevant pedagogy has become the most widely cited component of the Afrocentric idea in education. Ladson-Billings' (1994/2009) study illustrates that *all* teachers, including White teachers, can operationalize CRP. Hence, this is a demonstration of the accessibility of Afrocentric pedagogies to all people. Re-membering and implementing culturally relevant pedagogy within its Afrocentric foundation can foster academic achievement and cultural competence in African American students. By including this discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy in my conceptual framework, I hope to recover the brilliant Blackness of the theory that centers the African child and celebrates all humanity.

2.3.2 Conclusion to conceptual framework. In a country where to "make America great again"[3] means to appoint white supremacists as government officials (i.e., President Donald Trump's appointment of an alt-right proponent --a political group whose ideals are centered on "white identity" and the preservation of 'Western civilization'-- leader, Stephen K. Bannon), we must provide our children with heterarchal accounts of history that center Africans and African Americans. Black people are not tabula rosae (King, 2005). We do not need the salvation of Whites or anyone else. I argue that when Black children are able to recall our triumphant histories of victory throughout multiple periods of oppression, they and we can be hopeful about the battles we will fight in this arena.

Review of Literature

This section of Chapter Two focuses on the negative experiences of African American males in public schools to illustrate the ideological and systemic ways public

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[3] 46th President of the United States, Donald Trump's, presidential campaign slogan.

schooling hinders their academic success and social mobility. I do not present this information to situate African American males as powerless victims, but rather to point to some of the real problems schools present for Black boys, since African American children are suffering academically and socially in U.S. public schools (Boutte, 2016; Dumas, 2014; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Despite decades of scholarship recounting effective ways to teach African American children, teacher educators and public school practitioners are still largely unaware of or ignore strategies which have been shown to affirm and help Black students learn (Boutte, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, Pabon, Woodson, & McGee, 2013; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Indeed, African American males experience more social and academic distress than any other group, including African American females (Bristol, 2015; Howard, 2014; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Milner et al., 2013; Noguera, 2008).

The purpose of this literature review is to: (1) explore troubling educational experiences faced by African American males in K-12 public schools; and (2) examine various responses to these experiences. When discussing responses to Black male students' experiences, I broaden the discussion to include literature that speaks to affirmatively and effectively educating all African American children, as African American girls are also suffering in public schools (Dumas, 2014). I begin the discussion of the troubling educational experiences of Black male students by first examining the negative depictions of African American males in society since these depictions have been shown to influence the ways teachers and administrators view and treat Black male students in schools (Howard, 2014; Howard et al., 2012). In response to the dismal academic and social experiences of African American males in public K-12 schools,

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scholars have called for the presence of Black male teachers in classrooms, culturally relevant instruction, and out of-school programs. Each of these will be discussed more fully in the second section of the review.

2.4 The Troubling Educational Experiences of African American Males

    2.4.1 Negative social imagery of Black Males. There is a large body of literature that suggests Black males are negatively depicted in society, which has fostered the hyper-policing Black males' experiences in schools and society (Ferguson, 2000; Howard, 2014; Howard et al., 2012; Noguera, 2008; Polite & Davis, 1999). The maltreatment of African American males in public schools largely mirrors the treatment of Black males in society at large and negatively shapes public perceptions about Black males (Howard, 2014; Noguera, 2008; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). In his book, *Black Male(d): Peril and Promise in the Education of African American Males,* Howard (2014) classified five negative depictions of Black males dating back to as old as four centuries ago that shape the public's perception: (1) the physical brute and anti-intellectual; (2) the shiftless and lazy Black male; (3) the hypersexual Black male; (4) the criminal-minded Black male; and (5) the slickster-pimp/gangster Black male. These depictions influence the ways Black males experience school and the larger society (Howard, 2014). This is evident in school settings where African American males are often mislabeled as at-risk, troublemakers, and unsalvageable (Howard et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2000).

    2.4.2 Negative social imagery of Black Male students. Relatedly, Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2015) discussed the racial divide in teacher education due to the further (mis)reading of Black male youth from popular visual images. The racial divide in teacher education is a consequence of the white racial homogeneity of the teacher

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education faculty who prepare preservice teachers, who are also mostly White, middle-class female students, but have the responsibility of teaching in school communities serving students who are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, racially, and economically different from them (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Consequently, programs may avoid placing preservice teachers in settings where Black students predominate, or which provide opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss and confront the stereotypes they hold about communities of color and the Black males within those communities (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Thus, many White teachers develop their singular awareness of Black male students through media production of Black male imagery rather than through actual experiences with Black males (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015).

In their study, Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2015) investigated messages about urban education as received by preservice teachers from media. The data were collected at each author's individual institution. Sealey-Ruiz's, research is presented first, followed by a discussion of Greene's.

Sealey-Ruiz hosted a documentary, *Beyond the Bricks* (Koen, 2009), (which tells the story of two Black males from Newark, NJ who drop out of school, but later return) on her campus located in the northeastern region of the U.S., making it mandatory for two cohorts of English Education preservice teachers to attend. After the viewing, preservice teachers completed a 10-item, open-ended survey that intended to capture how they made sense of the documentary, and if they made connections to race and urban education that were discussed in the English Education class. The actual number of participants was not given, but 53 surveys were completed by preservice teachers and used in the study. The survey respondents were Black, Asian, White, Latino, and

Biracial, ages 22 to 33 years old, and included 42 females and 11 males. She did not specify the number of participants from each ethnic group.

Sealey-Ruiz applied features of Staple's (2008) critical literacy framework, where students listen critically to narratives, watch critically, question critically, imagine critically, record critically, and discuss critically to analyze the preservice teachers' engagement with the film. Although *Beyond the Bricks* is intended to be a counternarrative (an example and anecdotal that challenges the status quo and deficit perspectives), Sealey-Ruiz found that most comments on the survey were based on stereotypes about Black male students. For instance, although the opening scene of *Beyond the Bricks* begins with a Black male affirming that he believes he is smart, one White male preservice teacher responded, "What concrete steps can we take as teachers, policymakers, etc. that support black males to promote a love of learning among this critical population?" Embedded in this conversation is the belief that Black males do not have a love for learning. Even after viewing a film where Black males returned to school to overcome the adversity they face in schools, the preservice teacher still insinuated that Black males are in a perpetual state of crisis (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Sealey-Ruiz concluded that most preservice teachers lacked critical questioning about the images presented in popular films and, instead, used popular films to facilitate their understanding of Black males in schools.

The second author, Greene, collected and analyzed data from his preservice teacher education course, *Teachers in Film*, which required preservice teachers to critique Hollywood films for messages they present about urban education. Preservice teachers watched *Boyz N the Hood* (Singleton, 1991)*, Dangerous Minds* (Smith, Simpson, &

Bruckheimer, 1995)*, Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, DeVito, Sher, & Shamberg, 2007)*,
187* (Reynolds, 1997)*,* and *Lean on Me* (Avildsen & Piazzo, 1989).   Data collection
included classroom observations, verbatim comments from students (the authors do not
specify if the comments were solicited or unsolicited), and student journal entries about
the films and their fieldwork experiences.

 After data analysis, Sealey-Ruiz and Greene focused on the opening sequences of
the films used in Greene's course to analyze the messages the films were sending about
Black male youth, their schools, and their home communities. Each film opens with a
scene that frames the students' communities as desperate, desolate, and dangerous.
Findings from the *Teachers in Film* course indicated that popular films normalize the
idea that Black male students create mayhem in urban schools. Similarly, finding from
the *Beyond the Bricks* survey illustrated that even when positive visual images of Black
males and their communities are present, preservice teachers still require scaffolding and
critical conversations on race and inequality. To summarize, Sealey-Ruiz and Greene
concluded that their findings confirm the power of media to incite critical conversation
and potentially transform the ways in which Black males and their families are
read.   Ultimately, these popular images can influence the perceptions that teachers hold
about their Black male students, imagining them as dangerous, which also lays the
foundation for many "zero tolerance" policies that bring the hyper-policing of Black
males from the streets and Black communities to schools.

 2.4.3 Policing Black Male students. There is a pervasive narrative about the
necessity to over-regulate and control Black males in schools and society, given the
negative social images used to depict them (Ferguson, 2000; Howard, 2014; Howard et

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al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). This obsession with regulation and control of Black bodies has resulted in harsher disciplinary consequences and zero tolerance policies geared towards Black (male) students (Skiba, et al., 2011). Nationally, 15% of African American males from early grades to high school were suspended, compared to 7% of Latino males and 5% of White males from 2012-2013 (Schott Foundation, 2015). Similarly, the average expulsion rate for African American males was 61% compared to 29% for Latino males and 21% for White males (Schott Foundation, 2015).

Skiba et al. (2011) documented the patterns of office discipline referrals in elementary and middle schools during the 2005-2006 academic year. Data were collected through a web-based School-wide Information System (SWIS). In SWIS, students are identified by name, district identification number, grade, Individualized Education Program (IEP) status, and ethnicity. The contents of a discipline referral include information about (a) the types of problem behavior leading to a referral; (b) the time of day, location, referring adult, and others present during the event; (c) the presumed maintaining consequence (why a student chose his/her behavior (e.g., escape from work)); and (d) the primary administrative decision. Skiba et al. (2011) identified a subset of 436 schools from the 4000 schools in the United States using SWIS. The final sample included 364 schools, comprised of 272 K-6 level schools and 92 sixth through ninth level schools. They chose schools who (a) used SWIS for the full 2005-2006 academic year, (b) reported ethnicity information, (c) had grade levels between kindergarten and sixth grade (K-6) or sixth and ninth grade (6-9), and (d) agreed to share anonymous summaries of their data for evaluation purposes. Compared to 73,525

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comparable schools in the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) sample for 2005-2006, the schools in this sample were within 5% of NCES data in the following categories: size, proportion of students with an IEP, and location (urban, suburban, or rural). However, fewer schools in the SWIS database were composed of schools with higher SES, and had a larger number of schools with high ethnic/racial diversity

The primary research questions of the study focused on the patterns of office discipline referrals (ODRs) by race and the pattern of administrative decisions by race. Skiba et al. (2011) used descriptive analysis and a series of logistic and multinomial logit regression analyses to describe the extent of disproportionality in student infractions, administrative decisions, and their interactions. They found that African American students are 2.19 (elementary) to 3.78 (middle) times as likely to be referred to the office for problem behavior as their White peers.

Additionally, the results indicated that African American and Latino students were more likely than their White peers to receive expulsion or out of school suspension as consequences for the same or similar problem behavior. At the elementary level, African American students were about 27% more likely than White students to receive out-of-school suspension as a consequence to minor infractions such as disruption and noncompliance. Similarly, Latino students at the elementary level were about 49% more likely to receive suspension than White students across all infractions except disruption (other categories: minor misbehaviors, noncompliance, moderate infractions, major violations, use/possession, and tardy). Although researchers did not control for gender, the results correlate with a larger body of literature and findings that argue that African

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American students, and specifically African American males, suffer from discipline disparities in school.

In her article that summarized causes of the disproportionality in school discipline for Black males and recommendations for change, Monroe (2005) discussed how societal forces may inform teachers' perceptions of African American student behaviors, particularly African American males, resulting in severe and punitive consequences. She outlined three conditions that contribute to discipline disparities among Black males: (a) the criminalization of Black males, (b) race and class privilege among middle class White stakeholders, and (c) zero tolerance policies.

Like Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2015), Monroe (2005) also argued that popular media images portray Black males in violent and criminal ways that provide the context for school disciplinary practices concerning Black males. When disciplining African American male students, teachers are likely to demonstrate reactions that may appear to be more severe than required (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Milner, 2007; Skiba et al., 2011). Monroe suggested that teachers are not likely to connect their disciplinary reactions to the stereotypical perceptions that often guide them. Ladson-Billings' (2011) provides an anecdotal example of such behavior. While observing a student teacher, she recorded nine times in which the student teacher repeatedly redirected an Asian American male, Stanley, to stay in his seat, using phrases like, "sit down Stanley" or "not now Stanley" (p. 11). During the same observation, a Black male, Larry, got out of his seat and received the response, "what are you doing out of your seat? You're out of here!" (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 11). Larry was sent to the principal's office after leaving his

seat only once without permission. Ladson-Billings (2011) reported this reaction from the student teacher during their post-observation conference,

> I pointed out the disparity between her responses to the two boys. I showed her each time I had documented her repeated warnings to Stanley and her one sanction issued to Larry. When she looked at my log she was shocked at what she had done and at a loss for words to explain why she had treated the boys so differently. (p. 11)

Like Monroe, Ladson-Billings (2011) contended that the harsh disciplinary actions towards Black boys are due to the societal criminalization of Black males. Given the pervasive and persistent pathological images of Black men, there exists a widespread fear of Black men throughout society, including in schools (Brown & Donnor, 2011; Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noguera, 2008). School personnel often respond to this fear by exhibiting increased levels of control (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Hence, Black males lose their childhood before they are eight or nine years old and are consequently viewed as men by school officials (Ladson-Billings, 2011).

As the notion of childhood is stripped from Black male students, harsher consequences and punitive responses are 'warranted' for their 'misbehavior'. Ferguson (2000) advanced this point drawing from her three-year participant observation research at an elementary school. She studied the daily interactions between teachers and students to contextualize the experiences of a group of 11 and 12-year-old African American boys. She found that the expectations for school-aged Black males were similar to those of Black men. Much like African American males in society, the African American boys in the school were viewed as criminals instead of learners. Consequently, the Black boys

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were treated differently than their White counterparts. As an illustration, one teacher recounted the day when a White male student finished his work early and went to participate in silent reading on a classroom couch. Soon after, a Black male student, described by a teacher assistant as a kid that "has a jail-cell with his name on it", completed his work and joined the White student on the couch and began silently reading. The teaching assistant's (mis)reading of Trey illustrates a disturbing trend in schools, their role in tracking Black male students into the prison system; more on this phenomenon is discussed in the next section. Trey, the Black male, was reprimanded and told to go back to his seat. Trey contested the teacher, as he found it unfair that he would need to return to his seat and his White counterpart did not. As his teacher recounted the narrative, she stated the following about his contestation, "Of course he had to talk back," (Ferguson, 2000, p. 221). Ferguson concluded that the "criminal inclination" imagined about Black men influenced the disciplinary decisions regarding Black male students.

Beyond the negative perceptions that lead to discriminatory disciplinary practices, it is important to note that educational expectations, practices, and policies reflect the values of those who create them. White and middle class individuals hold positions of power in educational settings and therefore make decisions regarding behavioral expectations that reflect their culture (Monroe, 2005). As a result, teachers, both White and Black who are unfamiliar with African American cultural expressions, misinterpret African American behaviors as inappropriate. For example, teachers may view overlapping speech (the dialogue of more than one speaker at a time) as disrespectful, or play fighting/rough-housing as authentic aggression. Data suggest that students of color,

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especially Black males, are punished for 'wrongdoing's resulting from subjective school personnel judgments (Milner, 2007; Tanner, 2009).

2.4.4 Zero tolerance policies, the school to prison pipeline, and Black Male students. Another cause of disproportionality in school discipline that Monroe outlined is zero tolerance initiatives. Zero tolerance policies are historically rooted in federal drug policies to deter drug trafficking (Caton, 2012). Initially, the zero tolerance policies that were designed for safety were established to protect against mass school shootings, such as those committed by mostly White males. However, these policies have become increasingly problematic and discriminatory for Black males (Caton, 2012). Using counter-storytelling within a critical race theory framework, Caton (2012), examined the impact of zero tolerance policies on Black males' educational experiences and outcomes. For more than nine months, Caton documented the experiences of 10 Black males through interviews and follow-up interviews to acquire insights into the participants' stories and perceptions of school experiences. Six to eight interviews were conducted per participant. All of the participants left high school without graduating, four of the participants left in the 10th grade and six in the 11th grade. The participants represented three different urban high schools in primarily low-income areas, made up of mainly Black and Hispanic students.

Caton's findings were summarized by themes linked from the participants' narratives. She found that the schools' security measures created an inhospitable and, at times, hostile environment and constant exclusion from class caused participants to fall behind on their schoolwork and impact their learning. Moreover, Caton reported the need for strong teacher-student relationships to achieve academic success. She found that

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the most significant risk factor leading to school dropout is class exclusion, which can often be a gateway for dropping out and incarceration.

The criminalization of Black males and the disproportionate enforcement of zero tolerance policies contributes to what has been referred to as the *school-to-prison pipeline* (Dancy, 2014; Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline pertains to the policies that encourage police presence in schools, harsh tactics, and automatic punishments that result in suspensions and out-of-class time (Elias, 2013). These policies disproportionately affect students of color and students with disabilities, especially Black males and position them as prisoners (Caton, 2012). The implementation of such policies transforms the school environment into spaces where students are defined as criminal suspects who are guilty until proven innocent (Caton, 2012). The school-to-prison pipeline is only part and parcel to a larger phenomenon that many Black males face, mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

Civil rights lawyer and activist, Michelle Alexander (2010), offered a striking critique of mass incarceration asthe new racial caste system in so-called post-racial America. Alexander (2010) chronicled how, through the mass incarceration of African Americans, the criminal justice system has reinvented and advanced the Jim Crow system, wherein people of color are restricted from voting, gainful employment, and are ultimately relegated to second-class citizenship. She asserted,

> Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways
> that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're
> labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination -- employment discrimination,
> housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational

opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from

jury service - are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights,

and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim

Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.

(p. 2)

Indeed, the racial caste system of America has morphed and is taking root in our

educational system.

2.5 Responses to the Educational State of African American Males

Both scholars and policymakers have responded to the abundance of literature

regarding the negative school experiences of African American males. National

initiatives such as President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper,* former U.S. Education

Secretary Arne Duncan's *Black Men to the Blackboard,* and the *Call Me Mister* program,

from Clemson University in South Carolina, focus on the recruitment of Black men to

serve as mentors and teachers to increase the academic success and quality of life for

African American males (Bristol, 2013; White House, 2016). Researchers have

introduced paradigmatic and pedagogical shifts, such as culturally relevant pedagogy, as

well as out-of-school initiatives, to increase academic excellence and promote social

change (Grant, 2011; Howard, 2014; Howard & Flennaugh, 2011; Terry, Flennaugh,

Blackmon, & Howard, 2014; Woodland, 2008). In the next section, I focus on Black

male teacher recruitment efforts, pedagogical approaches, and out-of-school programs as

responses to Black males' dismal school experiences.

2.5.1 Black Male Teachers. In some cases, Black male teachers are ushered into

the profession as the panacea to the Black male "crisis" in education (Brown, 2012;

Pabon, 2014). About 75 percent of Black boys grow up in a single-mother family, consequently missing the male role model in the home (Bristol, 2015; Kunjufu, 2013). Black male teachers have been expected to serve as surrogate fathers and role models to "at-risk" and "in-crisis" Black male students (Pabon, 2014). Recruiting more Black male teachers into the field is a commonsense approach to addressing the needs of Black boys in schools (Brown, 2012). However, researchers posit that a singular focus on recruiting Black male teachers is problematic (Bristol, 2015; Brown, 2012; Jackson, Boutte, & Wilson, 2013; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010; Pabon, 2014). First, they note a *Black Superman[4]* rhetoric disregards the structural and systemic challenges Black male students and teachers face. Second, a focus on Black male recruitment can lead to a disregard of the pedagogical preparation and practices of these candidates. Last, a focus on maleness devalues Black female teachers.

Jackson, Boutte, and Wilson (2013) complicated what it means for Black male teachers to be considered both a problem and a solution, conceptualized through what they call "double-talk." Precisely, Black males are viewed as both the villains and superheroes pertaining to the Black male educational "crisis." On one hand, there is a pervasive and pejorative narrative in mass media about the dismal conditions of Black men (i.e. high unemployment, lack of education, imprisonment, drug-absent homes) (Jackson et al., 2013). Conversely, there is a focus on Black male teacher recruitment as the solution to solving educational troubles in the Black community and particularly with Black males (Brown, 2012; Jackson et al., 2013; Pabon, 2014). Given the nature of this "double-talk" that occurs within mainstream discourse about Black males, scholars refute

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[4] Black Superman refers to a soldier who will use his Blackness and maleness to lead Black youth to academic success (Pabon, 2014).

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the claim of Black males as the panacea to the educational problems facing African American male students, citing the fact that positioning Black men as both the problem and the solution dismisses the systemic and institutional barriers that Black men face in schools and the larger society that marginalize them (Bristol, 2015; Jackson et al., 2013; Pabon, 2014).

In the same way, Pabon (2014) found that even with the Black Superman expectation, Black male teachers, much like Black male students, are pushed out of their classrooms, in a process she calls *schooling out*. Pabon (2014) conducted a study using life history methods, which captures the socio-historically situated experiences of participants in their own words, to uncover the narratives of Black male teachers in hopes of complicating the narratives about the Black Superman. She interviewed each of the four participants twice, the first time to uncover the participant's life history and sense-making until becoming a teacher, and in the second interview, she focused on the participant's present life as a teacher and his sense-making of that experience. Two major themes emerged from the participants' narratives: feeling underprepared in teacher education, and feeling pressured to standardize their curriculum. Drawing from these themes and specific parts of each participant's narrative, Pabon arrived at the concept *schooling out*. An example from a participant, Byron, illustrates this concept.

During his tenure in a graduate degree program in Pennsylvania, Byron became an activist in a Black student group and led students to protest issues of social inequality. Byron earned his teaching certificate through an alternative certification program and was in his 10th year as a social studies teacher at the time of the interview. He expressed frustration with his under-preparation in teacher education,

finding that his coursework lacked relevance to the urban school context. When he raised the issue in the course, his professor noted that he made other students uncomfortable and implied that he should save his comments.

In his role as the teacher of record, Byron experienced schooling out when his school transitioned to a Eurocentric "standard" curriculum. After teaching history from an Afro-centered perspective for several years, he believed his classes were engaging, intellectually stimulating, and culturally relevant for his predominantly Black students. Of this shift to standardized curriculum, Byron explained,

> If you love your kids and are unapologetically black, I don't think you can exist in these schools. With the direction education is going, they're not thinking about understanding the sociological or psychological issues with our children. The shift that I'm watching take place is everybody's adjusting to the injustice. (p. 932)

For Byron, the "standard" curriculum in both his teacher preparation program and within his school, opposed his pedagogical beliefs. Consequently, he doubtful about continuing in his role as a teacher.

In this vein, researchers, such as Lynn and Jennings (2009), argued that the pedagogical practices of Black male teachers are understudied, and the scholarly literature does not sufficiently document their pedagogical practices. Brown (2012) considered the pedagogical beliefs of Black male teachers in his exploration of the theoretical implications around positioning the Black male teacher as the central agent of social change for Black male students. Drawing from the notion of human kinds, Brown theorizes African American male teachers are constructed as a pedagogical kind, that is,

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"a type of educator whose subjectivities, pedagogies, and expectations have been set in place prior to entering the classroom" (p. 299). Succinctly, the Black male educator, his positionality, pedagogy, and role have been situated directly in the context of Black male students, specifically to "secure, administer, and govern the unruly Black boy in school" (Brown, 2012, p. 299), regardless of his own educational philosophies.

Brown used two methodological approaches--historicizing knowledge and ethnographic interviews--to uncover a historical context for the interviews with Black male teachers to set in place a normalizing discourse about the pedagogies of the Black male teacher. He employed purposive sampling, choosing to focus on a single site to explore the diversity of teacher engagement with Black male students. The singular site for the study was one sixth-to-ninth grade public school in a large city in the Midwest, Crispus Attucks School (pseudonym), which had the largest number of Black male teachers in the district. While spending 14 months on site Brown continuously analyzed interviews throughout the process. To identify emergent themes about how teachers discussed their roles and experiences working with Black male students, he organized material into chunks of data and various categories.

As with the teachers in Pabon's (2014) study, four of the 10 male participants in this study began careers in other fields and transitioned to teaching as a profession. Brown does not detail the motivation for the men's move to education. The interviews of those male teachers are included in Brown's analysis. Their interviews clearly displayed how they theorized their identities as teachers in relation to the larger societal construction of the Black male teacher.

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Two themes emerged from the participants' interviews. First, he observed the differing ways teachers' social, spiritual, and political affiliations informed their vision of teaching. Second, the interviews illustrated how being Black males informed the participants' practice and their theorizing about themselves as Black male teachers. For instance, one participant, Baba Parker, troubled the notion of Black male teachers being constructed as only a physical intimidator for Black male students,

> However, what I am saying is definitely be sound in your pedagogy, you know, it's primary. … Haberman says there's an absence of Black male teachers, but he doesn't say anything about what that Black male teacher needs to possess. You know, what's important? What's critical? What do they have to come in with, you know? What issues will they have to deal with? Are you suggesting any Black male teacher or any Black male will do? Naw, it's not the case. (Brown, 2012, p. 308)

Baba Parker's comments reiterate the fact that simply placing Black male bodies in front of Black male students does not guarantee improved learning outcomes for Black male students.

Brown concluded with two points. First, assuming that all Black male teachers can work with all Black male students essentializes both groups. Second, implicit in the discourse about the Black male teachers is the belief that Black men have the rugged manhood needed to govern unruly Black boys, a belief that undermines the intellectual contributions of Black men such as their pedagogies when working with Black male students. Both Brown and Pabon (2014) focused on Black male teachers who have come to education after working in other fields. Similarly, both researchers discussed the

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ideologies that propelled their participants' teaching philosophies. Undertheorized in both works are the teaching philosophies of Black male educators who enter teacher education as their primary field of study.

Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2010) broadened their scope of participants as they presented the voices of Black male and female teachers to provide a more nuanced analysis of the male teacher shortage. Importantly, their work illuminates the voices of Black female teachers in a conversation that in some ways dismisses their role in educating African American males. The authors draw from feminist, queer and postcolonial theoretical frameworks to address the complexity of the dynamics of gender relations in teachers' lives such as intersections with race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality.

Two participants were included in their study, one male and female African Caribbean elementary school teacher from Toronto. Like Brown (2012), the authors employed purposive sampling to draw attention to the politics of hegemonic masculinities in the context of doing women's work coupled with the racialized dimension of male privilege. Both participants completed semi-structured interviews about their decision to become elementary school teachers and their influence as role models.

Clarissa, the female participant, troubled the gendered dynamic where women are devalued in relation to their male counterparts and how this is intensified for Black female teachers. For example, she explained that in her school parents of Black male students often want their children placed with a Black male teacher, viewing them as more authentic and assertive than a Black female teacher. Martino and Rezai-Rashti

(2010) contended, "Black male teachers are considered to wield a power, in their capacity as role models, which is not available to black female teachers in terms of how they are perceived by their own communities" (p. 255).

However, Clarissa entered the field of teaching with the specific goal of providing students with greater possibilities for identification with teachers of color, as she believes this can reduce the potential alienation encountered by many students of color. In essence, Clarissa became a teacher to empower Black children, although she is perceived as incapable by some Black parents. While Martino and Rezai-Rashti's (2010) work includes the experience of one Black female teacher, additional work is necessary to highlight the voices and experiences of more culturally relevant Black female teachers on the issues of educating Black male students and the Black Superman discourse. My study situates the experience of a culturally relevant Black female teacher working with a Black male student.

Researchers emphasize that although relying on Black male educators as the cure to the dismal educational state of Black male students is a commonsensical approach, it is present with much cause for concern (Bristol, 2015; Brown, 2012; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010; Pabon, 2014). Recruiting Black male teachers as a stand-alone solution to Black male student achievement and well-being disregards the systemic and pervasive institutional and societal issues facing both Black male teachers and students. Simply placing Black male bodies in the classroom can potentially place students with teachers who are ill-equipped to provide sound pedagogical practices and content knowledge.

A focus only on Black male teachers to empower and educate Black male students also dismisses the importance of Black female teachers who embody

transformative and culturally relevant pedagogies. Accordingly, another response to improving the school experiences of African American males, is the use of culturally relevant pedagogy.   In the next section, I explore culturally relevant pedagogy as a response to the negative schooling experiences of African American boys.

2.5.2 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Ladson-Billings' (1994/2009) germinal work on culturally relevant pedagogy, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, highlighted the teaching practices and philosophies of eight female teachers, including three White teachers and five Black teachers. Important to note here is the selection method for the teachers included in Ladson-Billings' (1994/2009) study. Relying on input from the community, parents and principals participated in the selection of teachers for the study, based on their positive experiences with the teachers. Based on the practices and philosophies of these eight teachers, Ladson-Billings conceptualized culturally relevant pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings (1994) documented the practices of highly effective teachers of African American students by conducting an ethnographic study of the teachers, observing and interviewing the teachers for three years. Drawing upon Asante's notion of Afrocentricity and Collins's Black feminist epistemology, the approach of the study was to ask what could be learned from African American students, their parents, and teachers that would maintain the integrity of their culture and worldview. Namely, she declared, "… we worked with the assumption that African American students and their parents demonstrate normative behavior and that they act rationally, making decisions that make sense" (p. 180). The study was conducted in a primarily low-income, African American and Mexican American community in Northern California. At the time of the

study, the community's school district experienced turnover in leadership and was considered a poor performing district. A local newspaper concluded that the districts poor performance was due to its "poor" students.

Ladson-Billings made approximately 30 visits to each teacher's classroom, debriefed with individual teachers when possible, and conducted interviews following a protocol that engaged teachers in questions about their pedagogical philosophies. Data analysis consisted of collective interpretation in which Ladson-Billings met with the teachers in the study to discuss the videos in light of the transcribed interviews capturing their teaching philosophies. Using a grounded theory approach, Ladson-Billings (1995) developed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy.

She found that the teachers in the study helped their students to be academically successful, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical. However, each teacher did so in her own way. This difference in approach led Ladson-Billings (1995) to investigate the ideological beliefs of the teachers in the study. Three characteristics emerged among the teachers' beliefs: (a) positive conceptions of self and others; (b) an intentionality to foster social relations that foster academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness; and (c) shared and critical conceptions of knowledge.

The eight teachers in the study demonstrated positive conceptions of themselves and others in the way they believed in their students, saw themselves as members of the community, and their participation in the community. In the classroom, the teachers fostered positive social relations by encouraging students to work together and be responsible for each other. The teachers also demonstrated a connectedness with all of their students and developed a community within the classroom.

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As it pertains to knowledge, the teachers in the study were passionate about knowledge and learning and provided opportunities for students to explore knowledge by doing. This included identifying classroom experts who presented on their particular area of expertise. Another example of the teachers' conception of knowledge was their critique of the school curriculum. Two teachers resisted the use of district approved reading materials. In their resistance, they showed their students what materials they were supposed to use, along with the materials they would use and why.

Ladson-Billings (1995) argued for a more expansive view of pedagogy, one that surpassed strictly psychological models. Recognizing that many attempts at school reform failed to address teacher ideologies and beliefs, particularly towards African American students, Ladson-Billings evaluated the beliefs of the teachers in her study to move towards conversations about culture. Ultimately, culturally relevant pedagogy is designed to problematize teaching, encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society.

Since the introduction of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), researchers have broadened Ladson-Billings' conceptualization to include various racial and ethnic identities and a range of other factors, including language (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Milner, 2017). However, decades after the release of Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy framework, Ladson-Billings (2014) and others (Howard & Rodriguez, 2017; Milner, 2017; Sleeter, 2012) question whether the implementation of CRP by practitioners has been consistent with the breadth and depth of the conceptual framing. To follow is a look at various studies on culturally relevant pedagogy. Two questions guide my review of the established literature on CRP. First, does the study present an

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increase in academic outcomes for African American students? Second, does the study focus on and evaluate change in students' sociopolitical consciousness?

2.5.3 Review of CRP studies. Powell, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera, and Correll (2016) designed a comprehensive model and evaluation tool to evaluate the effectiveness of culturally relevant instruction. The Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP), a framework for teacher professional development, was derived from the researchers' definition of culturally responsive instruction (CRI). According to Powell et al. (2016), CRI is

> instructional practices that connect learning to the cultural knowledge and experiences of students and that draws on students' cultural and linguistic strengths and frames of reference in instruction, thereby resulting in higher levels of student achievement. At the same time, CRI validates and affirms students' linguistic and cultural knowledge and seeks to empower students and their families by valuing their resources and by helping them to interrogate and act upon real-world issues. (p. 3)

Moreover, Powell et al assert that CRI is also known as culturally relevant pedagogy. Multiple theoretical perspectives inform CRI including: multicultural education, equity education, and second language acquisition. Powell et al. argue that each of these theoretical perspectives have lacked cohesion to operate together in a way that hinders their identification in classroom practices.

Consequently, they introduced the CRIOP tool that operationalizes CRI using seven elements: (1) Classroom Relationships; (2) Family Collaboration; (3) Assessment; (4) Curriculum/Planned Experiences; (5) Instruction/Pedagogy; (6)

Discourse/Instructional Conversation; and (7) Sociopolitical Consciousness/Diverse Perspectives. Based on a recommendation from the extant literature to provide evidence-based research on the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy (Sleeter, 2012), the CRIOP was used to guide teacher professional development and measured students outcomes based on the instruction of teachers who were considered high or low implementers of CRI, based on the CRIOP tool.

Powell et al. (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study designed to answer the following questions: (1) Do teachers increase their use of culturally responsive practices as they participate in CRIOP professional development? (2) What is the relationship between implementation of culturally responsive instruction and student achievement in reading and mathematics? and (3) What are teachers' perceptions of their successes and challenges in implementing culturally responsive instruction? Study participants were teachers and students from four elementary schools.

School A was located in a mid-sized city. Schools B and C were located in a rural school district, and school D was located in a nearby town. School A had a free and reduced lunch rate of over 90%, while the other three schools had free/reduced lunch rates around 60%. Twenty-seven teachers from the four schools participated in the study. All were female and predominantly White (n=26; African American n=1). Nineteen teachers taught all subjects in self-contained elementary classrooms (kindergarten n=5, first grade n=6, second grade n=5, third grade n=1); two teachers taught in self-contained classes with both kindergarten and first grade; two teachers were special education teachers; one teacher taught physical education; and one teacher was a reading specialist and second grade teacher.

Four hundred fifty-six students participated in the study. Student participants in the study were from schools A and D, as these two schools administered the Measures of Academic Progress test to measure academic achievement. Of the student participants, 325 came from school A and 131 students from school D. An almost even percentage of boys (50%) and girls (49%) were represented. Demographics of the two schools were similar--almost identical. Students at School A were 8% White, 45% African American, 42% Hispanic, and 5% two or more races. School D consisted of 9% White, 43% African American, 43% Hispanic, and 5% two or more races. Data sources included classroom observations, student achievement results (Measures of Academic Progress [MAP] reading and mathematics scores from the fall 2012 testing administration and the spring 2013 test administration), and post-observation teacher interviews. Classroom observations and post-observation teacher interviews took place in the fall and the spring.

During the summer preceding the 2012-2013 school year, teacher participants participated in a professional development session led by the CRIOP project director. The summer workshop was a 6.5 - hour session that included inquiry-based learning, development of inquiry projects, family collaboration, and incorporating families' funds of knowledge into classroom curriculum. Teachers also attended two full-day sessions during the fall semester conducted by the project director and an English as a Second Language (ESL) consultant. The fall professional development sessions focused on various elements of the CRIOP. The CRIOP project director and school-based coach also held a meeting with school administrators to introduce the CRIOP model and discuss the

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elements of the protocol. Additionally, teacher participants received ongoing classroom coaching and professional development throughout the 2012-2013 school year.

To determine if student learning was related to implementation of culturally responsive instruction, teachers were separated by scores on the spring CRIOP observations (the sample mean was 18.4, with a standard deviation of 3.25), into High Implementation groups and Low Implementation groups. High Implementation teachers were defined as those who had spring observation scores at or above one standard deviation from the mean. Low Implementation teachers were defined as those who had CRIOP spring observation scores at or below one standard deviation from the mean.

Using a one-way analysis of covariance test, researchers found that students with teachers identified as high implementers of CRI scored significantly higher on their spring MAP reading tests than students with teachers from the low implementation group. Spring MAP reading tests were used as a dependent variable, the level of implementation (high or low) was used as a fixed factor, and fall MAP reading tests as a covariate. Students with teachers identified as High Implementers scored significantly higher than students with teachers identified as Low Implementers on spring MAP reading test $F(1, 188) = 3.06$, p < .05, $\eta^2 = .02$. Results for the MAP mathematics tests indicated the same trend.

To answer the research question about teachers' perceptions, Powell et al. conducted semi-structured interviews using the following questions: (1) How do you define Culturally Responsive Instruction? (2) What are your biggest successes with Culturally Responsive Instruction? and (3) What are your biggest challenges with using Culturally Responsive Instruction with your students? They used a two-phase method to

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analyze data from the interviews. In the first phase, responses to each interview question were coded according to seven holistic elements of the CRIOP. In the second phase of data analysis, the fourth author used analytic induction to create a code list beyond the categorical CRIOP elements.

From the interview data, Powell et al. found that classroom relationships and instruction and pedagogy were most frequently associated with teachers' understandings' of culturally responsive instruction. Moreover, teachers reported family collaboration and curriculum as challenges. Finally, teachers rarely addressed the elements of discourse and assessment, and never discussed successes or challenges related the sociopolitical consciousness element.

 Powell et al. (2016) responded to Sleeter's (2012) call to provide more evidence-based research proving the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy for student achievement measures. Yet, it did not report changes in the sociopolitical consciousness of students. In the discussion of the goals of CRI, sociopolitical consciousness appears to be an afterthought and is also coupled with the tag, "diverse perspectives." A diversity of perspectives is different than a critique of inequitable systems and policies. For the African American child, who has been marginalized by a system of white supremacy since before birth, it is imperative that instruction hinges upon fostering critique of societal enterprises.

Aguiree and Zavala (2013) also introduced a lesson analysis tool to evaluate culturally responsive teaching. Focusing on mathematics, their tool enabled teachers to analyze and critique mathematics lesson with multiple lenses, including one of social justice. They used culturally responsive pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge to

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construct culturally responsive mathematics teaching (CRMT). CRMT "involves a set of specific pedagogical knowledge, dispositions, and practices that privilege mathematical thinking, cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge, and issues of power and social justice in mathematics education" (Aguiree & Zavala, 2013, p. 167).

The CRMT lesson analysis tool is made up of eight dimensions that may be examined within a single mathematics lesson or across lessons: (1) intellectual support; (2) depth of student knowledge and understanding; (3) mathematical analysis; (4) mathematical discourse and communication; (5) student engagement; (6a) academic language support for ELL; (6b) use of English as a Second Language (ESL) scaffolding strategies; (7) funds of knowledge/culture/community support; and (8) use of critical knowledge/social justice.

The study included six beginning teachers, including five White female teachers and one White male teacher. Three participants worked in elementary schools and two in middle schools. One participant served as a substitute teacher for a private school. The five public school teachers worked in different school districts with a significant number of students of color (42-71%) and as defined by the researchers, 'economically disadvantaged' students (32-71%). All of the teachers participated in a series of professional development workshops aimed at developing their CRMT competencies.

The professional development sessions occurred in November 2008, May 2009, and July 2009; each session was about three hours. In the first session, teachers were provided a space to share their triumphs and challenges in their first year of teaching. In the second session, Aguiree and Zavala introduced the lesson analysis tool through two activities. First, in pairs, the teachers rated a commercially produced lesson plan using

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the tool. Then, they worked in pairs to rate their own using the tool. The final session built on the previous session to analyze math lessons and develop teaching goals for the year.

Data sources included teacher interviews, transcriptions from the three professional development sessions, and written artifacts such as lesson plans and teacher-written reflections. Researchers found that the analysis tool enabled teachers to critique their lessons with multiple lenses including attention to mathematical thinking, language, culture, and social justice. Secondly, the tool fostered self-evaluation within the teachers as they reflected upon the strengths and limitations of their mathematics lessons using the rubric dimensions. The findings from this study clearly explicate the utility of this tool for teacher development. Although teacher development is necessary for student academic achievement (Boutte, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995), information and results from this study do not speak to student academic outcomes. This study provided an explicit look at social justice and teacher attitudes and preparation but neglected to correlate these factors with student academic outcomes.

Along the same line, Hubert (2014) evaluated culturally relevant mathematics instructions, but from the students' perspectives. Recognizing the lack of research on students' perspectives, she conducted a case study that examined students' perspectives of CRP and the effect that participating in culturally relevant mathematics instruction had on their attitudes and interest towards mathematics. Hubert conducted the culturally relevant intervention at Frankfort High School (pseudonym), an alternative high school located in a southern state. Thirty-seven students of various ethnicities, considered "at-risk," participated in culturally relevant mathematics instruction taught by the researcher.

The students ranged from 16 to 22 years old. Of the 37 students, 15 were Hispanic, 11 African American, 4 White, 4 Multi-racial, 2 Native American, and 1 Asian.

Students were enrolled in a preparatory class for mathematics standardized testing. Hubert was allowed to teach the class for a 10-day period. Students were given the choice to participate in the intervention. Although 37 students participated, on average about 20 students attended the class daily. The students completed a pre-assessment and post-assessment on the first and last days, respectively. The mathematical content covered included quadratic and exponential functions. The topics of the lessons included: (1) teen pregnancy (two lessons); (2) perinatal HIV; (3) teen smoking; (4) football and soccer; and (5) saving money. On average, students who participated in the culturally relevant intervention increased by one letter grade.

Five students were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews based on assessment scores, attendance, and ethnicity. Hubert included students with varying level of differences in pre-and post- assessment scores, as well as students who had attended at least half of the hours of instruction. Additionally, she wanted to capture African American students' perspectives of culturally relevant instruction, as well as understand if other students felt the same or different than African American students. Therefore, she included two African American students, one Hispanic student, one mixed race student, and one White student.

For data analysis, Hubert transcribed the audio recordings of the interview and then coded them with preexisting codes. The codes were generated before data analysis from literature on African American student perspectives on effective classroom environments. The codes were: (1) homelike classrooms; (2) ethic of caring; (3)

participation opportunities; and (4) technology use. Two additional themes emerged during data analysis, confidence and motivation. All of the students who participated in the interviews had very positive perspectives of culturally relevant pedagogy and preferred CRP as opposed to traditional mathematics instruction. Also, all of the students interviewed expressed a new interest in mathematics. Students offered comments like, "I felt like an idiot before I came to your class … but when I came to your class how you taught it [using CRP] I understood everything" (Hubert, 2014, p. 330). Another student stated, "I felt happy, I felt like I actually wanted to be there and I actually wanted to learn math" (p. 330).

Although Hubert's study provides a brief narrative about student academic outcomes and student attitudes towards math, it does not provide insight into how students made sense of the social topics discussed in the class. Moreover, the preexisting themes guiding her research do not explicitly address issues of social justice and empowerment. It is not clear how she integrated the sociopolitical consciousness into the lessons or evaluated it as a part of student outcomes.

In the area of English language arts, Hill (2009) studied how a teacher in a suburban school tapped into students' cultural and linguistic resources to employ culturally relevant pedagogy. An affluent suburban school district, Oak Valley School District (all names are pseudonyms), experienced an influx of African American students from working class families of nearby Detroit. As these students entered the school, they were often labeled as having minimal skill and abilities due to the difference in their speech patterns (Hill, 2009). Hill chronicled the voices of two African American

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students in such a situation at a middle school in Oak Valley School District, Monet and Kiki.

She used the girls' voices and writing in integrated and excerpt style to share their acknowledged distinctions between home and school literacies. Moreover, she examined their teacher, Mr. Lehrer's use of students' home languages to explore their world as well as grant access to Standard English. Data included classroom observations in a seventh-grade English classroom where 29 students were enrolled. Twenty-one students were White, 5 African American, 1 Asian, 1 French, and 1 Ethiopian. The class consisted of 15 girls and 14 boys. Monet and Kiki were chosen for the study because they sought educational equity by attending Oak Valley schools, and they desired, and were vocal about, preserving their Detroit identity.

Hill observed the class during one 46-minute period, three to five days per week over a five- month period from February to June 2005. In addition to the classroom observations, Hill used field notes, teacher interview excerpts, and Monet and Kiki's written artifacts to explore her research questions: (1) What is the nature of writing practices that facilitate standard and nonstandard writing conventions? (2) How are these opportunities linked to student identity? (3) How do focal students respond to these opportunities?

Hill concluded that for these two girls, the ongoing use of code-switching pedagogies presented access to Standard English. In this example, the teacher allowed students to draw from their home languages to inform their voices in nonstandard writing contexts, and in some instances, they negotiated their voices in standard contexts. For example, when Kiki resisted compromising her voice, Mr. Lehrer provided low-stakes

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opportunities to write in non-standard contexts. Hill's study suggests another way to evaluate student academic outcomes, through writing and additional language acquisition.

Some argue that Standard English is the language of power and is necessary for success in traditional schooling and the broader society (Delpit, 1995). The fact that Monet and Kiki refuse to part with their home language and Mr. Lehrer drew upon their home language could serve as an example of the cultural competence tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy. Yet, evidence of a sociopolitical critique was absent in Mr. Lehrer's work with Monet and Kiki.

Bui and Fagan (2013) reported statistically significant means gains from pretest to posttest scores in their study of 49 fifth-graders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They evaluated the effects of the Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy (IRCS), which integrates story grammar instruction and story maps, prior knowledge and prediction method, and word webs through a culturally responsive framework. The IRCS was evaluated on two levels. First, using only the three strategies above. The second level, IRCS Plus, combined the three strategies with multicultural literature and cooperative learning. The authors wanted to evaluate the effects of integrating the reading strategies through a culturally responsive teaching framework as most of the existing research evaluated the strategies from Euro-dominant perspectives.

The 49 student participants included in the study were selected from two fifth-grade classrooms at one urban elementary school in northern California. The school's population was 55% Hispanic, 18% African American, 14% European American, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% other non-White, 37% were designated as English learners,

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and 65% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Bui and Fagan conducted paired-samples *t* tests for each group to determine if there were any significant mean score differences between the pretest and posttest for each measure.

In both groups, mean scores for word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retell scores increased. Bui and Fagan found that students from both groups made statistically significant gains from pretest to posttest on each of the dependent variables. Moreover, medium to large effect sizes indicated that the combination of strategies had a positive effect on students' mean reading scores. They also found that although there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the students' posttest mean scores on any reading measures, students from the IRCS Plus group made a greater mean score gain than the IRCS group for reading comprehension. They hypothesized that the addition of multicultural literature and cooperative learning might have a positive impact on student engagement or motivation. Still, their study does not explicitly measure or report on any changes in the sociopolitical consciousness of students after engaging with multicultural texts.

Each of these studies illustrates the effectiveness of culturally relevant instruction for all students, and specifically African American students (see Table 1 for key findings from selected studies). In each of the studies, students who received culturally relevant instruction increased in academic achievement measures, including the standardized Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test. Other key findings from these studies reveal the propensity for culturally relevant pedagogies to increase student engagement and motivation (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Hubert, 2014). Although the authors of these studies reported findings about the increase in academic achievement outcomes for

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African American students, they did not report on changes in students' sociopolitical consciousness, which is a major tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Through their extensive synthesis of research studies on culturally relevant pedagogy, Aronson and Laughter's (2014) found that some studies incorporated some parts of culturally relevant pedagogy but not all studies did. I am including their synthesis as they examined studies for markers of both academic measurement and sociopolitical consciousness across various content areas. These researchers referred to an inclusive framework, culturally relevant education (CRE), to merge the research strands of Ladson-Billings' (1994) culturally relevant pedagogy and Gay's (2000, 2010) culturally responsive teaching. Also responding to Sleeter's (2012) challenge to provide research studies that provide insight into the effectiveness of culturally relevant education, Aronson and Laughter (2014) sought examples of research connecting CRE to positive student outcomes across content areas.

They searched within four online education databases (Academic Search Premier, Education Full Text, Education Index Retrospective, and ERIC) for studies published between 1995 and 2013, using the terms culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. They found that the idea of CRE was not always consistent across studies. To demonstrate this, they assigned four CRE markers for the synthesis: academic skills and concepts, critical reflection, cultural competence, and critique discourses of power. Almost half of the studies (17 out of 37) contained all four markers. Other studies contained at least two of the markers in some variation. Many of the qualitative studies evaluated the attitudes of students and teachers after culturally relevant education but offered no report on the academic outcomes of students. In

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contrast, the quantitative studies provided information on academic achievement outcomes but did not provide insight into the meaning-making processes of students and teachers about sociopolitical engagement. As Sleeter (2012) asserted there is a need for evidence-based research as it relates to student outcomes, including, but not limited to academic achievement. There remains a need for evidence-based research that provides insight into both student meaning-making processes, specifically as it pertains to sociopolitical awareness and critique, as well as to academic achievement.

More recently, scholars have turned their attention to outside of school and outside of school *time* spaces to foster the sociopolitical consciousness component of culturally relevant pedagogy (Murray & Milner, 2015;Toldson & Lemmons, 2015). I agree that outside of school time is a productive space to foster sociopolitical consciousness in students because my experience with Merrick confirms it.

2.5.4 Outside of School Time (OST) programs. Providing a critique of schools neglecting to foster the sociopolitical consciousness of Black students, Murray and Milner (2015) discussed educating African American children in outside-of-school time programs. Murray and Milner (2015) used the third dimension of Ladson-Billings' CRP, sociopolitical consciousness to think about how outside-of-school programs, afterschool, and summer programs that serve school-age children and youth (6-18 years old), could develop instructional practices that build student knowledge and understanding of injustices in their communities and work to change them. The authors recommended outside of school time programs (OST) as vehicles to foster this competency because many schools were not meeting the social, cultural, and academic needs of Black students.

Moreover, outside of school time programs play a vital role in promoting *academic* success among African American students (Toldson & Lemmons, 2015). Other benefits of OST programs include the development of social capital necessary for youth to gain a deeper understanding of the social context in which they live and learn; provision of skills; and the development of students' social identities to more effectively navigate their schools and communities (Ginwright, 2007, 2009; Sullivan, 2015). Accordingly, the extant literature explores how different outside of school approaches foster the academic and social success of Black male students.

Woodland's (2008) review of the literature on the influence of afterschool programs on young Black males showed three types of programs that appear to assist Black males: first, the extracurricular model that draws on sports, arts, homework assistance and other broad ranging activities to engage youth outside of the classroom; second, the mentoring model, as utilized by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, which connects youth with adults or older mentors who provide additional support and attention; third, cultural rites of passage (ROP) programs that use culture-based interventions to support the transition of Black youth to adulthood.

Within the three models, Woodland (2008) named nine core elements of effective programs: (1) caring adult-child relationships; (2) program flexibility; (3) one-on-one academic assistance; (4) quality staff training and education; (5) safety; (6) family involvement; (7) an enriching curriculum; (8) cultural competence; and (9) rigorous and empirical evaluations. Each of these elements can be incorporated in culturally relevant ways to support the academic, social, emotion, and cultural development of Black youth (Murray & Milner, 2015). For example, within the OST program, academic assistance

for young Black males should include critical dialogue that addresses the relationship between Black males and the educational system (Woodland, 2008). Such dialogue can assist in the dismantling of obstacles and ideologies that persist in the miseducation of the Black male participants during their traditional school day (Woodland, 2008).

Baldridge, Hill, and Davis (2011) contended that given the systematic push out of Black male youth from traditional schooling contexts, alternative education programs, such as community-based youth organizations, are potential sites to improve the educational chances of Black males. Community-based youth organizations (CBYOs) vary concerning mission, structure, and method of service delivery; however, they are marked by several key features. For instance, although CBYOs are often situated in the same social, political, and economic contexts as schools, they are not usually held to the same bureaucratic constraints (Baldridge et al., 2011). Consequently, they can operate with more programmatic autonomy, which presents them the opportunity to increase the level of support available to overburdened and under-resourced schools and address the needs of underserved students.

Baldridge et al. (2011) drew from qualitative interviews with 24 Black men, aged 18-30, who participated in a federally funded community-based youth organization, EmpowerYouth (pseudonym). The program focused on low-income youth in both urban and rural environments by providing job training, education and life skills assistance, and courses for youth to work towards their GEDs or high school diplomas. EmpowerYouth began in the late 1970s with a belief in "'rebuilding' the lives of out-of-work and out-of-school youth as a means of expanding their educational, social, and economic possibilities" (Baldridge et al., 2011, p. 127).

For this study, the researchers used 24 close case studies with Black men who graduated from the EmpowerYouth program. The participants were purposively chosen to illustrate the different types of students who had completed the program at various sites nationwide. Participants were selected through a database that included information on students' graduation date, gender, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, current occupational/schooling status and whether they had children. Additionally, the researchers chose two graduates at each site who were neither employed or in school.

Baldridge et al. (2011) found that participants believed their traditional schooling experiences were highly problematic and unbearable, resulting in a decision to leave traditional schooling contexts. In reference to the CBYO, EmpowerYouth, participants noted that teachers in this program were 'not like regular teachers.' Instead, participants noted that their instructors at EmpowerYouth sought to build meaningful relationships with them. Baldridge et al. concluded that programs like EmpowerYouth provide a necessary alternative for Black males as they provide spaces for young Black men to make sense of their traditional schooling experiences, engage in healthy adult-youth relationships, and apply educational experiences.

The researchers' findings addressed the need to develop educational models that respond to the needs of African American males in America. However, this study only examined the utility of an out-of-school approach for males who have already left the traditional schooling context. My study focuses on the importance of raising the sociopolitical consciousness of Black male youth while in school to combat school push out and dropout, which often results in limited and dire social opportunities for Black men.

More recently, Toldson and Lemmons (2015) presented a theoretical framework for OST with school-aged Black males that includes workforce development, healthy lifestyles, safety and structure, and strengthening families. They argue that these components, working together, will foster better grades and social adjustment to school. Drawing upon the workforce development component, Hargrave (2015) examined the structure of a pre-college science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education program (Growing students in STEM--G-STEM) to analyze how program components led to successful student outcomes.

The program is a university-led collaboration among a major mid-western university, three school districts, area STEM businesses and corporations, and youth and families of color. G-STEM serves youth of color in grades 8-12 in three school districts: two rural districts and a large urban district. In the large urban district, there are approximately 300 students in the G-STEM program enrolled in 11 middle schools and five comprehensive high schools. Annually, about 40%-50% of the students enrolled in G-STEM from this district are African American. Students and families are asked to make a five-year commitment to the program (grades 8-12). Student selection is based on a student's demonstrated propensity for math or science, teacher recommendations, and average or better performance on standardized tests. Students who fulfill the program requirements (i.e. math and science course enrollment, participation in 75% of G-STEM activities, and maintenance of a GPA of 3.0 or higher each semester) earn a four-year tuition scholarship to the major mid-western university to study in a technical discipline.

Program activities include afterschool meetings to explore STEM careers; conducting laboratory experiments, tours of corporate research facilities and interactions

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with corporate mentors; quarterly visits to the university for STEM demonstrations and interactions with professors and students; science fair project production and presentations; summer academic development programs; and summer research internships. The program is grounded in three precepts: ethic of care, hostmanship, and culture and community of high expectations. G-STEM maintains dynamic learning environments where students of color pursuit and achievement in STEM is normal, expected, and nurtured (Hargrave, 2015).

Hargrave reported,

In contrast to the national high school graduation rate for African Americans of 67% (NCES, 2014), every student who completed the five-year G-STEM program (n = 90) graduated from high school. Ninety-nine percent enrolled in postsecondary education immediately after high school; 82 (92%) in four-year colleges or universities and 7(8%) in community colleges (Table 2). This is significantly higher than the national college participation rate for Blacks of 32% (NCES, 2014). (p. 352)

As evidenced by the data, the G-STEM program was effective in preparing African American students to enroll in postsecondary education, more so than traditional schooling approaches alone. Hargrave (2015) observed that although the data provided a picture of program effectiveness, it has "very little explanatory value for understanding the essential structures for empowering African American students to successfully complete high school prepared to pursue STEM degrees" (p. 353).

Consequently, she conducted a critical race analysis of G-STEM educational structures. Three tenets of critical race theory (CRT) framed the analysis: (1) racism is

endemic to U.S. society and guides daily practices in education; (2) CRT challenges dominant deficit ideology about the intellectual abilities of students of color; (3) and the centrality of experiential knowledge of people of color; and counter-storytelling. Based on her analysis, Hargrave (2015) conceptualized a G-STEM counter space. Counter space "is the result of the program components [educational agents, enacted purposes, interactions, and locations] that emancipate program participants (i.e., teachers, students, staff) to realize the possibilities in STEM for African American students beyond those espoused by majoritarian narratives" (p. 358). The counterspace the G-STEM program created enabled African American students to counter deficit narratives so prevalent in majoritarian educational spaces.

Hargrave's work addresses the importance of ensuring structures are in place to foster a space where African American students can counter deficit narratives. In majoritarian educational spaces or traditional schooling spaces, Black students often find themselves with educational agents (i.e., teachers and administrators) who view them from deficit perspectives. In turn, students endured an oppressive educational space, instead of one that was emancipatory and empowering.

Although there are promising examples of the power the of out-of-school time programs to serve as spaces to raise the sociopolitical consciousness of Black males, provide them with positive adult-youth relationships, applied educational experiences, and counter spaces that foster success, there are also many programs that are servicing Black students but not serving their educational needs (Hynes & Sanders, 2011). Hynes and Sanders (2011) argued that while African American families were increasingly and disproportionately enrolling their children in afterschool programs, the Black-White

academic achievement gap continues to widen. This begs the question, "Are afterschool programs contributing to or reducing inequality in children's outcomes?" The philosophies of outside-of-school time programs should be interrogated to understand if the programs can provide African American students, specifically African American male students, the tools and spaces to achieve academically, grow in cultural competence, and critique social inequities.

As emphasized throughout the conceptual framework and the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy, African American students often experience a cultural mismatch in traditional schooling environments that attributes to the achievement gap between African American students and their European American counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Milner, 2012; West-Olatunji, Shure, Garrett, Conwill, & Rivera, 2008). West-Olatunji et al. (2008) suggest rites of passage (ROP) programs as a strength-based, culture-centered approach to positively impact academic and dispositional outcomes among low-income African American male adolescents.

In tandem with Woodland (2008) and Toldson and Lemmons (2015), ROP programs focus on community involvement, positive role models, collective instruction, cultural and personal identity development, high expectations, safe and supportive environments, and an emphasis on purpose and achievement (West-Olatunji et al., 2008). Other key features of ROP programs include an emphasis on the community involvement in various ways. For instance, typically a group of men and women from the community serve as elders within the ROP program, acting as role models and contributing knowledge and instruction within the group. Also, there is an emphasis on communal responsibility (King & Swartz, 2016), in that students learn how their

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academic achievement is relevant to the success and flourishing of their community. High expectations are also a key element in ROP programs, "students are expected to maintain satisfactory school grades and near-perfect school and program attendance and are required to present knowledge of personal growth and cultural history to the community" (West-Olatunji et al., 2008, p. 137).

Although studies (Pratt-Clarke, 2013; West-Olatunji et al., 2008) suggest ROP programs can increase academic achievement among African American students, few of them present empirical data to that end. Harvey and Hill (2004) used data from a three-year evaluation of a youth rites of passage demonstration project to examine the effects of the program on 'at-risk' African American youth and their parents. The MAAT Adolescent and Family Rites of Passage Program used a strengths-based perspective grounded in an ecological framework and Afrocentric principles. The program began with an eight-week preinitiation or orientation phase, followed by weekly meetings emphasizing African and African American culture. Three interventions were used in the program: (1) an afterschool component, (2) family enhancement and empowerment activities, and (3) individual and family counseling.

The afterschool component focused on interpersonal skills based upon the Seven Principles of the Nguzo Saba (the foundation of Kwanzaa, which reinforces seven basic values of African culture). The family enhancement and empowerment components consisted of sessions that were held for about two hours once a month and a retreat for parents. Professional counseling personnel, such as an African American male with a Masters of Social Work (MSW), hosted individual and family counseling sessions.

Student participants in the program included African American males between the ages of 11.5 and 14.5 years old, along with their parents and other family members. The males were recruited from the juvenile justice system, diversionary programs, and the public school system. Additional criteria included participants who had been arrested by the police, but for whom the prosecutor lacked sufficient evidence to take the case to court; had a first charge but no prior convictions; were consent decree youth; were on regular probation for one year.

The Institute for Urban Research (IUR) at Morgan State University evaluated the program over its three-year span. The IUR collected data on 57 Black males over the three-year period: 17 males from the first cohort, 13 from the second, and 27 from the third. Pretest and posttest data were collected about the following outcomes: self-esteem, academic orientation, drug knowledge, racial identity, cultural awareness, and perceived impact of the Rites of Passage Program.

Researchers found that participants had statistically significant gains between the pretests and posttests in self-esteem and knowledge about drug use. Concerning racial identity and cultural awareness, the increases were not statistically significant. However, youth did indicate growth in those areas. Pretest and posttest scores did not indicate significant gains in participant academic orientation. However, the program increased motivation among the participants by using creative strategies to promote appreciation for reading, biology, science, and mathematics. Harvey and Hill (2004) concluded that culturally competent interventions should be used with underserved youth.

2.6 Conclusion

The extant literature illustrates that Black male teachers are not the panacea to the dismal schooling experiences of African American male students. Furthermore, culturally relevant pedagogy can produce positive academic outcomes for African American students. However, there is a need for more empirical data evaluating the sociopolitical consciousness of students who are a part of classrooms where culturally relevant pedagogy is used. Scholars argue that traditional school spaces neglect the sociopolitical component of the theory (Murray & Milner, 2015). To the contrary, outside-of-school time programs can foster sociopolitical consciousness, positive adult-youth relationships, and have the potential to increase academic achievement among Black male students (Baldridge et al., 2011; Woodland, 2008). My study is an amalgam of these concepts. As reflected in the literature, African American male teachers are not the panacea to the under-service of Black male students in school, considering the marginalization of Black male teachers themselves and perhaps non-critical pedagogical styles. In my afterschool meetings, I, a Black female teacher, with an emancipatory pedagogical framework, sought to foster a positive adult-youth relationship with Merrick (a Black male middle-school student) and his peers.

Table 2.1: Key Findings from Selected Studies in this Literature Review

Researcher (Year)	Focus	Participants	Findings
Powell et al. (2016)	- Professional development (CRIOP) - Culturally responsive teaching - Students' reading and mathematics achievement - Teachers' perceptions	- Elementary teachers at four schools (26 White; 1 African American) 426 students	- Students of high implementers of the culturally relevant teaching had significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics than students of low implementers. - Teachers faced various challenges implementing culturally responsive instruction.
Hubert (2014)	- Students' perspectives of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) - Culturally relevant mathematics instruction - Students' attitude and interest towards mathematics	37 students of various ethnicities, and considered "at-risk"	- Students who participated in the culturally relevant intervention increased by one letter grade. - All students had very positive perspectives of culturally relevant pedagogy - All students preferred culturally relevant instruction as opposed to traditional mathematics instructions. - All of the students expressed a new interest in mathematics.
Hill (2009)	- Culturally relevant teaching - Code switching pedagogies - Standard writing conventions and Standard English acquisition	- Seventh graders Monet and Kiki (focal students) 29 students - English teacher (White male)	- The ongoing use of code-switching pedagogies presented successful access to Standard English for the two girls in the study. - The girls resisted using only Standard English because they affirmed their home language. - Monet and Kiki, distinguished between standard and nonstandard writing and chose when to use each form.
Bui and Fagan (2013)	- Culturally responsive teaching - Integrated Reading Comprehension Strategy (IRCS) - IRCS Plus - Multicultural literature	49 fifth-grade students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	- Students from both groups (on average) made statistically significant gains from pretest to posttest for each dependent variable - There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the students' posttest mean scores on any of the reading measures. - Students in the IRCS Plus group made a greater mean score gain for reading comprehension

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CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of Chapter Three is to discuss the methodology and methods I used to study Merrick's educational context and narrative and his perception of the afterschool meetings. I begin with background information about my pilot study from 2016 with five 8th grade male students of color and its relation to the current study. I re-introduce my research questions for this study and discuss my epistemological and methodological commitments. Also, I explain the specific research methodology I used for this critical case study (Asante, 1987; Yin, 2014). Finally, I discuss the context and participant in the study, data collection and analysis, my positionality, trustworthiness of the research, and the significance of the study

3.1 The Pilot Study

As detailed in the introduction, I hosted afterschool meetings in the spring of 2016 with five male students of color after hearing the critiques from one of the boys, Merrick. The groups' discussions and Merrick's desire to know more about his/our culture and structural inequities led to my decision to host afterschool meetings, which was the pilot study for this study. Given Merrick's interest in issues of race and racism, his prior knowledge from his father, and his display of activism by emailing the teacher in charge of the Black History moments at our school to include additional leaders besides Martin Luther King Jr. in Black history in the morning news show, I sought to relay parts of critical race theory to Merrick and other middle school students in this afterschool group.

It is important to note here that I chose to engage in the work of increasing Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness, not awakening it. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Merrick possessed a critical consciousness of society when he entered my classroom. Therefore, I sought to further inform his meaning making of a racialized society.

I had completed a course on critical race theory in spring 2015 and anticipated sharing readings from *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (Bell, 1992). Critical race theory (CRT) is a movement originating from critical legal studies (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Emerging in the mid-70s, CR theorists explore the relationship between race, racism, and power in order to examine and dismantle inequities between Black and Brown populations and White populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). I chose to work with students to explain and encourage the use of personal agency to advocate for themselves and their communities. As a teacher, I found it difficult to move past deficit perspectives in conversations with other teachers, from various backgrounds, pertaining to students from lower socioeconomic circumstances and families of color.

I selected seven students to participate in the afterschool meetings. Five students returned their permission forms (See APPENDIX A). All of the students were either currently enrolled in my math elective class or had been the previous semester. All five participants were male students. The table below details the self-identified racial and ethnic identities of the students. I created and use pseudonyms to protect the participants.

Table 3.1: 2016 Afterschool Meeting Participants

Name	Racial and Ethnic Identity
Carlos	Black and Panamanian
David	Black

Elijah	Black and Native American
Merrick	Black and Jamaican
Olya	Mexican and Unknown

3.1.1 The critical race curriculum and afterschool meetings. In this section, I provide a description of how and why I constructed the sessions the way that I did and describe the materials I used during our afterschool meetings. The meetings were intended to equip students with language to resist in scholarly ways the colonizing structures of their schooling and society (Watkins, 2001). As stated in my introduction, I experienced a life-shaping moment involving race and racism when I was in sixth grade. Although I knew what I experienced was due to racist attitudes, I did not have the language of critical race theory (CRT) to help me name what I was experiencing (Lawrence, et al., 1993). Of course, Black folk and other people of color experience racism often, without necessarily having language to name the transgressions. However, I remember the empowerment I felt when I was able to name what I experienced after entering graduate school. I wanted my students to feel that same empowerment. Therefore, I wanted to provide a critical race curriculum in our afterschool meetings.

I drew from the reading material, scope, and sequence of my graduate course in critical race theory. I started our first session with excerpts from Lorde's (1981) "The Uses of Anger" as it was one of the first readings in my CRT class. I wanted to begin with this piece, because I knew there was potential for much anger once we entered into critical and historical conversations about race and racism in the U.S. Therefore, I used this text to convey to the students the importance of anger at such issues and how we could use our anger to resist hegemonic structures and practices. I wanted resistance to

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be a key takeaway for the boys. Yet, I wanted them to resist in particular ways, mainly through scholarly arguments. My goal was to give them references to name some overt and covert ways racism functions in our society.

I used videos, and abbreviated texts, for example readings and videos describing white privilege (see APPENDIX B for the entire curriculum), to provide resources to which students could return to present their own arguments about the endemic nature of racism. I focused on three tenets of CRT: (1) racism is endemic to life in the U.S.; (2) a resistance towards claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy; and (3) a challenge to ahistoricism and an insistence upon contextual/historical analysis (Lawrence, et al., 1993). In our meetings, I shared materials with the boys that traced the history of imperialism and colonization, the rise and maintenance of white supremacy and privilege, and race as a social construct. We spent our six weeks exploring these ideas and placing some of the boys' stories of racial injustice within these frames.

We met once a week for six weeks. Each session was about an hour. For each session (except the first), I would begin by asking the boys a question of reflection based on the previous week's meeting. I called this the "debrief." After allowing each student some time to debrief if he chose to, I would introduce the new conversation for the current week. For most sessions, the conversations were a continuation of the topic from the previous week, with the introduction of some new material. Our conversations converged around issues of white privilege over the course of our time together (see APPENDIX B).

I believe at least two components of King and Swartz (2016) Afrocentric Praxis of Teaching for Freedom were present in our meetings. King and Swartz (2016) named

(1) eldering as an emancipatory pedagogy of the praxis and (2) accurate scholarship free from errors and omissions, specifically as it pertains to the histories of marginalized people and groups. In our afterschool meetings, I served as an elder to the boys. I strove to create a space where both my students and I could experience dignity and respect. I believe my students valued my knowledge and wisdom and sought to learn from me, as I did from them. This was evidenced by the ways we all cared for each other within the meeting space. For instance, on Wednesday afternoons, as soon as the bell rang, one or more of the boys would run over to the nearest discount grocery store to bring snacks for the entire group, while being careful to return before our start time. In addition, the boys felt comfortable sharing their life experiences with me and asking me for information pertaining to some of their questions.

When King and Swartz (2016) discuss accurate scholarship, they are referring to avoiding errors and omissions, specifically as it pertains to the histories of marginalized people and groups. Revealing how current racial and socioeconomic inequalities are linked to earlier periods of racism is an example of how I sought to present accurate scholarship in our afterschool meetings.

3.1.2 Merrick's perceived transformation. Each boy's journey through sociopolitical consciousness was impactful, but Merrick's journey was especially powerful; his academic performance changed as the meetings progressed (see APPENDIX C for further description). Before our afterschool meetings, Merrick would attend my mathematics class without paper and pencil. He would seldom raise any mathematical questions, or complete his assignments. As a result, his grade in my class was an F. As Merrick became more trusting of me, he and I discussed his grades from

other classes. At the outset of the afterschool meetings, he was also doing poorly in those classes, particularly because of his poor relationships with his teachers. For instance, Merrick refused academic engagement, such as classroom participation and the completion of assignments in his English class, because his teacher was disrespectful to him and threw him out of the room for only asking a question. Although I perceived intellectual and academic changes in Merrick, I wanted to hear Merrick's own narrative about his schooling experiences, including his opinion of the impact of the afterschool club.

In our afterschool meetings, Merrick was excited to talk about issues dealing with race and racism as opposed to some of the other boys in the group who seemed to miss the necessity of these conversations. Additionally, Merrick came to me with some understanding of how race and racism function in this country to oppress African Americans. Because I believe schools often harm Black males, I wondered if any of Merrick's experiences within his school settings shaped his sociopolitical consciousness. I wanted to hear if he would recount any details from his experiences in school that aligned with his sociopolitical consciousness. Namely, I wanted to know if Merrick experienced racism at school from elementary to middle to high school and if he could name it. Because of his sociopolitical consciousness, I thought Merrick, of all the boys would be able to articulate those experiences within his schooling narrative. For these reasons, I selected Merrick rather than another student as my case study participant. Moreover, I wanted to learn if he felt better equipped after our meetings to resist racist schooling practices. Hence, Merrick was the sole unit of analysis for this study (Yin, 2014). Although I spend some time exploring the afterschool meetings in the following

Chapters, Merrick did not remember many things from our afterschool meetings when I interviewed him.

3.2 Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to explore Merrick's school experiences from elementary to high school, the context of his middle school where he participated in critical race focused afterschool meetings, and if these meetings impacted him. Given my commitments to specific bodies of literature, this was an etic study. An etic approach to research is one that relies heavily on the use of theory to guide and inform study design (Saldaña, 2016). Three conceptual frames guided this inquiry: (1) emancipatory pedagogy (King & Swartz, 2016), (2) culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and (3) the notion of the miseducation of the Negro (Woodson, 1933). Along with my commitment to these conceptual frames, I had an equally strong commitment to privileging Merrick's voice, as I describe later in the chapter. The purpose of this research was threefold: (1) to understand Merrick's schooling experiences; (2) to understand the context of Merrick's middle school; and (3) to explore if afterschool meetings focused on sociopolitical consciousness affected Merrick.

3.3 Research Questions

To contextualize Merrick's experience, I used the following research questions.

1. What was the context of the middle school Merrick attended while participating in the afterschool meetings?

   a. What local curriculum was used in Merrick's eighth grade social studies course?

   b. How did/does Merrick make meaning of the context and curriculum?

2. What is Merrick's schooling narrative?

3. How (if at all) did the afterschool meetings affect Merrick?

3.4 Qualitative Design

Given the contextual nature of this study and the use of the researcher as key instrument of investigation, I used a qualitative research design (Glesne, 2011). Qualitative research design is an iterative process where designs are flexible rather than fixed and researchers construct and reconstruct the research design throughout the process (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell's (2013) model for qualitative research design is comprised of five components: (1) goals or defining the purpose of the study; (2) the conceptual framework or theories and beliefs, literature, and preliminary studies that inform the research; (3) research questions that lead to new understandings about the setting or participants; (4) methods used to conduct the study; and (5) checking for validity or how the researchers' results or conclusions may be threatened or wrong and how to deal with those factors. For this study, I drew upon Maxwell's qualitative research design, because his approach allows me to obtain detailed contextual information to connect emancipatory pedagogies to Merrick's experiences in public school.

Maxwell defined qualitative research as research that helps the researcher better understand (a) the meanings and perspectives of participants; (b) how these perspectives are shaped by and shape their physical, social, and cultural contexts; and (c) the specific processes that are involved in maintaining or altering these phenomena. All of these characteristics, but particularly the last one, are pertinent to the critical aspect of this study. In the next section, I describe in detail my commitment to critical frameworks that

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are concerned with social critique and social justice, but here briefly, I mention the utility of Maxwell's characteristics of qualitative research to those commitments. Because I would position my research within the critical paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), I am concerned with issues of power and oppression, and transformation and emancipation. Maxwell's last characteristic of qualitative research, evaluating processes of maintenance and change in various material contexts, is an integral part of critical research as it helps the researcher and participants see and name oppressive processes, with the hope of devising ways to disrupt them.

3.5 Epistemology

My critique of structures like schools dismissing and demeaning the culture of African American students and my orientation towards social justice for the racially oppressed provides insight into my epistemological commitments. Ontologically, I believe in realities that have been shaped over time by an amalgam of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that are mistakenly taken as "real" and natural (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My alignment with historical realism and the desire for transformative intellectualism led me to situate my work within the critical theory paradigm.

Given that realities are shaped by multiple factors, knowledge is subjective and the relationship between the researcher and participant is transactional (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I believe there are multiple layers to the experiences of any one individual, and each individual's experience is mediated by different values and various structural differences. Therefore, findings are value mediated and require dialectical dialogue between the researcher and participants. The researcher and participants are both

intertwined and the what can be known is intertwined with the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Critical theory researchers seek emancipation and social transformation towards equity and justice as the means of their scholarship (Glesne, 2011; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Glesne (2011) listed these general characteristics of critical theory research design: (1) critical theory research tends to focus on issues of power and domination and to advocate understanding from the perspective of the exploited and oppressed (p. 10); (2) critical theorists are interested in exposing ways discourses are socially and historically constructed and how they maintain inequality, oppression, and exploitation; and (3) critical theory researchers are often interested in praxis.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) noted in their description of critical theory that the term "critical theory" was used as a blanket term, denoting a set of several alternative paradigms. Glesne (2011) also stated that critical theory researchers make use of standpoint epistemologies. Standpoint epistemologies, "are positioned in the experiences, values, and interests of a group that has traditionally been oppressed or excluded" (Glesne, 2011, p. 10). For this study, I situated critical theory within a race-based epistemology known as Afrocentricity.

3.5.1 An Afrocentric Critical Theory. Asante (1987) critiqued critical theory as one that continued the tradition of Eurocentrism. In mainstream academic discourse, critical theories are often associated with the Frankfurt School[5] and Marxist thought, many of whom were White male theorists informed by and immersed in Eurocentricity,

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[5] It is important to note here that critical theory has advanced since the Frankfurt School of thought, but those more recent authors included in the canonical literature for critical theory are still White (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011).

with societal critiques specific to the economy and *their* social contexts (Asante, 1987; Grant, Brown, & Brown, 2016). It is important to note here that scholars of African descent such as W.E.B DuBois and Carter G. Woodson sought social transformation through their scholarship (critical theorizing) before the formation of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s (Grant, Brown, & Brown, 2016). However, DuBois and Woodson are not often regarded as germinal critical scholars in canonical literature. Therefore, I use the term "mainstream academic discourse" to discuss Asante's critique of a *particular* conception of critical theory. Marxist critical views of reality emerged from Eurocentric consciousness, which excluded the cultural and historical perspectives of Africa (Asante, 1987).

Asante argued that for the African American and the world at large, critique must transcend the European notion of universality. The European notion of universality is the view of European culture as the center of the social universe (Asante, 1987). Given this hubris, those of Eurocentric traditions have projected their ways of knowing and being as the standard to understand cultural phenomena. Asante argued that Marx, Freud, and those who take up their theories, assert that there are no possibilities of other realities or perspectives. The impetus of Asante's argument is not the validity of Eurocentric worldviews, but the fact that they have been purported as the only and universal way to experience and understand the world. In his first book, *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987)*,* Asante does not present a succinct definition for Eurocentricity, but instead, he argues that the paradigm has been used in a way that purports it as universal and degrades other worldviews.

Asante (1987) provided an example of the danger of the dismissal of multiple realities. He provided the narrative of Cecil John Rhodes' desire to gain control of territory in southern Africa, governed by King Lobengula. Rhodes sent emissaries to negotiate control of the land. The emissaries obtain a signature from King Lobengula. Asante recorded the results of this exchange,

> Rhodes may have believed that King Lobengula gave him title to the land, but Lobengula never believed that he had. Two cultural views of the world clashed, and the Europeans automatically assumed the correctness of their view. An Afrocentric analysis points out that Lobengula could never have sold or given the land away, since it did not belong to him but to the ancestors and the community. […] It took nearly one hundred years, two revolts, and a seven-year war to correct the situation. (pp. 10-11)

The lack of acknowledgment and understanding of Afrocentric ontology and epistemology and hegemonic acquiescence to Eurocentric traditions have been the cause of misunderstandings throughout history (Asante, 1987). For this reason, Asante defined Afrocentricity as the, "placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior" (p. 6). For too long African responses have been decontextualized and examined from Eurocentric perspectives.

Another example is seen in literature. Asante presented an example in which romance was contended as a central theme in literature based only on the literature from U.S. and British classics. When a professor teaching an English course in Nigeria tried to convey this to students enrolled in his course, through a Victorian novel that included kissing, he learned that romance in that way is not universal as his students had no

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cultural understanding or language for kissing. These examples are used to illuminate the necessity of acknowledging how place and culture shape our interpretations and understandings. Thus, by the nature of geography alone, there is more than a European episteme to consider.

The reliance upon Eurocentric perspectives as universal retains a European cast through an apartheid of knowledge and understanding (Asante, 1987; Bernal & Villalpando, 2010). The examples above show how applying only Eurocentric frames to the African world can become limiting, restricting, and in many cases detrimental to African communities. Specifically, in the U.S. context, the distortion and omission of African histories has led to the degrading of African Americans in the sense that their history on this continent begins with a social construct developed by Europeans, "the Negro." In this way, the African is cut off from centuries of agency and thriving in African and African history and is instead relegated to an oppressed social being with no history prior to slavery (Asante, 1987).

In contrast, the Afrocentrist creates new paths of interpretation through re-membered histories. Through the lens of Afrocentricity, African American culture and history are represented as developments in African culture and history, situated in African classical thought and the African classical past. According to Asante, when African American culture is analyzed outside of an Afrocentric paradigm, incorrect conclusions are bound to occur.

For this study, the characteristics of the critical paradigm were situated in Afrocentricity. That is, I sought emancipation and social transformation with African American ideals centered. I drew upon Asante's concept of Afrocentricity, because the

premise of my argument is that schools and society dismiss the origins of African Americans prior to the European conquests. Consequently, schools operate in the European notion of universality, perpetuating colorblind ideology that does not result in equal outcomes for children of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As I investigated the experience of an African American child, I desired to honor the tradition of Afrocentricity and center African ideals in my critical analysis. I drew upon the critical paradigm to challenge current schooling mechanisms, given the historical antecedents of their inceptions; concurrently, I sought social transformation through the voice of the participant. These beliefs among the critical paradigm call for methodology that is dialogic in nature, with voices mixed between researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). For this project, critical case study was an appropriate methodology for the research purposes as the propositions guiding this inquiry are connected to the "how" of the school experiences of Merrick.

3.6 Critical Case Study

Yin (2014) defined case study as inquiry that: "(a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). As phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable, Yin (2014) provided these methodological characteristics of case study: "(a) [case study inquiry] copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result (b) relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result (c) benefits from the

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prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p. 16).

As with other research designs, case study research begins with the case study's questions (Yin, 2014). Case study research is likely to appropriately explore "how" and "why" questions. Questions of this nature require in-depth analysis with contextual reverence. Yin (2014) also noted "how" and "why" questions are more explanatory and require operational links to be traced over time. Given Yin's characteristics for case study, an explanatory critical case study was proposed for this inquiry.

The purpose of an explanatory case study is to explain how or why some condition exists (Yin, 2014). Explanatory case studies begin with theoretical or initial explanatory propositions. At the outset of this study, I posited that African American students have been subordinated by the structures and practices of public schooling in the U.S. Additionally, I argued that the extant literature on culturally relevant pedagogy illustrates a cultural mismatch between Afrocentric ideals and the Eurocentric norms in public schooling. Such a mismatch perpetuates the dismal academic performances of Black students, particularly African American males. Along the same lines, I argue that emancipatory pedagogies and culturally relevant pedagogy are transformative for Black children suffering in public schools.

The use of an etic perspective is prevalent when conducting explanatory case studies because researchers begin with theoretical propositions that they believe can provide explanatory power about the conditions of the case (Yin, 2014). To sum up my rationale for conducting an explanatory case study, provided my understanding of the sociohistorical underpinnings of the education of African American children (Watkins,

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1993) and the extant literature about inequity in U.S. public schools for children of color (Boutte, 2016; Howard, 2014; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 2008), I approached this inquiry with initial theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform my investigation of Merrick's school experiences. Based on my conceptual framework and the existing literature on policing Black male students as outlined in the previous chapter, I believed that throughout Merrick's schooling narrative, I would find instances where school personnel have attempted to push him out of school due to oppressive curriculum and inequitable instructional and discipline practices.

3.6.1 Context and participants. The study emanated from an urban middle school in the southeastern region of the United States. Element Middle School (EMS) is home to a few magnet programs, including an academically rigorous magnet. The racial and ethnic composition of the population is as follows: 61% African American, 22% White, 8% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 4% classified as 'Other'. Fifty-seven percent of the student population receive free or reduced lunch.

According to Maxwell (2013), some goals of purposeful selection include: selecting individuals or cases that are critical to exploring theories and selecting participants with whom you can establish the most productive relationships. There are two reasons I chose Merrick. First, I recognized the critical case presented in Merrick's discourse. Second, my positionality as a trusted teacher to Merrick granted me access to explore these issues with him and other students.

Merrick is now a high school student. The participant, Merrick, was briefly described above. He is a 15-year-old, self-identified Black and Jamaican student. Merrick was a part of my math intervention class and afterschool meetings. He and I

have built a rapport and I serve as an elder to him (King & Swartz, 2016). I had access to

him because of my prior position as his teacher. Despite the accessibility that comes

through having been Merrick's teacher, our relationship also presents the threat of breach

of confidentiality. Therefore, we met outside of the school districts' domain and I use

pseudonyms to protect his identity. Merrick is also the "unit of analysis" or the "case"

for this case study (Yin, 2014). I centered the propositions of this study on the

experience of an African American male student engaged in both the traditional school

curriculum and emancipatory pedagogies. Because Merrick is the unit of analysis, data

collection consisted of sources that uncover his story.

    3.6.2 Data collection. According to Yin (2014), case study evidence can come

from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-

observation, and physical artifacts. The purpose of data collection for the researcher

engaged in case study design may be two-fold: (1) to collect data about actual human

events and behavior, or (2) to capture the distinctive perspectives of the participants in

the case study, or the researcher may pursue both purposes.

    Yin (2014) offered four important principles of data collection with case study

research. First, use multiple sources of evidence. Using multiple sources of evidence

aids in the development of converging lines of inquiry, or triangulation (Yin, 2014).

Conclusions from case study inquiry steeped in multiple sources are more likely

convincing and accurate. Second, create a case study database, to formally assemble the

evidence. It is important to ensure the differentiation of raw data from fieldwork and

researcher interpretation. This principle ensures the separation of those data. The third

principle, maintain a chain of evidence, is used to increase reliability of the information

in a case study. The purpose of this principle is to allow external observers, those reading the case study, to follow "the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions" (Yin, 2014, p. 127). Lastly, the fourth principle focuses on the use of data from electronic sources, such as social media communications. Yin cautioned researchers to set limits on the amount of time spent acquiring data collection from electronic sources and setting parameters about the navigation of and collection of data from various websites.

Following Yin's (2014) prescription for sources of evidence and principles for data collection, I collected evidence from the following sources: documentation and interviews. For case study research, documentation is used to corroborate evidence from other sources (Yin, 2014). With regards to this study, I obtained the state social studies curriculum standards for Merrick's eighth grade year, the curriculum used in the afterschool meetings, Merrick's grades from 8th grade, and other documents that describe the demographic context of the middle school Merrick attended.

Data on the school demography, history, and curriculum helped answer my first research question as they relate to the Merrick's school context. The curriculum standards were used to answer my second research question pertaining to the local curriculum. Along with using documentation, I conducted four semi-structured prolonged case study interviews with Merrick. Prolonged case study interviews may take place over two or more hours in a single sitting or may occur over multiple sittings. In these interviews, participants can share their opinions, insights, and meanings related to certain events (Yin, 2014). These interviews helped answer each of the research questions for this study. During each of our hour-long interviews, I tried to uncover

Merrick's voice about his experiences in the educational system and the afterschool meetings. I wanted to hear his opinions, insights, and meaning making. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) asserted, in-depth interviews "uncover and describe the participants' perspectives on events" (p. 102).

Another rationale for conducting interviews is the desire to center the voice of a Black male, which is often silenced. Emancipatory pedagogy is concerned with contesting and reconstructing dominant patterns of knowledge formation and replacing them with patterns that are multiperspectival (Swartz, 1996). Historically, the voices of African American males have been distorted or absent as it pertains to a stake in their own learning (Noguera, 2008; Howard, 2014), this study sought to privilege the voice of an African American male student.

3.6.3 Data analysis. I met with Merrick at his home over three consecutive weeks for three (one each week) interviews ranging from 45 minutes to one hour. I recorded each of our interviews. Then, I had each of them transcribed. Although I imagined using provisional coding for my first coding cycle, I decided on descriptive coding for the first cycle after reading the transcripts (Saldaña, 2016).

I anticipated a more storied account of Merrick's schooling experiences, but instead received more recurring information about aspects of schooling important to him. Therefore, I started with descriptive coding, which is defined as a protocol used to analyze the data set's basic topics to lead to further analytic work, to uncover those important topics (Saldaña, 2016). For my second round of coding, I used provisional coding, which consists of codes predetermined from my conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2016). Next, I placed various codes into categories and from there analyzed the groups

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of data into themes, as Saldaña (2009) defined a theme as "an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded" (p. 13). Initially, I derived three themes from interviews with Merrick: (1) meaningful work for Merrick; (2) the impact of teachers on Merrick; and (3) Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness. After working with my advisor, I conducted a follow-up interview with Merrick to uncover more information pertaining to the three themes I described above. In our fourth interview, I gained additional insight into what became an additional theme from the interviews, Merrick's thoughts on being known, as well as two other salient points.

In addition, as I stated in section 3.5 detailing my epistemological commitments, I drew upon Afrocentric frames and scholarship from primarily Black scholars as analytical frames for this study. Specifically, in both my findings and discussion, I celebrate African and African American ways of being and thought as ways I interpret my conversations with Merrick. Asante (1987) emphasized the importance of drawing from African (American) culture and ideals when participating in research with African Americans because African Americans often have been misunderstood through Eurocentric analysis. Therefore, in my analysis, I apply the works of Black scholars with Afrocentric commitments (e.g., Boutte, 2016; Emdin, 2016; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In particular, in my findings and discussion, I apply Emdin's (2016) work with reality pedagogy. Reality pedagogy echoes culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Like Ladson-Billings' (1994), Emdin examines students' culture and community to inform teaching and learning. In contrast to Ladson-Billings, Emdin

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(2016) focuses more on the co-construction of the classroom space between students and teachers. Emdin's work frames experiences of urban youth of color and uses their voices and experiences to craft lessons, classroom community, and learning experiences. Although he uses the term "urban youth of color", Emdin draws some of his educative practices specifically from Black communities. For instance, he visits neighborhood Black churches to learn from the pastors as teachers. In this way, Emdin's practices coincide with drawing from the African American community to effectively educate African American students, which is a central argument of Afrocentricity in education (Asante, 1991; Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2016).

3.7 Positionality

Positionality is defined as where the researcher stands socially, locationally, and ideologically in relation to participants (Hay, 2005; Merriam et al, 2001). Positions can be determined by education, gender, sexual orientation, class, or race and can shift throughout the time of the researcher's and participant's interactions (Merriam et al, 2001). Additionally, positionality is the critique of viewing a culture as a monolithic entity (Aguilar, 1981).

Aguilar (1981) challenged the notion of "insider" by presenting a model of relativity as it pertains to the researcher and participants, with respect to the multiplicity of social and cultural characteristics present in each culture. That is, given intracultural variation, there is perhaps no full insider status, but a researcher may be relatively inside or outside. Historically, insider status meant "easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly, be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study" (Merriam et al, 2001,

p. 411). The critique of insider status lies within the propensity for insiders to be biased and to be too close to the culture to ask provocative questions (Merriam et al, 2001). The outsider's advantage is his/her curiosity with the unfamiliar and the ability to raise provocative questions. The outsider's disadvantage is the insider's strengths.

Glesne (2011) noted that while researchers cannot control positionality, they (we) can make decisions that mediate our positionality and subjectivities in ways that honor our participants. Power dynamics are inherent in all research (Merriam et al, 2001). It is not only important to recognize the presence of power dynamics but to negotiate them with participants. Knowing one's positionality can help guard against a self-seeking research process and cultivate a research process in which participants are regarded as colleagues.

As stated above, positionality also locates the researcher within insider or outsider status. Given the advantages and disadvantages of each status, it is imperative that the researcher locates his/her insider or outsider status at the outset of the study to mediate that status. Banks (1998) offered four typologies for insider/outsider variations: indigenous-insider, indigenous-outsider, external-insider, and external-outsider. For my study, I located myself as the indigenous-insider. The indigenous insider "endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community" and "who can speak with authority about it" (p. 7).

Merrick and I are both African American and experience and name the oppression that exists within a country founded upon white supremacy. While we possess these commonalities, it is also important to note that I was once Merrick's teacher and as previously stated, viewed as an elder by him. This may have impacted the way he shared

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his experiences with me. As an elder, Merrick admired me and knew the assumptions of my research. I was concerned that my position as an elder may influence his storytelling, that Merrick would tell his stories in a way that match my particular assumptions about race and schooling. At some points in our time together, I wondered if this was happening. For instance, when I asked Merrick what he would change about the school curriculum, he replied, "I would try to change all the history. You know that was going to be my thing." I wondered if he presented that example because of my harsh critique of the traditional school curriculum in our afterschool meetings. However, when I first met Merrick, he too critiqued the school's morning news school for not expanding its coverage of Black leaders in Black History.

Besides serving as his elder, Merrick and I also come from seemingly different socioeconomic backgrounds. Merrick lives in what he considers, "the hood." I would describe myself as growing up in a middle-class neighborhood. Based on our interactions and conversations about home experiences and views of schooling, I believe our class differences influence the way we understand and make sense of the world. For example, in class one day, Merrick asserted that Black folks live in the hood. Similarly, around that time in the school year (before the afterschool meetings), he concluded that I was an "oreo" based on where I resided.

Along with differences in class, I also recognized that Merrick is a Black male and as described in Chapter Two, historically and currently, Black males have been vilified in society. Black women also experience their own oppression in this country (Crenshaw, 1991), yet, the experiences of Black men and women are different. This difference also influences our contextualization of the world in which we live. I wrote

the protocol of the interview in a semi-structured way that allowed Merrick to discuss his experiences without the pressure of situating them in a particular set of assumptions.

The assumptions with which I approached this work are grounded in the literature and my ideological commitments to social critiques; however, Merrick's voice is central in this work. I recognized my assumptions about race, schooling, and black subservience could cloud my interpretations of Merrick's narratives. To guard against centering my assumptions, from the outset of the study, I selected in vivo coding to draw directly from Merrick's verbiage to center his words and perspectives. In my analysis, I used both in vivo and descriptive coding and categories to represent what I thought was salient to Merrick. Additionally, I used in vivo coding to organize themes based on Merrick's own words. Using in vivo coding helped mediate some of my commitments to theoretical orientations.

3.8 Trustworthiness

Lather (1986) discussed validity within the context of openly ideological research. Openly ideological researchers are, "committed to the development of research approaches that challenge the status quo and contribute to a more egalitarian social order" (Lather, 1986, p. 64). Aware of the danger of conceptual overdeterminism, Lather offered four guidelines to guard against researcher biases. First, triangulation, which is the use of multiple measures to include multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes to establish data trustworthiness. Second, is construct validity, "A *systemized reflexivity,* which gives some indication of how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of the data, becomes essential in establishing construct validity in ways that will contribute to the growth of illuminating and change-enhancing social theory" (p.

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67). Third, face validity is the implementation of member checking as a standard practice in emancipatory research designs to establish data credibility. Finally, catalytic validity is "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization,' knowing reality in order to better transform it" (p. 67).

In the previous section on positionality, I outlined my conceptual and theoretical assumptions that influenced this study. I also discussed commitments to centering the voice of my participant. Drawing upon both of those commitments, I used a combination of the guidelines presented above. As Lather (1986) stated, systemized reflexivity is concerned with how the data changes the a priori theory. Although I used provisional coding, I started with in vivo and descriptive coding to find what information Merrick talked about with significance before drawing upon my pre-existing codes. I was cautious to look for spaces where Merrick's narrative differed from the theories from which I drew. Although I do not include much discussion on this topic in the following chapters, I did find data that coalesced with Woodson's (1993) miseducation of the Negro. I do draw upon the miseducation of the Negro as an explanatory tool in this study, but I preferred to represent more of the divergence between Merrick's story and Woodson's framework. Instead, I found examples were Merrick misspoke about current events, and in some ways misunderstood schooling practices in a way that could lead to his subordination. I do not spend much time discussing this in the next two chapters because I used thematic analysis for data analysis. Therefore, I discussed the themes that I derived from that analysis. Systemiatized searching for what did not fit allows me to claim construct validity in this work. Furthermore, I engaged in peer debriefing, where a

trusted colleague, questioned my assumptions and conclusions about the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Additionally, I employed member checking. Member checking is a system of the researcher receiving participant feedback about the data and conclusions s/he (the researcher) collected (Maxwell, 2013). I shared copies of the interview transcripts with Merrick to ensure I did not have misinformation. Moreover, I shared my conclusions from my coding and welcomed his feedback. Engaging in the process of member-checking allows me to claim face validity in this work.

I examined multiple data sources including: Merrick's grades, state social studies standards, the critical race curriculum from the afterschool meetings, and transcripts from interviews with Merrick to establish data trustworthiness or triangulation. At the outset of this study, I hoped to claim catalytic validity. I chose to focus on Merrick as the sole participant in this study because I perceived his conscientization (Freire, 1973). However, Merrick did not remember material from the afterschool meetings with clarity. Consequently, I cannot claim catalytic validity.

3.9 Significance of the Study

Black lives really do matter. Well, to some of us. From my experience in this country, I do not think Black lives matter to all. In some instances, (i.e. the enslavement of Africans, colonial education), I have witnessed that Black lives mattered but only to serve the interest of White elites. Given my argument that many of the current practices in schooling perpetuate black subservience, this research is significant to changing the tide of pedagogical practices so that Black lives and communities are thriving, not just surviving.

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My dissertation study contributes to a larger body of literature that urges the use of culturally relevant and emancipatory pedagogies to foster academic achievement and a greater sociopolitical critique of the status quo. This work has implications for persons who write curriculum, teachers, teacher educators, and civic partners. I hope curriculum writers will read this project and re-member mathematics, English, social studies, and science curriculums to reflect the truth and more than just the colonizers' voice. I hope that teachers who critique the status quo in their schools will feel empowered to stand against inequities by using transformative pedagogies like culturally relevant pedagogy and emancipatory pedagogies in their own classrooms or with students after school. Finally, I hope teacher educators will read this study and feel an urgency to meet with their faculty and rethink, rewrite, and redo teacher education programs to focus on re-membering content for the sake of all children and to teach pre-service teachers to teach with care. In short, this dissertation study addresses the larger matter of the state of Black lives in this country.

CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I describe the experiences of one 15-year-old African American male, Merrick, in reference to his relationships with teachers across elementary, middle, and high school, his thoughts about schoolwork and the curriculum, and his life outside of school. Merrick's connections between outside of school, particularly his home life, and school were salient across the interviews. I begin this chapter by restating the purpose and research questions for this study. Following the restatement, I provide a discussion of Merrick's eighth grade schooling context in order to include a brief description of his teachers and the state curriculum standards. Next, I provide more details about the critical race curriculum I devised in the afterschool meetings as briefly mentioned in previous chapters. I conclude the chapter by exploring four themes: (1) "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it": Meaningful work for Merrick (2) "A loving heart": The influence of teachers in Merrick's life (3) "They shoot first and ask questions later": Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness (4) "My name was out there": The importance of being known to Merrick and two salient points: Worst memories in school were not about school and "The Struggle."

4.1 Re-Introduction of the Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, I explored Merrick's school experiences from elementary to high school. Secondly, I examined the context of

Merrick's middle school where he participated in afterschool meetings organized around critical race theory. Finally, I explored if the meetings impacted Merrick. To accomplish these purposes, the following research questions were posed:

1. What was the context of the middle school Merrick attended while participating in the afterschool meetings?

   a. What local curriculum was used in Merrick's eighth grade social studies course?

   b. How did/does Merrick make meaning of the context and curriculum?

2. What is Merrick's schooling narrative?

3. How (if at all) did the afterschool meetings affect Merrick?

4.2 Element Middle School

In the previous chapter I described the demographics of Element Middle School (EMS). Here, I will further discuss the context of EMS by providing more details about the magnet programs at the school, Merrick's teachers, and Merrick's eighth grade social studies curriculum and more details about our afterschool curriculum. Some of the representation in this section is based upon my insider positionality as a former teacher in the school.

4.2.1 Magnet programs. At the time of Merrick's eighth grade year, there were three magnet programs operating within Element Middle School (each magnet has been assigned a pseudonym). Two of the magnets, Artist and Geo, were not considered academically rigorous magnets by school officials, meaning that students' standardized test scores were not the determinant for acceptance. Acceptance into the third magnet program, WRITE, was largely predicated upon standardized test scores. Only students

who had scored at the 75th percentile or above on MAP Reading *could apply* for this magnet (emphasis added, this language is pulled directly from the program's website). I emphasized this language to highlight what I read as an immediate way to regulate the population considered eligible to participate in this magnet via test scores based on standardized tests that are often biased against students of color (Milner, 2012).

Based on my experience as a former teacher at EMS, Artist and Geo had a greater level of racial and socioeconomic diversity than WRITE. Students in WRITE were majority White. In this school community, this magnet was described as a "school within a school." In fact, WRITE magnet has its own charter and its own pool of donors to enhance the academic and social experiences of students in the program. Moreover, this program was housed on its own wing of each grade level hallway within the school. It is important to note that Geo, one of the other magnet programs, was also located in its own building. Students in WRITE were also given priority in registering for exclusive co-curricular classes such as Latin, which take place over the course of the entire year. This limited their schedule to certain sections of other co-curricular offerings such as strings, which in turn created a magnet specific section of these courses where only students from the magnet participated. Both the physical separation of WRITE and separation based on course selections have created a system of hierarchy and segregation in the school.

Educational researchers have noted, magnet programs have served the function of resegregating public schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Students who were not a part of WRITE were harassed for using the doors on the WRITE side of the hallway. Teachers who taught in WRITE were quick to differentiate between

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their students and the "general population." For example, often teachers in WRITE would chastise students from the "other side" of the hallway for using "their" door to exit the hallway during dismissal. Safety issues were not their cause for concern for "general population" students using "their" doors. Instead, separation was their main goal. Students on both sides of the hallway felt and embodied this hostility. For instance, students in my class would comment about how only the "smart" kids are allowed on "that side" of the hallway; while the children in the magnet would not dare venture past my classroom during class changes for fear of being mixed in with the "general population."

    4.2.2 Merrick's teachers. Merrick's core teachers (teachers of mathematics, English/language arts, science, and social studies) included: one Black male, one Black female, one White male, and in one subject area a host of three teachers throughout the school year, including one White female, one White male, and one Black female. Besides myself, his co-curricular teachers included: two White males, one Black female, and one White female.

    During his tenure in my class, Merrick rarely made comments expressing a positive relationship with his core teachers. Instead, often he came to my class clowning (making witty jokes) and complaining about one of his core teachers. We never discussed his relationship with his co-curricular teachers, but in our interviews, he still complained about the same core teacher, stating "I hate her with a passion because she tried to keep me back." Neither during the school year or during our interviews did Merrick discuss these core teachers as positive or influential to him. However, Merrick did describe his criteria for a favorable teacher, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

4.2.3 Merrick's social studies curriculum. I chose to focus on the social studies curriculum because our afterschool meeting topics were centered on the history of racial subordination and white supremacy in the United States. By evaluating the social studies standards, I was able to evaluate whether or not the local curriculum included these issues, specifically in the social studies context as this subject area focuses on history. At Element Middle School, teachers used localized state standards to guide instruction.

In eighth grade, students studied the history of the state. As reflected in the eighth grade social studies curriculum guide, topics in the standards include: the settlement of the state by Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans; the causes of the American Revolution and the state's role in the development of the new nation; the state's role in the development of the new national government; the multiple events that led to the Civil War; the impact of Reconstruction, industrialization and Progressivism on society and politics in the state in the late 19th and 20th centuries; the role of the state in the nation in the early 20th century; the impact on the state of significant events of the late 20th and 21st centuries (see Appendix F for the state indicators for each standard).

The historical timeframe covered in Merrick's social studies class ranged from circa 1663 to around the 1970s. Given this timeframe, there were multiple opportunities for Merrick to learn about the ingenuity and agency of Africans and African Americans, such as legacies of resistance as witnessed during enslavement, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movement of the late 1950s and 60s, and the African American fight for freedom for literacy (Perry, 2003). However, when I asked Merrick how he felt about

being a part of our afterschool meetings, he replied, "I felt like I was in a secret society."
I asked him what made him feel that way.

> Because it was people that you would not let in. You had to be [hesitates] we all
> wasn't really smart at that time. We spoke about different stuff. We spoke about
> politics, Black Panthers, and all that stuff. We thought about that stuff. … We
> really spoke about African history.

This comment from Merrick relayed to me that our afterschool meetings provided him with a space that differed from his social studies curriculum or other classes for that matter. When he referred to our meetings as a "secret society", I interpreted Merrick's description as evidence that he was not receiving this "secret" information about African and African American history during his time in the traditional classroom. I also want to highlight the beginning of Merrick's response, where he commented on the selectivity of our afterschool group and his comment that "we all wasn't really smart at that time." I contend that our afterschool meetings provided a space that not only spoke of African history, but also one that valued him, and just as he was.

Merrick's comment about their not being smart at the time, and still welcomed into the space seems to imply that he felt valued for who he is and not just how he performed. This is important to think about as Ladson-Billings' (1995) talked about the importance of teachers valuing all students in the classroom community, regardless of their supposed intellectual contribution. I imagine Merrick may have experienced some classrooms in which he was not highly valued, because he did not perform highly or as highly as others.

The afterschool meetings. As stated in the previous chapter, the purpose of the

afterschool meetings was to equip male students of color with language to resist and

disrupt racial subordination and colonizing practices in their school and broader contexts.

I structured these meetings to inform students of the history and conception of race in the

United States, the issue of white supremacy and white privilege, and ways to examine

those concepts in their daily lives. We watched videos, read articles, and engaged in

conversations about the colonization of multiple people groups in this country, the

objectification of African Americans, and the consequences of those practices on African

Americans in the present (see Appendix B for a detailed list of our video links and

articles).

Murray and Milner (2015) observed the ability of outside of school programs to

meet the sociopolitical needs of African American students, because many schools are

not doing so. Merrick's commentary on the helpfulness of the afterschool meetings

echoed Murray and Milner's observation above. I asked Merrick what was helpful to

him from the afterschool meetings. "What's been helpful is to think of a different way to

deal with stuff." When I asked for an example, Merrick shared:

Say if I get into another encounter with the police, I'm not going to be like, "Oh,

blah, blah, blah." I can't be disrespectful. Then, I'm going to get shot. Then, I'm

going to be on the news, and I'm going to be on t-shirts. I don't want to be there.

As Murray and Milner noted, "OST [outside of school] programs are well

positioned to respond to the sociopolitical needs of Black youth" (p. 896). I agree with

Murray and Milner that outside of school programs are necessary to equip African

American children with the sociopolitical consciousness imperative to their academic and

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material survival and while I did not set out to invoke fear of the authorities in my male students of color, I did want them to understand the history of our country in such a way that they understand the sociopolitical climate in which we now inhabit that breeds the hyperpolicing and killing of African Americans (Alexander, 2010).

4.3 Interviewing Merrick

Before I move on to discuss themes and salient points (Saldaña, 2016) from interviews with Merrick, I want to share what it was like to interview Merrick and represent some of his statements in order to provide more insight into Merrick's personhood. As previously stated, I taught Merrick as an eighth grader during the 2015-2016 school year. From my interactions with him then, I knew Merrick as a teddy bear, or one that I would characterize as having a tough exterior, but is playful when you interact with him in smaller, friendlier settings compared to our math classroom.

During one of our interviews, Merrick talked about this aspect of his appearance when elaborating on a comment he made about his teachers (not specifying either Black or White) bullying students. This conversation began when I asked him what he did not like about school. "I don't like how they try to end bullying, but some teachers bully you." I asked him to tell me more. "You know how kids try to bully teachers? Sometimes teachers bully students, but the student won't open up about it, because they'll look like a punk to their friends." I asked him if he had experienced any of this teacher bullying. "Oh no," he exclaimed with confidence. I asked him why he thought that was so. "For some reason, people see me as a big person that likes to fight," he said. "I'm not really that person." I followed by asking what he thought of that perception, and if he thought it was good for people to see him that way. Merrick shared,

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Sort of, kind of, yes. If there was a big bully-looking-type dude, I might be the first suspect. If somebody wanted to mess with me, their friends would be like, "No, you don't want to mess with him," – stuff like that. People don't want to mess with you when you look like a big bully.

Although Merrick is aware of how his bigger stature sometimes leads to some people perceiving him as a bully, he stated that he is, "not really that person." Indeed, throughout our interviews, I was able to learn of the kindness, compassion, and warmth Merrick has for others. This is one aspect of Merrick I often talk about when describing him to others. I imagine that when people in general, and teachers specifically, look at Merrick, they do not immediately think about his "boyhood" or caring nature. Instead, I think people may fear him because his size, or in a school setting, assume he is older than he really is. And that makes me fear for Merrick's safety. Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old Black boy, was shot a killed by law enforcement for playing with a toy gun. In a time where this happens, I worry about Merrick's safety. Given his stature, his vocal critique of racism, and the negative social imagery of Black males pervasive in society, I fear that Merrick is in danger. Ladson-Billings (2011) illustrated how the negative social imagery around Black males leads to the dismissal of their childhood. Sadly, these attitudes are also prevalent among White (and some Black) teachers who teach males of color (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Ferguson, 2001).

Across our four interviews, Merrick shared stories about his teachers, friends, and family. For instance, when I asked Merrick about his motivation to do well in school, he shared an emotional response about his family.

My mama, my mama and my grandma. My grandmother on my dad's side, she died when I was ten. I was ten or nine. That really impacted my life. My mom can tell you. I was messed up in my mind. I still kind of am. My great-grandma on my mother's side died. That messed me up worse. It was December 28th and April 27th, the day after my birthday. It just really messed with my mind. My grandma raised me. The first home I went to was her house. My mom wasn't old enough to have her own house. My mother had my brother when she was 16. She had me when she was 18. My grandma…She popped us if we didn't say "yes ma'am, no ma'am." I got the most butt whoopings, my brother could tell you. I'd break sticks on my butt.

Merrick, a 15-year-old sophomore in high school, walks around with the grief of losing his grandmother from about five years ago. He reflected, "I was messed up in my mind. I still kind of am." Although I did not ask, I wonder if Merrick ever received counseling to walk through the stages of grief at such a young age. Even if he did, he still confessed that his family and the loss of some of his loved ones still impact him deeply. They affect him so much so, they are, as he explained, his motivation to do well in school. I imagine they are on his mind as he navigates his schooling experiences.

Throughout our interviews, I was pleasantly surprised to get to know more about Merrick. In our previous interactions, I served as his teacher, and as previously stated, and as an elder to Merrick. However, in those settings, I did not provide space to hear about Merrick's heart for his family and learn of his value system.

As an educator, it was easy for me to stereotype Merrick as a teenage boy who only cared about being cool and being with his friends. Instead, I learned that people,

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including teenage males, are not static characters, but are dynamic, and just as adults, traffic through multiple social spaces, too. Some adults care about their social status in the professional arena, and also prioritize family on the home front, similarly, Merrick did, too. From the quote above and the rest of our interviews, I learned that Merrick is a dynamic character with multiple layers, seeing through multiple lenses that inform his perceptions and thoughts about himself, others, and the world.

Being a dynamic character, I recognize that Merrick is not without flaw. Although I do not give much attention to it in the thematic analysis that follows, Merrick was expelled from his high school in 2017. I do not spend time examining what happened, because Merrick spent more of his time discussing elementary school and middle school during our interviews. Further, I do not address the trouble Merrick got into because there are enough narratives of young African American boys as "villains". I have not tried to hide data that complicates Merrick as a joyful young, African American male committed to racial justice. Merrick was not a stellar student. As you read, you will see where Merrick resists completing school work, refers to his membership in a gang, and shares an inaccurate critique.

In the discussion about themes and salient points, I share more of Merrick's comments that reveal how important his loved ones are to him and his motivation to do well by them and others about whom he cares. Even when I asked him what he learned in middle school, he responded, "To stay on the right path and stay out of trouble, to care about other people that are not as fortunate as you." For clarification, I asked if he learned that in middle school and from whom. He replied, "I just like helping people. I

don't know why." In the same interview, he stated that his favorite teachers had, "a loving heart."

I was able to learn more about his compassionate heart towards family, friends, and even teachers to whom he had grown attached. I was not expecting to hear such sentimental responses from Merrick. In my limited experience with middle school boys, I had not perceived them to be so emotionally aware of those around them and or to express such caring for those less fortunate than they. This has been the beauty and benefit of interviewing Merrick. By showing care and concern for the wellbeing of others, his thoughts and insights disrupt master narratives (Yosso, 2006) about young African American boys as dangerous "bad boys" (Ferguson, 2001; Howard et al., 2012).

4.4 Themes from Interviews with Merrick

In this section of the chapter, I discuss themes that I coded and analyzed from the interviews with Merrick. Merrick agreed to talk with me about his schooling experiences and his thoughts about participating in the afterschool meetings. I analyzed four themes from our interviews. In some ways, elements of the first three themes coincided with my theoretical framework: (1) "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it" : Meaningful work for Merrick (2) "A loving heart": The influence of teachers in Merrick's life (3) "They shoot first and ask questions later" : Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness. In addition, I highlight another persistent theme from the interviews, "My name was out there": The importance of being known to Merrick and two salient points: Worst memories in school were not about school, and "The Struggle."

4.4.1 "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it": Meaningful work for Merrick. Merrick is adamant about not doing school

work. He mentioned that school work is irrelevant to his personal life, and therefore, he does not engage. Merrick and I were briefly discussing his relationship with teachers when he began to discuss his disdain for the work given to him at school. Merrick began, "Me and teachers can be cool, but just don't give me work. I don't like work."

Throughout our second interview when we discussed his memories from elementary to high school and his interactions with teachers, Merrick repeatedly stressed the fact that he does not do work. As early as third grade Merrick developed an aversion to school work. When we discussed elementary school days, I asked, "Was school hard then?", and he remarked, "Uh-uh, [school was not hard then]. My mom can tell you this. I don't do work. I will pass a test any day, but I will not do the work."

I was able to view some of Merrick's end of the year grades from his eighth grade school year. At the end of the school year, in his core classes: Language Arts, math, social studies, and science, Merrick received a D, C, D, and D respectively. Merrick failed Language Arts during the 2015-2016 year. To gain the D in Language Arts, he told me he attended summer school. Based on his testimony about not doing school work, I am not sure of his academic abilities, because Merrick refuses to perform school in the ways traditional schooling requires (i.e. completing school work such as written assignments).

After hearing this response a few times, I asked, "Do you think work is a part of school?" Merrick stated he felt like schools tried to set students "in factories", which he seemed to have some resistance against.

Yeah, but I feel like school just tries to set you in factories. How am I going to use any of that stuff in my personal life? How am I going to use X +Y = 79-72 and all that in my personal life?

In frustration, he recalled an assignment from seventh grade in which he was tasked with writing a letter. "Nobody writes letters no more. Who still writes letters? That's why we've got Twitter™." Seeing no validity in the task, Merrick did not see the need to engage in the assignment. Given that Merrick is a student, and in some ways has not experienced positions that would require these skills, it is important for culturally relevant pedagogues to help students make relevant connections.

Although I would argue that Merrick's comments illustrated a resistance to work, I do not think his comments reflected a lack of motivation. Typically, teachers and researchers search for what will "motivate" African American children (Howard, 2014). However, Merrick's statements do not illustrate a lack of motivation. Instead, Merrick expressed resistance to degrading and irrelevant work. When I asked Merrick if there was any purpose to him going to school, he returned to his discussion on the un-useful nature of the work he received in school.

To be honest, it's a "yes" and a "no", because I'm sitting on that gate right now. I've got to go to school for 12 grades. Then I've got to go to college. Then I've got to get a job. I have to work, work, work, work, work, work just to do more work. This time I might be getting paid for my work.

In the last sentence of his statement, Merrick was expressing the exasperating nature of working for so many years and at the end, you "might" get paid for your work. Based on his tone in stating "This time I might get paid for my work," wisely, Merrick seemed to

express a lack of faith in meritocracy, or the promise that completing all of his work would lead to upward mobility, specifically in the form of a wage paying job. I asked Merrick if he thought all that schooling was worth it. "Yeah, because I don't want to be a bum, but I don't think we should do work to do more work to just get paid for that work."

In another interview, Merrick elaborated on this contention of working for commensurable wages. In this, our third interview, we were speaking specifically about what Merrick thought about Black children and learning. I asked, "What do you think now about Black children and learning?" Merrick explained, "We'll learn, but we're going to have to get something in return. We're not going to do like a whole bunch of paperwork and get one grade up." He gave an example, "I'm at a 70 and you give me a 71 for a five-page essay. We're not about to do that. I need like full grades."

Based on these comments, I think Merrick believes he is being asked to produce large amounts of work without a large return. His logic applies to receiving adequate credit in the form of grades for investment in schoolwork, and to ultimately receiving monetary compensation from a job that may or may not come after completing years of schooling. Besides the fact that he experiences school work as irrelevant to the world he inhabits (i.e. handwriting letters in the age of "Twitter™"), Merrick also feels an imbalance in the amount of work he is asked to complete to the amount of compensation he receives.

I wanted to know what type of work Merrick found meaningful, so I asked what he thought schooling should be like. He gladly responded with his solution.

I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it.

Teach us and show us how to do it. At [the alternative school] we took a field trip

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to [a local technical college]. All they do is like…I think it was engineering, and they were making plastic. That's a job. I think they said they make $30 an hour just to make plastic.

Merrick indicated that the work he saw at the technical college "paid off", and he found the pay more than sufficient for the job, as indicated by the comment, "they make $30 an hour *just* to make plastic." As I stated in the paragraph above, it did not seem that Merrick simply disliked schoolwork, his problem appeared to be with work that he did not find meaningful, in that it was irrelevant to his world and an unfair return on his investment.

Merrick provided more insight into schoolwork that he would find meaningful, this time he talked about work that related to his personhood. After recounting a science lab dissecting a cow's eye, Merrick told me, "It [the information he learned in school] didn't help. If I took classes on what career I wanted to take, it could really help me in my career, but you can only do that in high school." Excitedly, he proceeded to tell me about the classes he would take as a sophomore, "next year I'm taking entrepreneurship (and) African American studies." Merrick was eager to talk about meaningful learning opportunities, including those that pertain to his life and ancestral history. In this same interview, when I asked what Merrick would change about what he learned in school, he replied,

I would try to change all the history. You know that was going to be my thing. I do not like White history. That's all they teach us. I want to learn Native American history, Black history, African American, like, now history, stuff like that, but they don't teach us that. We have to learn that after school.

Like many researchers (Asante, 1991; Boutte, 2016; King, 2015; King & Swartz, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Woodson, 1933) contend, Black students are inundated with the histories of Europeans, but rarely learn of their own ancestral history. Merrick is interested in learning, particularly when the learning is applied, and I would argue experiential, and when the content includes his ancestral history, contemporary issues in African American communities and other histories of targeted peoples.

Too often, African American males are described as unmotivated (Howard, 2014), but their voices are not often solicited in understanding what will "motivate" them. After hearing Merrick's thoughts about schoolwork, I think that Merrick is concerned about the role of schooling in his present reality (i.e. grades) and his future (i.e. his career and compensation). Merrick desires work that is relevant to his lived experiences, including the use of appropriate technologies, the utility of pedagogies and courses that are relevant to real-world work opportunities, and courses that include his ancestral history, current realities, and the histories of other targeted peoples.

4.4.2 "A loving heart": The influence of teachers in Merrick's life. During our first two interviews, Merrick and I spent some time talking about his teachers, both his current teachers in high school and those from eighth grade. During eighth and ninth grade, Merrick had two Black male teachers, neither of which he described as his favorites when I asked him to recount his favorite teachers.

In our first interview, I asked Merrick to describe each of his core subject area teachers from his first semester in high school. As he described his Black male teacher, Merrick noted, "He don't really stand up for himself. When you don't stand up for yourself, you get bullied." For Merrick being bullied meant a teacher did not come back with witty

jokes toward students. He described this quality earlier about another teacher and in the comment below when he referenced a male teacher's ability to "diss" (return witty comments) students. I asked if he felt like he could learn from this teacher, to which he replied, "Not really. I need somebody that's strong-minded. He can diss you, but you won't understand what he's saying." Merrick described this kind of repartee as what he wanted in his teachers. "I want somebody I can be looking up to who don't really get bullied by their students."

Merrick described the teacher he could look "up to" as someone who is able to stand strong with their students as well as show compassion towards them. In the next paragraph, I provide more of Merrick's insight on his idea of a good teacher. Here, I want to note that I included this information on Merrick's Black male teacher not to vilify his teacher, or any other Black male teachers, but to highlight how Merrick positioned one of his Black male teachers as someone he could "diss" and from whom he did not learn. Researchers have found that often Black male teachers are type-casted into a sort of salvific role that Black male students do not always appreciate or desire (Brown, 2012; Pabon, 2014). I draw upon this finding to illustrate the role Black female teachers have historically played in educating Black male students (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Siddle Walker, 1996). Although not often cited, Black women have laid pedagogical and teacher dispositional foundations that support Black children in the classroom and the work of Black male teachers (Bryan, Williams, & Jett, forthcoming). For example, in Ladson-Billings' (1994) germinal work about culturally relevant pedagogy, five of the eight teachers included in the study were Black female teachers. Ladson-Billings' (1994) observations and analysis of all the teachers in that study, led to

what started as culturally relevant pedagogy, which has influenced other pedagogical frameworks concerning the education of Black students including, culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) and reality pedagogy (Emdin, 2016).

The work of five Black female teachers over 20 years ago is still informing research about ways to effectively educate African American children. Of course, these are only the *recorded* accounts of how Black female teachers' pedagogies and dispositions have impacted Black children and specifically, Black male students. I put forth that given the demographics of the teaching force, 2% Black male, 7.7% Black female, (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016), it is imperative that the work of Black female teachers not be overlooked or dismissed in the recruitment of Black male teachers to "save" Black male students. I am certainly not trying to pit Black female teachers against Black male teachers. Rather, I am advocating that both groups of teachers be acknowledged for the work as effective pedagogues.

In a follow-up interview I shared with Merrick that he did not mention any Black male teachers as his favorite, but instead mentioned three Black female teachers. When I reflected, "Black female teachers can impact Black male students just as much as Black male teachers can," he provided the following insight.

And I feel that, because most Black people are mama's boys. Cuz when you see a broke Black man, where you think he gonna be living? With his mom. That's why I think that [impact of Black female teachers on Black male students] is. Because mom's take care of us more than anybody else do. Like, some White mom's will get nannies, and they'll be Black, and the kid will call the nanny,

"mother". You see that in a lot of movies. And I guess, it's that Black girl magic. That is an actual thing.

After his insightful commentary on Black mothers, I asked Merrick if he found that the favorite teachers he named acted as "mothers" in the classroom.

Yeah [they act as mothers in the classroom]. Cuz even when I don't raise my hand, they point me out, like you know the answer to this, cuz I stay after school with all my teachers, especially you. And we'll be in the classroom, and they'll be like, "Well, I know he doesn't like blah, blah, blah, so I'm not gonna bring blah, blah, blah in the class. He don't like celery, the snack not about to be celery."

Merrick named three Black female teachers as his favorite teachers because of their care for him. Across our four interviews, Merrick shared that his family "struggled", which when I asked for clarification, I learned that Merrick was speaking of financial hardships at various times in his schooling career. Two of his favorite teachers helped him during those times, and one of his favorite teachers desired to know more about his life outside school. "During elementary school my mom was going through the struggle. As my mom was going through the struggle, I'm going through the struggle, my brother is going through the struggle. My sister went through the struggle." During this time, Merrick shared his second-grade teacher helped him out. "My second-grade teacher took me shopping for my trip to DC. Oh man, I miss her. … She took me to movie night … She took us to Burger King." When I asked Merrick why was she one of his favorites, he replied, "Because she paid for me." When I asked what his favorite teachers had in common, Merrick responded, "A loving heart."

Provision from teachers took precedence in Merrick's recollections of schooling experiences in elementary school. "Number two [favorite teacher] is Ms. Jackson. She was my fifth-grade teacher, the one that paid for me to go to DC, the one where I sold the donuts and she paid the other half." He spoke very highly of his second-grade teacher, too. "My second-grade teacher is kind of tied up there. … Because she paid for me. She bought me like toothbrushes, toothpaste. She bought me drawers. You don't buy [chuckles]." He called her one of his favorite teachers. She was active in Merrick's life even after second grade. In fifth-grade, she helped him prepare for his trip to DC. "We went shopping together. She took me driving when I was in fifth-grade. She took me out. I was like, 'Where are we going?' She took me to Walmart."

Earlier in the same interview when I asked Merrick to recall one of his favorite memories from school, it was about the fifth-grade DC trip where he received assistance from his second-grade and fifth-grade teachers.

Elementary school. I had to sell donuts. I had to sell a whole bunch of donuts. I sold all my donuts to the teachers that was in the school. I sold every single box to the teachers that were in the school. Some [teachers] would say, "I already bought a box, but I'll donate." I was like, "Oh, thank you." I'd write their name down. I had to get another packet because I got all the teachers on the first packet. I had two packets. I think I went to DC because of that. The whole class went to DC after that. My second-grade teacher took me to go shopping for my trip to DC."

Merrick shared even more memories about his second-grade teacher. "She took me to movie night. Willow [elementary school]. Willow had movie nights. She took us to

Burger King. It was me and another student. She took us to Burger King. We ate there.

We went to movie night. She bought us snacks there. I'm like, "Lady, I'm full [laughs]."

These two teachers impacted Merrick through their generosity. They provided

him with food, money, opportunities to go on field trips and enjoy activities such as

school movie nights.

In our first interview, Merrick shared this desire for his teachers "to give students

a chance."

I want teachers that will give students a chance, because they never know what's

going on in their home. Every single student goes through something at home. I

don't care how much money you've got, what new Js you got. Everybody is

going through something.

For Merrick, a good teacher is one who cares about him, one who affirms his

humanity despite his socioeconomic condition, and one who seeks to consider what he

called his "struggle to success." In our second interview when I asked Merrick, "What

type of things could you tell your teachers so they know that you learned what you

needed to learn for the school year?", he shared, "I'll show them my test scores. I'll

show them what I do with my personal time, what's my hobbies, what I go through

[pause] nah, nah." I asked him, "Why would you take that out?" Merrick responded,

"What I'm going through in life? Because you never know who they might tell."

Wanting to know more, I continued, "Why did you consider bringing that in?

Why would that be important to show the teachers?" Merrick stated, "To show your

struggle to success … That was my thing. That's what I had to do. I had to struggle

through to my success." Again, I found that Merrick wanted teachers to acknowledge his

full human experience beyond what is "academic." To me it seems that Merrick understands that we carry our full selves with us everywhere we go. What I mean by that is, that students' personal lives impact their school lives. He emphatically stated that it was important for teachers to "understand what [he] was going through in life" and the teachers he named as his favorites were teachers who showed they cared about what was happening in his life, not just about his performance at school.

Merrick named me as one of his favorite teachers because of my concern for his life outside school.

My number one teacher, you want to know who that is? On my life, Ms. Williams was the best teacher. If it wasn't for Ms. Williams, I would be in worse trouble than I am right now. Because I wouldn't stop gang banging. I wouldn't stop wearing red. I would be out in the streets horribly.

Merrick's ideas about care and compassion from his teachers align with King and Swartz (2016) culturally informed principle—communal responsibility. Communal responsibility refers to consideration for each other, working for the good of each other, in responsibility for each other. Based upon Merrick's stories about his favorite teachers, I infer that each of his favorite teachers considered his goodness and took responsibility in cultivating well-being in multiple areas of his life, not just school. Each of his favorite teachers cared for him holistically, showing care and concern for his academics and his life outside of school.

4.4.3 "They shoot first and ask questions later": Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness. Throughout our conversations, Merrick made comments that illustrated evidence of his sociopolitical consciousness or his awareness and critique of social

inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As stated in the previous chapter, I chose to work with Merrick in the afterschool meetings because of the evidence of his sociopolitical consciousness. For example, during our third interview focused on his participation in the afterschool meetings, Merrick began to discuss what goes on in this country. He explained,

> I read statistics a lot, and they say most likely if your mother is a single parent you end up in jail and all that stuff. Because of what goes on in this country, it makes things worse on everybody else.

To that, I asked, what "things?" "The stuff that Trump [President Trump] is doing, we've got to suffer for it." I asked Merrick to provide specific examples of what Trump is doing. "Healthcare. He's trying to do something with that, ain't he?" I added that Trump was trying to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Merrick replied, "Yeah, it's going to affect a lot of people. The whole thing with Syria, that's going to affect people on this side at least by the way it's handled. We [the country] really have no money. I think we're the brokest country."

In that same interview, Merrick described injustices against Black people, including racial "profiling" and the likelihood of being falsely accused of a crime as a Black male. Addressing racial profiling, Merrick remarked,

> The main thing [issue facing Black people] is profiling. I hate it. I went through it. I hate it. I really hate it. I think they had a video on Facebook. A dude was so smart. He just wanted to dress up as a thug. He set up a stand or something. He knew everything. I don't know how, but the brother was smart, but he was dressed up like a thug.

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In his comment above, Merrick addressed that fact that because a young man was dressed in certain attire, his intelligence was dismissed, and he was only thought of as a thug, which is what he referred to as racial profiling. I asked Merrick, "How do you think teachers define thugs?" He answered,

> If you go up to a teacher right now and ask, "What is a thug?" They're going to be like, the kids that's failing, the kids that act out in class all the time, the kids that don't get a lot of attention at home and all that stuff. The kids that's really going through something, that's what they call thugs. That's a big thing.

I probed, "You don't agree with that?" Merrick shared, "To a certain extent, but you've got to see what they're going through. I always say you've got to see what they're going through to call them what you call them." Just as Merrick's remarks about teachers illustrated that he wanted them to have an awareness about his personal life as it impacts the rest of his life, he seems to want that understanding for others that society may write off as "thugs", too.

Along the same lines, later in the interview, Merrick detailed media portrayals of Black youth.

> I'm going to put it like this. If I go on Google and I look up three White teens, they're going to show happy White teens playing and all that stuff. I look up three Black teens, it's mug shots. It's an actual thing on Google. You can look it up.

Merrick followed up with, "Why we [Black teens] can't be happy?

Both Merrick's commentary about "thugs" and this information about the Google search reminded me of Emdin's (2016) research about the neoindigenous. Based on

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similarities in the experiences of marginalized indigenous populations and urban youth of color, Emdin (2016) identified urban youth of color as neoindigenous. He argued,

> Identifying urban youth of color as neoindigenous allows us to understand the oppression these youth experience, the spaces they inhabit, and the ways these phenomena affect what happens in social settings like traditional classrooms. It seeks to position these youth in a larger context of marginalization, displacement, and diaspora. (p. 9)

Emdin demonstrates how teachers make assumptions about African American and Latino/a students based upon negative preconceived notions about their cultural identity, which in turn facilitates their marginalization. I connect Emdin's work to Merrick's contrast between White youth and youth of color/Black youth. Emdin highlights how preconceived notions of students leads to teachers' unfair treatment of students. Merrick highlights how African American students are consistently imagined in the White imagination. White teachers, he argued, don't work "to see" that kids are "really going through something." Instead, they rely on a stereotype of "thug" as explanation for behavior. I connect Merrick's illustration to Emdin's idea of the marginalized neoindigenous both in Merrick's assessment of the way White teens are represented as happy, safe, and pleasant and Black teens as dangerous and criminal and in the way White teachers reduce the experiences of Black students to a stereotype. The latter of which contributes to society's dismissal of their innocence and childhood in both the classroom and on the streets (Ferguson, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015).

As Merrick and I continued to discuss Black teens and society, he reminded me of the chilling account of Kalief Browder, an African American teen who was racially profiled and falsely accused of stealing, then, sent to Riker's Island, where he was abused. Once found not guilty, Kalief was released but committed suicide after telling the story of torment in Rikers (Barish, DuVernay, & Averick, 2016). Merrick began discussing Kalief's story when I asked him, "Do you think you're in danger because you're a Black male? How?"

> You know how they be like some Black people look alike? If I was walking down the street, somebody robbed a bank, and they see me, and I look like him, I'm getting locked up. I've seen it happen before. What's that story, Kalief Browder? He went through Riker's – Riker's, that's hell – just for somebody saying, "He stole my book bag." A Black man can go to jail if somebody just said he raped them. We have to pay child support if they just say it's our kid. [For Black men] They shoot first and ask questions later. That's how I see it.

In Merrick's response to my question, he revealed his understanding that Black men are guilty until (or if ever) proven innocent. Merrick addressed extreme consequences or "dangers" for Black men for each offense. I would agree with Merrick that Black men are deemed guilty until proven innocent given the negative social imagery that has been painted and purported against them for centuries (Crenshaw, 1995; Howard, et al., 2012; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015).

In our third interview, Merrick illustrated a keen understanding of the social injustices around him. I wanted to know if he thought our afterschool meetings affected him. I began with, "Let's go ahead and start talking about our meetings from last year.

How would you describe them to a friend?" He shared, "It was very educating. We didn't get through a lot of stuff, but it was very educating. It was fun too. We had a lot of laughs, snacks, a lot of snacks." I reflected, "You said they were fun. What made them fun?" Merrick recalled a song he always asked me to play that I found obnoxious. "You remember that song that I always used to play? … To see you get mad was just funny."

I wanted to know if Merrick remembered any material that was meaningful to him. I asked, "Do you remember anything that was important to your life? Any things that haven't left you since our meetings?" Merrick tried to jog his memory out loud, "I'm trying to think," he said. "We didn't do a lot. Oh my God! What did we do?" Merrick had a hard time recalling specific information from the meetings. He tried to provide some examples, but they turned out to be material we did not cover in our afterschool meetings.

Further along in our conversation, Merrick remembered we talked about "African history." I replied, "Tell me what you found helpful that we talked about [during the afterschool meetings]. What has been helpful to you?"

> Say if I get into another encounter with the police, I'm not going to be like, "Oh, blah, blah, blah." I can't be disrespectful. Then I'm going to get shot. Then I'm going to be on the news, and I'm going to be on the t-shirts. I don't want to be there.

One of the initial goals of meeting with the young men after school was to equip them to navigate our racialized society in ways that disrupts the status quo and at the same time, in a way that hopefully keeps them alive. My goal was not to purport subservience, but an awareness of the different expectations of various social actors, including males of

color. I believe understanding how law enforcement officers sometimes respond to young Black males is important knowledge for sociopolitical consciousness.

This theme was particularly important to me, because the pilot study that informed this dissertation research began because of Merrick's insightful critique about the world around him. Across four interviews, I found that Merrick understood the sociopolitical climate in which he lives as a social actor. That is both fortunate and unfortunate. It is fortunate that Merrick understands the realities that he is up against, and in the same way it is unfortunate that a fifteen-year-old recognizes the truth that when encountering Black men, law enforcement will "shoot first and ask questions later." I included this theme in the findings, because it is important that as children live and understand these realities, schools provide spaces to discuss them and tools to resist them.

I had hoped I would hear more from Merrick about how our critical race meetings affected him, but he could not remember much specific information from the afterschool meetings. That the meetings were fun and helpful to him, and that the relationship he had with me as a teacher kept him from being in "even worse trouble" were the things he described as meaningful.

4.4.4 "My name was out there": The importance of being known to Merrick.
By teachers. During our second interview where we talked about school and teachers, Merrick said, "my name was out there." He repeated this idea multiple times in that interview. Typically, he used this phrase to share why teachers would get along well with him. For instance, the first time he used the phrase, he recalled interactions with an elementary teacher. "I forgot her name, Ms. Clackley (pseudonym), she would be the meanest lady to everyone else. When she comes to me, she would be so nice to me. …

Because my name was out there." I asked Merrick to explain what that phrase meant, to which he replied, "It was out there in a good way. I never got in trouble in elementary school." As we continued with conversations about his experiences in elementary school, Merrick used the phrase again. In third-grade, he encountered a teacher with whom he did not interact well initially. "My third-grade teacher, we really didn't click. Then, she had no choice but to click with me." I asked him why she "had no choice" but to click with him. "I'm just going to keep saying the same thing. My name was out there, Ms. Williams." Again, I asked for further explanation of what that meant to Merrick and how it affected his relationships with his teachers.

> If I go to any elementary school that I went to and you say my name, they'll know who I am…I made them laugh. I would see a teacher in the morning, and she's struggling with all her things and her paperwork. I would go help her out. She would give me a little piece of candy or something. That's the main thing I do at that school. I did a lot of fundraisers, too.

As Merrick described his name being out there in elementary school, he did so by discussing his relationship with teachers, particularly in a positive manner as he first described the comment saying, "It was out there in a good way." When I followed up with Merrick, I shared this theme and asked him how it made him feel to be known by his teachers.

> I love it, because I see some of these students that they [the teachers] don't know nothing about and some of the teachers still don't know they name, and like it's almost the middle of the school year. Like the first week, teachers already knew my name, because I'm a class clown.

I asked him to tell me more about why he "loved" being known by his teachers.

I want to stand out, because if I'm getting a zero and you tell me you don't care,

that's going to make me feel some type of way. But if I get a zero and you be like

"Merrick, what is you doing?" You gotta get on me, that something you gotta do.

Merrick, to some degree, identified with being helpful and funny, which he framed as

positive attributes among his elementary teachers. In his last quote, he referred to his

current teachers, as he has just started his sophomore year of high school at the time of

our follow-up interview (fall 2017). Merrick still desires to be known by his teachers as a

comedian, and according to him, someone who is "unique."

By peers. When Merrick reflected on middle school, he talked about being

known there, too, but not once by teachers. Instead, in middle and high school, Merrick

began to discuss being known by peers. He described being in a neighborhood gang

where the gang was known by teens in multiple middle schools and high schools. "We

was known. We took seventh-grade over. Seventh-grade was ours." To say "seventh-

grade was ours" meant that their gang had a large number of members from seventh-

grade, and therefore, "ran" seventh-grade in terms of popularity. According to Merrick,

the intent of their gang was not like notorious gangs. "It wasn't like the Blood and Crip

gangs. We made our own. [We weren't trying to do] nothing, just make a name." I

asked how they made their name. "I don't know. I just guess we were trying to get a lot

of people in." After that, he named four different high schools from which their members

came.

During our first interview, Merrick reflected on his current social life.

My social life, it's more than average, than other people. I can go through a

hallway and [does not complete sentence] I was with my girlfriend one day and

she said, "How do you know all these people?" I was like, "I guess they just

know me. I don't know them." My name is really, really loud. When people talk

about me, they know who they're talking about.

When I followed up with Merrick, I asked him what his friends would say about him.

My friends, you remember Jay (pseudonym), the person I always hang with,

that's my cousin, he my cousin and my friend. He would be like, "Merrick a

bully; Merrick nice at the same time. He funny. That boy a clown." When I post

something, that's what people say on my Instagram, "boy you fool."

I followed by asking about his thoughts on identifying as a "class clown" and being

called a "clown". Typically, African American males have been negatively depicted as

the Sambo, or minstrel character who sought to entertain his superiors (Howard et al.,

2012). However, when Merrick described himself as a "clown" he meant someone who

is funny and enjoyable among his peers and with his teachers.

Yeah, I like being a clown, but when I'm serious people take me as a serious

person. Like when I'm quiet in class, people be like, "Merrick, what's wrong,

bruh? Who did it? Who tryna catch that fade [fight or some sort of retaliation]?"

I'm like chill. I have people who will not die for me, but they'll fight for me 'til

the ends of the earth.

I asked him why he thought people would "go so hard" for him.

To be honest, I don't know. That's something I never could analyze myself. So,

let me

think about it. I never could think why [does not complete sentence] I feel like I never changed up on nobody. I guess that's why people be like, I'll die for you. I'll ride for you and all that. Because most of their friends probably switched up. I'm in the back looking like, "Hey, I'm still here."

When I shared what it was like to interview Merrick earlier in this chapter, I talked about his compassion for others. In this response, I could again see Merrick's concern for others as he discussed what I call his loyalty to friends. As Merrick talked about his relationship with his friends in this part of the interview, I understood that their loyalty to him was also valued, as he repeated this idea of being known. In my view, for Merrick, to be known meant he was cared for in some way. By peers he was cared for through the fact that they are willing to fight for him and with teachers he seems to know they care about him by "his name [being] out there", or the fact that he stands out to teachers.

In each case, with teachers and peers, Merrick attributes his being known in a positive manner. With teachers, he is known for being helpful and funny. While with his peers, he painted a picture of a loyal and fun friend.

I think about Merrick's care for others as a motivator for being a "clown." In the Black community, people often say, "I have to laugh to keep from crying." Merrick's provision of laughter is good for the souls of Black folk (Saloy, 2001). When he discussed being known by his teachers, he assured me, "[my name] was out there in a good way." He went on to describe his relationship with teachers as one in which he was helpful and made them laugh, as discussed above. With his friends, he also mentions bringing fun through clowning. I think Merrick wants to be joyous around others. He

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finds humor enjoyable himself and seeks to spread joy to others. We call it, #Blackboyjoy.

Merrick wanted to be known and wanted to be enjoyed. When we talked about teachers and peers, he never casted a picture of himself in a position of opposition, but instead he painted a picture of himself as someone who was popular and well-liked. I found it surprising that when I asked Merrick how it made him feel to be known by teachers, he responded, "I love it." As an educator, the last thing I think teenage students care about is how teachers feel about them. In my opinion, so much will be lost with students if other teachers think like me and disregard the importance of students' perceptions of their teachers' perception of them.

Merrick's thoughts about his "name [being] out there" are important, because it leads to a deeper understanding of what it means to care for students. For instance, Merrick wants to be known by his teachers. He wants them to know his name and facets of his personality (i.e. his sense of humor). In their study of emancipatory pedagogies, King and Swartz (2016) encouraged teachers to locate students, or use who students are to inform instruction. In order to engage in student-centered instruction, educators must first *know* students.

4.5 Salient Points

In addition to the themes above, I will discuss some salient points from Merrick's interviews. Although these points did not become patterns or themes, they are important here, because they taught me more about Merrick's story and how these points inform him. These points are brief and not all related, but they seemed important to Merrick as he shared his experiences with me.

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Worst memories in school were not about school. In our second interview as we discussed his schooling history from his earliest memories of school until now, Merrick spoke about social interactions in and around school. He spoke about social interactions more than he spoke about academics. When I asked Merrick about favorite memories and worst memories from school, they were about social interactions and not specifically academic.

When we discussed his worst memories of school, he recounted instances like, "I peed my pants" in elementary school, and "My worst memory [in high school] I think is when the left tackle stepped on my foot while we were playing football." When I followed up with Merrick about his worst memories, he shared that peeing his pants was one of his worst memories because of his own embarrassment. "That's embarrassing. You peed on yourself?" I asked him if anyone saw him. "I don't remember. The only person I remember seeing me is the nurse. But, that's the only person I *remember*." I asked if he knew no one had seen him, if he would have still been embarrassed. "Yeah, because like being embarrassed by other people is not really gonna affect you in life. Being embarrassed of yourself, you gonna remember that 'til your casket." Although I did not ask him directly, after spending time with Merrick, I believe Merrick has high standards for himself as evidenced in his comment about remembering embarrassing moments until he dies and his desire to take care of his mother even as a young child.

His toe being stepped on by "the left tackle" in high school made the list as one of his worst memories because of the pain he experienced after the injury.

It was [one of my worst memories] because when the game was over—we won—

and I got a couple of reps—but I had to go to my grandma house and grandmas don't like doctors and stuff like that. They believe God gonna fix everything, and I'm not saying He won't, but God gave us doctors. And my grandma, she took my whole toe off. Like my toe nail off. I never cried so much ever in my life.

"The Struggle." When I asked Merrick if he liked elementary school, Merrick framed his response in reference to his out of school circumstances at the time, or what he called, "the struggle." Based on the context in which he spoke, "the struggle" was some type of financial hardship for the family. Merrick's experience in the struggle seemed to impact him both at home and in school.

> No [I did not like elementary school], not at one point. During elementary school my mom was going through the struggle. As my mom was going through the struggle, I'm going through the struggle, my brother is going through the struggle. My sister went through the struggle. When I was in I think it was pre-K, the third-grade, I had every shoe you could think of, Jordans, all that. Fourth-grade, fifth-grade, I had the same pair of shoes, had to wear a uniform. We came up from it. I'm glad we did, but it was a struggle.

I asked Merrick if he was happy to be at school when he was struggling at home, but he said, "No, I wanted to stay home to take care of my mother at that point."

Years later as a high school student, "the struggle" informed the way Merrick thought about schooling, particularly, when he reintroduced the term "struggle" when discussing assessment measures. When I asked Merrick, what measures he thought could be used to show teachers what he had learned throughout the school year, he offered, "I'll show them my test scores. I'll show them what I do with my personal time, what's my

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hobbies, what I go through [pauses] nah, nah." I asked him why he recanted his last comment, "what I go through." "Because you never know who he [prospective teacher] might tell [about his personal business]." Wanting to know why he brought that up, I asked why he considered that to be important to show teachers. "To show your struggle to success…That was my thing. That's what I had to do. I had to struggle to my success." I followed by asking Merrick what represented success for him currently. "When we first found this house, I thought it was a big house. You know what I'm saying?…If I wanted to, I can go buy my mom rims. I could take my momma's car to be fixed up. It's nothing wrong with it, but I want my momma car to be riding high on 32s." I asked why those things were important for him. "To show that I can take care of my momma. You can't talk about me when your momma is riding in an old Cadillac that's barely, driving because you can't take care of your responsibilities."

Hearing Merrick talk more about responsibilities in the home, I asked if he thought it important for teachers to know his responsibilities outside school and his success with them. "Yeah, because you can take care of the responsibilities at home as you can do at school." I asked which was more important, school responsibilities or home responsibilities. Merrick replied, "My home…Because this is where I have to come to every night. This is where I lay my head. If I can't lay my head at home, where am I going to lay my head?" For Merrick, responsibilities within his home, or his outside school context, are more than his schooling responsibilities.

I included these points, because they helped me understand more about Merrick's context inside and outside school and how much of his outside school experiences informed his thoughts on schooling. Honestly, hearing of how Merrick's life and

circumstances outside school informed his thoughts on school was not surprising. Instead, it was a reminder of how society affects individuals in school, not just the practice of schooling. For instance, the field of foundations of education began as the study of how society affects schooling (Tozer, 2001), however, if we look closely at only educational processes, we can miss the humanity of those we wish to educate.

Participating in interviews with Merrick vividly reminded me of the trials and triumphs of the children I taught within and beyond the classroom. As Merrick talked about "the struggle", I thought of how school work may have been the last thing on my mind if I were in his shoes. While this is not a call for educators to "let up", or set low expectations for students living in adverse social conditions, it is a reminder that Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) still matters to every human being, including those we teach. Within Merrick's experiences inside and outside school, I found implications for curriculum writers, teachers, teacher educators, and civic partners, each of which I discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I present a summary of the study, discuss particular findings, and provide specific implications of my study for curriculum writers, teachers, and teacher educators. In the discussion section of the chapter, I will expound upon findings I considered most enlightening. I begin this chapter by summarizing the study.

5.1 Summary

I examined the educational experiences of an African American male student, Merrick, who participated in a series of afterschool meetings focused on examining issues of race and racism from a critical race perspective (Lynn, 2004). My conceptual framework consisted of works that explored the miseducation of Black students (Woodson, 1933), Afrocentricity (Asante, 1987; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). I argued that traditional schooling perpetuates a racial caste system that hurts African American students by distorting and ignoring their heritage knowledge (King, 2015) and neglecting and refusing to invite dialogue leading to social critique that fosters a sociopolitical consciousness leading to change. I conducted a pilot study during the 2015-2016 school year, where I shared these ideas with male students of color. In this study, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with Merrick and an evaluation of his middle school curriculum in order to examine his schooling experiences in relation to these ideas about miseducation and sociopolitical consciousness.

From interviews with Merrick, I developed four themes: (1) "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it" : Meaningful work for Merrick (2) "A loving heart": The influence of teachers in Merrick's life (3) "They shoot first and ask questions later" : Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness (4) "My name was out there": The importance of being known to Merrick. I will spend the rest of this chapter discussing these themes and providing implications for curriculum writers, teachers, teacher educators, and civic partners.

5.2 Discussion

At the outset of this study, I sought to explain parts of Merrick's schooling narrative through my conceptual framework where I contended that schools purposely distort and disregard the rich heritage of African peoples to foster what Woodson (1993) called the miseducation of the Negro. Therefore, I endeavored to capture Merrick's schooling narrative, from elementary school to his current schooling experience as a high school freshman. However, instead of learning a sequential story of his time in school, I learned of Merrick's thoughts towards some major aspects of schooling such as the curriculum and schoolwork, teachers, and how schools have contributed to (or not) his heritage knowledge (King, 2015).

I thought Merrick would tell me storied accounts that would lead me through his schooling experiences each step of the way. For instance, I thought Merrick would begin by telling me what school was like in elementary school and then, how the transition was from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school, with full details of how they were similar and different, and how they impacted him. However, in our interviews, Merrick had more to say about certain topics and experiences. He focused

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on those topics and experiences rather than detailing the arc of his education experiences. Consequently, I did not think I had a developed educational narrative to analyze, and so sought to discuss the themes from analyzing interviews with Merrick.

In both my introduction and review of the literature, I argued that for decades African American scholars have presented theories and frameworks to effectively education Black children. However, much of that body of work has gone underutilized (Aronson & Laughter, 2016) or coopted in ways that minimize the emphasis on centering African Americans and their cultural assets (Sleeter, 2012). In contrast, I am situating my discussion in this specific body of literature. Particularly, I draw upon Black scholars who have effectively educated African American students and teachers who educate African American students (Boutte, 2016; Emdin, 2016; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

5.2.1 Meaningful work: "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it": Meaningful work for Merrick Merrick's ideas about work came at no surprise to me as scholars (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2009; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016) have emphasized the damage dismembered histories and meaningless work causes African American children. It is important to note that Merrick not once stated that he disliked learning, but he did state that school was not of much value to him. Throughout our conversations, he reiterated the fact that what he learned in school had no bearing on his lived experiences.

Merrick's testimony is reminiscent of Emdin's (2016) reality pedagogy, which furthers Ladson-Billing's concept of cultural relevance. Emdin (2016) argues for an understanding of youth culture that evaluates the intersections of urbanity, race, class,

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and age. In reality pedagogy, teachers and students work together to co-construct a

learning environment that meets the students' unique needs. Collaboration is integral in

reality pedagogy because the teacher begins with the assumption that s/he is not the

expert on students' lived realities and therefore, should seek to understand and learn from

students. Merrick asked the question, "How am I going to use that stuff [writing letters

and $x + y = 79\text{-}72$] in my personal life?" The collaborative aspect of reality pedagogy can

provide a space where students can confidently ask that question and co-construct an

answer.

Over 80% of the U.S. teaching force consists of monolingual, White women

(Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016). Because White women experience the world differently

than the youth of color they may teach, it is imperative that teachers learn the unique

needs of their students from conversing with and consulting their students (Emdin, 2016).

Further, teachers should not only seek those needs for the point of knowing alone, but

they must integrate those needs and knowledges into the learning curriculum because

students' prior knowledge shapes how teachers can best deliver content (Emdin, 2016).

Likewise, Ladson-Billings (1994) and King and Swartz (2014) insisted on the

importance of including students' cultural knowledge in the curriculum. When I asked

Merrick what he would change about what he learned in school, he replied, "I would try

to change all the history. You know that was going to be my thing."

Merrick was the impetus for our afterschool meetings. When I met Merrick, he

was discussing Huey P. Newton and talking about inequities among Black people and

White people. History matters to him, more importantly, African and African American

history matters to him as he would go on to explain in his interview. Merrick shared, "I

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want to learn Native American history, African American like now history, stuff like that, but they don't teach us that."

King and Swartz (2016) refer to a pedagogical practice of locating students, which invites teachers to learn about and include students' cultures as they design instruction. Specifically, locating students is defined as an emancipatory pedagogy that means, "students' cultures "hold" information about how to engage them in learning" (King & Swartz, 2016, p. 38). In the same way, Emdin (2016) advocated for educators to co-construct the classroom space with urban students of color using reality pedagogy. Reality pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning where teachers have the primary goal of meeting students on their own cultural turf. In reality pedagogy, there is a role reversal that positions students as experts in what shapes how best they learn content. The findings from Merrick's interviews about his thoughts on school align closely with the extant literature around teaching African American youth. That is, Merrick, a Black male student, wanted to engage in schoolwork relevant to his cultural heritage and background, and work that spoke to his current reality, aspects found in emancipatory pedagogy (King & Swartz, 2016) and reality pedagogy (Emdin, 2016).

Merrick also spent some time talking about work that would "get [him] something in return." I found his insight in this area particularly perceptive. When Merrick talked about work in this way, he provided two examples. In one example, he talked about work in which he would make an impressive living wage, such as $30 an hour. In another example, he talked about the return in reference to his current station as a school-aged student. He wanted grades that matched the level of effort put forth in assignments. Tying the two together, Merrick advocated for school work that gave him a return worth

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his time in both areas. Namely, he wanted his current work as a high school student to increase his grade averages more than just a few points, and he wanted that work to prepare him for a job in which he could earn a livable wage.

It seems that by design, school work should do that, especially in the state where Merrick resides where the state standards are accompanied by a document which profiles a successful state graduate who should obtain world class skills ready for a global career (TransformSC, 2017). However, Merrick laments the fact that the work he receives does not meet these standards from his vantage point.

Although I understand Merrick's argument against doing laborious work and only receiving small increases in his grade, I also understand the way his middle school marking grades were calculated (i.e., based on percentages for each category of the assignment --homework, tests, and quizzes, and other assignments). Knowing that different assignments held different weights, I understand why his grade point average would not have moved as much as he desired. In retrospect, I could have challenged some of Merrick's assumptions about the utility of his mathematics courses by sharing how he could use algebra to help him figure out how his grades may have been weighted.

To his other point about work in school that will prepare him to earn a livable wage, I agree that students, and particularly Black males and other students of color, should receive an education that prepares them for competition in the labor market. While I understand there are researchers (Kohn, 2003), who advocate for an education that is not tied to the labor market, and instead focus on students' interests, I contend that when Black children spend over 12 years in school, they must be prepared to compete in a labor market that for centuries has been designed for their participation at the bottom

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(Watkins, 2001) and for lower wages and salaries. I support Watkins' (2001) argument because of the systemic subordination of African Americans in society at large.

As a Black woman raised by a single mother, who was born to a janitor and factory seamstress, I was taught that my education would help me contend in a world where I would have to work twice as hard for just as much as White folk. I needed my education to be one that prepared me to be a formidable contender in the labor market (of my choice) so that I could continue to advance economically in a society that seeks my subordination (Woodson, 1933). Obtaining an education does not secure economic and social mobility in the U.S. for a Black person, but it does provide a greater chance to earn a living wage (McLeod, 2009). Here, I would like to mention that I distinctly address social mobility, because it is one of the goals of education that I esteem, and because I recognize economic power can lead to greater quality of life, which I desire for African Americans. Important to note here is the way I am engaging with the term social mobility as it pertains to education.

Labaree (1997) outlined three divergent goals for U.S. education: democratic equality (schools should focus on preparing citizens), social efficiency (schools should focus on training workers), and social mobility (schools should prepare individuals to compete for social positions). Labaree contrasted education for a private good to education for the public good. In his discussion of education as a private good, he described education with the aim of social mobility as positioning education itself as a commodity, providing individuals with competitive advantages as they seek desirable social positions. In this approach, Labaree explained, "The aim is to get more of this

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valuable commodity than one's competitor, which puts a premium on a form of education that is highly stratified and unequally distributed" (p. 42).

For those who believe social mobility should be the purpose of education, education is seen as a private good for individual competition in the labor market. And Labaree asserted that elite parents see the most gain from this approach to education.

The social mobility goal, therefore, by portraying education as a consumer commodity, produces different kinds of effects on education depending on the social class of the consumers in a given educational setting,…One result is that pressures for intensive competition and radical stratification of education are likely to come more strongly from those at the top of the social scale than from those at the bottom. It is elite parents that see the most gain from the special distinctions offered by a stratified educational system, and therefore they are the ones who play the game of academic one-upsmanship most aggressively. (1997, p. 54)

I agree with Labaree's assessment of the commodification of education as a private good in the social mobility approach. Similarly, one of Merrick's comments about work reflected the desire for schooling to aid in social mobility. When I asked him, "What do you think it [school] should be like?", he responded, "I think they should teach us about that job, not just make us do work about it. Teach us how to do it." Merrick wants an education that leads to the ability to obtain a job based on the skills he acquired. Additionally, he wants to be able to make what I would call more than a living wage.

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At [the alternative school], we took a field trip to [a local technical college]. All they do is like…I think it was engineering and they were making plastic. That's a job. I think they said they make $30 an hour just to make plastic.

In this part of our conversation, Merrick shared these details with me excitedly. In that moment, it seemed that those possibilities of schooling appealed to him as schooling that was worthwhile and that would help him earn a good living. Earlier in our conversation, Merrick made another connection with the social mobility approach to education. We were talking about his stance against completing school work. I asked, "Do you think work is a part of school?" Merrick replied, "Yeah, but I feel like school just tries to set you in factories." Within both of these comments, I could see Merrick wrestling with his vision for schooling and its connection to his future, and the reality of his schooling. Specifically, these comments remind me of the tensions around the social mobility approach to school and schooling in relation to the labor market as it pertains to African American students.

I would like to again call attention to economic differences. Labaree specifically discussed the ability the elite to benefit from the educational system, because the elite have the financial means to privatize education. For instance, the elite are able to afford to bid up the price of a house to gain access to the "right school district" (p. 54). In the same way, Labaree explained that elite parents privatize education by using their economic power to maintain monocultural neighborhood schools. In contrast, Merrick, and others like him who do not possess the economic capital to which Labaree refers. Thus, I do not think social mobility functions for less affluent students in the same way it

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does for elite students, because less affluent students and their families do not have the means to privatize education.

One tension that I mentioned in my defense of an education tied to the labor market is the fact that my education prepared me to be a formidable contender in the sector of the labor market that I chose. Here in lies one problem of an education tied to the labor market, and particularly a capitalist labor market mediated by racism (Bowles & Gintis, 1978; Bell 1992). As social reproduction theorists (Bowles & Gintis, 1978) asserted, schools are agents in the social reproduction of the economic caste system. Throughout history, an education directly tied to the labor market has led to the tracking of particular people groups into fields and jobs they may have found undesirable (Oakes, 2005). Tracking, or the practice of placing students in specific courses of study with the intent of landing them in certain parts of the labor market, is a disenfranchising outcome of an education tied to the labor market (Oakes, 2005). For African American students, being tracked into lower positions in society continues to be real danger as it has been throughout history (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tyson, 2011; Watkins, 2001). This danger does not exist for elites who can leverage economic capital in ways that stratify access to public education and that produce opportunities for education as a private good (Labaree, 1997).

To summarize my thoughts on an education tied to the labor market, I emphasize the importance of an education tied to the labor market for Black students and recognize the dangers of an education tied to the labor market as it pertains to educating African American students. I have not exhausted the lists of benefits and dangers of an education tied to the labor market and educating Black children, but I attempted to highlight some

historical and contemporary issues prevalent in the conversations about educating African American children and the relationship between education and the U.S. labor market. I insist that we continue to think of the ways an education tied to the labor market can both help and hinder African American students.

As I think specifically about Merrick and an education tied to the labor market, I meditate on the importance of broadening the horizons of possibility for Merrick and other students like him. In one conversation we had in the classroom, Merrick reminded me, "You can't dream about something you've never seen." With that in mind, I think it is important to continue to provide "windows" for students into what could be for their futures (Boutte, 2016). King and Swartz (2016) would place such imaginings within the emancipatory pedagogy, of locating students. Locating students involves providing content relevant to students' current lives, as well as providing opportunities for them to learn beyond their current situations. I want Merrick to experience a curriculum that prepares him for the labor market, but not one that equips him to take a subservient role in the labor market. Instead, I hope Merrick experiences a curriculum that equips him with tools to think critically and solve problems relevant to his community and the world at large. I believe this can be achieved by question-driven pedagogy. With question-driven pedagogy, teachers ask students thought provoking questions that build on what they know (King & Swartz, 2016). In my opinion, participation in such pedagogy would prepare students for any labor market that is to evolve in the future.

From my experience of working in one school Merrick attended, there are at least two factors I observed that may have contributed to Merrick's dissatisfaction with his work and the mismatch between the state's intentions and the delivery of the standards.

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First, in Merrick's case, teacher quality was a hindrance to receiving "world class skills" and work that would provide him "something in return." I worked with three of the teachers who comprised Merrick's eighth-grade team of core teachers. One teacher was consumed with his own social mobility, in the form of moving to an administrative position and spent more time focusing on completing applications and finding new employment, rather than enhancing lesson plans and student engagement. Another one of his teachers preferred to use film to entertain students and dismissively control behavior (i.e. using the film to keep students seated). Merrick's least favorite teacher that year spent a lot of time either not speaking to students. She would sit at her desk and give students independent work, or yell at them for asking her a question pertaining to the work she had given.

I include these examples not to denigrate teachers, but to provide personal and professional insight into how systems can be in place, such as the profile for a successful state graduate, and students still feel (and rightly so) that their needs are not met in schools. I am not touting this profile as the hero in this narrative either. Having been a teacher when it was released, I recognize that teachers may or not have been given this document. I remember becoming acquainted with the document through a graduate course, for which I was paying. The state's department of education did not provide an introduction to the document, or training providing teachers with tools to foster this imagined graduate. In my experience, there are many visions cast that speak of high standards for students, but tools, including highly qualified and dedicated teachers with appropriate dispositions cease to abound to make these visions a reality.

5.2.2 "A loving heart": The influence of teachers in Merrick's life :

Culturally relevant dispositions. One tension I experienced while working with Merrick and reviewing the literature around educating African American males was the fact that I am an African American female eldering a male, when there are multiple calls for Black male teachers to work with Black male students (Bristol, 2013; Brown, 2012; Pabon, 2014; White House, 2016). In all honesty, my preference as a teacher is to work with female students as I am a female and typically, feel most comfortable conversing with them and relating to them. However, as a Black person in the U.S., I recognize the ways in which our society demonizes our Black men (Howard et al., 2012). I also recognize the beauty, strength, intelligence, and ingenuity of Black men and aspire to aid in protecting and defending it. Therefore, I hosted the male students of color after school and constructed this entire study around the experiences of a Black male.

More interesting than my own commitments to Black male students though were Merrick's comments about his favorite teachers. Merrick named three teachers as his favorites, each of them was female. To this point, one may interject, "Perhaps he only had female teachers." On the contrary, Merrick made remarks about two Black male teachers that he did not enjoy. As stated in the previous chapter, this is not to vilify those Black male teachers or any others, but to problematize national calls for more Black men to change Black boys. While I believe it is good and fruitful for Black boys to have Black male teachers, I think it is even better for Black boys to have culturally relevant, caring teachers of any race. It is not good enough just to have a Black male (or female) body in the classroom with Black male students, instead teachers of African American males must possess specific dispositions that incline them to work with students for the

good of the students and their communities (Boutte, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). For instance, Merrick critiqued his ninth-grade history teacher, who is a Black male, because he was not able to "diss" students, or return a witty comment to students' jokes. Emdin (2016)'s work on cosmopolitanism as one of components of reality pedagogy might reflect one way to engage Merrick's critique.

Cosmopolitanism is an approach to teaching that focuses on fostering socioemotional connections in the classroom (Emdin, 2016). It is based on the philosophical construct that human beings are responsible for each other and our individual differences should be valued, despite cultural differences (Emdin, 2016). According to Emdin (2016), typically, urban youth of color are alienated in the classroom, because they do not assimilate to dominant culture. The goal of the cosmopolitan classroom is for everyone together to be able to be their authentic selves. The brilliance of urban youth of color is often denied, because their brilliance does not fit into an existing mold, such as whitestream norms; subsequently, urban youth of color are labeled anti-academic. However, in a classroom that is shaped by a cosmopolitan ethos, students and teachers work together to create a culture that is a tapestry of communal practices (certain ways of talking, moving, gesturing, and articulating).

One way teachers can promote cosmopolitanism in their classrooms is to speak students' language. In the specific example with Merrick and his social studies teacher, Merrick's desire for his teacher to be able to "diss" students is a pragmatic aspect of speaking African American Language (AAL), signifying (Boutte, 2008). Signifying refers to a speaker humorously insulting a listener. One must be quick-witted to participate (Boutte, 2008). Boutte (2008) noted that African American Language has two

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dimensions, language and style. The pragmatics of AAL has been referred to as the spirit of the language (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). It is important for teachers to deeply explore students' cultural identities and locate students within the classroom as a community and within the scholastic content. These pieces together are important to teachers operating in culturally relevant dispositions. In teacher education, I would suggest providing preservice teachers an intensive study of African American Language (Boutte, 2008; Rickford & Rickford, 2000). First, teachers need to recognize the rules and patterns of the language. Next, preservice teachers should sit as students of African American students to learn the pragmatic functions of the language. I am not recommending that preservice teachers begin to appropriate terms from the language. After learning from students, preservice teachers can draw upon the pragmatic elements such as signifying to relate to students. At the least, a study of the language can prevent preservice teachers from hyper-correcting and punishing African American students for using their language.

When Ladson-Billings (1995) introduced the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, she did so by describing the dispositions of teachers concerning their conceptions of self and others, their social relations, and their conceptions of knowledge. Specifically, Ladson-Billings (1995) evaluated these propositions, because she recognized the failure of school reform rested largely upon unchanged, deficit perspectives of teachers towards African American children.

Although Merrick did not state that his Black male teachers expressed deficit or demeaning attitudes towards him, his testimony does not support the argument that Black male teachers are the "answer" to helping Black male students in schools. Instead, my

position as a culturally relevant pedagogue, regardless of gender, had some impact on Merrick as he called me his best teacher. When I asked him why, he responded, "If it wasn't for Ms. Williams, I would be in worse trouble than I am right now." He was referring to our conversations about gang affiliation. I proceeded to ask him if any of his other teachers talked to him about that to which he replied, "They didn't know about it, that's the thing."

I cannot say with certainty what his teachers knew about him, but I wonder if they would even care if they did, because some teachers have been socialized to expect gang affiliated caricatures of African American males (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Further along in this same interview, Merrick says that his three favorite teachers shared this, "a loving heart." King and Swartz (2016) connected each of their emancipatory pedagogies to an African worldview and culturally-informed principle. Merrick's mention of his teachers possessing "a loving heart" echoed the collective responsibility and communal responsibility that King and Swartz discuss. Collective responsibility is an element of the African worldview that informs communal responsibility, which is an emancipatory pedagogy. Collective responsibility is an ontological orientation that is concerned with togetherness, group-based ways of knowing, empathy, community-mindedness, service to others, and right action that represents a commitment to human interconnectedness. Communal responsibility is the emancipatory pedagogy informed by the African worldview element, collective responsibility. Collective responsibility is a pedagogical approach that teachers can use in their classrooms to foster group belonging, reciprocity, right actions, and being responsible for each other. As I stated in Chapter Four, Merrick liked helping others, and he most appreciated those teachers who helped him. In this

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way, although he did not explicitly state it, I inferred that Merrick desires teachers who care about the well-being of others, including him.

Merrick presented a proposition for teachers that transcends gender, that his teachers would possess "a loving heart." In each of his examples of his favorite teachers, Merrick presented a person who cared about his well-being and his life. So too, culturally relevant pedagogues carry a disposition in which they value social relations with students in which they demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). To sum up my argument of this section, effective teaching for African American male students has more to do with teacher dispositions than teacher characteristics such as gender.

5.2.3 "They shoot first and ask questions later": Merrick's sociopolitical consciousness: Emerging sociopolitical consciousness. As I prepared to collect data for this study, I anticipated that Merrick's ideas may have changed or shifted a little since our time together in after school meetings. Merrick has new teachers and other social networks that influence his worldview. I was prepared to hear new ideas about his identity as it pertains to race, and maybe even ideas antithetical to some of those we discussed in our meetings. However, I heard something different in our interviews. Merrick had not deviated from some of the thoughts and ideas discussed in our afterschool meetings, instead, to me, it seemed as if he only remained with those ideas. This surprised and frustrated me more than the thought of him shifting perspectives. Truly, I assumed that after sharing more information about race and racism's effects on his life, Merrick would go dig deeper, by staying up on current events and researching

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historical precedents pertaining to them, and become equipped to combat the social ails caused by systemic racism.

When I asked Merrick, "If you could name at least two issues facing Black people in this country, or not even the whole country, just where we live in general, what do you think are two issues facing Black people?", he responded, "The main thing is profiling. I hate it. I went through it. I hate it." While I agree profiling is a great injustice that Black people endure daily, and we had discussed racial profiling in our afterschool meetings, I thought I would hear Merrick take that information and look at how it resulted in other issues for African Americans. To be fair, I did hear some connections as he recounted the Kalief Browder story, but I think I was unfairly looking for more. Just like when working with the sixth-graders I briefly discussed in the introduction chapter, I placed high, but unrealistic pressures on Merrick to have all the information pertaining to the Black struggle for freedom after having conversations about race and society.

In addition, I found that one of Merrick's sociopolitical critiques was incorrect.

Merrick: I read statistics a lot, and they say most likely if your mother is a single parent you end up in jail and all that stuff. Because of what goes on in this country, it makes things worse on everybody else.

Dalisha: What things?

Merrick: The stuff that Trump is doing, we've got to suffer for it.

Dalisha: Give me a specific example of one of the things that he's doing.

Merrick: Healthcare. He's trying to do something with that, ain't he?

Dalisha: He's trying to repeal Obamacare.

Merrick: He's trying to repeal it, but that's a lot of people who…

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[pause]

Dalisha: You were saying if Trump changes healthcare in the country it was going to affect a lot of people.

Merrick: Yeah, it's going to affect a lot of people. The whole thing with Syria, that's going to affect people on this side at least by the way it's handled. [inaudible] We ain't dead. We really have no money. I think we're the brokest country.

Dalisha: I don't think that's true. We do have a lot of debt, but we have a lot of allies. We usually do.

Merrick critiqued the actions of President Trump and ended with a comment about the financial situation of our country. Merrick stated "We [the country] really have no money. I think we're the brokest country." Moreover, to start this comment, Merrick began with an accusation against the president and then followed with a question towards me to substantiate his critique. I was alarmed and upset by his inaccuracy in making a critique and the fact that he would set out to make a claim without having evidence to back it up. My family raised me on the African American proverb, "When you're Black, you have to work twice as hard to get just as much." I have been raised to understand that, and in the world of social critique, when you are Black and critique the status quo that protects whiteness and white supremacy, you must "come correct", that is you must come with verifiable facts to be taken seriously to affect change, and sometimes even that does not work.

In my frustration, I shared some of my data points with a colleague, because I knew my heart was too entwined with the work. This is the same issue I faced when working with my first group of students, the sixth-graders mentioned in the introductory

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chapter. I easily forget that I am working with children who in some ways, though denied in others (i.e., hyper-policing, boys viewed as men), are still experiencing childhood.

They may not feel the immediate weight and social obligation to "fix" the system as I did when I came to much of this information. I began to explore these issues when I was at least 10 years their senior with more experience in the raced and classed society we live in. Concisely, I came to this information with more tools than they. Largely, the biggest tool was time. Along with the fact that I am older than the students I teach, I have also studied issues of race and racism longer and have been provided various tools and language to identify, and in some ways, disrupt parts of the systemic racist regime. Consequently, interviews with Merrick have led me to think about a continuum when thinking about sociopolitical consciousness.

Before interviewing Merrick, I positioned sociopolitical consciousness as an end point, or final destination. However, I recognize through Merrick's testimony and even in my reflections that we are constantly growing in our consciousness of the world around us and certainly with issues of race and racism as the forces used to oppress people of color (Alexander, 2010). My time with Merrick helped me reorient my thinking. Now when I think about sociopolitical consciousness I do so as a continuum. As I think about sociopolitical consciousness as a continuum I focus on three components: time, content, and entry point. The temporal component of the continuum is that as time progresses (and the appropriate tools and content are present), one grows in knowledge. In my comments above, I briefly discussed how I grew in sociopolitical consciousness, because I had time and the appropriate resources. The content component

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is largely connected with the ability to access socially political and critical content. Another component of the continuum would be entry point. One's position on the continuum would not only be mediated by the amount of time s/he has to engage with critical content, but also what his/her thoughts were at the start of engaging with socially conscious political and critical content. For instance, in my pilot study, not all of the boys started with the same understanding of race and racism as Merrick. So, although they had the same amount of time to engage in the afterschool sessions with Merrick and with the same material, I would imagine their thoughts on some topics would differ from his. Indeed, during our time together, I noticed that some of the boys did not take seriously the station of being a male of color even after watching videos about racial subordination. However, one of the other boys in the group, Carlos, did make connections from the videos with racial injustice he witnessed at school.

Evaluating sociopolitical consciousness on a continuum is important, because it may help us refrain from dismissing people as "sleep", a contrast to the term "woke", which refers to one who is aware of and resisting social injustices. The more people we write off as "sleep" or "not woke," the fewer people we have to fight racial and social injustices. I argue that we need to attend to where people are and meet them there with the appropriate tools and content to walk alongside them on the continuum. I want to note that I think this sociopolitical consciousness continuum is true for teachers and teacher educators as well. My recommendation remains the same, to meet people where they are and walk with them on the continuum. I do think it would behoove those of us who are more "woke" than others to seek to identify our colleagues who need some assistance on the continuum.

Relatedly, Jackson (2011) offered strategies for developing the sociopolitical consciousness with future teachers at traditional university-based teacher preparation programs. First, future teachers should be given opportunities to learn social and political histories of communities of color. Next, teacher educators can reinforce the communal aspect of culturally responsive teaching by partnering with community-based organizations and structuring future teachers' clinical experiences to include opportunities to be part of social justice movements.

From my own experience with Merrick, I learned that you cannot spend six weeks or even nine weeks with a student and expect him/her to continue on this journey alone. It should have been of no surprise to me that Merrick mostly recited inequities, such as stereotyping and profiling, that we discussed in the afterschool meetings; I left him on the journey alone. I do not share this to insert myself as a salvific character of sorts. Instead, I share this as a lamentation. I do not think it is my responsibility to facilitate Merrick's full journey of sociopolitical consciousness. Again, when I met Merrick, he was already exhibiting a sociopolitical consciousness. However, from my own experience and what has been referenced in recent literature (Murray & Milner, 2015), schools are not fostering the sociopolitical consciousness of students of color (or White students), and there is an extreme need to do so.

In my own experience, the road to sociopolitical consciousness has been a continuous one since I began the journey. Unlike how I conducted the meetings with Merrick and other students for a few weeks, over the course of the last four years I have continuously been enrolled in courses about issues of race and racism, attended discussion groups with like-minded scholars to talk about the issues, and read books and

attended conferences focused on pursuing justice. Looking at my own experience alone, it is with much hubris that I would believe that just one group can keep a student on the path to discovery. Yet, all was not lost, in one interview, Merrick shared that the afterschool meetings changed some things for him, "Yeah [I changed]. I think after that I stayed out of trouble. I think so. I don't know so, but I think I stayed out of trouble." I included that point to illuminate the fact that the meetings were helpful for Merrick; however, ongoing conversations with students will more likely increase their tools to identify, analyze, and disrupt systemic injustices. Perhaps, if schools taught history without error and the omission of people of color and marginalized groups (King & Swartz, 2016), students would receive tools to critique and disrupt social injustices.

5.2.4 "My name was out there": The importance of being known to Merrick.

As I reflected on Merrick's salient comment about his "name [being] out there" and our conversations about what that meant to him, I was reminded of Asante's (1987) admonishment to use Afrocentric frameworks as tools of analysis when engaging in research with Black children. Merrick's commentary about his reputation among teachers and peers related to King and Swartz' (2016) discussion of the African worldview. King and Swartz (2016) provided examples of elements of the African worldview shared by students of African ancestry across the Diaspora. Some of those elements were the caring treatment of people and enacting "the good" of others through behaviors that are truthful, just, compassionate, generous, and peaceable to create harmony in human relations that lead to the well-being of the community. When Merrick talked about why his "name was out there", he recounted ways that he brought forth

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service and right actions towards others, both African worldview elements. For instance, when he explained why his "name was out there" in elementary school, he recounted,

> If I go to any elementary school that I went to and you say my name, they'll know who I am…I made them laugh. I would see a teacher in the morning, and she's struggling with all her things and her paperwork. I would go help her out.

As Merrick talked about his notoriety, it was not just for his namesake, it was also because he wanted to be known for doing good, or taking right action towards others (King & Swartz, 2016).

I interpret the African worldview element of collective consciousness as prevalent in Merrick's conversation about his relationships with his friends. Collective consciousness is a relational way of knowing that is shaped by mutuality, the sacredness of both the spiritual and the material; Reciprocity and Harmony (Virtues of MAAT); and Unity and Self-Determination (Nguzo Saba Principles) (King & Swartz, 2016). Merrick talked about his social life as "more than average" in relation to his level of popularity. However, for his deeper relationships, he thought about why his friends would "fight for him 'til the ends of the earth." When I asked him why he thought they would do so, he replied, "I feel like I never changed up on nobody. I guess that's why people be like, 'I'll die for you.'" Again, in his relationship with peers, I see Merrick committed to just actions towards people and cultivating harmony and unity. This was one of my favorite parts of interviewing Merrick, hearing him talk about his relationships with others.

To Merrick's earlier point about profiling, if one were to look at Merrick, I do not think they would imagine he is the caring young man he is. I will admit, I did not know just how phenomenal he was until embarking on this journey with him. So too, I would

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not know what to make of his comments about his "name [being] out there" without exploring literature on African worldview elements (King & Swartz, 2016). It is hard to even fully articulate my thoughts at the conclusion of this section, because it is so disheartening to think about the ways in which African American children are misunderstood because of the apartheid of knowledge that exists the world at large, and teacher education specifically (Bernal & Villalpando, 2010; King, 2015).

In short, I argue that Merrick's desire to be known reflects his African ancestry in various ways, including African cultural continuities such as caring for others, service to others, justice, unity, and harmony. Unfortunately, African heritage knowledge and cultural knowledge have been dismembered and omitted in teacher education programs. Consequently, teachers are often unable to see the beauty their African American students possess and share in the classroom community. Yet, there is hope. Boutte (2016) emphasized, "African Americans have a long tradition of excellence in education, socialization, and mastery of their environment and circumstances, and educators can consider wisdom from African American communities when seeking *best practices*" (p. 24). Indeed, Boutte (2016) showcased the work of 14 model teachers from the Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African American Students – CEEEAAS at the University of South Carolina. The model teachers at CEEEAAS come from various backgrounds, including different racial backgrounds (e.g., some of the model teachers are White) and are all committed to an in-depth understanding of African American students' cultural backgrounds to make learning meaningful and transformative. Although the Afrocentric worldview is most prevalently embodied among African descendants throughout the Diaspora, that does not mean White teachers and teachers of color cannot

foster culturally informed principles and pedagogies in their classrooms. All teachers can teach and foster relationships in a way that Black children and their cultural assets can be celebrated.

5.3 Implications

As I stated in the introduction, for years scholars of color have labored to provide the educational system with decades of research to effectively educate African American children, including African American males. Despite this, African American children are still being spiritually murdered in the classroom as well as physically on the streets (Johnson & Bryan, 2017). Ultimately, what is at stake here are the lives of beautiful Black boys. Hence, I will provide implications for persons who write curriculum, teachers, teacher educators, and civic partners.

5.3.1 Curriculum writers.
In his interviews, Merrick, repeatedly discussed his disdain for his schoolwork because it is irrelevant and dismissed his heritage. These findings indicate the necessity of constructing learning targets and objectives that are relevant to students' lived experiences and speak to their needs in the future. One way to write such a curriculum is to collaborate with *students* and teachers to understand particularities of their youth culture (Emdin, 2016).

Additionally, Merrick's testimony echoed the cry of multiple scholars across multiple decades to re-member the history and contribution of Africans and African Americans into and across the curriculum. Most recently, researchers (Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016) have written about how to re-member African and African American histories in the classroom. Those resources can be used to fulfill *all* students' need of an accurate account of history. By re-membering African heritage knowledge,

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curriculum writers and consequently teachers can participate in the African informed principle of inclusion (King & Swartz, 2016). Inclusion happens when all cultures and groups are understood as substantive participants in human development, and their presence is vital, not token (King & Swartz, 2016).

    5.3.2 Teachers. One of the most compelling statements Merrick made was about the commonality among his favorite teachers, they had, "a loving heart." As discussed in a few sections, Ladson-Billings (1994), also explored the dispositions of the effective teachers of African American students in her study and found the teachers possessed a genuine care and concern for students. To genuinely care for students, I would argue that teachers need to genuinely know students. Merrick also shared that I was influential to him because I knew something about his life and provided guidance in that area.

    While I understand the many constraints under which teachers operate, results from this study point to the importance of teacher-student relationships. To foster the type of care Merrick made mention of in his interview, teachers can first treat *all* students with kindness and dignity. Often, teachers have their favorite students to whom they show great care and concern (Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, teachers should attend to treating all students with respect, kindness, and dignity.

    This is especially important as it pertains to Black male students who are often treated harshly out of teachers imagined perceptions of them (Howard, et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). Teachers need to interrogate their biases about their students and actively combat them in their minds and with their actions towards students. One way teachers can interrogate their biases, is to read literature by males of color. I would recommend reading Ta-Nehisi Coates' (2015) *Between the*

World and Me, which is an autobiography through which he recounts his coming of age story as a Black male in the U.S. In his book, Coates shares ways his Blackness was unwelcomed in schools. While reading this book, I would encourage teachers to locate their practices amidst Coates' experiences. Coates' story is a counter narrative to the many negative stereotypes surrounding Black boys and men (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). Teachers can read many of those stereotypes confronted in his work. In addition, although teachers may not be able to do this with each of the students in their courses, specifically for middle school and high school teachers, teachers can make an effort to join students in their extracurricular and community activities such as athletic games, spoken word events, and religious gatherings as applicable.

Teachers can also draw upon African-informed principles for content and pedagogy to effectively care for and educate Black students. King and Swartz (2016) provided an Afrocentric praxis for teaching that is available to teachers of all ethnicities. To be frank, one does not need to be of African ancestry to effectively educate African American children (Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Across ethnic identities, teachers in public schools should: (a) seek to familiarize themselves with re-membered histories of Africans and African Americans that have been often omitted and distorted in the traditional curriculum (King & Swartz, 2014, 2016); (b) draw upon Diasporan and neoindigeonous literature to locate students (Boutte, 2016); and (c) communicate with students in culturally affirming ways (Emdin, 2016).

Finally, the title of my work suggests that the sociopolitical work with Merrick and the other boys happened outside of the traditional school day. As I stated in section 5.3.1, the traditional school curriculum should be reconstructed in a way that provides

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accurate accounts of the history of African Americans. Doing so will enhance the possibility of fostering the sociopolitical consciousness of students during the school day. This work does not have to take place after school, or "underground." For instance, some high schools are offering Africana studies courses for students. Some schools offer clubs during the school day where students can participate in areas of their interests. This is also a space for sociopolitical work. However, I do caution that those facilitating these courses and clubs be equipped with accurate accounts of African and African American histories. Although, people are excited to promote social justice in schools, because of the apartheid of knowledge in academia, too often teachers and the public at large are left with distorted accounts of African and African American histories (Bernal & Villalpando, 2010; Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016).

   5.3.3 Teacher educators. Teachers are primarily equipped through teacher education programs. Teachers will be more equipped to effectively educate African American male students if they are provided the necessary dispositions and knowledge in teacher preparation program. It follows, then that teacher educators become (if not already) committed to an academic agenda where these are taught and practiced.

   Teacher educators may need to revise syllabi and entire classes to meet the needs of African American male students like Merrick who desire accurate accounts of African and African American histories and teachers who will treat him with dignity. In fact, teacher educators may work within their departments and colleges of education to reform program guides and coursework requirements for teaching degrees. For instance, teacher educators may begin to require additional world history coursework, specifically courses that survey African history, for their pre-service teachers. Another suggestion is for

teacher educators to transform their teaching spaces to reflect components of reality pedagogy (Emdin, 2016) and the Afrocentric Praxis of Teaching for Freedom (King & Swartz, 2016). Even with measures such as these, teachers may not enter the classroom as culturally relevant pedagogues, but our chances are much smaller if these things do not change.

In addition, teacher educators can use the rich historic examples of Black high schools as sites of activism to imagine what is possible with preservice teachers. Baker (2011) examined pedagogies of protests among African American teachers in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. Although minimally cited across literature on the movement, these Black teachers made crucial contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. According to Baker, combining ideas about activism based on the African American uplift philosophy and John Dewey's democratic conception of progressive education, these teachers created academic and extracurricular programs that encouraged student protests. For instance, teachers designed programs that explicitly taught students to vote. They also taught lessons on the structure of government and the courts' design to acclimate students with U.S. political culture. Drawing from the experiences of students and teachers as activists can help teacher educators re-imagine what is possible and prepare pre-service educators to support activism for racial justice.

5.3.4 Civic partners. The findings from this study are illustrative of the ability to affirm the humanity of Black children through intellectual engagement in outside of school spaces. Therefore, in addition to the call for curriculum writers, teachers, and teacher educators to make changes to foster the sociopolitical consciousness and success of African American students, civic organizations and invested citizens can also join in

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the struggle for the emancipation of the Black mind. Civic organizations for this cause could include, but are not limited to faith-based organizations, local chapters of national Pan-Hellenic sororities and fraternities, and afterschool organizations like the Boys and Girls club.

Any leader in each of these organizations should possess a desire towards, and proven and demonstrated commitment to social justice. In addition to desire and commitment, these civic educators should possess re-membered and accurate accounts of African and African American history. Unfortunately, accurate accounts of African and African American history are hard to uncover given the apartheid of knowledge that exists within all levels of schooling (Boutte, 2016; King & Swartz, 2014, 2016; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). However, civic educators committed to taking up this work with fidelity can access resources through museums and university courses in Africana studies as a starting place.

Although there is no "official" curriculum to foster sociopolitical consciousness among students, leaders in these organizations can begin conversations about current events and tie those to critical engagement with historical antecedents. Next, or along with those conversations, leaders can host book studies that are relevant to issues of social justice and bring in speakers from various fields who pursue social justice in various arenas. To foster social justice, it is imperative to invite a diversity of guests and speakers across ethnicity, vocational, age, gender, and economic lines. During their intellectual engagement with studying social justice, students should then engage in social justice projects and community work. I envision that as students increase in

sociopolitical consciousness, they would increase in right actions that foster a collective

humanity (King & Swartz, 2016).

EPILOGUE

As I conclude this dissertation project, my first research project, my work has become more about Black lives than research in education. It has been about that from the beginning but even more so now. Even as I reconvened with Merrick for interviews, I felt myself become more in touch with his humanity than I had been as his teacher.

Although I can attest to this fact at the end of the project, I do admit that throughout the project, I found myself lost in doing the work of research. I mentioned in Chapter Five that I take the responsibility for not capturing Merrick's educational narrative as I had wished. I left my first two interviews with Merrick quite frustrated. I felt as though Merrick's responses to my interview questions were not focused enough. They did not coalesce with my research questions as I had envisioned. I shared these frustrations with some colleagues, along with my advisor. My advisor encouraged me to follow where Merrick led in our time together. She reassured me that it was okay to listen to what he had to say and not only search for things I wanted him to say. After our conversation, it was as if a weight had been released from me. As a novice researcher, I thought it was my duty to ensure that I conducted the interviews in such a way that Merrick's responses provided the best data for my intended study. I worried that if his responses did not fit neatly with my research questions, I would fail in some way.

For the future, I have a new mindset with which to approach listening to participants in interviews. First, I recognize I can listen for the stories that are important to participants, while keeping them focused on the interview protocol. Early in my time

with Merrick, I focused on the interview protocol without listening for those stories important to him. Secondly, as I listened to Merrick, I came to understand the importance of following his stories and asking for more. By using phrasing such as "Tell me more"." and "How did that make you feel?" I could come alongside Merrick as he let me in on experiences and narratives that are important to him. I am grateful that Merrick was excited to share with me and agreed to a follow-up interview. In that interview, I was able to employ some of what I talked about here for future research.

When I returned to our recorded conversations with this new mindset, I heard the importance of the stories Merrick told. Moreover, I realized that more of his conversations converged with some of the theoretical concepts included in my study. than I had originally thought. Most importantly, I remembered the study was about him and his stories, not my own.

This was an invaluable lesson from my time with Merrick and embarking upon research for the first time. I cannot allow myself to get lost in doing the work of the work. I mean, I cannot get lost in the bureaucracy of conducting research, while missing out on the beautiful humanity I wish to affirm.

Along those lines, I also experienced a shift in my epistemological beliefs. I am still working through what some of these shifts are exactly and what they mean for my work in the future, but here I will share a bit of what I am currently thinking. I stated in the introduction that I wanted to "beat White folks." I have always purposed to do so by showing White folks that I can achieve just as much as they could and even more. As a teacher working towards social justice with Black children, I wanted them to do the same thing. I wanted my Black students, and specifically Merrick, to beat White folks by

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achieving in the same ways White folks did. For me, doing so would mean that we needed to learn the ways of White folks in school and consequently, assimilate to them. Throughout this dissertation journey, I learned on some levels that adherence to whitestream norms in school is what I was asking of us, myself and my students. In doing that, we would lose the African American identities for which I fight. Arriving at this conclusion led me to immerse myself all the more in Afrocentricity as an analytical lens.

For too long, I have been trying to keep up with White folks, to beat White folks, instead of reveling in the beauty that is Blackness. Again, as I pen these thoughts, I am still grappling with contradictions and paradoxes. However, in this moment, I care to leave those unresolved. For I wish to celebrate the fact that I have made it here. I celebrate that I have found another way in which I have been held captive to white supremacy; and therefore, I have another way to resist. In this moment, resistance looks like uncovering as much literature as I can about Afrocentricity as an analytical tool and thinking of ways to spread this good news of the African episteme.

Resistance was one of my aims when I started this work in 2015 as a racial justice project. Resistance was my hope when I continued to work with Merrick and his friends in 2016. For Merrick specifically, I wanted him to continue to resist white supremacy and society's and his school's attempts at his subordination because of the color of his skin. But, I wanted him to do so in ways that I could call productive and in ways that would not further endanger his already endangered Black body. For me, resistance in the fight against white supremacy and racism has always come in the form of academic achievement and scholarship. I do not think these are the only ways to resist but they are

the ways I have taken up resistance. Consequently, they are the ways I shared with my students. In any form, resisting in productive ways is a matter of urgency for Black children and adults.

I want Black boys and girls to esteem themselves and their people highly. I argue that if we do not resist the school curriculum which does not show the brilliance of Black people, then our children will feast on the deficit caricatures of Black people that are portrayed in the media. These depictions lead to the spirit murders of many Black boys and girls (Johnson & Bryan, 2017). Historically, spirit murders have been the first step to our physical murders, which are present all around us (Alexander, 2010; Watkins, 2001). In my opinion, race-based work with youth of color is a matter of life or death.

As I reflect more on my time with Merrick and this dissertation research, I think more on how excited Merrick was to share with me. When I walked into his home for the first interview, it was as if he had seen a ghost. He stammered, "Oh my God! I can't believe you're here. I thought I'd never see you again." The semester I spent with Merrick and the other boys after school was my last semester teaching in K-12 schools. It was also their last year at the middle school. I promised the boys that I would keep in touch, but I imagine they may have heard promises like those before, many unkept.

When I arrived at Merrick's house, I was also engaged. Merrick wanted to talk about that and how he needed to meet my fiancé. I am including this picture to provide more insight into the type of relationship we shared. I have mentioned my perception of Merrick's care for people and his desire to be cared for. I am convinced that care and our relationship played a role in the way Merrick began to perform in my math class and what he took away from our afterschool meetings.

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As mentioned earlier, Merrick confessed that he could not remember many specific topics of discussion from our afterschool meetings. However, he stated that the meetings were helpful to "think of a different way to deal with stuff." Also, during the semester in which we began meeting, Merrick's academic grade increased from an "F" to a "C" in my class. Additionally, he shared that I was his favorite teacher because "If it wasn't for Ms. Williams, I would be in worse trouble than I am right now."

Scholars (Noddings, 1986; Valenzuela, 1999) have discussed the importance of the ethics of care in transformative relationships and academic achievement among students. Specifically, Valenzuela (1999) addressed what it means to care about Mexican and Mexican-American youth. However, I argue that within my relationship with Merrick, a specific type of care existed, one that emanates from the African American philosophy of education (Perry, 2003). The work of Black scholars (Baker, 2011; Perry, 2003; Siddle Walker, 1996) paints a picture of care for students that is closely tied to our collective struggle for liberation through education. In this conception of care, what I will call "elder care," teachers approach students with high expectations and a high level of commitment, because they understand weight of being Black in this country.

I approached Merrick in the same way. As I mentioned earlier, I often think about the negative stereotypes that will be projected on Merrick's Black body. When others do so, they will miss the beauty that is his soul. I cared so much for Merrick in the educational setting because of my belief that fighting for our literacy is the same as fighting for our freedom. I articulated that to Merrick, and I believe he respected it and respected me as an elder. As a result, I think Merrick's academic performance improved and his aspirations began to shift.

While I recognize the multiple responsibilities placed on educators, I implore educators at every level to get back to the basics. Sure, I believe that almost anyone who enters the field of education does so because s/he is for the students with whom s/he will encounter. But, based upon my own experience and the testimonies of other teachers I have worked with, I think each of us can get lost in the bureaucracy of schooling and the politics around us that tramples on our humanity (i.e. a national leader who incites bigotry and racism). My time with Merrick has been a beautiful reminder that students are children with hopes and dreams, and that most of us as teachers sign on to help them achieve those. I hope this study inspires educators across levels, K-12 and postsecondary, to return to the good work they set out to do.

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APPENDIX A: Permission Form for Afterschool Meetings

Dear Parent(s):

My name is Dalisha Williams. I have served as your son's math interventionist specialist. Throughout the course of our time together, your son has expressed interest and maturity in issues of equity and access for African Americans. Because of his interest and that of other students, I am hosting an afterschool forum in which students can voice their opinions about important issues and learn background information to help support their understanding. We will meet Wednesdays at 2:45pm. Transportation will not be provided. If you agree to let your son participate, please be here to pick him up at 3:40pm. Additionally, I would like to record some of our meetings to document the feelings and voice of adolescent students of color. Please sign the consent form below, agreeing to your son's participation in the program and the stipulations as listed above. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the school, ext 72165.

I look forward to working with you all!

Best,

Ms. Williams

_____

I agree to my son's participation in the afterschool forum.

Child's Name:

_____

Parent's Name:

_____

Parent's
Signature:_____

Date:_____

APPENDIX B: Afterschool Meeting Curriculum

Date	Agenda	Artifact
March 2, 2016	-Group Norms -Lorde - The Uses of Anger -Video and Dialogue	Critical Race Theory: Understanding the Nature of Race and America https://youtu.be/CB27vqknETk
March 9, 2016	-Debrief from previous session: Share one thing you remember from last week and/or what was most interesting to you and why. -Discuss historical examples of oppression in the U.S. context. What are the underlying causes? -Examine and trouble stereotypes	A Brief History of White Privilege, Racism and Oppression in America https://youtu.be/YFjKQVZLk1g
March 16, 2016	-Finish conversation from last week: What do you find most problematic about our country? -Race as a social construct -White privilege	The Social Construction of Race Explained https://youtu.be/_qaWp8_z81w
March 23, 2016	-Revisited and finished last week	
April 6, 2016	-Race as a social construct with material consequences -Stereotypes -White Privilege	White Privilege Article http://www.tolerance.org/article/racism-and-white-privilege
April 20, 2016	-White Privilege -What is White Privilege? -Macklemore's White Privilege	13 Things White People Take for Granted https://youtu.be/EcfPLL3qjkI

APPENDIX C: Reflections on the Afterschool Meetings

These are excerpts from a conference paper I completed in June 2016. I am including these excerpts that specifically focus on Merrick's sentiments as a way to contextualize the critical-race afterschool meetings and my choice to continue to work with him for this critical case study.

*

I met with five male students of color after school, weekly, over the course of six weeks. In this setting, the students and I discussed issues of race and racism to include: understanding race as a social construct; the history of race in the U.S., colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism; the power of stereotypes and assumptions; and white privilege. This information was shared through discussions, videos, and articles. Each meeting lasted an hour. Although all of the boys' journeys through sociopolitical consciousness were impactful, Merrick's journey was especially powerful as his academic performance improved while his sociopolitical consciousness grew.

*

At the beginning of the semester, [Merrick] would arrive without materials and sit silently disengaged, or make rude comments when he deemed appropriate. After we started meeting after school, Merrick would come to math class ready to discuss more issues of race and racism and additional media he found interesting and racially charged.

He also began to participate in conversations about the mathematics we were learning. By the end of the semester, Merrick's grade in my class increased from an F to a [C].

There are two perceived reasons for his participation in class. The term "perceived" is being used here because I will later conduct interviews with Merrick to ascertain his voice concerning the changes. The first perceived reason for Merrick's academic success was an increase in self efficacy. In our discussion of his turnaround in my class, Merrick disclosed, "When I first came here I thought I was like retarded." After conversations about his giftedness as a scholar in Black studies and leadership qualities, Merrick began to put forth a strong effort to improve his academic performance.

I had a classroom expectation that lack of community participation would lead to placement in a different course. One student, another participant in the afterschool club, had already been removed from the class. Later in the semester, Merrick disclosed, "You're my favorite teacher. I can't get put out of your class." Merrick respected me as an elder, a component of emancipatory pedagogy in which students experience their place as learner with dignity since teachers have exhibited expertise in a way to share the power of knowledge with them as opposed to using that expertise to exert power over them (King & Swartz, 2016). Our conversations in the afternoon revealed to Merrick my expertise in critical race theory and my desire and willingness to share the information with him and his classmates.

Merrick entered my class with the understanding that African Americans have been unfairly treated in this country. As we engaged in question-driven pedagogy and communal responsibility, both emancipatory pedagogies (King & Swartz, 2016), he decided he would go to college to major in African American Studies. Question-Driven

pedagogy requires that teachers ask thought-provoking questions to build on what students know. Communal responsibility is the understanding that for anyone to be free, everyone had to be free. We discussed this concept throughout our afterschool meetings, recalling that although some people of color are living "well", many are not. I asked students their response to the fact that significant amounts of African Americans are still unemployed, underemployed, and mis-educated. Merrick's response was that of gaining more understanding and knowledge of his people and speaking out against oppression.

"White supremacy!" Merrick shouted this phrase to describe much of the injustice he encountered in the school and larger society. One day, he arrived at the afterschool meeting incredibly tense, refusing to speak. As time elapsed, he began to loosen up and recount the story of how he "didn't do nothing," but still got in trouble due to racial profiling. Merrick recognized the injustice he faced and through our meetings began to name the oppression, and in some cases, uncover the source. In a discussion about white privilege, Merrick discussed the inequities regarding access to better food choices in grocery stores and the fast food restaurants present in their neighborhoods. Merrick was eager to share his critical scholarship with peers and his family as a way to name injustice and consequently, challenge the status quo, further embodying the emancipatory pedagogy, communal responsibility.

APPENDIX D: Permission and Assent Forms

Dear Parent(s) and Student,

I hope this letter finds you in good health, spirits, and strength. During the 2015-2016 school year, your son participated in afterschool meetings with me. During the meetings, we engaged in rich dialogue, and created an open, safe space where we felt comfortable to explore social and equity issues through exploring history and sharing our stories and experiences.

Because of my perceived transformation of Merrick, I would like to interview him to explore and document the various conversations from the afterschool meetings and his overall school experience. If you allow his participation in this study, I will conduct two to three individual interviews with Merrick.

Allowing Merrick to participate in the study is your decision. You do not have to allow him to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also remove him from participation in the study at any time or he may decide not to answer any questions he is not comfortable answering.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at dswilliams89@gmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Allison Anders (803) 777-0521 (office) or email aanders@mailbox.sc.edu if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at (803) 777-7095.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please sign the attached form and return it to Dalisha Williams.

Sincerely,

Dalisha Williams

College of Education

University of South Carolina

820 Main St.

Columbia, SC 29208

Assent Form
Study Title: Still Runnin' the Underground: A Critical Case Study of Emancipatory Pedagogy with an African American Male

Researcher: Dalisha Williams

I have read the information contained in the letter about the study titled above, which describes what my son will be asked to do if I allow him to participate. I have been told that the decision is up to me, that I do not have to allow my son to participate, and that I can stop his participation at any time I choose.

- ▫ Yes, I will allow my son to participate in the study.

  Or

- ▫ No, I will not allow my son to participate in the study.

Child's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____   _____

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Interview 1: Catching Up

1. What was the beginning of high school like before you were expelled from ABC (pseudonym for his high school)?

- How did you feel about your teachers at ABC before you were expelled? Please name them, what they teach and what you thought about them and their classes.

- How did you feel about what you were learning? Do you remember anything interesting?

- Did you learn about anything that matters to your life outside of school?

2. What was it like being on the football team? (I saw one of his social media posts where he mentioned that he missed "these days", in his picture, he was on the field with his mom, smiling in his uniform)

3. Why are you at Brigham Academy (pseudonym for alternative school)? What happened?

- Did any other events lead up to that?

- Were any of your friends involved?

- Did you feel the need to protect yourself? What was your motivation?

- Had you been in any other trouble this year?

4. How do you feel about Brigham Academy?

- What are the teachers like there? Name them and their subjects, how do they treat you?

-What are you learning? How are you learning (hands-on, research, lecture)?

- Do you like what you are learning? Is it meaningful to your life outside of school?

5. What do you think of yourself and your future right now? Do you feel like a failure?

Do you want to go back to ABC? Do you care about being expelled from there? Why?

APPENDIX F: Interview 2 Protocol

Interview 2: Revisiting School

In this interview, I will be asking you to think about your experiences in school from pre-school to ninth-grade. Specifically, we will discuss what stood out to you during those years, whether it be specific subjects, teachers, events, or friends.

1. What is your favorite memory of school?

2. What have you always liked about attending school?

3. What have you disliked about attending school?

4. Name your top three favorite teachers in school. Why were they your favorites?

5. What is your worst memory from school?

6. How do you feel about what you learn in school?

7. If you could change anything about your schooling experience, what would it be and why?

8. If you could change what you learn in school, what would it be and why?

9. Do you feel school benefits you?

10. How do you feel about your performance at school?

APPENDIX G: Interview 3 Protocol

Interview 3: Perception of the Afterschool Meetings

Last week, we talked about your thoughts about school and your experiences from pre-school to the present. This week, I'd like us to discuss your perception of the afterschool meetings you participated in with me last school year.

1. If you can remember, before the meetings, what did you think about being a Black male?

2. If you can remember, after the meetings, what did you think about being a Black male?

3. What do you think about Black children and learning? Did you always feel that way?

4. What did you think of our meetings from last year?

   a. Do you remember anything specific from them?

   b. Did you find anything we talked about helpful this year?

   c. Do you think you changed after participating? If so, in what ways?

   d. Did your attitude towards school change? What about your attitude towards learning?

5. Did your attitude towards White people change?

6. Do you think other Black children would benefit from afterschool or outside of school meetings like these?

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APPENDIX H: Interview 4 Protocol

Interview 4: Follow-up Interview

1. How would your friends describe you? You mentioned your name being out there, what would a peer say about you, even if they didn't know you well?

2. In one of our previous interviews, you mentioned these [peeing pants, getting in trouble, and having your toe stepped on] as your worst memories of school. What made those your worst?

   For instance, did your classmates see you wet your pants, did you have to go home?

3. You mentioned your family went through the struggle when you were in elementary school? What does the struggle mean for you [and your family (mom, brother, sister)]?

   What affect did that struggle have on you?

   Were you stressed, worried, lacking food, clothing?

4. You mentioned this idea of your name being out there among your teachers and being known through your gang? How does it make you feel to be known?

   a. From friend, and peer perspective?

   b. And teacher perspective? (perhaps 3rd grade compared to 4th & 5th in detail)

GRADE 8

South Carolina:

One of the United States

The focus for social studies in grade eight is the history of South Carolina and the role that the state and its people have played in the development of the United States as a nation. Students learn about the state's development during colonial times; the growth of the American ideal, which led to the break with England; and the rising controversy about slavery, which led to the Civil War. The continued study of South Carolina from Reconstruction to the present, including the struggle for social and economic justice waged by the people of South Carolina, further allows students to see the progress that the state has made and also to visualize the future challenges yet to be met and overcome.

Instruction should utilize the social studies literacy skills for the twenty-first century that are enunciated in chart format in Appendix A. These statements represent a continuum of tools, strategies, and perspectives that are necessary for the student's understanding of social studies material that is taught at each grade level. Beginning at kindergarten and progressing to graduation, each statement is a developmentally appropriate iteration of the same skill as it is being further honed at each grade band (K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and high school). While most of these skills can be utilized in the teaching of every standard, the most *appropriate* skills for each standard are repeated in a bulleted list at the bottom of the page for that particular standard.

Standard 8-1: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the settlement of South Carolina and the United States by Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans.

Enduring Understanding

The human mosaic of the South Carolina colony was composed of indigenous, immigrant, and enslaved populations. To understand how these differing backgrounds melded into an entirely new and different **culture**, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-1.1   Summarize the collective and individual aspects of the Native American **culture** of the Eastern Woodlands tribal group, including the Catawba, Cherokee, and Yemassee.

8-1.2   Compare the motives, activities, and accomplishments of the exploration of South Carolina and North America by the Spanish, French, and English.

8-1.3   Summarize the history of English settlement in New England, the mid-Atlantic region, and the South, with an emphasis on South Carolina as an example of a distinctly southern colony.

8-1.4   Explain the significance of enslaved and free Africans in the developing **culture** and economy of the South and South Carolina, including the growth of the slave trade and resulting population imbalance between African and European settlers; African contributions to agricultural development; and resistance to slavery, including the Stono Rebellion and subsequent laws to control slaves.

8-1.5   Explain how South Carolinians used their natural, human, and political resources uniquely to gain economic prosperity, including settlement by and trade with the people of Barbados, rice and indigo planting, and the practice of **mercantilism**.

8-1.6   Compare the development of representative government in South Carolina to representative government in the other colonial regions, including the proprietary regime, the period of royal government, and South Carolina's Regulator Movement.

Standard 8-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes of the American Revolution and the beginnings of the new nation, with an emphasis on South Carolina's role in the development of that nation.

Enduring Understanding

The events surrounding the American Revolution transformed British colonists into American citizens. To understand South Carolina's pivotal role in this process, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-2.1   Explain the political and economic consequences of the French and Indian War on the relationship of the South Carolina colonists with Native Americans and England.

8-2.2   Summarize the response of South Carolina to events leading to the American Revolution, including the Stamp Act, the Tea Acts, and the Sons of Liberty.

8-2.3   Explain the roles of South Carolinians in the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

8-2.4   Compare the perspectives of different groups of South Carolinians during the American Revolution, including Patriots, Tories/Loyalists, women, enslaved and free Africans, and Native Americans.

8-2.5   Summarize the role of South Carolinians in the course of the American Revolution, including the use of partisan warfare and the battles of Charleston, Camden, Cowpens, Kings Mountain and Eutaw Springs.

8-2.6   Explain the role of South Carolinians in the establishment of their new state government and the national government after the American Revolution.

Standard 8-3: The student will demonstrate an understanding of South Carolina's role in the development of the new national government.

Enduring Understanding

Independence from Great Britain made the creation of a new national government and individual state governments imperative. To understand how and why these governments were created, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-3.1 Explain the tensions between the Upcountry and the Lowcountry of South Carolina, including their economic struggles after the Revolutionary War, their disagreement over representation in the General Assembly, the location of the new capital, and the transformation of the state's economy.

8-3.2 Explain the role of South Carolina and its leaders in the Constitutional Convention, including their support of the Three-Fifths Compromise and the Commerce Compromise as well as the division among South Carolinians over the ratification of the Constitution.

8-3.3 Explain the basic principles of government as established in the United States Constitution.

8-3.4 Analyze the position of South Carolina on the issues that divided the nation in the early 1800s, including the assumption of state debts, the creation of a national bank, the protective tariff and the role of the United States in the European conflict between France and England and in the War of 1812.

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Standard 8-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the multiple events that led to the Civil War.

Enduring Understanding

The outbreak of the Civil War was the culminating event in a decades-long series of regional issues that threatened American unity and South Carolina's identity as one of the United States. To understand how South Carolina came to be at the center of this conflict, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-4.1 Explain the importance of agriculture in **antebellum** South Carolina, including the plantation system and the impact of the cotton gin on all social classes.

8-4.2 Analyze how **sectionalism** arose from racial tension, including the Denmark Vesey plot, slave codes and the growth of the abolitionist movement.

8-4.3 Analyze key issues that led to South Carolina's secession from the Union, including the nullification controversy and John C. Calhoun, the extension of slavery and the compromises over westward expansion, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott decision, and the election of 1860.

8-4.4 Evaluate the arguments of unionists, cooperationists, and secessionists on the issues of states' rights and slavery and the ways that these arguments contributed to South Carolina's secession.

8-4.5 Compare the military strategies of the North and the South during the Civil War and the fulfillment of these strategies in South Carolina and in the South as a whole, including the attack on Fort Smallville, the Union blockade of Charleston and other ports, the early capture of Port Royal, and the development of the *Hunley* submarine; the exploits of Robert Smalls; and General William T. Sherman's march through the state.

8-4.6 Compare the differing impact of the Civil War on South Carolinians in each of the various social classes, including those groups defined by race, gender, and age.

Standard 8-5: The student will understand the impact of Reconstruction, industrialization, and Progressivism on society and politics in South Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Enduring Understanding

During the periods of Reconstruction, industrial expansion, and the Progressive movement, South Carolina searched for ways to revitalize its economy while maintaining its traditional society. To understand South Carolina's experience as representative of its region and the United States as a whole during these periods, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8.5.1 Analyze the development of Reconstruction policy and its impact in South Carolina, including the presidential and the congressional reconstruction plans, the role of **black codes**, and the Freedmen's Bureau.

8-5.2 Describe the economic impact of Reconstruction on South Carolinians in each of the various social classes.

8-5.3 Summarize the successes and failures of Reconstruction in South Carolina, including the creation of political, educational, and social opportunities for African Americans; the rise of discriminatory groups; and the withdrawal of federal protection.

8-5.4 Summarize the policies and actions of South Carolina's political leadership in implementing discriminatory laws that established a system of racial segregation, intimidation, and violence.

8-5.5 Compare industrial development in South Carolina to industrialization in the rest of the United States, including the expansion of railroads, the development of the phosphate and textile industries, and immigration.

8-5.6 Compare the plight of farmers in South Carolina with that of farmers throughout the United States, including the problems of overproduction, natural disasters, and sharecropping and encompassing the roles of Ben Tillman, the Populists, and land-grant colleges.

8-5.7 Compare migration patterns of South Carolinians to such patterns throughout the United States, including the movement from rural to urban areas and the migration of African Americans from the South to the North, Midwest, and West.

8-5.8 Compare the Progressive movement in South Carolina with the national Progressive movement, including the impact on temperance; women's **suffrage**; labor laws; and educational, agricultural, health, and governmental reform.

Standard 8-6: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the role of South Carolina in the nation in the early twentieth century.

Enduring Understanding

South Carolina's response to national crises during the first half of the twentieth century brought it back into full participation in the national experience. To understand the state's changed status, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-6.1 Explain the reasons for United States involvement in World War I and the war's impact on South Carolina and the nation as a whole, including the building of new military bases and the economic impact of emigration to industrial jobs in the North.

8-6.2 Explain the causes and effects of changes in South Carolina and the nation as a whole in the 1920s, including Prohibition, the destruction caused by the boll weevil, the rise of mass media, improvements in daily life, increases in tourism and recreation, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and the contributions of South Carolinians to the Harlem Renaissance and the Southern Literary Renaissance.

8-6.3 Explain the reasons for depressed conditions in the textile mills and on farms in South Carolina and other regions of the United States in the 1920s and the impact of these conditions on the coming of the Great Depression.

8-6.4 Explain the effects of the Great Depression and the lasting impact of the New Deal on people and programs in South Carolina, including James F. Byrnes and Mary McLeod Bethune, the Rural Electrification Act, the general textile strike of 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the Public Works Administration, the Social Security Act, and the Santee Cooper electricity project.

8-6.5 Compare the ramifications of World War II on South Carolina and the United States as a whole, including the training of the Doolittle Raiders and the Tuskegee Airmen, the building of additional military bases, the rationing and bond drives, and the return of economic prosperity.

Standard 8-7: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact on South Carolina of significant events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Enduring Understanding

Changes that took place in the United States during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries revitalized the economy and challenged traditional society and politics in South Carolina. To understand the response of South Carolina to these challenges, the student will utilize the knowledge and skills set forth in the following indicators:

Indicators

8-7.1   Compare the social and economic impact of World War II and the **Cold War** on South Carolina with its impact on the rest of the United States, including the increases in the birth rate; the emergence of the consumer **culture**; the expanding suburbanization, highway construction, tourism and economic development; the continuing growth of military bases and nuclear power facilities; and the increases in educational opportunities.

8-7.2   Analyze the movement for civil rights in South Carolina, including the impact of the landmark court cases *Elmore v. Rice* and *Briggs v. Elliot*; civil rights leaders Septima Poinsette Clark, Modjeska Monteith Simkins, and Matthew J. Perry; the South Carolina school equalization effort and other resistance to school integration; peaceful efforts to integrate beginning with colleges and demonstrations in South Carolina such as the Friendship Nine and the Orangeburg Massacre.

8-7.3   Explain changing politics in South Carolina, including the role of Strom Thurmond, the shift from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, the increasing political participation of African Americans and women, and the passage of the Education Improvement Act (EIA).

8-7.4   Summarize key economic issues in present-day South Carolina, including the decline of the textile industry, the state's continuing right-to-work status, the changes in agricultural emphasis, the growing **globalization** and foreign investment, the influx of immigrants and migrants into the Sunbelt, the increased protection of the environment, the expanding number of cultural offerings, and the changes in tax policy.