

JUSTICE OR JUST US?
VOICES FROM WITHIN
PRISON WALLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the pattern of tracking students out of educational institutions into the penal system. This narrative study was designed to explore the reasons young Black men aged 19-25 are being incarcerated at a growing rate from the young men's perspectives. By giving these young men a voice, this research allowed these young men to tell their stories of why they think they were incarcerated and what interventions could have helped them. This study highlights the young men's perception of influences in their lives that funneled them into the school to prison pipeline. Research suggests the need for social and political programs that will assist families in the formative lives of young Black men.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and my husband, Fred, who has encouraged me all the way. To my children and to my grandchildren, it is my hope that you continue your education. To my grandson LaJuan, who has helped as much as he could with the computer, I hope I have shown you a work ethic and that I have not scared you by working so hard. I want you to believe that education is the key to success. Thank you for putting up with me and taking over my duties.

In memory of my mother Idella Green and my grandparents Joe and Lula Green, I thank them for all they did for me. To my grandmother in-law, Helen Ragland, who paid my first tuition for college, I thank you. For my parents, you always stressed education and family, or should I say, family and education. I did them both as best as I could. I appreciate everything you taught me. You were right! Even when you thought I was not listening, I was. In my years of living I have become you, wow! I never thought that would happen. I know you are here with me and with all of this work, Grandma, I just hope I can help somebody.

Lastly, to my daughter Yovonne, whom I never thought I would outlive. This book is dedicated to Marcus, I see him in the voices of the young men that participated in the study. I hope he sees himself.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

*“The caged bird sings with a fearful trill, of things unknown but longed for still,
for the caged bird sings for freedom.”*

Maya Angelou, 2009

Black males continue to be incarcerated in United States’ prisons today. Gerhardtstein (2009) stated that while violent crime has fallen in America, the incarceration rate has increased. There are an estimated 1.5 million Black men in prison and another 3.5 million on parole. Nealy (2008) stated that Blacks make up 12.5% of the United States population and 40% of the prison population, while Whites make up 66% of the population in the U S and 36 % of the prison population.

The prison population, according to Baldry, Brown, Brown, Cunneen, Schwartz, and Steel (2011), has risen since 1972 in most western nations. Many of these nations have mirrored the U.S. patterns with some places such as the Northern Territory in Australia imprisoning indigenous peoples at rates highest in the world. Baldry et al. (2011) stated that the prison population in Australia has been subject to the same pressures that the United States has and exhibited many of the attributes of the U.S. that has made the U.S. a place where the circumstances mark a need for change. The United States has the highest incarceration rate of any free nation. As a proportion of its population, the United States incarcerates five times more people than Britain, nine times more than Germany, and 12 times more than Japan (Petersilla, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2011), the overall U.S. prison population declined in 2010 for the first time since 1972. State and federal prisoners numbered 1,612,396 at the end of end of 2010, a decrease of .3% from the end of 2009. The federal prison populations increased by .8% while the number of prisoners under state authority declined by .5%. Almost half, 51%, of federal inmates in 2010 were serving time for drug offenses, 35% for public order offenses (weapons and immigration), and less than 10% for violent and property offenses. In 2010, the total state and federal sentenced prisoners totaled 1,446,000 with 561,400 Black males; 451,000 White males; and 327,200 Hispanic males (United States Department of Justice, 2011). The number incarcerated is still too high and the problem remains a serious threat to the wellbeing of the nation. Why is this phenomenon happening? What is the lure of the streets that perpetuates this phenomenon? Why are young men destroying their lives at such an early age? What is it like to live in prison? The purpose of this study was to explore the life experiences of young Black men as they move through school-to-prison pipeline by focusing on their educational and career choices.

Many people think that education is the way to escape the life of poverty; however, the dominant culture in the United States maintains that the Black community has always had a history of underperformance in education. Meiners (2011) advocated for scholars to commit to interrupt the flow of young Black men toward the school-to-prison pipeline. She challenged educators and professionals to build sustainable and viable decarceration initiatives to make schools and communities thrive. She advised stakeholders to formulate programs that will assure young Black men the opportunity to become productive citizens. This inquiry focused on stories told by individuals of their lived experiences within the school system while growing up and the education received in the prison system while incarcerated.

Smith (1992) noted that labels play an important role in defining groups as well as individuals that belong to groups. In the last century, the term for Black has changed from *Colored* to *Negro* to *Black* to *African American*. These changes were attempts of Blacks to gain respect from the dominant culture. This research uses the terms *Black* and *African American* synonymously to give respect to the change.

Problem Statement

Several researchers have explored the reasons that young Black men have been in prison. For example, Hall and Killacky (2008) reported that incarcerated Black men said that resources to obtain status within the community and to wear jewelry, clothes, and other expensive items were two of the reasons that they decide to turn to crime. Lack of role models, peer pressure, and surviving in a community where they are not nurtured or seen as equals are some of the reasons educational attainment has not been important to young Black men. Young Black men living in poverty stricken violent communities without roles models are also more likely to have negative school experiences that lead to crime.

While at the other end of the spectrum, White males with intact families and adequate incomes are more likely to succeed in academics and reach career goals without becoming involved in the criminal justice system. The problem within the Black community is severe and touches the lives of all who reside in the community.

Significance of the Problem

The purpose of this narrative research was to reveal, describe, and discover perceptions of incarcerated Black men aged 19-25 years who are non-violent repeat offenders housed in state prison. The participant were asked to reveal their perceptions of the educational system in and out of prison and how both systems influenced their career choices as well as what opportunities

and social benefits the school systems afforded them. The research examined the experiences of Black men along the school-to-prison pipeline with the end result as the route many Black males take just as oil oozes through a pipeline with a purposeful direction. Society has already determined the path these Black boys will take as early as elementary school. This research gave incarcerated young Black men a voice using open-ended questions so that they could report candidly their experiences to the researcher. In addition, the findings of this study can have implications for improvement of the educational and political systems in our society. The research can help stakeholders and politicians to understand the urgency of the problem and recognize the barriers that young Black men encounter so that interventions can be made at critical times to improve the plight of these young Black men through programs and incentives to help improve their lives so they can contribute to society.

Research Questions

This research provided a voice to prisoners housed in a state prison in Alabama by asking the following questions in a state prison in a setting predetermined by the warden or prison officials that provided the prisoner and researcher privacy. The research questions included the following:

- (1) What are the educational experiences of young Black male who are non-violent repeat offenders aged 19-25 both inside and outside prison that lead to the school-to-prison pipeline; and
- (2) How have these educational experiences contributed to the life choices that they have made both inside and outside prison?

This research used narrative research methods to answer the research questions. The narrative approach is familiar to social scientists because of its popularity in psychology,

medicine, law, and political science. Each participant reported on lived experiences to answer the research questions.

What is Critical Race Theory?

This study adopted critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework in examining the perceptions of incarcerated young black men in state prison (aged 19 - 25) as it pertains to formal education, career choices, and how they view their place in society. Critical race theory, according to Parker and Lynn (2002), is a theoretical lens used in qualitative research that focuses attention on race and how racism is deeply rooted within the framework of the American society. Racism has directly shaped the U.S. legal system and the ways people think about the law, racial categories, and privilege. Critical race theorists have argued that society has systematically used deployed racism in U.S. society. In the literature review in Chapter II, research revealed that when Blacks (especially Black men) were asked if they were treated fairly in institutions in the U.S., they stated that institutional racism was prevalent in society.

Merriam (1998) stated that, from a critical perspective, research should be interested in how social institutions are structured to preserve the interest of some members more than others. Parker and Lynn (2002) have argued that CRT has three main goals. Its first goal is to present stories from the perspective of people of color. The second goal of CRT is to argue for the abolition of racial discrimination from the perspective of people of color, at the same time recognizing that race is a social construct and that race is fluid and is continually shaped by political pressures such as differences such as gender, class, and any inequities experienced by individuals. Thus, CRT was used to describe and discuss the perspectives and perceptions of the problems within the educational system by young Black and how these perceptions affect their view of education.

Critical Race Theory and Violence

Violence is a characteristic that is associated with people of color and minorities when compared to the dominant culture. Watts and Erevelles (2004), Alport (1979), Elliott and Aseltine (2013), and Noguera (1995) reported that social conditions fuel violence that is reported in schools by minorities. Noguera (1995) argued that social conditions force students from low-income backgrounds to feel vulnerable, angry, and resistant to the normative expectations of institutions and school-like environments from the position of critical race theory. The authors noted that some schools look like prisons complete with police officers, security cameras, metal detectors and a dress code that requires conformity.

It has also been reported that school violence is the result of oppressive social conditions that force students, especially those from low-income families to feel vulnerable and resistant to the normative expectation in a prison-like environment (Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Alport, 1979; Elliott & Aseltine, 2013). The authors examined the impact of social, political, and institutional structures on the creation of “deviant” students. Watts and Erevelles insisted that CRT and disability studies broaden the scope of both theoretical perspectives of CRT and disabilities studies. The authors analyzed CRT and disability studies on the basis of school violence to demonstrate that any discussion of racial and disability oppression must be relevant in schools. It is the authors’ opinion that schools practice social control through their disciplinary actions and appeal to sociopolitical conceptions of what encompasses normative behavior. These perceptions of what it means to be normal have become so hegemonic that any student who acts out of the scope of the norm is seen as dangerous, in need of discipline, segregated in special classrooms, or alternative schools and eventually expelled. The norm of public schools has historically upheld the right of “Whiteness” and ability. Students oppressively marked by race, class, or disability

are always deemed as students of lack, inferior, dangerous, and of little use in the school system. The authors' argument puts pressure on scholars in both fields of inquiry to explore the intersection between race, class, and disability in the educational, social, and legal contexts.

Noguera (1995) examined violence as a structural phenomenon and described schools as institutions of social control. Violence is conceived as a structural phenomenon and schools play a role in the social reproduction of violent student behavior. Structural violence is entrenched in the brutal poverty stricken areas in which urban schools and their communities are situated. Children struggle in this community for day-to-day survival in context of what offers little hope and improvement. These children are seen as dangerous to other classmates in school. When social control is given a higher priority than learning and the means to attain this control is sanctioned and condoned by state boards of education, structural violence is present. Watts and Erevelles (2004) agreed that schools are dangerous places where violence occurs in the daily lives of students manifested by the colonizing, and differential treatment practices in the United States public school system.

Critical Race Theory and Privilege

Delgado and Stefanic (2001) asserted that the legal definition of Whiteness took shape in the context of immigration laws and the courts decided who would be white. White privilege refers to social advantages, benefits and courtesies that come with being a certain member of a certain race. Delgado and Stefanic cited Peggy Macintosh's argument that White people enjoy and can rely on several privileges that are attached to the color of their skin. The authors gave an example of two men interviewing for a job; both applicants have identical experience and good references. One of the interviewees is Black, and the other is White. The person who interviews the two is White also. Who would get the job? It would be quite likely the White person. This is

what is meant by White privilege. White privilege refers to the set of societal privileges that White people benefit from beyond those commonly experienced by people of color with the same social, political, or economic spaces (i.e., nation, community, workplace, income, etc.). The term White privilege connotes both obvious and less obvious unspoken advantages that White individuals may not recognize they have, which distinguishes it from overt bias or prejudice.

Harris (1995) argued that the privileges that Whites enjoy are linked to the subordination of people of color. Schools are taking on the role of social control with its policies contributing to the deviant student, many of whom are constantly disciplined in the public school system and are segregated in classrooms for students labeled as mentally retarded (MR) and trainable mentally retarded (TMR).

Solomon (1992) acknowledged that Blacks embrace high educational aspirations on one hand, while falling back on their own subordinate, oppositional culture to resist the structure. This form of resistance is mediated by race. Many times this is due to the student's primary socialization outside of the school system, which occurs only with family and their immediate community. Within this social system, Black children are bombarded by expressions of subordination that their racial group encounters while interacting with the dominant group. For those Blacks who gain entry into the workplace with the dominant culture, unequal treatment continues with unequal working conditions and unfair promotions. Children internalize the negative reactions of their family and community. They deny the part that law enforcement plays in their lives even though they are warned of police vigilance and the surveillance of Black youth.

The second reason Blacks have strained relations with the dominant culture could be historic, according to Solomon (1992). The relationship between the two groups has been one of White superiority and Black inferiority in the slave culture followed by Black exclusion from full

participation in the economic, social, and political life that has developed a culture of resistance that challenges the authority of the oppressors. Blacks still use behaviors, language forms such as Ebonics, and identity symbols that do not contribute to academic success (p. 6).

Ogbu (1999) identified two problems that arose from dialect and speech differences in Black students. He stated that there are communication problems with teachers and others that speak proper English. These communication problems cause learning problems for Black students concerning their ability to speak or write proper English. These differences cause students not to prepare for higher education and they do not acquire the skills that are needed to further their education.

Critical Race Theory, Legal Studies, and School Discipline

Many scholars think that you cannot define critical race theory without linking it to legal studies because Delgado and Stephanic (2012) stated that critical race movement sprang up in the 1970s as lawyers, activists, and legal scholars realized that the advances of the civil rights had been stalled and in some instances rolled back. Critical race theory builds on two previous movements: critical legal studies and critical feminism. CRT borrowed from critical theory that not every legal case has one correct outcome. Cases can be determined by emphasizing some line of authority over another or interpreting one fact differently from an adversary. The group also built on feminism insights on the relationship between power, control, and habits of patriarchy as it pertains to social roles (p. 4).

Hudson (2011) conceived that CRT dates back to the era of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and the critical movement of the 1970s. It was formulated out of critical legal studies (CLS), which have the tendency to pay no attention to issues that deal with racism, but emphasize equality by looking at the working of social phenomena of race, racial subordination, and

discrimination (Crenshaw, 1995). Delgado and Stefanic (2001) stated that CRT is used by lawyers to advocate on behalf of clients to expose bias within the system (p. 101).

Carter (2008) alluded to the fact that Black students must cultivate a critical race consciousness to provide a counter narrative of the myth of Black intellectual inferiority consistent with academic under performance. A critical race consciousness will not assure that Blacks will perform on a high academic level; however, the presence of a critical race consciousness along with the attitude of the usefulness of school can aid Black students in achieving academic goals despite facing the structured constraints and barriers they will have to face in their academic lives. A critical race consciousness is connected to a positive race and group identity and pride in one's racial group. When Black students possess a critical race consciousness, they possess an understanding of race as a potential barrier to their schooling and life success. They understand the history of racism and societal inequality in America (Carter, 2005).

While supporting the idea of maintaining a positive image, Carter also argued that Blacks have to develop and maintain a positive racial achievement identity in a society where an individual's racial membership is portrayed as less-than, subordinate and or invisible. Black students' racial and achievement self-conception may provide insight for society to understand why students portray adaptive or maladaptive behaviors in school. By teaching Blacks sociocultural needs in a context in which students learn, educators will be better equipped to meet the academic needs of these students. The findings from the data presented in this article indicated that having positive feelings about one's racial group and having a sense of connectedness to the group can be helpful in supporting Black students' academic achievement (Carter, 2008).

Blacks must believe in themselves and understand the history of racism and inequality in the United States, by creating positive roles and identities for youth to follow. Images of low self-esteem and derelict behavior are portrayed, which makes it important for leaders in the educational arena to put forth the effort so that educators will understand the way Blacks interact in their neighborhoods and establishment.

In the subsequent chapters of this research paper, I provide explanations and descriptions of stories told by young Black men of their lived experiences in and out of jail, as well as an explanation of the methods used to give meaning to their stories. The definitions of terms allows the reader to understand the salient terms used in this research.

Delimitations

Delimitations in a research study allowed the researcher to better manage the data collection and analysis efficiently. In many instances, while performing fieldwork, the researcher was inclined to try to record everything that is heard or seen or that cannot realistically happen. Wolcott (2009) offered the “vacuum-cleaner” approach so that the research would not reach a point where it is unmanageable I chose this delimitation because it allowed me to stay focused on the participants reflective experiences on education. The participants were a protected population and I did not want to seem as though I was trying to find out information that would get them in trouble. This research was limited to six participants incarcerated in a state prison; all of the men were repeat offenders.

Limitations

Limitations of the study described possible shortcomings of the study and to what extent the study can be generalized to the public. This study was limited to a small number of participants who were incarcerated and may have expressed negative opinions and adverse

opinions of all forms of institutions. In other words, they could come across as having an axe to grind because of the time they served, which may shade the truthfulness and accuracy of their stories. An inmate who has served one year might have a different opinion about education and prison than one who has served five years (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I selected non-violent participants who have committed non-violent acts. I selected men from 19-25 years of age to interview with the assumption that they would view me as an older adult or “mother” figure, and speak candidly throughout the interview process.

Another limitation placed on this study was that I did not solicit data from teachers, school officials, or family and law enforcement personnel. Reissman (1993) acknowledged that some subjects fear reprisal and their ability to tell their stories may be compromised. Reissman also commented that any story told has an element of truth in it. This study was committed to examining the young African American male perspectives of schooling experience both in and out of prison to illicit dialogue and to promote sustainable change from different institutions, stakeholders, and policymakers.

Inquirer bias was another limitation. Patton (2002) stated that naturalistic inquiry involves field work and puts the researcher in close contact with the participants in the study and their problems and the researcher’s cognitive and emotional stance toward those people and their problems. Patton offered strategic thinking. He suggested that there is a middle ground between getting too involved which can cloud judgment and remaining too distant which can reduce understanding (p. 50). As an African American, I have a different take on what was being said by each of the participants. My goal for the research was to be as candid as I could. So far, the review of the literature had an eye-opening effect on me and it was my hope that this research could provide new information so that policies and programs would be enacted to help alleviate

the problem of lack of skills for Black men so they could participate in their own destiny and lessen the burden on society that the high rate of incarceration has cost society.

Assumptions

Assumptions reflect a certain position that researchers take when they choose qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 1998). After the researchers make this choice, they shape their research by bringing to the inquiry a paradigm or worldview a set of beliefs that guide action. These beliefs have been called paradigms, philosophical assumptions, and epistemologies.

Merriam (1998) insisted that the worldview is often combined with the interpretation. Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences and meanings directed toward certain objects or things. Therefore, the goal of research is to rely on, as much as possible the participant's view of the situation. Merriam stated that research relied on the participant's reflective view of their experiences through the cultural norms that operated in their lives.

Before I decided to research the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline, I assumed that young Black men were going to prison because of unfair laws, and unfair treatment in the criminal justice system. My research has revealed a much more complicated set of variables that contribute to the phenomena of the so called school-to-prison pipeline. My assumptions were that many variables led to the incarceration of young Black men which included young parents, racism, lack of discipline, as well as the fact that parents were allowing their children to watch too much television. I thought the criminal justice system was biased and I also thought that young Black men wanted to get out of impoverished situations using criminality as a stepping stone. I

tried to be as unbiased as I could by not asking leading questions and relying on the participants recollections of their experiences.

Definition of Terms

Critical Race Theory— This is a theoretical lens first articulated within legal theory that focuses attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of the American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Culturally Disconnected—Ways in which young people are connected to or disconnected from mainstream opportunities, lifestyles and outlooks. (McDonald & Marsh, 2001).

Epiphanies— These are special events in an individual's life that represent turning points. They vary in their impact from minor epiphanies to major epiphanies, and they may be positive or negative (Creswell, 2007, p. 234).

Functionally Illiterate—Possessing some reading and writing skills but not of sufficient quality to permit their use in normal socioeconomic relationships. This term usually refers to those whose literacy deficits that are the result of cultural factors rather than mental retardation or developmental expressive writing disorder (Jenkins, 2006).

Hedonism—The doctrine pleasure or happiness is the chief good in life (Neville, 2013).

Hegemonic—Authority or control or dominating influence by one person or group, especially for political group over society or one nation over another (Peleg, 2007).

Intersectionality—The examination of race, class, national origin, sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various setting (Delgado & Stephanic, 2012).

Jim Crow—The Jim Crow laws were state and local laws in the United States enacted between 1876 and 1965. They mandated de jure racial segregation in all public facilities in Southern states of the former Confederacy, with, starting in 1890, a separate but equal status for

African Americans. The separation in practice led to conditions for African Americans that tended to be inferior to those provided for White Americans systematizing a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages. Jim Crow is the practice of discriminating against Black people especially operating systems of public segregation (Alexander, 2012).

Paradigm--- A basic set of beliefs that guide action (Guba, 1990, p.17).

Racism—The idea that there is a direct correspondence between group’s values, behaviors and attitudes and its physical features is one of the major social problems confronting contemporary societies (Social Science Encyclopedia, 1996).

Restoring—This is an approach to writing narrative in which the researcher retells the stories of individual experiences of the participants, and the new story typically has a beginning, middle and an ending (Creswell, 2007, p. 234).

School-to-Prison Pipeline—pattern of tracking students out of educational institutions, Primarily via “zero tolerance” policies and directly and/or indirectly, into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems (Cobb, 2009).

Stereotypes—A fixed usually negative, image of members of a group. (Delgado & Stephanic (2012).

Tracking— The process where students are divided into categories so they can be assigned into groups to various kinds of classes. Sometimes students can be classified as fast, average, or slow learners and placed into fast, average or slow classes on the basis of their scores on achievement or ability tests (Oakes, p. 247).

Zero Tolerance Policies—Harsh disciplinary polices enforced by school systems that do not distinguish between major and minor infractions (Public Policy Research Institute, 2005).

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is a narrative design that describes the reflective perceptions of the educational system as perceived by young incarcerated Black men. Chapter I provided an introduction to the topic, the conceptual framework, a description of the purpose of the research, significance of the problem, the research questions and definitions of terms used in the research. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature and lays the groundwork for the rationale of the study. Chapter III describes the methodological design of the study, outlines the collection procedures and explains the method used to analyze the data to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Chapter IV restories the data provided by the participants and reveals the themes in a within case analysis and a cross-case analyses. I also retold the movie *Redemption* and disclosed the themes that were present in the movie that paralleled the themes that emerged the interviews. Chapter V rationalized the themes that emerged in the stories from a critical race theory perspective. Chapter V answers the research questions and includes the discussion, implications for educators, parents, policy makers, court officials, the need for future research, and the conclusion.

CHAPTER II:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review provides information on young Black men's perception of factors that have prevented them from making wise choices in their education and career choices both in and out of prison from the past. The review is divided into categories to address the research questions: (1) case studies of individuals previously incarcerated; (2) reasons for the incarceration of; (3) family structure: a house is not a home; (4) Black men: culture, race and education; (5) the man in the mirror: Black men and self-hate; (6) tracking, alternative schools and expulsion; (7) poor communities and quality teachers; (8) starting at zero: no means no; (9) seeing is believing: images in homes; (10) navigating the prison industrial complex. These topics are some of the reasons young Black men are not achieving academically. These variables have been identified by researchers. My research identifies other themes as the participants told their stories.

In this study, I was also interested in the usefulness of prisoner education for incarcerated Black men. Members in society were asked if people who have committed a crime should be educated. Incarcerated individuals were asked if they received a quality education in prison and what were the barriers that prevented them from receiving a quality education in and out of prison. Prior research revealed that the public does not feel the need to educate prisoners and public opinion dictates policy changes. My research revealed gaps in the present literature by asking the men themselves to identify interventions that they perceived that would have helped them make better choices in and out of prison when pertains to education.

Case Studies of Past Offenders

The schooling experiences of young African American men in and outside of the prison system in terms of influencing their educational and career choices is complicated and diverse. Jeffers (2010) interviewed inmates returning to society concerning their school experiences and retold their stories. I have noted two inmates' experiences from the study in my literature review. These two stories were significant in this research because their stories told of reasons that they did not acquire the skills they needed to acquire the education they needed for a productive life.

Romeo is 19 years old and best described as being very intelligent and articulate with a great deal of "street smarts." He was born in New York City and experienced many difficulties as an only child in a single-parent home. As a child, he wanted to become an astronaut. Romeo's mother made him go to school. But according to him, she did not have any interest in whether or not he was learning. His mother did not have more than an eighth-grade education, and she left it up to the schools to prepare Romeo for his future. Romeo attended public schools in New York where he began disrupting and disturbing the academic environment with unwelcomed questions. He had questions about himself, as a young Black male, and he wanted to know why he had to learn what he was being taught. He became very frustrated when his questions went unanswered at school and at home. He felt the best way to gain attention was to respond negatively toward those in authority. His mother sent him to live with relatives in San Diego, California, where he attended urban schools. His behavior led him to have many encounters with law enforcement agencies causing family members to seek help for him through boarding homes and various programs for "at risk" youth. When asked what he recalled most about his academic experiences, Romeo replied, "To tell the truth, when I was a kid, I wasn't really paying much attention." Romeo made it to high school, but only to complete the eleventh grade. He was charged with

robbery and missed much of the eleventh grade because of going back and forth to court. Romeo was eventually expelled from school, even after receiving a “good progress” in English award from his school. He tried to get back in school, but was denied access. He tried to attend another school, but was denied access. Because he was 18 years of age, he had become eligible to attend community college. After being denied re-entry to high school a second time, Romeo was out of school and without a job. He was charged with another robbery and given a three-year prison sentence in California’s Department of Corrections.

Shaw D is a 20-year-old with two children to support. His girlfriend is helping him because he stopped going to school in the eighth grade. When asked the reason he chose to discontinue schooling, he replied, “I don’t think they related to me.” Upon hearing his response, the author was determined to discover exactly who “they” were and in what ways “they” did not relate to him. Shaw D was born in New Jersey, but attended urban school in San Diego. Although he stopped going to school in junior high, he managed to complete the equivalency of an eleventh grade education while incarcerated. He occasionally paused when speaking about his academic experiences as if he regretted not being able to graduate. Of all the participants, Shaw D seemed most enthusiastic about having his experience documented. He did not hesitate to speak of his frustration in school and how he would fight for no real reason. He says his behavior was out of control, and that became the reason why his parents decided to send him from New Jersey to San Diego for a change of environment. Shaw D explained that his parents felt the inner city was not capable of providing a healthy image and life for a young Black boy. He came to San Diego and quickly acquainted himself with street life and gang activities despite the change in his environment. Shaw D eventually quit going to school, and when asked why he made that decision, he replied, “Teachers shouldn’t become angry with people who really need help the

most.” His questions were eventually answered by young black boys who experienced similar circumstances. They lived together in neighborhoods forming gangs that prefer “blue” over any other color and calling themselves “Crips.” The streets became his new school, and the Crips were his fraternity brothers. Criminal behavior became common and the purpose of school as loosely defined. Shaw D was sentenced to five years in youth authorities for burglary, but transferred to the Department of Corrections to complete the remainder of his term. The decision concerning a career is a choice that will haunt one throughout one’s life. This decision can be detrimental if it is made at an age where choices are not fully understood.

Price (1998) studied six young black men from varied back grounds involved in the criminal justice system who were committed to get their high school diplomas to determine what were their experiences in school and what choices and ideas about what was important to know, their ideas of what success means, as well as the different kinds of futures they imagined for themselves. This study’s intent was to expand the understanding of the complexities of their lives in school and to challenge the one-dimensional image of Black men. First, the author explored the complexities of the experiences of the men in school. Second, he explored the range of meaning the young men gave to their experiences in context to the barriers and privileges they encountered in school as it pertains to class, race and gender. Price argued that this perspective should not intended to be generalized to all African American men.

There were differences across the six young men of how they thought about a high school diploma and life beyond school. For instance, one young man from a working class family said, “That is all they are teaching you, white is so superior, they dominate everything.” A student from a middle class home said, “If school was not such a competition, there would be no need for

grades.” The young men that the focus of schooling is on accommodation, whether to tolerate or unconsciously accept the dominant structure and culture of schooling.

The young men ages ranged from 15 to 17 years and they attended four different schools where the percentage of African Americans attendance ranged from three to four percent to 46%. Social class seemed to be a powerful explainer for some of the different and similar experiences, opportunities and barriers of privileges encountered by the young men. Mac an Gahill (1998) noted that social classes are not fixed unitary categories, but modifies itself in a range of experiences. All of the young men were committed to acquiring the high school diploma. Attending school meant that they had to participate on the terms of their teacher, take tests, and attain passing grades and complete projects to meet graduation requirements.

The participants voiced similarities and differences in their meanings about high school diplomas and what they wanted to attain beyond high school. Two of the young men stated that the meaning of the high school diplomas symbolized a personal achievement while the other four viewed the high school diploma as a link to economic success. Two of the young men believed that the high school diploma represented an important personal achievement and it proved their lives took on meaning even though they were involved in the criminal justice system. Their involvement in the criminal justice system caused them to view school differently. The other four participants talked about plans beyond high school.

Price (1998) Connell (1993) and Mac an Gahill (1994) argued that the choices men make, the differences in the kind of futures they imagine for themselves, their different ideas about what was important to know and their different ideas of success are due in large by examining their different access to privilege, the way in which they encounter inequality and the ways in which they interact in connection to the system of race, class, and gender in context of daily school lives

explains the meaning they make of school. Connell (1993) noted that within the schooling process, some masculinities, some masculinities are formed by “battering” against the authority structure. Others by harmoniously insertion into the academic pathways (p.100) Mac an Gahill (1994) write about connections between stratification of knowledge in schools, teachers’ relationships with students, career ambitions expectations and the emergence of masculinities in male students.

These studies added to this body of knowledge by asking the young men to give suggestions on how to improve the system and what interventions could be used to help other young boys from making the same mistake. This study added to this body of knowledge by asking the young men to give suggestions on how to improve the system and what interventions could be used to help other young boys from making the same mistake.

Why Are So Many Black Men Incarcerated?

Many Black men are in prison for different reasons. Solomon (1992) stated that some working class Black students in White educational institutions develop contradictory relationships toward these institutions. They embrace high educational aspirations on one hand, while falling back on their own subordinate, oppositional culture to resist the structure. This form of resistance is mediated by race. Many times this is due to the student’s primary socialization outside of the school system, which occurs only with family and their immediate community. Within this social system, Black children are bombarded by expressions of subordination that their racial group encounters in interaction with the dominate group. For those Blacks who gain entry into the workplace with the dominant culture, unequal treatment continues with unequal working conditions and unfair promotions. Children internalize the negative reactions of their family and

community to the denial of law enforcement where they are warned of police and vigilance in the surveillance of Black youth.

The second reason Blacks have contradictory relations with the dominant culture could be historical, according to Solomon (1992). The relationship between the two groups has been one of White superiority and Black Inferiority in the slave culture followed by Black exclusion from full participation in the economic, social, and political life has developed a culture of resistance that challenges the authority of the oppressors. Blacks still use behaviors; language forms and identity symbols that do not contribute to academic success (Solomon, 1992, p. 6).

In a study by Wilkinson (2003), it was found that young Black males tend to quit school around the age of 14. The older participants stated that they wished they had stayed in school. Cutting school and dropping out was seen as a necessary step to get money to live day to day. The money earned through hustling was used to buy clothes, drugs, jewelry, alcohol and entertainment. Participants frequently stated that their parents could not afford to provide the latest fashions and other material possessions. Peer pressure, material goods, as well as internalized relative deprivation seem to make the choice to abandon school easier for Black males. School problems began in junior high school. Many participants described difficulties with course work, school structure, dealing with authority and disciplinary action taken against them as unfair.

Many problems that incarcerated young Black men encounter in their educational process started in kindergarten. Morris (2004) stated that many educators both Black and White, who teach low income African American children are disconnected culturally, psychologically, and proximately from the children they teach and from the communities where they live. Therefore, these educators do not understand the children's experiences beyond the schoolyard.

Darling-Hammond (2000) and Smith (1992) found that the quality of instruction received by African Americans was much lower than that received by White students creating a racial gap in collective achievement as early as the end of first grade. Today, for the first time in the nation's history, education is not only the ticket to economic success, but to basic survival. In recent years, high school dropouts have only one chance out of three to land a job and the job he gets pays less than half of what he would have earned 20 years ago. In 1996, a recent high school dropout who is Black had only a one chance in five of being employed whereas his White counterpart had a 50% chance. Today, even high school graduates struggle to find a job. In the African American culture, high school graduates, not enrolled in college, have only a 42% of employability, compared to 69% of White graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, p. 100). A growing underclass is developing and being cut off from the productivity and engagement society.

Schools, according to Darling-Hammond (2000), have changed slowly. Most are organized to prepare only 20% of their students for "thinking" work; those students that are tracked early into gifted and talented "advanced" or "honors" courses. These courses and appointments are least available to African American, Latino, and Native American students. Schools that serve large numbers of African American students are least likely to provide or offer the kind of curriculum and teaching needed to meet the new standards. The schools are typically funded at lower levels than schools serving predominately white and more affluent students. These schools lack the resources, materials, equipment and qualified teacher that would give students access to the education they will need to participate in today's and tomorrow's world.

Attention to policy to improve educational opportunities to all Americans is needed based on the assumption that the students, not the schools or classrooms are the sources of unequal

educational attainment. Black students, according to Darling-Hammond (2000), lack access to qualified teaching, high quality materials, equipment, and laboratories among other things. The rhetoric of American equality and the effects of school desegregation and fiscal reform do not reflect the experiences of African Americans and minority students in the United States. As of 1995, fifty-six percent of all students in central city schools were Black or Hispanic. Meanwhile funding and tax policies leave most urban systems with fewer resources than suburban schools due to the high concentration of minority students. It was reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2011) that, in October of 2009, approximately 3.0 million Americans, ages 16-24, were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma. This status dropout rate accounted for 8.1% of the 38 million non-institutionalized civilians, ages 16 – 24, living in the U.S. The dropout rate trended downward between 1972 and 2009 from 14.6% in 1972 to 8.1% in 2009. Black's dropout rate was at 9.3% in 2009, while Whites was lowest at 5.2%. Black males had a higher dropout rate at 10.6%, and White males' dropout rate was at 6.3%.

Western (2003) discovered in his inquiry that around 60% of Black male high school dropouts in their 30s have prison records. Prison time averages 28 months for Black men with low levels of education with two years of prison time as a common phenomenon. Almost everyone in the Black community has a connection with prisoners in one way or another. It has become a theme within the Black community. Black men are seven to eight times more likely to go to prison or jail than white men. Because 93% of all prison and jail inmates are male, the prison boom has been the most important development in the countries race relations in the last thirty years.

Weis and Fine (1996), in a case study of poor African American and White working class men, were asked the question, "Why are so many Black men incarcerated?" White men stated

that educated Blacks had good jobs because they had worked for them and the “others” are just lazy, they do not want it, and they want something for nothing voicing stereotypes. White men’s access to education was thought of as deserved, and men and women of color are said to have invaded the system. When Blacks were asked why there are so many men in jail, the answer was “no jobs.” One interviewee stated that “Blacks don’t have nobody telling the children that they have potential. People tell the children to sell drugs and shoot a gun.” He stated that the answer to the social and political problem was to create jobs, that the problems could be solved through education. The general consensus among the Black community is that education is the key to success. The Black community and the White community state that education will help young Blacks build capacity that will develop their character to make them productive in society.

Family Structure: A House is not a Home

When families feel inferior, cannot stand alone, make the ends meet or provide for their own, discontentment follows. Jenkins (2006) and McCall (1994) noted that family structures have dominated the literature explaining relations and socialization of Blacks. The Black family has been destroyed by drugs that have swept through the community like a hurricane. On a personal note, as a social worker it was devastating to walk in communities, to be afraid of doing your job. To work in communities where dope addicts stand in the middle of the streets asking for money and visibly shake and sell anything that they can lay their hands on. This kind of devastation indicates the tragedy that has gone on in neighborhoods. Jenkins (2006) noted that the introduction of drugs into the African–American community in the 1970s proved deleterious for the entire community. Drug trafficking offered two alternatives for a community that was already suffering from the pain of social strife, on one hand, drugs helped nullify the pain for a people who felt that the door of opportunity for upward mobility was closed to them. On the other hand,

Blacks were offered a chance to participate in the drug scene to create capital in an economically deprived culture. It was a choice to become a drug addict or to become a part of the drug selling culture for parents. Even the families who did not participate in this culture suffered from social suffocation and oppression because every family member was affected if parents participated in this culture. Drug issues prevented parents from fully developing and actualizing their roles as encouragers and nurturers for their children.

McCall (1994) noted that the presence of a frustrated and oppressed parent can be dangerous if they are presenting from a defeatist frame of mind to their children. Many Black children are left to fend for themselves. Therefore, parents play a critical part in the educational process of their children and how the children view the educational system, themselves and their future.

Poussaint (1995) noted that the African American male role in Black children lives has not been represented. Black men find themselves in a position of defending themselves against stereotypes and images that are often placed in the minds of others. Research has revealed that a father's influence on a child's development would benefit children's lives and includes the following:

1. Sex role: Children who experience a nurturing relationship with their fathers are more comfortable with societal expectations for sex roles; children do not develop stereotypical views of male and female roles;
2. Social adjustment: Although a direct causal relationship had not been clear established, research pointed to a correlation between juvenile delinquency and fatherless households. Children with available, nurturing fathers tend to display better social adjustment; and

3. Cognitive development: Some studies revealed that children whose fathers provided at least 40% of caregiving were more cognitively developed; these children also showed greater empathy and fewer stereotypical beliefs.

Carter (2008) acknowledged the fact that “Black” parents have a special and difficult responsibility to orient black children to a social system in which they are devalued. Parents must teach children that they may be victimized by racism, yet they must also be careful not to allow their children to adopt a victim mentality. As a parent and grandparent it is hard to make children understand how to live in two worlds. Children struggle with learning how to speak in the Black culture without being teased that they are acting “White.” The children also have to struggle while in school using Black vernacular in classrooms where perfect English is expected.

The absence of Black male figures is noted in the literature. Black parents send their children off to a world where many are not able to adjust because of cultural differences. Black males have found it hard to adjust even though they believe that education is the road to success.

Black Men: Culture, Race, and Education

Gordon, Gordon, and Nembhard, (1994) and Jenkins (2006) posited that in the United States education is considered crucial for upward mobility. Many African American males have experienced problems achieving academic success. The following issues facing African American men have been analyzed:

1. Unequal access to facilities for formal education for Black males;
2. Rising dropout rates;
3. Declining college and graduate school attendance;
4. The effects of cultural differences between teachers and pupils;
5. The lack of job training or appropriate job training;

6. Poor quality schooling;
7. Low expectations for black male academic achievement; and
8. Poor academic socialization and inadequate home and family support for academic learning.

Polite (1994) found that black males had total control over their high school academic programs, selecting courses based upon the minimum graduation requirement. African American males most often made dead end course choices because parents were not able or prepared to assist them. The courses prepared them neither for work nor for higher education. Resources to feel powerful seemed to be the contributing factor for these young Black men. The gap between approved goals and the means people have to achieve these goals creates social strain. For many males in the Black community, success is measured in terms of material goods, social status, and recognition of personal expression. The indicators of material success include a person's job, income, and place of residence, clothing, cars and other goods. The questions of how to achieve these goals of success are highly individualized and most cultures emphasize hard work, self-control, persistence and education (Walker, Spohn & Delone, 1998). African Americans have experienced many difficulties in obtaining a quality education. The dropout rate still remains a problem and has reached as high as 50% in some of the nation's inner cities. Academic competency is a greater problem for Black males.

The educational system is multifaceted and Price (1998) and Mac an Gahill (1998) offered their suggestions on how the school system proved to be one of the dynamics that shaped the educational choices of young Black men. Price (1998) concluded that the educational system in the United States is determined by social class and race. To understand how Blacks view education and the meaning of schooling, one must take in consideration of how race, social class

and gender intersects with teachers, the curriculum and other aspects of schooling. Mac an Gahill (1998) suggested that schools shape versions of masculinities. The authors stated that there is a definite connection between the stratification of knowledge in school teacher relationships with students and the education process. Some Black male students masculinities are formed by resisting the schools authority and structure, and others by smoothly inserting into academic pathways and negotiation of a set of possibilities depending on their connectedness to the African American Community, along with the dominate cultures image of black masculinity formulates Black's opinion of education and schooling.

To understand Black men and the Black culture, one must look deeply at the way men are viewed in their communities. Sewell (1997) stated that there are two masculinities in the Black community, the conformist and the yardman. These two models position Black boys into the madness of being either/or nothing else. The conformist is seen as ideal. These are not necessary accurate representations of real lives but are ideal and discourses, which push and pull the souls of Black boys. The ideal model reproduces the dominant society ways of living, even the language. The yardman became a street rebel excluded in school and does not receive the nurturing by teachers or the community he needs. The yardman is usually well accepted within the Black community. He knows his place. He is not mimicking the dominant society (p. 173). Black men see themselves as caught in the middle. Black men either are going to conform to society's ideology of who they are, or they will rebel against the system. Actually the perception is how Black men view themselves. If they view themselves as a yardman, they will accept the role of a yardman.

The Man in the Mirror: Black Men and Self-Hate

Within the Black community, researchers (Noguera, 1995; Garibaldi, 1992; Hooks, 2001) have argued that self-interpretation and social labels plays a big part in the education of Black boys. Noguera (1997) argued that the internalized belief in racial stereotypes and the influence of social labels that present Black men as villains cause teachers, Black and White, not to engage and interact in a close and nurturing way with Black boys. These teachers do not provide them with superior educational services. School systems provide an array of services and programs for students; however, Garibaldi (1992) noted in a New Orleans study that 40% of Black male students felt that their teachers did not set high enough goals for them and 60% desired their teachers to push them harder. The study revealed that Black men had strong interest in education and that this interest has always existed among African Americans. Education has always been seen as the means for upward mobility in the Black community.

hooks (2001) professed that one of the factors that influences the social status of Black people particularly Black males is the continuing internalization of self-hatred that results in low self-esteem:

Seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murders, Black men have no real dramatic say when it comes to the way they are represented. They have made few interventions on the stereotype as a consequence as they are characterized by stereotypes that were first articulate in the 19th century, but hold sway over the imagination of the minds of citizens' of the present day. Black males who refuse categorization are rare, for the price of visibility in the contemporary world of White Supremacy is that Black males identity be defined in relation to the stereotype whether by embodying or seeking to be other than it. (p. xii)

The African American community has been established in relation to the definition given to it by the larger community. From language to religion, to images of beauty and success, African Americans have been taught how to speak, what to believe, how to look, and how to define success. With no sense of ancestral accountability and facing current forms of dysfunction

in families, as well as soaking up negative social imaging, a healthy development is not a reality for many Black youth. Therefore, when a Black male-child enters the education arena what occurs can solidify or change his negative self-image. Black educators have a particularly hard role in the education of Black men.

Barclay, Duke, and Sullivan (1996) in the film *American Dream* depict the plight of Black male principal educating young Black men in the years of Jim Crow. The principal is faced with two choices, providing the healthy education and psychological development of his pupil, or meeting the demands of the white educational power structure that set and controlled the educational agenda. The story describes what happens when a male student paints a portrait of a Black Jesus and the principal was ordered to remove the portrait from the school. The film is fictional; however, it depicts an example of the role education plays in the psychological development of the Black male. At the end of the movie, the principal decides to resist the psychological abuse of pro-white educational messages and to support the student's right to embrace his individual self, to make sure that he sees himself in everything he does and says.

Hooks (2001) went on to state that the internalization of self-hatred results' in a low self-concept:

Most Black thinkers acknowledge that internalized self-hatred is more pronounced now than it was when the economic circumstances of Black people were far worse, when there was no social integration. Today progressive black people; are in a struggle learned that legalized racial integration would not change White supremacy perspectives. Since anti-racist individuals did not control the mass media. The media became the primary tools that would be used and is still used to convince Black viewers of everyone else of Black inferiority. (p. 18)

Jenkins (2004) contended that laws forced society to discontinue direct forms of social prejudice while television became the new medium to spread stereotypical perspectives.

Television proved to be more successful than laws because it reached an even greater audience. In his book, *It Makes Me Want to Holler*, McCall (1994) spoke of images of white skin, "drinking in

the beauty of their ivory skins that seemed purer, cleaner.” Young Black males are confronted with negative images of “gangsta” and stereotypical culture available to them (p. 9).

Oliver reminded us that:

A societal ideology tells people about the status of their society and about their place in the world. In this sense, a society’s ideology gives structure to how group members define themselves and their experiences and also provides impetus for group action. All Americans Black, White, Hispanic, Asians and others are exposed to pro-white socialization messages disseminated by the school system, mass media, and religious institutions. (p. 94)

Young Black males today are experiencing great frustration because they are not able to navigate a society that is supposed to be open. Black men can view wealth accumulated by those upper class through the mediums of mass media. Therefore, success and self-esteem is measured through the mirror and not through the mind.

Tracking, Alternative Schools, and Expulsion

Blake and Darling (1994) and Oakes (1981) noted that school systems use tracking as a “primary socialization agent in elementary and secondary education which has negatively affected the academic achievement and self-concept of African American males by disproportionately tracking them and not providing positive role models.” Oakes (1981) claimed that tracking does not foster the outcomes that schools value. Schools in the past have valued academic success and educational equality. Tracking is conflicting with the nation’s goals of having all students meet high academic standards and leaving no child behind. Tracking widens the gap of inequality among students in determining what they learn in school. Tracking systematically leaves children who are not in the high track behind. Students in high track classes learn more than students in low tracks. High track students receive measurable advantages that allow them to reach their potential and acquire goals, while students in the low track are disadvantaged and depressed with little hope. African American males are allowed to reach the

10th grade or to graduate from high school without marketable, reading and writing skills. It has been estimated that 44% of all African American males are functionally illiterate (p. 236).

Darling and Hammond (1990) found that tracking students into “back to basics” programs has found its way into current alternative schools. This tactic that was passed was intended to help students, but has actually damaged them. Students assigned to these remedial programs are likely to receive educational instruction from multiple choice tests, rote memory instruction and tasks that are disconnected from skills they need to learn. These students are not provided the opportunity to talk about what they know, read books where they see their own realities reflected, write, frame knowledge as well as solve problems. These students are often denied the opportunity to develop the capacities they will need in the future. Alternative curriculum will not provide the most favorable avenue for active learning.

Dunbar (1999) posited that children who are warehoused and separated from traditional learning environments adopt alternative role models functional for that setting. The alternative setting reduces any sense of these students seeing themselves as “good students.” Dunbar (1999) found that most students displayed inappropriate behavior regularly in alternative settings. Behaviors such as loud voices, slamming doors, and verbal abuse could be heard any time during the day. When asked if this behavior upset him, one student stated he did not because he did not want any one upset when he “went off.”

Many Black students are removed from the educational arena altogether. This holds true for expulsion. In 2009, the Texas special education students made up only 9% of the student body, but accounted for 220% of expulsion to an alternative education program that year. Fowler (2010) stated that special education students are 3.5 times more likely to be sent to in-school

suspension, almost six times more likely to receive out-of school suspension, four times more likely to be sent to a disciplinary alternative school, and three times more likely to be expelled.

Poor Communities and Quality Teachers

Darling-Hammond (2000) found that unequal access to well qualified teachers is one of the most critical factors when determining the underachievement of African American students. Unqualified teacher educators are also related to strategies that respond to a student's needs and learning style. Studies have shown that teachers who enter without full preparation are less able to plan and redirect instruction to meet the student's needs. These teachers are less skilled in implementing instruction, less able to anticipate students' knowledge and potential difficulties, and less likely to see if their job is to do so. The attitudes of these teachers leave many students with a self-fulfilling prophecy of not being successful. Access to quality teaching is not new to African Americans students. *Closing the Divide*, a book by Robert Drubén (1987), described the results of his study of reading instruction and outcomes for 300 Black and White first graders across seven schools in the Chicago area. He found that the disparities in reading outcomes were explained not by socioeconomic status or race, but by the quality of instruction the students received. However, the study also found that the quality of instruction received by African American students on average was much lower than that received by White students thereby creating a racial gap in aggregate achievement at the end of first grade.

While considering the plight of young Black men, we must consider all aspects of childhood and his upbringing. Jenkins (2006) reported that African American men are not adequately served in the classrooms around the country however; he does not rest the blame entirely on the system. There are many reasons for the lack of cohesion between Black male youth and the public school system. Jenkins (2006) argued that for the Black male student,

schooling often starts out as a disadvantage. He brings with him numerous social ills, a history of oppression that affected his family unit, a life of poverty or some other form of economic struggle, a community of criminality and violence, a generation of enraged and inadequately educated parents and elders, as well as the beginning of deep psychological and self-esteem issues that take root with his entry into preschool.

Starting at Zero: No Means No

Policy plays a big part in the incarceration of Black men. Several studies (Cobb, 2009; Heitzeg, 2009; Fowler, 2011; Marble, 2008; Nealy, 2008; Noguera, 1995; Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2007) identified problems with schools using the *zero tolerance* policy as a way to discipline children in the school system. This policy has propelled many young men into the prison system. Less money is being spent on education and more money is being put into prison and incarceration. For the first time in history, five states are putting more money in prison than school systems: Connecticut, Delaware, Michigan, Oregon, and Vermont. Nealy (2008) noted that lack of education plays a big role in the “cradle to prison” pipeline. In the inner city, more than half of all black men do not finish high school, which limits their ability to find work. In the year 2001, over 42.8% of Black males graduated from high school compared to 70% of their white male counterparts and 56% of African Americans overall.

Zero tolerance policies do not distinguish between serious and non-serious offenses. Students have been expelled for nail clippers, Advil, and mouthwash. Cases reported by the Justice Policy Institute (2009) and the Advancement Project (2005) outlined incidents subject to zero-tolerance policy. They included such examples as

1. A seventeen-year-old junior shot a paper clip with a rubber band at a classmate, missed, and broke the skin of a cafeteria worker. The student was expelled from school;
2. A nine-year-old on the way to school found a manicure kit with a 1-inch knife. The student was suspended for one day;
3. In Ponchatoula, Louisiana, a 12-year-old who had been diagnosed with a hyperactive disorder warned the kids in the lunch line not to eat all the potatoes, or “I’m going to get you.” The student, turned in by the lunch monitor, was suspended for two days. He was then referred to the police by the principal, and the police charged the boy with making “terroristic threats.” He was incarcerated for two weeks while awaiting trial;
4. Two 10-year-old boys from Arlington, Virginia, were suspended for three days for putting soapy water in a teacher’s drink. At the teacher’s urging, police charged the boys with a felony that carried a maximum sentence of 20 years. The children were formally processed through the juvenile justice system before the case was dismissed months later;
5. In Denton County, Texas, a 13-year-old was asked to write a scary Halloween story for a class assignment. When the child wrote a story that talked about shooting up the school, he both received a passing grade by his teacher and was referred to the school principal’s office. The school officials called the police, and the child spent six days in jail before the courts confirmed that no crime had been committed;

6. In Palm Beach, Florida, a 14-year-old disabled student was referred to the principal's office for allegedly stealing \$2 from another student. The principal referred the child to the police, where he was charged with strong-armed robbery, and held for six weeks in an adult jail for this, his first arrest. When the local media criticized the prosecutor's decision to file adult felony charges he responded, "Depicting this forcible felony this strong-arm robbery, in terms as though it were no more than a \$2 shoplifting fosters and promotes violence in our schools." Charges were dropped by the prosecution when the *60 Minutes II* crew showed up at the boys hearing; and
7. A five-year-old boy in Queens, New York, was arrested, handcuffed, and taken to a psychiatric hospital for having a tantrum and knocking papers off the principal's desk.

The examples mentioned above indicated that zero tolerance policies target students for minor infractions, forces younger elementary and preschool students into the system for minor infractions and disciplinary issues. The effects of racism can be devastating to the wellbeing of persons. These are only the symptoms of a more basic problem. The problem is the alienation that results from the exclusion of African Americans. This exclusion or marginalization experienced by African Americans devalues what is Black and causes those who are Black to constantly struggle against seeing themselves as insignificant and sometimes openly hostile towards themselves.

Hudson (2011) posited that CRT can allow the researcher to clarify the meaning of *zero tolerance* policies and the linkage to the school-prison-pipeline for African American males. CRT

can allow the researcher to break down themes and epiphanies in the stories told by the participants.

Historically, school discipline has served a threefold purpose: (1) to ensure the safety of students and staff; (2) to preserve restraint and dignity in the school; and (3) to develop character. Today, schools have evolved to almost a jail-like status in some states. While most discipline policies are created with these goals in mind, policy that focus on police presence and expulsion are not in line with historical goals of school discipline. Many African American students are led along a path to the juvenile prison system, which increases their chances of going to the adult prison system. School administrators and security personnel enjoy wide discretion to decide which students are referred to the juvenile court system for behavioral infractions. Combined with preconceived notions about the ability of African American children to succeed, this perception works to push African American students out of school at significantly higher rates than their white peers.

The school-to-prison pipeline has introduced a police presence in schools. This cause's police involvement in non-criminal activities and causes parents to worry that there is a criminal element in schools. The analogy between schoolyards and detention centers has grown in urban low-income communities. The zero tolerance policies and other harsh measures spearheaded by the media has caused excessive security procedures and police involvement (Fowler, 2011).

Cobb (2009) argued that the police presence in schoolyards has grown since it began in 1990. Several politicians convinced fellow legislators and the public that children had become incorrigible and that spun a generation of policed classrooms. More police presence in schools increases police involvement in non-criminal incidents resulting in a spike of school referrals to the juvenile court system for childish misbehavior.

Cobb (2009) stated that to fully understand the full presence of African Americans in adult court, one must understand how they got there. These Black males experience internalized stereotypical beliefs and labels, lived in communities filled with poverty and crime, lack of role models, tracking within the school system and peer pressure are reasons young blacks do not have educational experiences that positively affect their lives.

In Texas, as well as many other states, discipline has moved from the school to the courthouse. According to a study by the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University (2005), the single greatest predictor of future involvement in the juvenile system is a history of disciplinary referrals at school. Fowler (2011) reiterated that school disciplinary practices can have un-intended consequences. In Texas, students are disciplined at the discretion of school districts although state law mandates specific disciplinary actions in serious cases. According to the Texas Education Agency, in the year 2009-2010 school year, 68% of student referrals to disciplinary alternative schools were discretionary, as well as 72% of expulsion from the schools. Most of the expulsions were for disruptive behavior where no injury or weapon was involved. Alternative disciplinary programs lack quality instruction and tutoring and at risk students fall even further behind academically.

Noguera (1995) referred to an instance of a student expulsion hearing served as a symbolic standpoint in showing who really has control of the schools. One example of school control was of a student being expelled from school for bringing a gun to school. The student was attempting to keep the gun away from his suicidal father. Although Noguera agreed that the student did violate a school rule, he pointed out that the violation was unrelated to the mode of discipline employed. The student's expulsion was used in a manner similar to the public

execution. It was used as a symbolic reminder to others of the consequences of challenging the disciplinary control of the school.

According to Fowler (2011), schools with high referring disciplinary rates to the court system should try to determine the root cause of these referrals. Many of the referrals issued by school police officers are for disorderly conduct, disruption of transportation and truancy. It was found that African-American and special education students are without fail overrepresented in these referrals. The research found that African-American and special education students are overrepresented in Class C ticketing. Overrepresentation of special education students across the spectrum of disciplinary referrals and court involvement was also identified; African American special education students were the most highly identified and these patterns have been identified in schools across the U.S. The Texas Appleseed's first school-to prisons pipe-line research identified 211 Texas school districts disproportionately referring African American students to alternative education programs for one or more years between 2001 and 2006, and almost a third of Texas school districts over represented special education students in their alternative education programs. This misbehavior of students is not new to Texas schools, however being drawn into adult court is new.

Heitzig (2009) speculated that the school-to-prison pipeline does not exist alone. It is deeply embedded in a socio-political climate towards criminalization of a particular group. The school-to prison-pipeline is a result of schools that criminalize minor disciplinary infractions through zero tolerance school policies, have police presence at schools; and suspend and expel students for minor infractions. Disciplinary actions which were once handled by school administration are now called crimes. Students are viewed as criminals through the juvenile and adult penal systems. The risk of later incarcerations for students who are suspended or expelled is

very high. Going to school has become synonymous with going to jail. Zero tolerance policies and overcrowded failing schools, with inadequate resources and high segregation rates, are schools that produce students with high incarceration rates. As school funding declines and security measures are funded, along the willingness of some official to escort five year olds off school grounds, problems with the school system cannot be accounted for by educational policy alone.

Seeing is Believing: Images in Homes

Research documented the role of the media especially television, in contributing to crime, public images, as well as thoughts and perceptions of Black men. Everyone relies on television to report what's going on in the world. It is easy to sit back in the easy chair and view the news whether local, national or international. The media has played a considerable role in transforming the public's perception of crime and images of criminals which shape public policy. Television shapes what issues we think about and how we think about them. This is especially true when we think of crime.

Television, newspapers, as well as movies form society's opinions of subcultures in society. Several authors examined the medias influence on society (Dorman & Schiraldi, 2001; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Orbe, 2008; Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 2007) examined the medias influence on society and noted the different tactics that were used to portray minorities as victims of crimes and perpetrators of crimes.

Walker et al. (2007) stated that our perception of crimes are shaped to a large extent by the highly publicized crime features on the nightly news and sensationalized in newspapers. We read about young African American and Hispanic males who sexually assault, rob and murder whites, and we assume that these crimes are typical. We assume that the typical crime is a violent

crime, that the typical victim is White and that the typical offender is African American or Hispanic.

Television news paints a portrait of crime, criminals and victims that is not proven by data; however, it is well received as the gospel by viewers. Minorities, according to research by Dorfman and Schiraldi (2001), are overrepresented when it comes to crime coverage. In spite of falling crime rates, African-American and Latinos are over-represented as offenders and underrepresented as victims, especially crimes involving White victims.

African Americans offenders are depicted in a more negative way than their White counterparts. Blacks are four times more likely to be seen on TV news as criminals; they are more likely to be seen in a mug shot, twice as likely to be shown in physical restraints, and two-times less likely to be identified by name. Black suspects are shown poorly dressed and are much less likely to speak than White suspects, reinforcing the concept that they were undifferentiated and homogeneous in the sense that they all look alike if mistakes are made (Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

Orbe (2008) and Andrejevic (2002) are in agreement with the consequences of reality television. These programs have been styled as the most popular form of entertainment. Orbe concluded that reality productions have been given credibility in recent years because of its low production costs, ease for foreign distribution and independence from union actors and writers. Reality television is assumed to be “real” and reality based. An early form of reality programming began in the U.S. with the introduction of *COPS* in 1980. This show allowed viewers to follow police officers in major cities as they go about their day-to-day interactions with the public. Blacks are usually under-represented by or misrepresented by television. Andrejevic (2002) posited that reality television offers the opportunity for individuals to have a direct effect on the

mass Medias portrayal of a people that has been created through a top-down centralized fashion. Reality television gives viewers who had previously only been able to watch how they were represented the privilege to actively participate in the representation of self.

Black boys tend to emulate roles portrayed by television and all forms of the media. The stories portrayed influence young Black boys to mimic roles seen on television and movies. Drug dealers, pimps and others who have loads of money were portrayed and education was not an important issue. Can the media portray successful Black men? Could the media show positive images of Black men? I believe that more positive images portrayed by the media could influence young Black males to make positive decisions towards education and career choices.

Navigating the Prison Industrial Complex

The Prison Industrial Complex has been studied by many researchers (Davis, 2003; Heitzig, 2009; Hudson, 2011; Jeffers, 2010) discussed the influx of men into the prison system by exploring the connections of corporations, government and the prison systems. Davis (2003) insisted that exploitation of prison labor by private corporations is one aspect of the relationship linking corporations, government, correctional facilities and media to the growth of the prison population. The relationship is now called the Prison Industrial Authority (PIA). Activist and scholars believe that the cause of increased levels of crimes are not the cause of the rise in prison construction and the drive to fill these new buildings, but the drive to fill these prisons were the ideologies of racism and the chase of profit (p. 84).

Davis (2003) argued that to understand the social meaning of prison today with the notion and meaning of developing the prison industrial complex, we must divide and separate crime and punishment. She stated that the media has led the public to think of crime as a natural and permanent effect. To think of the prison industrial complex we must understand and take on the

economic and political process rather than focusing on and individual criminal conduct. The fact is that many corporations with global markets now rely on prisons as an important source of profit. The concept of the prison industrial complex insists that racialization of prisons populations must be considered also by abolitionist and activists (p. 86).

Davis (2003) posited that prison was once a burden that was only for taxpayers. It is now a source of corporate profit, governmental agency funding, cheap labor, and employment of economically depressed areas.

The prison industrial complex is not a conspiracy, but a joining together of special interests that include politicians who exploit crime to win votes, private companies that make millions by running or supplying prisons and small town official have turned to prison as a method of economic development. Davis reported that the prisons labor complex now includes over 3,300 jails, over 1,500 state prisons and 100 Federal prisons in the United States. Almost 300 of these are private for-profit prisons. Thirty of these institutions are super maximum facilities, not including the super-maximum units located in most other prisons (Davis, 2003, p. 86)

The prison system, according to Heitzeg (2009), is a self-perpetuating machine where profits and political benefits are perceived and where there is an endless supply of clients for the system. Profits are produced through contracts for cheap inmate labor, private and public supply of construction contracts, job creation for criminal justice professionals and continued media profits from exaggerated reporting of news. Politicians use these benefits to include reduced unemployment rates, due to job creation and imprisonment of the poor and unemployed. The conversion of prisoners and (the majority of whom are of color) into sources of profit who consume and produce all kinds of commodities, consumes funds which could be used for social programs, such as education, housing, childcare, recreation and drug programs. Punishment is now big business for corporations producing all kind of goods from building supplies to electronic devices and hygiene products. These businesses provide all kinds of services from meals, to therapy and healthcare and are now directly involved in the punishment business.

Hudson (2011) has noted who benefits from the prison population of the school-to prison pipeline. The connection between incarceration and prison labor is significant to many people. Prison labor has been exempt from labor protection and unions. Workers compensation is not part of the prisons employment protection. Private companies are eager to get around regulations some businesses find it an opportunity and an investment to use prison labor. Rural communities across America are open to building prisons, which can create jobs and increase economies in their towns. Many government agencies use inexpensive prison labor especially in times when government budgets are being cut. There is often an inclination to use cheap prison labor. Prisoners can be paid up to \$1.10 per hour. State entities using prison labor for in-house needs and interstate deals are called: Class 2 tax deduction jobs and Class 3 jobs paying 43 cents an hour. These jobs include prisoners cleaning and maintaining the prisons. He adds that the rate of prison growth has little to do with the theme of crime itself, but is the end result of prison policy.

Along with these rising rates of incarceration for African Americans, Jeffers (2010) alluded to the fact that, correctional facilities at state, county, and local levels are increasingly becoming privatized. This is especially prevalent in California where the state government created the Prison Industry Authority (PIA) to provide productive work assignments for thousands of inmates. Operating in 22 prisons throughout the state, the PIA benefits greatly from the labor of inmates. Some critics view PIA as a modern plantation system. While slavery played a major role in the development of the economic system in America, some critics of the PIA voice that this program is a new slavery where anyone who commits a crime can be used to provide work in the labor force for free or for little pay.

Hudson (2011) noted that 97 corporation placed commercial ads in the prison industries trade magazine. These companies are making are making profit from the 2.2 million people

presently incarcerated in America's prison system. One corporation that collects huge revenues is the telecommunications industries through the prisoners calling home. These calls can range over ten times the standard price for basic telephone services. Prisons systems put a huge amount of money into the country's economy in many ways. Therefore, we must ask if the profits outweigh the costs in society. Are we robbing Peter to pay Paul? A cliché that allows one to think of the costs and benefits of incarceration. My research revealed that the costs to society to incarcerate young Black men outweigh the benefits. Funds used by corporations could be used for social programs to help the elderly and impoverished. Incentive to help these at risk populations are not there because of profits.

Education on the Inside: Does It Really Matter?

The second part of the research question asked prisoners to identify or reflect on their experiences with education in the prison system. Hall and Killacky (2008) inquired concerning prisoner education provided information using the research question: How do prisoners perceive their correctional education experience? The emphasis was put on the prisoner's perception of the educational system he was provided while an inmate which is one of the questions of the research questions guiding this inquiry. Overarching themes of motivation, success and regret proved to be salient in the study. The prisoner's perception of success influenced their study habits, their motivation to attend and persist in the classroom, and their future educational and employment plans. The themes of motivation, success and regret determined the life choices and experiences that the prisoners estimated as determiners that impact prisoner education.

Success, according to Hall and Killacky (2008) as perceived by the prison student is one's ability to care for self and loved ones. Many of the participants felt that success was "making it" and taking care of one's responsibilities. When asked to give an example of success, one student

named Darren commented, “Bill Gates, for example, Bill Gates was a bookworm. All he did was read books when he was small. But as times go on, the books...he learned so much from those books that look at him now the inventor of Microsoft. I look at him like he is successful.”

Darren attributed Gates’ dedication to books to his success. Others attributed success to individualism, being content with which you are, and being motivated to study. Motivation was a significant sub-theme to success. Some participants were motivated by their family members, children, and other inmates to do well and to get out of there.

A major theme that surfaced from this study was regret of prior decisions. After incarceration, each inmate began to reflect upon his life and the mistakes he made to end up in prison. Each of the participants expressed regret over disappointing their children, their parents and loved ones. They also regretted dropping out of school, participating in criminal activities and the confinement of prison. They regretted their behavior and the lack of effort they put forth in school.

Hall and Killackey (2008) determined the effectiveness of correctional education found that prison students even before incarceration had considered school as just a place where they were influenced by the wrong crowds and a place to be with friends who influenced them to drop out of school and get in trouble. Some of the participants saw no purpose of going to school, they described the allure of the streets and how that had led them to sell drugs. In elementary and secondary school, inmates stated that they were most engaged in school when they had teachers who treated them fairly, with respect and who encouraged them to do good things. Teachers who put forth an effort beyond the call of duty (stopping by children’s home, taking time to pull a child aside) brought back fond memories to the inmates.

The inmates in this study indicated that they had a desire to learn but funding had been cut. To receive a General Education Diploma (GED), they had to be tutored by peer inmates. They voiced that they would like to have professionals teach them. The inmates complained of lack of materials, difficult schedules and noise in the dormitory to prevent them from studying.

Wilkinson (2003) found in her study of 144 incarcerated black males that career choices were made during adolescence. Making money and having enough resources to provide for luxury items that bring status within the culture drives many of the choices that the young men make. Most of the men in the study stated that they were involved in illegal activities, especially drug selling. Some of the men viewed legitimate work and educational attainment out of reach and some decided that they liked the criminal lifestyle. Long term planning and gradual achievement were not considered as a goal for these young men.

Due to a cut back in funds to educate prisoners, inmates complained that they did not have properly educated tutors and that noise and scheduling problems had significant negative effects on their education. Incarcerated men feel good about themselves when they attend some type of formal education whether it is vocational or academic. Prisoners did report that schooling was not important to them in junior high. They voiced the studies that school was only a place to see friends. Many of the inmates did mention teacher's role in their self-esteem issue. The literature suggested that black men in prison regretted their decisions to leave school. The positive effect of educational programs in prisons is seen through the fact that these individual who attend these programs stay out of trouble because they are busy and are more prepared to re-enter society. Prisoners taking courses could be role models for their peers.

In a study by Tewksbury and Stengel (2006) to understand the importance of programs, tools and resources in correctional education programs as perceived by incarcerated students; the

inmates were asked this closed ended question, “What are your main reasons/ motivations to going to school? The students significantly stated that going to school made them feel better about themselves. Only 5% responded that correctional official’s encouragement, family encouragement, outside friend’s encouragement, in-prison friend’s encouragement, teacher encouragement, sentence reduction were reasons to attend correctional educational programs. Correctional education is needed for the management of inmates for several reasons. When inmates are occupied by academic and vocational programs, they are less likely to be involved in illegal or acting out behaviors due to boredom. Having inmates participate in educational activities may provide role models that may influence others and this positive attitude; may transfer to the outside when they go back into society.

There is little sympathy according to Ubah (2004) from the public for inmates concerning their education. As early as 1982 the legislators began to restrict higher education and Pell Grants for those in the penal systems. Ubah suggested that the reason the restriction on grants was because the grants were not effective in reducing recidivism, but it was due to a political climate that was negative to any program that provided comfort to criminals. Critics referred to Pell Grants as a waste of taxpayers’ money and ignored the fact education reduced the recidivism rate. The hysteria with the war on crime along with political opportunities over powered the “good” intentions of some policy makers and the Pell Grant was terminated for prisoners. This study can help politicians and stakeholders identify alternative methods of educating incarcerated individuals.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature provided the researcher with a myriad of themes that are contributing factors to answer the research questions. Information from research a priori revealed that socio-

economic factors in these young men lives were all contributing factors to educational and career choices. Racial stereotypes, self-hatred, political pressures, the media, poorly educated teachers, under-educated parents, poverty, drug infested communities, family structures, zero tolerance policies, the Prison Industrial Complex as well as the lack of role models, and fascination of the streets and making money, tracking within the school system lack of funding for school districts, labor market conditions, differential hiring practices and peer pressure. The research revealed the numbing of the Black communities with drug infestation in 1970s. The research revealed that when prisoners were asked how they perceived their educational experiences both in and out of prison the young men reported negative experiences. The young men reported that they were not provided the educational and nurturing experience from their families, the community teachers and society needed for a successful academic career and life's journey.

The research revealed that when prisoners were asked about education while incarcerated reported they stated that they did not feel that the education was adequate because the tutors in prison were not qualified to help and that the noise and disruptions did not help. The research revealed that due to funding, prison education was not a priority in the US. Instead, prison labor has proven to be a viable need to help a staggering economy. Cheap labor is one of the ways America became a powerful country.

Regret was a factor that most of the prisoners reported when asked what they would do to change their decisions to take on a life of crime. The prisoners reported that they regretted making the decisions made and that they regretted letting their families down. Motivation was another variable that the prisoners reported. The prisoners were motivated to go to schools because they felt that they could make their families proud of them as wells as make a living. Success to most

prisoners meant being able to take care of oneself and their families. The more things change the more they remain the same.

The problems Blacks perceived were self-inflicted in many cases. The research revealed images in the media that perpetuated negative stereotypes and self-defeating behaviors that Black men are facing, however, young Black men still engage in this behavior. The inquirer is looking for overarching themes from a critical race perspective to provide new themes that have not surfaced, even though it is said that there is nothing new under the sun. I think that the research thus far has not revealed a variable that needs to be researched. The researcher is attempting to discover and describe a new theme that has not been uncovered. The present research will add to the body of knowledge to provide avenues of intervention within the lives of young Black men using narrative research from a CRT perspective using themes that guide the development of the life story of the participants to report the key events or epiphanies that mark people's lives in a cumulative manner to makes sense of the events reported.

CHAPTER III:
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Members of today's society are aware of the phenomenon of young Black men entering the prison system. Many families have a son who is either in prison, on parole or somehow involved in the judicial system. The question is why. I made an attempt to answer this question using the narrative research design to give young Black men a voice to tell society why. The following research questions were addressed using the narrative research method to examine the experiences of six incarcerated young black males to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the educational experiences of young Black male non-violent repeat offenders 19-25 years of age both inside and outside prison; and
2. How have these educational experiences both inside and outside prison contributed to the life choices they made?

Rationale for Narrative Study/Design

Creswell (2007) stated that narrative research is a good approach for inquiry that includes life story because stories can be retold in chronological orders and epiphanies and key events can be expressed. Researchers (Cortazzi 1993; Creswell 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) have agreed that the chronology of narrative research sets it apart from other research because there is a beginning a middle and end. The chronology of narrative research emphasizes sequence. Merriam (1998) contended that narrative research allows the subjects to be flexible and look backwards to the past and look forward to the future. Narrative research helps me look inward to

explain personal reasons for doing the research and to look outward to society for the social significance of this work.

Connelly and Clandinin (2002) reported that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience that is to be studied and it names the pattern of inquiry to be studied. People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives. Narrative researchers describe those lives and collect and tell stories of them and write narratives of experiences. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2002),

Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum-the imagines now some imagined past or some imagined future. Each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

Creswell (2002) added that narrative designs are frequently used as a form of research in education because narrative studies offer practical, specific insights. He also added that narrative research is micro-analytic with the objective of learning about an individual (p. 521). Chase (2005) found that a narrative study shows how individuals are enabled or limited by social resources, socially situated in interactive performances, and how narrators develop interpretations. Creswell (2007) argued that narrative researchers situate individuals' stories within the participants personal experiences [their jobs, their homes, their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts of time and place] (p. 56).

Clandinin (2007) contended that the narrative approach can be seen in the pioneering work of John Dewey (1938) who focused on experience and identified the personal and the social along with importance of the continuity of experience within both realms (p. 230).

Creswell (2007) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further stated that narrative research is best for detailed stories of life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals. This study used six participants. The researcher analyzed the participant's story and

then “restoried” them into a framework that makes sense. This study used the elements of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) three-dimensional space narrative structure to advance the interaction, continuity, and situation to create the key elements of time, place, plot, and scene in a chronological sequence with a beginning, middle and an end. The end result of these stories is the men end up in prison.

One big step in the narrative process is the development of a rich theoretical framework. The framework needs to state the condition under which a particular phenomenon is likely to be found as well as the condition when it’s not likely to be found. The theoretical framework later becomes the vehicle generalizing new cases, comparable to the role playing in cross-experiment designs. Generally, qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of the cases are different. The inquirer selected representative cases for inclusion in this qualitative study using critical race theory as the framework.

Researcher Clarification and Reflexivity

I have to admit that I had certain assumptions and biases coming into this research, especially after completing the literature review. However, I always knew that to find out the truth you must ask someone who has been there, that is why I chose interviews. I could not understand why young men were going to prison in such high numbers; it had become a phenomenon to me.

I tried to reflect on my education while out in the field. Merriam (1998) stated that the researcher’s assumptions and biases need to be clarified at the outset of the study (p. 205). I agree with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who suggested that experience is a key term in research. The authors focused on Dewey’s writings on the nature of experience. For Dewey, experience is both personal and social. He stated that people are individuals and need to be

understood as such, but they cannot be understood as such; they cannot be understood as only individuals. People are always in relation, always in a social context. Furthermore, Dewey held that one of the criteria of experience is continuity that experiences grow out of other experiences and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions himself, in the past, present or future, even in the imagination, each point has a past and lead to an experiential future.

Clandinin and Connelly (2007) and Creswell (2007) stated that there is concern about the impact of the study on the participants. How will they see the write up? Will they be marginalized because of it? Will they be offended? Will they hide their true feelings and perspectives? Weiss and Fine (2000) discussed a set of self-reflective points that a researcher should consider in qualitative writing:

1. Should I write about what people say or recognize that sometimes they cannot remember or choose not to remember;
2. What are my political reflexivity's that needs to come into my report;
3. Has my writing connected the voices and stories of individuals back to the set of historical, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated;
4. How far should I go theorizing the words of participants;
5. Have I considered how my words could be used for progressive, conservative, and repressive social policies;
6. Have I backed into the passive voice and decoupled my responsibility from my interpretation; and
7. To what extent has my analyses (and writing) offered an alternative to common sense or the dominant discourse? (p. 33)

I knew I was entering a culture that I did not understand; yet, I wanted to know. Not knowing the extent of what I was going to find in my research, I tried to rely on Geertz's (1973) argument concerning researchers entering cultures. He stated that culture is most effectively treated in its own terms by isolating its elements specifically the internal relationships among those elements, however we must characterize the whole system in a general way. Geertz stated that when a researcher enters a culture, "he observes, he records, he analyzes." It is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something (p. 20).

Some of the most important factors I had to consider were my gender, age, ethnicity, and motivation. I knew that the participants would share their experiences only if they felt comfortable with me. All these factors could have influenced how the participants viewed me and how I perceived them, and as a result, my research interpretations.

I thought that they would view me as a mother figure and talk candidly about their lives. I spent about an hour with each participant for the first interview. I spent half of an hour on the second interview for member checking. The participants were able to see the themes and review the researcher's interpretation of the data, which can add to the subsequent credibility and validity of the research.

The participants wanted to know if I had sons and if any of them were in prison. I stated not yet! The participants were very respectful, and it is my hope that interventions can be made to help young Black men avoid the school-to prison- pipeline. The young men in this study offered their opinions on what would have helped them; I believe that they know best.

Participants and Setting

This research was conducted at a state prison in Alabama that housed approximately 1,399 prisoners. The participants were selected using purposive sampling according to Patton (1990)

and Creswell (2007). The participants were non-violent incarcerated Black men (aged 19-25) who had been incarcerated previously. The participants were selected because they were in prison and could understand the central phenomena. I provided the warden with a flyer (see Appendix C) to set up a presentation to a preselected group of potential candidates for participation. The researcher made a presentation to the group explaining the risks and benefits of the research to the participants and to the community and country at large. Participants were allowed time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of participating in the research with full knowledge of confidentiality and informed consent avoiding coercion. The researcher selected six participants who assumed pseudonyms to promote confidentiality and to assure that information provided in the study will not attract individual attention to the participants.

Each participant was required to sign a consent form (see Appendix C) before the interview began and were provided a copy of the document. The research participants were six African American men who met the following criteria:

1. Incarcerated at least on one prior occasion.
2. Incarcerated for a non-violent offense;
3. Between 19 and 25 years of age;
4. Attended public school;
5. Provided written consent to be interviewed;
6. Accessible for the length of the study; and
7. Able to recall early academic experiences.

The actual names of the participants were only used on the consent forms and pseudonyms were used throughout the study and reporting of the findings.

Table 1

Participants Quick Reference

Name	Age	Years of Education	Conviction
Lucky	20	9	Drugs
Antonio	25	GED	Drugs
Scotty	20	9	Burglary
Chase	25	GED	Drugs
Mikee-Mike	21	9	Drugs
Demontae	20	9	Drugs

Table 1 gives the demographics of each participant. Chase had been in this correctional facility since he was 17 years of age. Scotty and Demontae were in special education in public schools and are continuing their education in prison in the special education program. Five of the participants had been convicted of drug related charges and Scotty was convicted of burglary as a nonviolent offender. The participants did not finish a traditional high school; however, Chase and Antonio received their General Education Diploma (GED) while incarcerated. All of the participants voiced that they want to continue their education.



Figure 1. Data Collection Activities (Creswell, 2007)

Data Collection

Once a researcher has identified the purpose of the research she is then able to identify the appropriate method for gathering the research information. In this case, My Committee Chair and I contacted the Alabama Department of Corrections (DOC) to ask for entry into a prison that could accommodate my research questions (see Appendix A). Permission was granted for me to enter Stanton Correctional Facility in Elmore County, Alabama (see Appendix D). The correctional facility houses 1,399 inmates with of staff of 160 employees.

I engaged Creswell’s (2007) interview methods. Before I engaged in any data collection, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification was gained (see Appendix C) and permission was requested and granted by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E). This ensured that the research methods were appropriately designed and characteristic to the ethical considerations of research. Once the IRB granted permission, I provided the warden with a flyer (see Appendix F) to place in the prison so that men could volunteer to participate in the study. After the men

volunteered, I set up a presentation to the preselected group. Eight men were selected; however, only six men participated. The researcher made a presentation to the group explaining the risks and benefits of the research to the participants, the community and the country at large. I met with the group and selected eight participants. Only six of the eight were able to participate in the interview process.

Interviews were held in a room in the prison with a large window with a guard in close proximity. The participants were told to keep their hands on the table so that the guard could view all movements. The participants reviewed the informed consent and signed the document before the interview process began (see Appendix C). Data for this study came from interviews and audiovisual materials. Each participant was interviewed twice. The interview protocol questions (see Appendix H) formulated from the research literature helped to guide the interview process and led to the information that answered the research questions. Transcription of the interviews took place using speech recognition program. The interviews were then placed in file folders in locked drawers. The information was reviewed carefully for accuracy before data analysis began. The second interview was provided for member checking (see Appendix I).

Interviews

In search of knowledge, I decided that I would interview the participants to find out their stories. Seidman (2013) has argued that at the root of an interview is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Being interested in others is the key to some of the basic beliefs underlying interview techniques. It requires that interviewers keep their egos in check. It requires interviewers to realize that they are not the center of the world. It demands that the interviewer's actions demonstrate that others' stories are important (p. 9).

Bertaux (1981) stated that a good interview is one in which the interviewee takes control and talks freely expressing something true, something real, something of interest. He urges researchers not to ignore the difference between natural sciences and those of social sciences. “Unlike a planet, a chemical, or a lever, subjects in the social sciences can talk and think. If given a chance to talk freely, people tend to know a lot about what is going on” (p. 39).

Todorov (1984) has contended that interviewing in research is an interest in other individual’s stories because they are of worth. Their stories defy anonymity of a number and almost that of a pseudonym. To hold the conviction that we know enough already and do not need to know others’ stories is not only anti-intellectual, but leaves us prone to violence to others (p. 211).

I wrote the demographics portion of the interview protocol and allowed the digital voice recorder to function for the remainder of the interview. Each participant chose a pseudonym to maintain anonymity and confidentiality in the study. By not taking notes during the interview, I was able to focus on the participant and not be distracted by the process of writing, thereby noticing important voice reflections and body languages.

The interviews went well. I found that the young men were eager to tell their stories. The interviewees had to sit up straight with their hands on the table. They did not make any gestures, but they did make eye contact and spoke where I could understand. I did not perceive any sarcasm, or anger in their voices. They did not use any profanity. They acted like perfect gentlemen.

The data collected during the interview, both written and recorded, were transcribed, coded for themes and taken back to the participants for a second interview for member-checking to assure the validity and authenticity of the interview. Member checks were provided to each of

the participants to ensure fairness and good faith. I talked to each of the participants about the themes that I perceived as I restored their interviews.

Audiovisual Material

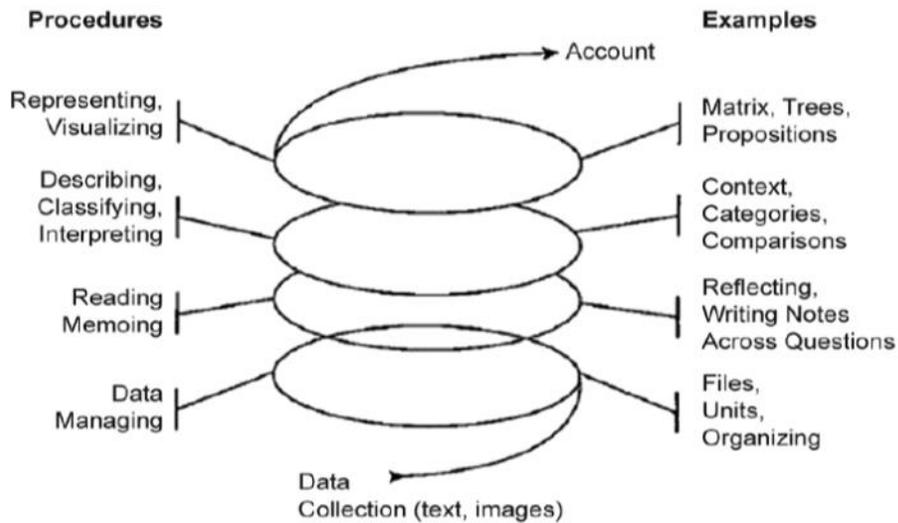
I viewed the movie *Redemption* as a source of information for this qualitative study. Creswell (2002) stated that the advantage of using audiovisual materials as an artifact is that people easily relate to images because they are persuasive in our society. Images such as videotapes and films provide extensive data about real life as people visualize it. The first step was to determine which material could provide information to answer research questions and how that material supplemented existing data. I viewed the movie *Redemption* as an artifact to provide a parallel of violent and nonviolent subjects that reveal the same themes. The movie depicted the life of a young man from early childhood until death row. Themes presented in the movie were also found in the review of literature and correlated to themes presented in the data from the interviews.

Data Analyses and Coding

Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008) have contended that in his analyses of events, sociologist Phillip Abrams argued that for historians and sociologist,

Knowledge is achieved by abstraction. In both cases, details of what is selected as evidence not what is given by the world. The focus is on specific kinds of generalization within the rhetoric of persuasion that can be constructed on the basis of personal narrative evidence. (p. 129)

This research used qualitative data analyses and interpretation.



Source: Creswell (2007)

Figure 2. Data Analyses Spiral (Creswell, 2007)

Creswell (2007) stated that the first step of data analyses is transferring the spoken word to text. The data was transcribed using the speech recognition program. The data was organized into file folders because of the large amount of information gathered and filed in locked file drawers. The next step in data analyses was to explore the data by reading through all of the information and making codes. The next step was to develop themes from the codes. Seven themes were developed from the codes. The themes were analyzed for contradictory evidence. The next step in analyzing the data was to connect the interrelating themes to display a chronology or sequence of events (Creswell, 2007).

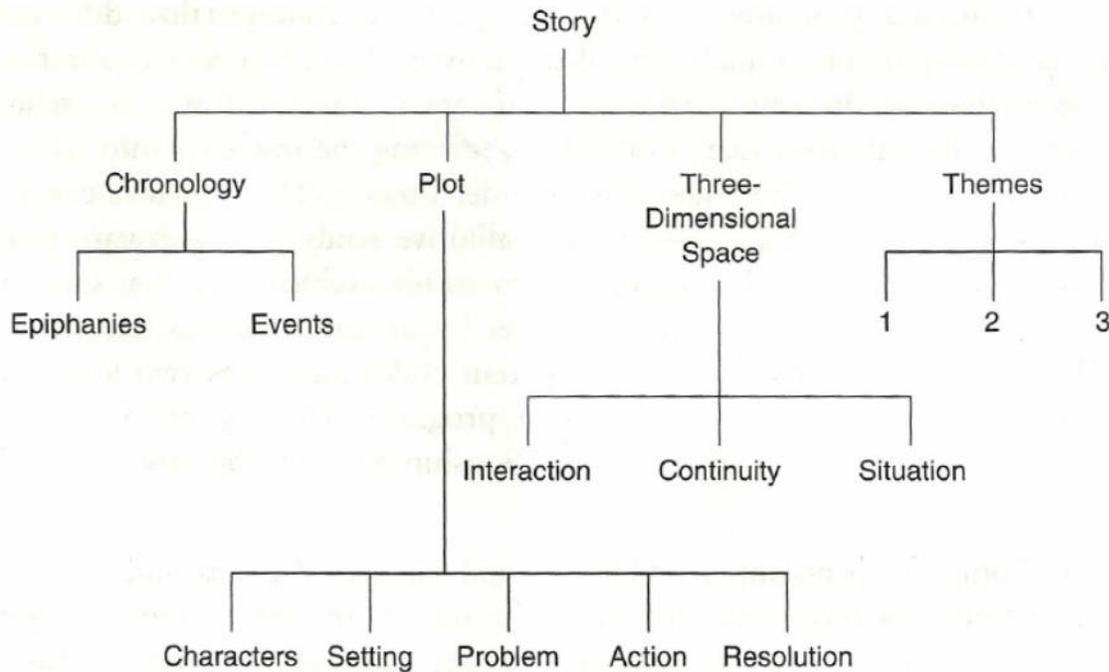


Figure 3. Template for Coding a Narrative Study (Creswell, 2007)

After coding and analyzing the data for descriptions and themes, I restoried the information via narratives organized by events shared from their earliest memories of school. I identified the themes already present within each narrative. Common themes/codes across the different narratives will be discussed for their implications for education and future research. To check accuracy and validity of the research, I used member checking on the second interview by asking the participants about the accuracy of the report. Participants were asked if the descriptions were realistic, if the themes are accurate and if the interpretations were fair (Creswell, 2007).

The objective of this narrative study was to ‘restory’ data provided by the participants by telling the stories of these young men in their words, as their stories related to the educational system. Clandinin (2007) contended that the narrative approach can be seen in the pioneering work of John Dewey (1938) who focused on experience and identified the personal and the social along with importance of the continuity of experience within both realms (p. 230). This study’s

research method includes a theoretical framework using critical race theory as a perspective to reveal variables from the data provided by the six participants to bring a new perspective for educators, policy makers, and mental health professionals to consider and make conversation for discussion to understand why many young men are choosing this way of life. Creswell (2007) stated that paradigmatic thinking is used in qualitative research to create themes that hold across stories and categories. The purpose of this narrative research design is to describe the perceptions of the inmates, and then determine which salient themes are present in each of the participant's stories. I used the narrative research design to tell the stories of the repeat offenders of their perception of the public school system and how this system played a part in determining the choices they made in their lives concerning education and careers and if these experiences led to them entering the school-to-prison pipeline (p. 54).

The narrative approach is familiar to social scientist because of its popularity in psychology, medicine, law and political science. The narrative approach writer has a large array of texts and approaches from which to choose. In a narrative, the issue of concern is selected and the inquirer selects multiple participants to gain different perspectives on the issue. In narrative research, a key theme has been the turn toward the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter. One big step in the narrative process is the development of a rich theoretical framework. The framework needs to state the condition under which a particular phenomenon is likely to be found as well as the condition when it's not likely to be found. The theoretical framework later becomes the vehicle generalizing new cases, comparable to the role play in cross-experiment designs. Generally, qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of

the cases are different. The inquirer selected representative cases for inclusion in this qualitative study.

The narrative methodology is appropriate for this inquiry because there is a need to determine why young Black men who are incarcerated choose the educational path in society from the young men's perspective. I attempted to give the incarcerated youth a voice to tell why they did not pursue an education and career goals. The high incarceration rate of young Black men only perpetuates the racial divide in the country. The financial cost of incarceration alone is enough to spend time looking for the answer to the research questions. This narrative inquiry provided a voice to those who "know" to tell their story. This study allowed parents, educators, law enforcement personnel, and the judicial system in the American society to understand the plight of young Black males as it pertains to their education and career choices. This research sought to open dialog for stakeholders, policymakers, and school systems to find solutions to the problems, to determine at what point in these young lives intervention would have been appropriate and to what extent these interventions would have helped alleviate the problems that they faced.

Coding and Themes

I used an inductive coding techniques described in Miles and Huberman (1994) to arrive at themes for the study. The initial data was collected, transcribed, and typed using the voice recognition program in Word 7. I reviewed the data line-by-line and generated stories from the data starting with the participants earliest memories of school. I looked for salient codes in the data (p. 58). I narrowed the data down to seven themes. I gave each theme a number and a color on a data card as follows: red=1 female headed households, lack of funds; blue=2, lack of community support; orange=3, influence from older guys; yellow=4, peer pressure; green=5

making money selling drugs; purple=6, lack of discipline; lime=7, expulsion and alternative schools; and 8=brown, epiphanies. After listening to the tapes and writing and reading the stories three or four times, I felt like I knew the participants through their stories. I color coded each theme by hand on 3 by 5 cards. Each participant is represented by quotes from the narrative that they provided.

The Role of the Researcher

The research question came to me while taking a course in ethics in my curriculum while attending the ethics course at The University of Alabama. Someone close to my son was arrested and put into prison for life. I had known this young man since birth. I knew his parents and his grandparents. I pondered the question of why this young man from a good loving family would throw his life away. I realized that I have eight grandchildren, six boys. I realized that I was not removed from the situation because my children were grown and well educated. I realized that everyone is affected by the high incidence of incarceration in the country. It became a reality that if this young man could get caught up in the criminal justice system that had assets and a good support system, anyone could. The music, the lure of the streets, as well as peer pressure can pull “good” kids toward a life of criminality. The fascination of the streets perpetrated by the media leads many teens to seek the adventure of criminality and to go astray. As I researched the problems, I found that being young and gullible is enough for young people to go astray. I thought I had to do something, so now at least I understand the phenomena and I do not know where to place the blame. Is it parents, community, schools, or society? This research should shed some light on the subject. I thought maybe since I have counseled men in domestic violence situations and assisted men with insurance counseling who are disabled, the young men would open up to me. I am truly interested in the subject. I think that my maturity and genuine sense of

caring enabled the young men to talk to me candidly concerning their education and career choices.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contended that as researchers we see ourselves in the middle of the stories-ours and theirs. Clandinin and Connelly implored researchers to examine the complexities of fieldwork by negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating changes and ways to be useful. As researchers, we come to the field living our stories. Our participant's lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end the day we leave. The stories we bring are part of the lives we lead (p. 63).

Trustworthiness/Validation

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that the basic issue of trustworthiness is simply how an inquirer persuades his audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that there is a need to know what arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked that would be persuasive on this issue? Inquirers have found it useful to ask four questions: (1) truth value: How can one establish confidence of the findings for the subjects in the context in which the inquiry was carried out; (2) applicability: How can the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects; (3) consistency: How can it be determined whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same similar subjects or the same or similar context; and (4) neutrality: How can one establish the degree to which the findings are determined by the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not by biases, motivations interests or perspective of the inquirer? (p. 290)

Guba and Lincoln (1989) insisted that instead of focusing on a presumed reality, the focus should

be on stakeholders and those realities as presented by the evaluator and attributed to the stakeholders.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argued that trustworthiness is an appropriate term for critical research because it signifies a different set of assumptions about research. One of the criteria for trustworthiness involves the credibility of portrayals of constructed realities. Another criterion of trustworthiness is accommodation, which is the ability to make generalizations from one research study to another (p.151).

Creswell (2007) contended that verification is critical to evaluating the quality of research. He identified eight procedures for validating and verifying research findings: (1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (2) triangulation, (3) peer review or debriefing, (4) negative case analysis, (5) clarification of researcher bias (reflexivity), (6) member-checking, (7) rich, thick description, and (8) external audits. He recommends that any research study employ at least two of these procedures (p. 208).

This research used member checking and researcher clarification (reflexivity) to evaluate the quality of the research. Member checking according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) allowed the evaluator to assess the intent of the action that is given by the respondent intended by acting in a certain way. It gives the stakeholder group the chance to correct errors of fact and errors of interpretation. Member checking provides the interviewer the chance to offer additional information, allowing them to understand the situation as a stranger understands it. It gives the participants time to further illuminate a given construction and bring out information that might have been forgotten. It puts the respondent “on record” as having said certain things and as having agreed that the interviewer got it right. It allows a chance for the inquirer to summarize, not only for the participant, but as the first step toward analysis of a given interview (p. 239). It also gives

the participant a chance to judge the overall adequacy of the interview process and to provide the individual data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

Creswell (2007) posited that how we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics that we bring to research. All writing is positioned and within a paradigm. All researchers shape the writing that emerges, and qualitative researchers need to accept this and be open in their interpretations. Today qualitative researchers are much more self-disclosing about their qualitative writing than they were years ago (p.179).

Richardson in Creswell (2007) stated that researchers “do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and a temporal general knowledge.” The best writing acknowledges its own “decidability” and all writing has ‘subtexts’ or position the material within a particular historical and locally specific time and place. In this research I attempted to give the participants a voice. To describe how they felt about the reasons they were imprisoned. The themes revealed in this should be an eye-opener for society (p.179).

Summary

In this chapter, I described the method of research and data collection. This chapter identified the rationale for this narrative study which stated that narrative research allows the researcher to retell stories and name epiphanies in the lives of the participants. This chapter described the participants and the setting for the study. The participants were six young Black men housed in state prison in Elmore, Alabama. Interviews were held on the prison grounds with an armed guard in close proximity of the interview. The narrative research design allowed me to use semi-structured interviews and a movie (*Redemption*) as an artifact to collect data to answer the research questions. After data was collected, transcribed, coded and restoried, themes that were embedded in the data were revealed. The data was evaluated for trustworthiness and validity

using researcher bias and reflexivity, and member checking. The method the researcher used for coding themes and was noted in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV:

FINDINGS

Introduction

I restoried the information provided in the guided interviews according to Creswell (2002). I retold the stories in the first person using the participant's voice and vernacular. By restorying the interviews I arranged their stories in a chronological order starting from their earliest memories of schooling. Epiphanies present in each of the participant's lives were reported. The participants used pseudonyms to provide data for the stories to answer the research questions. I re-told movie *Redemption* in third person to answer the research questions.

Lucky

"People think you are lame, if you respect older people."

I liked first grade. I made all A's, and I was on the honor roll, and I was in the spelling B and in the math derby. In elementary school we went on field trips and I was in programs. My favorite subjects were science and social studies. I liked to make good grades.

I loved first grade and I made good grades up until middle school. I made straight A's up until the sixth grade. After sixth grade, I started to get in trouble. I started fighting, I guess because the guys were jealous. I had real nice clothes and the girls liked me. I got suspended a few times in middle school. I got a lot of girls. Everything started going down in middle school. I lost focus. I completed the 9th grade and dropped out in the 10th grade two months before I turned sixteen. A lot of stuff changed. I started thinking differently. When you're young, you just follow the rules and listen to your mother. You're more focused. When you grow up, things just

turn out to be different. You have to make decisions for yourself. I hung with the popular kids. The popular kids were spoiled. I tried to fit in with them. I had to fight because I was clean. I can see now that they were not friends. They really were not friends. Behind your back they talk about you. They want bad things to happen to you whether it be girl wise or school wise. Your friends put you up to doing things. People think you are lame if you respect adults. I always tried to respect older people. I was teacher's pet from elementary school until middle school. They put you up to do things that normally you wouldn't do. So I started being non-compliant. My mother told me to stop, but I wouldn't. The teachers tried to tell me to stop listening to my friends, but your friends have more influence on you at that time than adults. Everything went downhill.

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That's when I started to go astray. If I would've of had someone there for me, I could've made it. There was no male figure in my life. I needed someone talk to. The older guys in the community had nice clothes and money. I wanted some of that; I decided to do what I had to do to get some of the things the older guys in the community had. I bought my younger brothers shoes and stuff too! I gave my momma money; she had to pay bills and did not have any one to help her. She always told me I was wrong, but I made her take it.

After elementary I started hanging with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble, selling drugs. In my community there was a lot of killing and a lot of drugs and robberies. The people in the community did not support the school. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family. We looked up to the drug dealers. I started carrying guns and selling drugs. Things went all the way left. I started carrying guns.

My father was not in my life; my mother could not teach me how to be a man. She could tell me right from wrong. But I knew that she could not do anything to me so I just did what I

wanted to do. If my father had been in my life, things would have been different. If I had someone to discipline me, I could have made it. They expelled me from school for fighting. I did not care!

When I get out I want to take up business management and psychology. I've been reading a lot of psychology books since I been here. I want an event hall. I want my own business. I just want to help my family. I have a son. My family is important to me. They "all" are important to me. My mother is sick, she cannot work. At one time she had two hair salons, but now, she has a brain tumor and lupus.

Antonio

"I knew I could not play basketball the next year, so I walked out."

Uh, I remember kindergarten. Learned nursery rhymes and we went on a lot of field trips. School was cool at that time. I had a lot of good times at that time. Teachers in elementary school tried to make learning fun. They tried to make me like school. I liked math and reading. I played sports. I graduated from elementary to middle school. I did not get into trouble in elementary school.

I quit school cause I was trying to grow up too fast. I would go to school and walk out the back door. They would drop me off, and by 7:30; I would be on my way out the back door! This started in the 9th grade. I don't not know why. When basketball season was over, I just started walking out because I did not want to stay in school. I tried to grow up too fast. Started selling drugs. I knew where to go to get the drugs. My community was good. I just wanted money. I use to disrupt the class so I would have a reason to leave. I had A's and B's up to the ninth grade. In the ninth grade, I failed science and I knew that I could not play basketball the next year, so I walked out.

I started dating at that time. I wanted money to impress the girls. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that. I was in 9th grade when all of that started. I started dipping and dabbing and selling drugs. I use to take my things to my friend's house and leave it so my momma would not see it. I left shoes and clothes at my friend's house. People in the community did not know "fo show". I use to park the car around the street and walk home. I got in trouble and went to wilderness camp. I got my GED in that camp.

I want to go to honors camp and get some training while I am here. I want to be a counselor so I can work with youth at risk when I get out. My parents told me to stay in school, and I would not listen. My dad was in my life, he kept us on the weekends. While I am here I am going to work on myself. I have a daughter and I want to visit with her. I should have gone on to school. Experience is the best teacher. Maybe I can give it another shot.

Scotty

"I guess I was just bad."

In first grade they taught me how to write my name and communication skills. I graduated and I remember my cap and gown. I had fun in school. I use to fight and disrespect the teacher. My grades were fair. I liked science. I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn't feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was bad in elementary school. They said I was moving too much. I started taking medicine, but I didn't like the medicine. I was class clown. I had a stepfather who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad.

My community supported the school. I had friends in junior high. We just hung out smoked weed and cigarettes. I didn't feel like school was for me. I didn't like any of the teachers

in school, not particular. I went to middle school. I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure.

I was sent to juvenile for stealing, and taking weed to school. They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn't getting no school credit. I wouldn't go, so they kicked me out. Wasn't no point in going to school if it didn't count? They were working on my behavior. My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I was in the 10th grade when I quit. I wasn't getting any school credit, so I just quit. I use to go out and make money by cutting grass. I use to make money and buy video games a lot. I was incarcerated because I didn't even have a job. I was stealing and taking things. Momma was taking care of me and she got tired of taking care of me cause I was always in trouble. Then I came here.

I had signed up for a GED when I came in to prison. I want to get out of here and get a job and start my own family. I want to sign up for welding. I need to make enough money to take care of my family, to keep food on the table. I want to go home and see my mother and my nieces. I want them to go college.

Chase

"I was curious."

Back in first grade I was a normal child. I ran and played. I enjoyed learning. I was curious. School was always good for me. School started being bad for me in the 6th and 7th grade. I got incarcerated in the 6th grade for having a gun in school. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old.

Things went down when I was in the sixth grade. I was fighting and selling drugs*. I fought in school. I was suspended in elementary school. I was punished for everything. I got use to 'punishment.' If people would have talked to me, instead of punishing me, I think it would

have helped. My mother did the best she could. She raised us by herself She had tried to work and come home late at night and help me with my homework. She would leave home at 7:00 in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 at night, and try to help me with my homework. She tried to tell me to stay out of the streets and do good. I was curious about what was going on out there. I believe if someone who had been through what I had been through, and was about 18 or 19 years of age, and could have talked to me, it would have made a difference.

Me and my friends would walk around and look for trouble. We were twelve and thirteen years old. We would burglarize, steal and smoke. We sold drugs to wear jewelry and clothes. I went to a youth facility when I was 12 years old for taking a gun to school. It was real hard, like a prison. I heard that youth here in Alabama get passes home and wear their own clothes, we did not get that. I think that if I had known that they would charge me as an adult at twelve years old. I would not have taken that gun to school. I came here at 17 years of age. I moved down here by myself. I do not have any family here.

My teachers were very good in school. They always talked to me and told me that I was smart; they told me I was a leader. I could not relate to them because they did not know what I was going through. My teachers would hear about the wrong I had done and they would still support me. When I get out, I am going to go back and talk to some of my teachers and thank them for what they tried to do for me.

My community was not involved in the school system. There was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood, but there was a lot of drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. I knew where to go and find the trouble.

When I get out, I want to help young people by being a positive role model. I use to tell my younger brother about my crimes. When I found out that I would be going to jail for a long

time, I told him not to listen to anybody but momma. He listened to me!! I wish I would have had someone to talk to me like I talked to him. Today, he has a family two children and he is only 20 years old. He is making good money and momma moved out of that neighborhood.

I have a couple of certificates since I have been here. I 'm taking welding. I wish someone had talked to me about the long term effects of crime. People always told me that I was going to go to jail. I thought, so what, I been to jail. They did not tell me that felons could not get jobs. Someone should have young people research about the crimes they commit. They need to know that they can lock you up for life. They need to know that you cannot get a job, if you are a felon. That's what I want to do; I want to work with kids who are at risk. When I want to know something, I go to someone who has been there! I listen to them and I might not know what to do, but I do know a little before I go into a situation.

Mikee-Mike

"If I had more discipline, I would have seen better days."

I had a good time in elementary school. I played sports! When I was in elementary I was lolly gagging around. I liked my teachers. I liked Ms. Bailey. Math was my favorite subject. Ms. Bailey would take me step by step in fourth grade. She made me good in math. I used to fight in school. I got suspended. I got into about 4 or 5 fights in elementary school. The kids from the neighborhood and me would fight about silly things like whose bike was the fastest. Who can run the fastest?

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I started selling drugs. I moved out of the house with my mother and moved in with my brother. My brother had been gone out of the house for a long time. If I would've had a father figure! He would not have

let me do anything that I wanted. My mother let me do what I wanted to do. I regret that I did not have a father. I was very hard-headed stuck out in the streets hanging out with my brother.

“In junior high I was still with my friends from the neighborhood. It was four of us. We started selling drugs, making money, and not going to school. All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do.’ If I had more discipline, I would have seen better days.”

‘I lived in a drug infested area.’ We had a boys and girls club in the community and church folks would come around and pick us up in a big yellow bus about twice a week. We had fun! The people in the community tried to support me. I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I was not “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother. I stayed with my brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn’t get no job. I got locked up at 17.

I got my GED and I got my barber’s certificate since I have been locked up. My mother and my niece are important to me. I pray to God that I make it to see them. I am going to work in a barber shop. I’ve got two friends who own shops. If I don’t, I will get me a 9-5. I am thinking about finding me a spot in Alabama to settle down. If I could take everything back, I would have stayed in school and played sports. I came in here when I was 17.

Demontae

“Disobedience got me here.”

Fourth grade is what I remember, friends on the playground. I had a lot of friends and doing schoolwork. The good thing I remember is me at graduation and moving on to another grade. I didn’t get into trouble in elementary. My teachers liked me and my grades were good.

You get older and life gets serious. Life got serious for me when I was in high school. Teachers told us that our parents were not going to be with us forever. Things started to get serious. I found out about gas, clothes and money.

I was in the streets getting money, and being in the streets, you want to smoke, you make mistakes. When you smoke it makes you want to do things to get things. You want to make money. I had positive and some not positive friends. The kids who wanted to be positive and make good grades grow up to be successful, and the kids that want to wear clothes and look good end up on the streets with nothing. When you look around, you wish you had stayed with a different crowd. You have to watch your surroundings and the atmosphere you're in, it's Karma.

I always lived in a good community. Nice neighborhood and good people. It was not a good vibe for me. I was not abused or anything. I just did not want to stay at home. I would go over to the trailer court and hangout. I traveled around with my older brother he exposed me to bad things and got into trouble. It was nine of us children and only me and my older brother got into trouble. My brother got life without parole. The others finished college and have families. Me and my brother are the only ones locked up. I thought my friends were in my corner but they were not. They wanted me to get in trouble and be broke like them. My mom and dad worked hard for what we had.

I was shot when I was twelve! I got hit by a car when I was seven. I have seizures. Three years after I got hit by a car I started having seizures. I got shot on the 4th of July. I got shot by a stray bullet.

I moved in to Alabaster when I finished middle school. I was fourteen years old. All hell broke loose when I moved to Alabaster! I got in trouble because I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I was gullible and I started smoking and disobeying my parents. I never got in

trouble when I was in school. I used to fight after school. We did not smoke before school. We smoked after school. They would get mad because my parents bought things for me and I would have to fight. The people thought that I lived in the trailer park. So, when they found out that I did not live in the trailer park they would start fights and say things. I guess they were jealous.

My parents worked hard. I lied to them and disobeyed them. I could not help that my momma and daddy worked hard. I would walk around with a pistol in my pocket. My daddy said if you have to carry a gun to a place, you ain't got no business being there. My parents worked hard and I disappointed them. Either you gonna work or be a bum on the street.

I 'm working on my GED, while I'm here. I'm supposed to be in college. I have a daughter and I hate that I'm in here. I am going home to take care of my little girl. I hate that my family has to help me while I am here. I'm supposed to be helping them.

Disobedience got me here. I am scared that the devil will come back after me and get me back into trouble. If I could talk to someone, I would tell them to make sure you don't let people get into your head. Don't let people tell you what to do. Don't take a chance for easy money. Prison is not where it's at. You can't see your child! I miss her, and when I talk to her, I feel bad. I don't want to come back here.

Within-Case Analyses

Several themes emerged as result of the interviews with the participants. The themes presented were (1) female headed households of lack of funds; (2) lack of community support; (3) influence from older guys; (4) peer pressure; (5) making money selling drugs; (6) lack of discipline; and (7) expulsion and alternative schools.

Several themes were presented in each of the participants stories; however, all themes were not present each of the participants' stories. Each of the themes were given a number to

provide a sequential depiction of the themes in each of the studies. The within-case analyses are presented first. The cross-case analyses are presented after the within-case analyses to reveal how these themes shaped each of these boys' lives.

Lucky

Theme 1: Female headed households and lack of funds. Lucky was the first participant on the study. He was a very intelligent young man who admitted that he made mistakes and tried to help his mother. He said,

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That's when I started to go astray. If I would've of had someone there for me, I could've made it. There was no male figure in my life. I needed someone talk to. That's when I started to go astray.

Theme 2: Lack of community support. Drug infested communities do not present options for many young Black men. Lucky stated, "In my community there was a lot of killing and a lot of drugs and robberies. The people in the community did not support the school."

Theme 3: Influence from older guys. Young men out of work and not in school have the opportunity to talk with the younger boys' in the community. Lucky stated, "The older guys in the community had nice clothes and money. I wanted some of that; the drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family."

Theme 4: Peer pressure. Lucky had an intact family until his stepfather died. He had fond memories of school and his family met his economic needs until his stepfather died. He replied,

After elementary I started hanging with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble, selling drugs. People think you're lame if you respect adults. I always tried to respect older people. I was teacher's pet from elementary school until middle school. They put you up to do things that normally you wouldn't do. So I started being non-compliant.

Theme 5: Making money selling drugs. Some teenagers are impressed with jewelry clothes and cars, Lucky said, “We looked up to the drug dealers. I started carrying guns and selling drugs. Things went all the way left.”

Theme 6: Lack of discipline. Lucky expressed a sincere longing for a male figure in his life. He said during the interview,

My father was not in my life; my mother could not teach me how to be a man. She could tell me right from wrong. But I knew that she could not do anything to me so I just did what I wanted to do. If my father had been in my life, things would have been different. If I had someone to discipline me, I could have made it.

Theme 7: Expulsion and alternative schools. Lucky stated that he had to fight because he wore nice clothes. Many children in low-income neighborhoods view clothing as a status symbol. Lucky said, “They expelled me from school for fighting. I did not care!”

Epiphanies. Life changing events (epiphanies) explain behaviors. The loss of his stepfathers’ income proved to be too much for Lucky to handle. He did not state in the interview that he received counseling or therapy. Lucky said, “My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That’s when I started to go astray.”

Antonio

Theme 1: Female headed households and lack of funds. Antonio stayed with his father on weekends. He did not state that he was under-privileged.

Theme 2: Lack of community support. Antonio stated that he came from a “good neighborhood that supported the school system.”

Theme 3: Influence from older guys. Antonio stated that he loved sports and had a supportive family. He wanted to impress girls.

Theme 4: Peer pressure. Antonio stated, “I wanted money to impress the girls. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that.”

Theme 5: Making money selling drugs. Antonio stated, “I was in ninth grade when all of that started. I started dipping and dabbing and selling drugs. I use to take my things to my friend’s house and leave it so my momma would not see it.”

Theme 6: Lack of discipline. Antonio did not get into any trouble in elementary school. He made good grades, and he noted, “I used to take my things to my friend’s house and leave it so my momma would not see it. I left shoes and clothes at my friend’s house.”

Theme 7: Expulsion and alternative schools. Antonio was not expelled and did not attend alternative school. He stated,

I quit school cause I was trying to grow up too fast. I would go to school and walk out the back door. They would drop me off, and by 7:30; I would be on my way out the back door! This started in the 9th grade. I don’t not know why. When basketball season was over, I just started walking out because I did not want to stay in school.

Epiphanies. Antonio admitted that he was fascinated by money. He quit school and went to a camp for juvenile delinquents; however, the money looked good. He replied, “I got in trouble and went to wilderness camp. I got my GED in that camp.”

Scotty

Theme: 1 Female headed households and lack of funds. The family was intact and supported Scotty until the tenth grade. He stated, “My dad died when I was going to alternative school.”

Theme 4: Peer pressure. Scotty stated that he did not like any of the teachers, and he had been diagnosed with ADHD. Scotty stated, “I went to middle school. I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure.”

Theme 6: Lack of discipline. Scotty explained, “I had a stepfather who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad.”

Theme 7: Expulsion and alternative schools. Scotty noted in his interview that he suffered from ADHD but he did not like the medication. He said,

I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn't feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was sent to juvenile for stealing, and taking weed to school. They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn't getting no school credit. I wouldn't go, so they kicked me out. Wasn't no point in going to school if it didn't count?

Epiphanies. Epiphanies are sudden and can have an effect on behavior. He stated, "My dad died when I was going to alternative school."

Chase

Theme 1: Female headed households and lack of funds. Chase regretted that his mother did not have help with her children. Chase stated,

My mother did the best she could. She raised us by herself She had tried to work and come home late at night and help me with my homework. She would leave home at 7:00 in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 at night, and try to help me with my homework.

Theme 2: Lack of community support. It takes a village to raise a child. Chase did not think that the community that he grew up in validated him. He stated, "My community was not involved in the school system. There was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood, but there was a lot of drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. I knew where to go and find the trouble."

Theme 3: Influence from older guys. Chase started dealing drugs at the age of 12.

Theme 4: Peer pressure. The young men on the neighborhood lacked supervision according to Chase. He replied, "Me and my friends would walk around and look for trouble. We were twelve and thirteen years old. We would burglarize, steal and smoke. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old."

Theme 5: Making money selling drugs. To gain status in the community, Chase stated, “We sold drugs to wear jewelry and clothes. Things went down when I was in the sixth grade. I was fighting and selling drugs.”

Theme 6: Lack of discipline. Chase was home alone most of the time. His mother was working. He said, “She would leave home at 7:00 in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 at night, and try to help me with my homework. She tried to tell me to stay out of the streets and do good. I was curious about what was going on out there.” Single mothers work long hours which gives children time alone and unsupervised. Chase stated, “I was fighting and selling drugs. I fought in school. I was suspended in elementary school. I was punished for everything. I got used to punishment. If people would have talked to me, instead of punishing me, I think it would have helped.”

Theme 7: Expulsion and alternative schools. Chase grew up very fast. He said, “I fought in school. I was suspended in elementary school. Went to a youth facility when I was 12 years old for taking a gun to school. It was real hard, like a prison.”

Epiphanies. Chase stated, “I went to a youth facility when I was 12 years old for taking a gun to school. I came here (prison) at 17 years of age.”

Mikee-Mike

Theme 1: Female headed households and lack of funds. Mikee-Mike lived in a low-income neighborhood with his mother who was a single parent. Mikee-Mike stated, “All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do.”

Theme 2: Lack of community support. Communities adjacent to areas with low incomes provided outlets for children. Mikee-Mike stated, “I lived in a drug infested area. We

had a boys and girls club in the community and church folks would come around and pick us up in a big yellow bus about twice a week. We had fun!”

Theme 3: Influence from older guys. Communities with high jobless rates are prone to the co-mingling of older and younger men. Some of these men are related. Mikee-Mike stated, “In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I moved out of the house with my mother and moved in with my brother. My brother had been gone out of the house for a long time.”

Theme 4: Peer pressure. Adolescence is a time when young people are trying to “find” themselves. Mike-Mike said, “In junior high I was still with my friends from the neighborhood. It was four of us. We started selling drugs, making money, and not going to school.”

Theme 5: Making money selling drugs. Ironically, Mikee-Mike’s brother introduced him to the underground trade of selling drugs. Mikee-Mike said, “I started selling drugs. I moved out of the house with my mother and moved in with my brother. My brother had been gone out of the house for a long time.”

Theme 6: Lack of discipline. The ideal of a father is noticed in the voice of Mikee-Mike he stated, “If I would’ve had a father figure! He would not have let me do anything that I wanted.” Conversely, he thinks that his mother let him do too much. “My mother let me do what I wanted to do. I regret that I did not have a father. I was very hard-headed stuck out in the streets hanging out with my brother.”

Theme 7: Expulsion and alternative schools. Mikee-Mike did not like the fact that he had been removed from his familial setting. He said, “I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I was not “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother.”

Epiphanies. The fact that Mikee-Mike was put in a group home caused him to grow up very fast. He took on the role of an adult. He said,

I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I was not “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother. I stayed with my brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn’t get no job. I got locked up at 17.

Demontae

Theme 3: Influence from older guys. As in the life of one of the other participants, Demontae was introduced to drug selling by his older brother. He said,

I traveled around with my older brother he exposed me to bad things and I got into trouble. It was nine of us children and only me and my older brother got into trouble. My brother got life without parole.

Theme 4: Peer pressure. To fit in, teenagers sometimes choose the wrong crowd. Demontae’s family moved at a time when he was trying to make life changing decisions. He said,

All hell broke loose when I moved to Alabaster! I got in trouble because I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I was gullible and I started smoking and disobeying my parents. I never got in trouble when I was in school. I used to fight after school. We did not smoke before school. We smoked after school. They would get mad because my parents bought things for me and I would have to fight. The people thought that I lived in the trailer park. So, when they found out that I did not live in the trailer park they would start fights and say things. I guess they were jealous.

Theme 5: Making money selling drugs. Although his parents could provide for his needs, Demontae chose to sell drugs with his brother. He said, “I was in the streets getting money, and being in the streets, you want to smoke, you make mistakes. When you smoke it makes you want to do things to get things. You want to make money.”

Epiphanies. Life changing events alter ones’ behavior. Demontae was hit by a car when he was seven. He started having seizures three years after he was hit by the car and he was shot

while shooting firecrackers on the 4th of July. Demontae and his brother had a good relationship and his brother received life without parole.

Cross-Case Analyses

Each participant's narrative provided themes that link or had comparisons to the other participants. The themes presented were (1) female headed households lack of funds; (2) lack of community support; (3) influence from older guys; (4) peer pressure; (5) making money selling drugs; (6) lack of discipline; and (7) expulsion and alternative schools.

Theme 1: Female Headed Households Lack of Funds

Lucky was the first participant in the study. He was a very intelligent young man who admitted that he made mistakes and tried to help his mother. He stated,

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That's when I started to go astray. If I would've of had someone there for me, I could've made it. There was no male figure in my life. I needed someone talk to. That's when I started to go astray.

Antonio stayed with his father on weekends. He did not state that he was under-privileged. For Scotty, the family was intact and supported him until the 10th grade. He stated, "My dad died when I was going to alternative school." Chase regretted that his mother did not have help with her children. Chase stated, "My mother did the best she could. She raised us by herself She had tried to work and come home late at night and help me with my homework. She would leave home at 7:00 in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 at night, and try to help me with my homework." Mikee-Mike lived in a low-income neighborhood with his mother who was a single parent. Mikee-Mike stated, "All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do."

Theme 2: Lack of Community Support

Drug infested communities do not present options for many young Black men. Lucky stated, “In my community there was a lot of killing and a lot of drugs and robberies. The people in the community did not support the school.” It takes a village to raise a child. Chase did not think that the community that he grew up in validated him. He stated, “My community was not involved in the school system. There was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood, but there was a lot of drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. I knew where to go and find the trouble.” Communities adjacent to areas with low incomes provided outlets for children. Mikee-Mike stated, “I lived in a drug infested area. We had a boys and girls club in the community and church folks would come around and pick us up in a big yellow bus about twice a week. We had fun!”

Theme 3: Influence from Older Guys

Young men who are out of work and not in school have the opportunity to talk with the younger boys’ in the community. Lucky stated, “The older guys in the community had nice clothes and money. I wanted some of that. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family.” Communities with high jobless rates are prone to the co-mingling of older and younger men. Some of these men are related. Mikee-Mike stated, “In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I moved out of the house with my mother and moved in with my brother. My brother had been gone out of the house for a long time.” As in the life of one of the other participants, Demontae was introduced to drug selling by his older brother. He said, “I traveled around with my older brother he exposed me to bad things and I got into trouble. It was nine of us children and only me and my older brother got in trouble. My brother got life without parole.”

Theme 4: Peer Pressure

Lucky had an intact family until his stepfather died. He had fond memories of school and his family met his economic needs until his stepfather died. He replied,

After elementary I started hanging with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble, selling drugs. People think you're lame if you respect adults. I always tried to respect older people. I was teacher's pet from elementary school until middle school. They put you up to do things that normally you wouldn't do. So I started being non-compliant.

Antonio stated, "I wanted money to impress the girls. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that." Scotty stated that he did not like any of the teachers and he had been diagnosed with ADHD. Scotty said, "I went to middle school. I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure." The young men on the neighborhood lacked supervision, according to Chase. He replied, "Me and my friends would walk around and look for trouble. We were twelve and thirteen years old. We would burglarize, steal and smoke. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old." Adolescence is a time when young people are trying to "find" themselves. Mikee-Mike said, "In junior high I was still with my friends from the neighborhood. It was four of us. We started selling drugs, making money, and not going to school." To fit in, teenagers sometimes choose the wrong crowd. Demontae's family moved at a time when he was trying to make life changing decisions. He said,

All hell broke loose when I moved to Alabaster! I got in trouble because I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I was gullible and I started smoking and disobeying my parents. I never got in trouble when I was in school. I used to fight after school. We did not smoke before school. We smoked after school. They would get mad because my parents bought things for me and I would have to fight. The people thought that I lived in the trailer park. So, when they found out that I did not live in the trailer park they would start fights and say things. I guess they were jealous.

Theme 5: Making Money Selling Drugs

Some teenagers are impressed with jewelry clothes and cars. Lucky said, “We looked up to the drug dealers. I started carrying guns and selling drugs. Things went all the way left.”

Antonio stated, “I was in 9th grade when all of that started. I started dipping and dabbing and selling drugs. I use to take my things to my friend’s house and leave it so my momma would not see it.” To gain status in the community Chase stated, “We sold drugs to wear jewelry and clothes. Things went down when I was in the sixth grade. I was fighting and selling drugs.”

Ironically, Mikee-Mike’s brother introduced him to the underground trade of selling drugs.

Mikee-Mike said, “I started selling drugs. I moved out of the house with my mother and moved in with my brother. My brother had been gone out of the house for a long time.” Although his parents could provide for his needs, Demontae chose to sell drugs with his brother, he said, “I was in the streets getting money, and being in the streets, you want to smoke, you make mistakes.

When you smoke it makes you want to do things to get things. You want to make money.”

Theme 6: Lack of Discipline

Lucky expressed a sincere longing for a male figure in his life. He said during the interview,

My father was not in my life; my mother could not teach me how to be a man. She could tell me right from wrong. But I knew that she could not do anything to me so I just did what I wanted to do. If my father had been in my life, things would have been different. If I had someone to discipline me, I could have made it.

Antonio did not get into any trouble in elementary school. He made good grades and he noted, “I use to take my things to my friend’s house and leave it so my momma would not see it. I left shoes and clothes at my friend’s house.” Scotty stated, “I had a stepfather who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad.”

Chase was home alone most of the time. His mother was working. He said, “She would leave home at 7:00 in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 at night, and try to help me with my homework. She tried to tell me to stay out of the streets and do good. I was curious about what was going on out there.” Single mothers work long hours which give children time alone and unsupervised. Chase stated, “I was fighting and selling drugs. I fought in school. I was suspended in elementary school. I was punished for everything. I got use to punishment. If people would have talked to me, instead of punishing me, I think it would have helped.”

The ideal of a father is noticed in the voice of Mikee-Mike he stated, “If I would’ve had a father figure! He would not have let me do anything that I wanted. My mother let me do what I wanted to do. I regret that I did not have a father. I was very hard-headed stuck out in the streets hanging out with my brother.”

Theme 7: Expulsion and Alternative Schools

Lucky stated that he had to fight because he wore nice clothes. Many children in low-income neighborhoods view clothing as a status symbol. Lucky said, “They expelled me from school for fighting. I did not care!” Antonio was not expelled and did not attend alternative school, but he stated,

I quit school cause I was trying to grow up too fast. I would go to school and walk out the back door. They would drop me off, and by 7:30; I would be on my way out the back door! This started in the 9th grade. I don’t not know why. When basketball season was over, I just started walking out because I did not want to stay in school.

Scotty noted in his interview that he suffered from ADHD but he did not like the medication. He said,

I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn’t feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was sent to juvenile for stealing, and taking weed to school. They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn’t getting no school credit. I wouldn’t go, so they kicked me out. Wasn’t no point in going to school if it didn’t count?

Chase grew up very fast. He said, “I fought in school. I was suspended in elementary school. Went to a youth facility when I was 12 years old for taking a gun to school. It was real hard, like a prison.” Mikee-Mike did not like the fact that he had been removed from his familial setting. He said, “I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I was not “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother.”

Epiphanies

Life changing events (epiphanies) explain behaviors. The loss of his stepfathers’ income proved to be too much for Lucky to handle. He did not state in the interview that he received counseling or therapy. Lucky said, “My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That’s when I started to go astray.” Antonio admitted that he was fascinated by money. He quit school and went to a camp for juvenile delinquents; however, the money looked good. He replied, “I got in trouble and went to wilderness camp. I got my GED in that camp.” Epiphanies are sudden and can have an effect on behavior. “My dad died when I was going to alternative school.” Chase stated, “I went to a youth facility when I was 12 years old for taking a gun to school. I came here (prison) at 17 years of age.” Mikee-Mike was put in a group home caused him to grow up very fast. He took on the role of an adult. He said,

I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I was not “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother. I stayed with my brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn’t get no job. I got locked up at 17.

Life changing events alter ones’ behavior. Demontae was hit by a car when he was seven. He started having seizures three years after he was hit by the car and he was shot while shooting

firecrackers on the 4th of July. Demontae and his brother had a good relationship and his brother received life without parole.

Redemption

I analyzed the movie *Redemption* to present themes that were present in the main characters' lives to show parallels of his life with the men in the study. I first described the main events in the film and then described the themes that were present.

Redemption is a movie based on a true story concerning a young Black man Stanley "Tookie" Williams III's reflective view of his entry into a life of crime. This movie is a reflective view of Tookie Williams's initiation into to a life of criminal behavior. Tookie Williams has been identified as the founder of the CRIPS, one of the most notorious gangs in California. While in prison, he wanted to redeem himself by helping other young men stay out of trouble. I think this movie is valuable and a valid source of information for my dissertation because the story depicts the life story of this young Black man living in a poverty stricken, drug infested community that lead to his entry into a life of crime, which eventually led him to incarceration. Tookie Williams's life paralleled the young men's lives that were interviewed in this study. I interviewed men convicted of non-violent offenses; however, they could have succumbed to the pressures that create violence. The movie depicts his life and his way of seeking redemption for this way of life before he was executed in 2005. Many young men choose this way of life and it is depicted in this movie. There were many factors that lead to incarceration of this young Black man throughout his journey to prison.

The interview portion of this dissertation reflects the lives of non-violent criminals however, after viewing this movie; it became abundantly clear that in the life of Tookie Williams

and the six inmates that I interviewed in prison were connected in some bizarre way. At least in prison there are guards that can protect them.

The movie opens with a meeting of the board for the Nobel Peace Prize. Tookie Williams was being nominated. A reporter's curiosity was inflamed. She decided to seek knowledge why young men are going to prison in droves from the community. The reporter had a teenaged son herself. She was worried about her son visiting back and forth with his dad who lived in a crime-ridden area. The reporter sought out the prison and gained entry into the system to interview Tookie Williams, an inmate who had been sentenced to life in prison for murder charges. He had become tired of all the fighting and killing and wanted to do something to help other young men take a different road and to stop them from entering a life of violence and crime. He was sent to solitary confinement for fighting in prison. There he started reading books. He gave the reporter an interview and they formed a relationship of trust and friendship. The reporter and the young man had multiple interviews so that she could tell his story. The young man on death row reflected about his life and why he turned to crime.

He reflected on his childhood, running through fields in Louisiana, through tall grass, bushes and flowers. The young man and his mother had lived with his grandmother in rural Louisiana and moved to south central Los Angeles, California, seeking a better life. He learned early that he would have to fight to survive in the crime filled city. He stated that he realized that he would have to fight for survival in the city when police officers came by and watched him and another boy fight and did not break it up.

He lived in a neighborhood where fights and violence were the norm. His mother sent him to live with his father to try to help him choose another way of life, however, the father took him to a motel and gave him a few dollars and did not come back. This was an epiphany in the boy's

life. He realized that he would have to fend for himself. He stated that the streets became his home, and that the boys in the neighborhood became his family.

Boys from the other side of town decided that they should protect their friends and claimed the blocks that they lived on as their “turf.” These boys from this side of town did not want boys from that side coming to their side of town. The boys regularly had fights to determine who was the strongest. Tookie became the strongest and most powerful of all the fellows on his side of town.

To survive they needed money. Drugs were the way they could make money to survive in the community. Tookie named his group “Crips” and they wore blue bandanas, and the guys on the other side of town wore red bandanas and called themselves “Bloods.” To determine who would sell the most drugs in the community, the gangs rivaled. Drive by shootings, and beatings were the norm the community. Over the years, many children died. The movie ended with Tookie waiting on death row he was denied appeals.

This story is all too common for young Black men. While in prison, he had to fight to survive. He looked at the news and read the paper and realized that children were still dying in the streets while he was incarcerated. He tired of this ordeal of violence and fighting and decided to write books about violence to help young people. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and the Noble Literary Prize for his work to save young people. Many in the community wanted him to gain release or a reduction in his sentence from going to the electric chair; however, he was not awarded the sentence reduction by the parole board. The movie was based on a true story and Stanley “Tookie” Williams was executed in San Quentin prison in 2005.

I thought this movie would be a good source for this research because of the parallels of the themes that were outlined in the review of the literature and the themes that emerged in the

interviews. This research required participants that had committed non-violent offenses, however, the movie showed “Tookie” as a violent offender. The movie and the interviews rendered some of the same themes. The movie portrayed Tookie’s story from a reflective point of view that confirms some of the reasons young Black men choose a life of crime. This movie depicted certain themes that are played out in the everyday lives of young Black men.

The movie replicated the themes in the participant’s stories: (1) female headed households, lack of funds; (2) lack of community support; (3) influence from older guys; (4) peer pressure; and (5) making money and selling drugs were themes revealed in the movie. The young men in this study committed non-violent crimes; however, the character “Tookie” in the movie committed violent crimes. I noted epiphanies in Tookies’ life.

Summary

This chapter restoried the participant’s accounts of their experiences both in and out of school. The stories began with the participants earliest memories of school. I restoried the data in a chronological order using Clandinin and Connelly (2000) three dimension of interaction, continuity and situation that defines a narrative study. The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix H). I restoried the interview and presented their stories in the first person. I used within case analyses of the data and a cross-case analyses of the data. I interpreted the movie *Redemption* and restoried the accounts of the movie in third person.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This narrative study described six Black males' perceptions of the educational system and their experiences as they relate to their involvement in the school-to-prison pipe line. Data to analyze these perceptions were gathered from interviewing six prisoners in Staton Correctional Facility in Elmore, Alabama. Themes were revealed from the codes that were embedded in the data. This chapter also discusses the analysis of data obtained from six guided interviews, and the observation of the movie *Redemption*. Experiences affect people in different ways. The findings revealed common themes present in the participant's stories and in the movie *Redemption*. Each participant did not reveal all of the same themes that were discovered, however, I presented salient themes provided by each of the participants. The themes presented were (1) female headed households lack of funds; (2) lack of community support; (3) influence from older guys; (4) peer pressure; (5) making money selling drugs; (6) lack of discipline; and (7) expulsion and alternative schools. I also noted epiphanies, the life changing events in the participant's lives. In the following pages participant responses are quotes and excerpts from stories that were coded for themes that were present in the stories as indicated by the men. I used critical race theory to analyze the themes presented in the narratives.

Delgado and Stephanic (2013) argued that scholars in this movement of CRT consider many of the same issues conservative civil rights and ethnic study discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective to include economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and

even feelings and the unconscious. CRT stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, it questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlighten rationalism and neutral principals of constitutional law (p. 5).

The participants in this study did not state that race or racism caused them to quit school or to turn to criminality as a way to earn a living, however, pundits of CRT are concerned with the unconscious relationship of race, racism and power. I address the fact that the participants did not speak of racism or the “system” using the three proponents of racism, silence, a colorblind ideology and internal racism.

Alexander (2010) and Delgado and Stephanic (2013) discussed silence as a proponent of racism. Alexander and Delgado argued that silence is the least acknowledged aspect of the new system of control in the United States toward marginalized citizens. Gerald Siders wrote, “We can have no significant understanding of any culture unless we know the silences that were institutionally created along with it.” Nowhere is that observation more relevant in American society today than in an analyses of the culture of mass incarceration. Descriptions of the silences that loiter over the mass incarcerated are rare because people, social scientist, judges, politicians and reporters are more interested in speech, acts, and events than in the silences beneath the surface (pp. 63-64). Delgado and Stephanic (2013) stated that many victims of racial discrimination suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament (p. 49).

Participants in this study could have been suffering from internalized racism which, according to Speight (2007), is a dynamic of CRT that is a process, a condition, a relationship that violates its victims physically, socially, spiritually, materially and psychologically. The first condition of this process is exploitation that brings about the energies from one group to another to produce an unequal distribution of wealth. The labor market in the U.S. society reserves skilled

high paying and professional jobs for White workers. Menial labor and service jobs are filled by Black and Latino workers.

The second condition of racism according to Speight is the most dangerous, marginalization. This occurs when a group is not allowed to participate in society and are potentially subjected to material deprivation and extermination. Powerlessness is the third condition experienced by those whose power is coerced without their exercising it. The powerlessness are situated so they must take orders and very rarely have the opportunity to give orders.

The fourth condition is system violence directed at members of a group because they are members of that group. The fifth condition, cultural imperialism, is relevant to this discussion because it is the instrument through which subordinate groups internalize their oppression. Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of dominant groups experience and culture as the norm. The dominant group's stereotypical images of the target group becomes internalized. The target group analyzes racism and accepts the negative societal beliefs about themselves. Speight (2007) went on to state that the modern version of racism is more subtle and covert involving more avoidance than hostility. Racism's contemporary products are constrained in images, language, expectations and the stuff of daily encounters that might be more easily interjected by the oppressed group. The dominant group has the power to determine and name reality, what is normal and correct.

Neville, Awad, Flores, and Bluemel (2013) stated that the question of whether the United States has moved beyond race and racism is one that scholars have pondered for decades. Many think that President Barack Obama's election into the White House in 2008 marked the beginning of a new "post-racial" era in which issues of race and racial discrimination are memories. Neville

et al. (2013) has insisted that there is a sense of a color-blind racial ideology (CBRI) that consists of color evasion (denial of racism by emphasizing equal opportunity). Among White CBRI enthusiasts, instead of racial prejudice, they ignore race, while ignoring race actually reflects racial intolerance and prejudice.

Neville et al. (2013) also insisted that among Blacks who endorse CBRI, there is a denial of the existence of racism; they engage in individual and collective behaviors that counter their group interests. Blacks who endorse CBRI may internalize racism and address the issue in a context in which they embrace the dominant idea of the racial status quo. The author gave an example of a Black person who believes that race is a non-factor in securing a job (or the denial of institutional racism) and believes that he/she and other Blacks need to realign their values to give priority to education and not to hedonism in order to succeed. At this point, a dominant racial ideology is maintained by relying on the United States values of meritocracy and individualism to explain group differences; in other words, blame the victim.

Alexander (2010) employed that the carefully engineered appearance of racial progress that strengthens the color blind argument is the public consensus that personal and cultural traits, not structural arrangements are responsible for the fact the majority of young Black men in urban areas of the United States are under the control of the criminal justice system or branded felons for life. There is colorblind public consensus that supports the new caste systems ideology that insists that race no longer matters (p. 234). I analyzed the themes presented in the narratives of the six participants in this study from a CRT perspective.

Theme 1: Female Headed Households and Lack of Funds

The first theme that developed from the interviews was females headed households, lack of funds. Four of the participants reported that they were raised by single mothers. Research has shown that female-headed household receive less money than the male-headed household. A death in the family and loss of income sometimes proves to be deleterious for families. Some of the young men in the study were supplementing their mother's income. For instance, Lucky stated that his dad passed away and Scotty's dad died as well. Scotty stated, "My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I use to go out and make money by cutting grass. I use to make money and buy video games a lot. I was incarcerated because I didn't even have a job. I was stealing and taking things."

Chase talked about his mom being the head of the household. He said, "My mother did the best she could. She raised us by herself. She had to work and come home late at night and help me with my homework. She would leave home at 7:00 A.M. in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 P.M. and try to help me with my homework."

With a lack of a household head at all, Mikee-Mike ended up in prison. He said, "All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn't get no job. I got locked up at 17."

From a CRT prospective, Delgado and Stephanic (2012) have revealed that Black women occupy more than one category when examining the dynamic of politics as it pertains to critical race theory. Intersectionality means the examination of race, class, national origin, sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings. These categories can be disadvantaging, for example, both Black and female. Black females operate at an intersection of

recognized sites of oppression. The authors asked if each disadvantaging factor is considered separately, additionally or in some other prospective. Should persons who experience multiple forms of oppression have their own category of representation apart from those that correspond to separate varieties of discrimination they incur (Delgado & Stephanic, 2012, p. 57-58)?

The young men in this study regretted that their fathers had not been in their lives. In a study by Hunter et al. (2006), it was revealed that young men raised by single mothers did not blame the mothers for their misfortunes. The participants in this study did not seek to blame their mothers; however, they did voice that they wished their fathers had been involved in their lives.

Theme 2: Lack of Community Support

Another theme that evolved in this study was lack of community support. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. Some of the men in the study thought that some of the people in the community contributed to their delinquency. Most of the communities were places without resources to help the families that lived in them. Some were drug infested and riddled with crime. According to Alexander (2010), the impact of globalization and deindustrialization was felt strongly in the Black community where unemployment has risen to 28%.

Martinez, Rosenfield, and Mares (2008) found that there was change in communities with low incomes over the past 30 years. The authors link drug activity to social disorganization, residential instability, heterogeneity, and socio-economic deprivation. Four of the participants in this study grew up in high jobless neighborhoods. Peterson and Krivo (2009) stated that neighborhood composition accounts for criminal activities. The inequality in the character of internal nearby neighborhood conditions lead to racial and ethnic inequality in violence. The authors argued that the level of criminal activities in a neighborhood depends on criminal activities in adjacent neighborhoods. African American neighborhoods, its proximity to other

neighborhoods, whatever their internal character, its closeness to communities with higher violence, characteristics associated with higher violence rates such as poverty and residential turn over, immigration, community investment and White residents contribute to criminal activities in a neighborhood. Pattillo-McCoy in her studies of middle class African American neighborhoods found that proximity to impoverished neighborhoods with high levels of social deprivation and other detrimental conditions create unique risks for crime and explain racial zed patterns of violence because higher risk communities crossed neighborhood boundaries to socialize, shop, and attend church. Adolescents also share schools where catchment areas are larger than a single neighborhood, which means that crime-producing processes will spill over and directly influence neighboring communities.

Lucky talked about the crime in the neighborhood and stated that the community did not support the school. The drug dealers gave the young men advice on how to live. They actually told the young men in the community to sell the drugs. Lucky stated, “We looked up to the drug dealers.”

Chase stated that there was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood but there was a lot of drug dealing in the community. Since his mother worked long hours he was free to go out and do what he wanted to do. He said, “I knew where to find trouble.” Chase and his friends looked up to the drug dealers and he started selling drugs at 12 years of age.

Mikee-Mike said that he lived in a drug-infested area and he and his friends would go to the boys and girl club. He stated that people from local churches would pick them up to take them on excursions once or twice a week. Due to the drug infestation in the community, the boys were happy for excursions out of the neighborhood. Participants reported the following:

In my community there was a lot of killing and a lot of drugs and robberies. The people in the community did not support the school. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family. We looked up to the drug dealers. (Lucky)

My community was not involved in the school system. There was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood, but there was a lot of drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. I knew where to go and find the trouble. (Chase)

I lived in a drug-infested area. We had a boys and girls club in the community and church folks would come around and pick us up in a big yellow bus about twice a week. (Mikee-Mike)

Theme 3: Influence from Older Guys

The third theme revealed in this investigation was influence from older guys. Children in communities without resources hang out on streets where older guys without jobs frequent. This is evident in many communities. Young boys want to know what is going on and they talk to people who are not positive influences. Sometimes these older guys are family members. Delgado and Stephanic (2013) and Speight (2007) noted that from a CRT perspective, there is the marginalization of men in Black communities. They hold that racism is a means by which society allocates privilege and stature. Racial hierarchies determine who gets the benefits, the best jobs, and the best schools. Harding (2009) stated that to best understand the cultural transmission process in poor neighborhoods requires understanding with whom adolescents interact compared with those in more affluent neighborhoods. Research indicates that adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to spend time with older individuals. The neighborhood is the place where young men feel safe and older peers become a source of protection, and boys with absentee fathers may be more susceptible to the influence of older males. Thus older peers, have the potential to expose to young adolescence males local frameworks of violence, romantic relationship and the strategies that the boys bring to their decision making. Harding argued that disadvantaged neighborhoods in comparison with more advantaged neighborhoods have more

cross-age interaction that accounts for the transmission of social phenomenon about violence, and involvement in the underground economy such as drug dealing due to the high unemployment rate in the community.

Lucky stated that the drug dealers in the community told them “sell drugs, help your family.” Sometimes the influence comes from older siblings. Mikee-Mike stated that in junior high he got out of hand and started hanging out with his brother and started selling drugs. Demontae’s older brother started him out in a life of crime. Demontae stated, “He exposed me to bad things, he was older.” Examples in the narratives include the following:

The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help your family. (Lucky)

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I started selling drugs. (Mikee-Mike)

It was nine of us children and only me and my oldest brother got into trouble. I traveled around with my older brother; he exposed me to bad things and I got into trouble. My brother got life without parole. (Demontae)

Theme 4: Peer Pressure

The fourth theme uncovered in this investigation is peer pressure. During adolescence, fitting in with the crowd is a major concern for youth. To make a decision to be “different” is a choice that children this age are not comfortable with. Youth at this age want to fit in. Giordano, Cernkovich, and DeMaris (1993) reported in their study that adolescent friendships are intimate and influential as adolescents seek autonomy from their family unit. Black youths are believed to be more peer oriented than their White counterparts because of presumed deficits in family structure. There is a wide agreement that adolescence is a time of a temporary distancing from parents while friendships increases in importance. Black adolescents are more likely than their White counterparts to reside in a mother-only household which lessens the degree of control and intimacy within the Black family unit. These family units many times suffer from material

deprivation (a tenet of CRT) and youths in these homes will depend on peers for affiliation and support.

Lucky remembered that he tried to respect older people he said, “People think you’re lame if you respect adults.” To get along with his peers, he became non-compliant. In the past, he had been teacher’s pet and liked by authority figures. He got trapped in crime, trying to get along with his friends. Antonio stated that he tried to grow up too fast. He admitted that he wanted cars and jewelry so he decided to sell drugs to fit in. He said, “A couple of my homeboys had cars and I wanted some of that.” The lure of the streets caused an intelligent young man to disregard parents’ warnings and accept a life in the streets. Scotty said that he had always had a hard time getting along with people. He said that in the seventh grade he started fighting because “people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure.” Scotty admitted that he had ADHD and that he did not like the medication.

Chase stated that he and his friends would walk around looking for trouble. Chase said that he was involved in gang activity as young as twelve years of age. Chase stated that they would fight and sell drugs and he went to juvenile detention when he was twelve years old for taking a gun to school. He thought that he could impress his friends.

Mikee-Mike stated that he and his friends from the neighborhood were still together in junior high. He said that they would fight over silly things like whose bike was the fastest and who could run the fastest. He said that it was four of them and they started selling drugs in junior high.

Demontae said that he had positive and not so positive friends. Demontae did not live in a poverty-stricken, crime-infested neighborhood, but he visited the crime infested neighborhoods. He said, “I had positive and not so positive friends.” He stated that he did not like to stay at home,

so he would visit crime-infested neighborhoods. He said that when the people in the crime filled neighborhoods found out that he was not from the neighborhood he would have to fight. The participants also talked about the following:

Your friends put you up to doing things. People think you're lame if you respect adults. I always tried to respect older people. I was teacher's pet from elementary school until middle school. They put you up to do things that normally you wouldn't do. So I started being non-compliant. (Lucky)

I tried to grow up too fast. Started selling drugs. I knew where to go to get the drugs. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that. (Antonio)

I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure. (Scotty)

I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. Me and my friends would walk around and look for trouble. (Chase)

In junior high I was still with my friends from the neighborhood. It was four of us. We started selling drugs, making money, and not going to school. (Mikee-Mike)

I had positive and some not so positive friends. The kids who wanted to be positive and make good grades grow up to be successful, and the kids that want to wear clothes and walk around looking good end up a bum on the streets with nothing. (Demontae)

Theme 5: Making Money Selling Drugs

The fifth theme discovered in this study involved the men selling drugs. The men in the study started selling drugs to make money so they could have things such as jewelry and clothes at an early age. In their communities, it was easy for them to go out and find drug dealers and get in the drug game. Alexander (2010) noted that the rules of the game (the war on drugs) are designed for the roundup of an unprecedented number of Americans for minor, nonviolent drug offenses. The number of annual drug arrests more than tripled between 1980 and 2005. The fact is police are legally allowed to engage in a wholesale roundup of nonviolent drug offenders does not answer the question of why they choose to do so when there are more serious crimes to prevent and solve. Alexander stated that the system of control depends for its survival on the tangible and

intangible benefits that are provided to those who are responsible for the system/s maintenance and administration. When the war on drugs was declared, illegal drug use and abuse was not a pressing concern in most communities. The announcement of the War on Drugs met with confusion and resistance within law enforcement, as well as among conservative commentators. Many people are stopped and searched in the War on Drugs and are perfectly innocent of any crime. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) trains police to conduct unreasonable and discriminatory stops and searches throughout the United States. In November 2003, for example, police raided Stratford High School in Goose Creek, South Carolina. The raid was recorded by the schools' surveillance camera as well as on a police camera. The tapes showed students as young as fourteen years of age forced to the ground in handcuffs as officers in uniforms and bulletproof vests aimed guns at their heads and led a drug-sniffing dog to tear through their book bags. The school principal was suspicious that a single student was dealing marijuana. No drugs or weapons were found during the raid and no charges were filed. Nearly all of the students searched and seized were students of color (p. 73-76).

All of the participants in this study stated that they had sold drugs as teenagers except Scotty. Lucky stated that he started hanging around the wrong crowd selling drugs after elementary school. He stated, "I started carrying guns and selling drugs." Antonio wanted nice things that his friends had so he started selling drugs in the ninth grade. He stated that he would leave possessions and things that he bought at friend's houses so that his mother would not know what he was doing. He visited his father's house on weekends. He stated that he bought a car with drug money and he would leave the car around the corner and walk home. He started making a lot of money and could not hide it from his parents or the community. He said that he mainly wanted to impress the girls.

Chase said that he started selling drugs in the sixth grade. Mikee-Mike said that he and his brother started selling drugs when he was in junior high. Demontae said that his older brother started him selling drugs and that he smoked drugs as well. Demontae stated, “when you smoke, it make you want to do things to get things.” The participants stated the following:

After elementary I started hanging with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble selling drugs. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family. We looked up to the drug dealers. I started carrying guns and selling drugs. (Lucky)

I tried to grow up too fast. Started selling drugs. I knew where to go to get the drugs. I just wanted money. I started dating at that time. I wanted money to impress the girls. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that. I was in 9th grade when all of that started. I started dipping and dabbing and selling drugs. I use to take my things to my friend’s house and leave it so my momma would not see it. I left shoes and clothes at my friend’s house. (Antonio)

Things went down when I was in the sixth grade. I was fighting and selling drugs. (Chase)

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I started selling drugs. (Mikee-Mike)

I was in the streets getting money, and being in the streets, you want to smoke so you make mistakes. When you smoke it makes you want to do things to get things. You want to make money. (Demontae)

Theme 6: Lack of Discipline

The sixth theme, lack of discipline, was quite surprising to me. As a parent I was always very strict. I often felt that my children disliked me for that. The participants in this study stated that they wished their parents would have put their foot down and disciplined them. Two of the participants stated that they knew that their mothers were not strong enough to discipline them and they wished that their fathers had been in their lives to teach them how to be men. Three of the participants stated that their biological fathers were not involved in their lives. Lucky and Scotty had stepfathers in their lives until the teenage years and both of the fathers died. Chase and Mikee-Mike did not have a male figure in their home. Bodovski and Young (2010); Kelley,

Power and Winbush (1992); and Lansford, Wager, Bates, Dodge and Pettit (2012) studied discipline practices of low income Black parents. Bodovski and Youn (2010) reported that the families' emotional climate was a determinate in parental depression, parent warmth and the use of physical discipline. Black single parents were more likely to report depressive symptoms and use more physical discipline in children under nine years of age; however, these parents reported higher levels of parental warmth. Parents were more likely to report warmth toward their daughters than sons.

Kelley, Power, and Winbush (1992) argued that Black families have been characterized as weak, disorganized, and vulnerable and Black parents have been described as harsh, rigid and strict. The study found that single Black mothers with low incomes did not use physical punishment when the mothers adhere to fundamentalist religious beliefs. Mothers who adhered to religious beliefs "focused on their children's inner life, their feelings, thoughts attitudes and wishes" rather than expecting unquestioning obedience to maternal authority. Maternal age was associated with parent-oriented discipline. Younger maternal age was associated with high levels of maternal stress. Maternal stress is a determinate of physical punishment.

Lansford et al. (2012) concluded that Black parents from low-income areas are less likely to use verbal strategies to discipline children. Mothers or female-headed households of African American descent and mothers of European descent used the four forms of discipline identically. They used reasoning, yelling, denying privileges, and spanking. African American children were more likely to live in households with lower socioeconomic status, higher stress and a single caregiver. Mothers reported reasoning more frequently with boys than girls. Higher levels of stress were associated with more discipline. According to CRT, Black women intersect in two categories of discrimination. Single parenting is yet another stressor. The young men in the study

did not blame their mothers, for their involvement in the criminal justice system, although they did believe that if their father had been present, it would have helped.

Lucky said that if my father had been in my life, “things would have been different.” He said that he knew that his mother could not do anything to him. So he did what he wanted to do. He stated that if someone had disciplined him, he would have made it.

Scotty said that he had a lot of disciplinary actions in school. He stated, “I guess I was just bad.” He said that he did not like any of the teachers and that he was the class clown. He stated that when he was young his stepfather tried to discipline him but he did not listen.

Chase, on the other hand, stated that he received too much punishment. He stated that he was punished so much until it did not matter anymore. He stated that if someone had talked to him instead of punishing him, things would have been different.

Mikee-Mike stated that his mother let him do whatever he wanted to do. He said, “If I had a father he would not have let me do whatever I wanted to do.” Demontae stated that his parents warned him about his behavior. He disobeyed them. He voiced “disobedience got me here.” The participants offered the following:

My father was not in my life; my mother could not teach me how to be a man. She could tell me right from wrong. But I knew that she couldn't do anything to me, so I just did what I wanted to do. If my father had been in my life, things would have been different. If I had someone to discipline me, I could have made it. (Lucky)

I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn't feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was bad in elementary school. They said I was moving too much. I started taking medicine, but I did not like the medicine. I was class clown. I had a stepfather who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad. (Scotty)

I was suspended in elementary school. I was punished for everything. I got use to punishment. If people would have talked to me, instead of punishing me, I think it would have helped. (Chase)

All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do. If I had more discipline, I would have seen better days. If I would've had a father figure! He would not have let me do anything that I wanted. My mother let me do what I wanted to do. (Mikee-Mike)

Theme 7: Expulsion and Alternative Schools

Most of the participants liked elementary school and made good grades. They started hanging around the wrong crowd and was expelled and suspended in junior high. Noguera (2003) noted that African American males were more likely than any other group to be subjected to negative forms of treatments in school. The message is clear: Individuals of their race and gender may excel in sports, but not in math or history. Alternative schools have become a mechanism of exclusion of students whose behavior is deemed inappropriate for mainstream schools. Most people associate the alternative school movement with innovative schools that provide students with either academic focus or an organizational structure that is adapted to different student's needs (Dunbar, 2012). Many public schools rather than providing genuine alternatives, provide a separate track for "under-class" students. Alternative schools become mechanisms to warehouse students whose behaviors are not appropriate for mainstream schools. The lack of options for some students is their greatest source of nonparticipation. The primary purpose of alternative schools has been to house students who have been described as incorrigibles, violent, disengaged social misfits. Non-participation is one of the basic components of critical race theory.

Dunbar (1999) has posited that parents, teachers, and teachers unions are among the constituents who have voiced concerns over the acts of violence that have negatively impacted the public school arena. African Americans have been removed from schools where status can be attained through good grades or sports. These students worked to outdo themselves by being "bad" wearing inappropriate behaviors like badges of honor. Alternative school was a promoted as a solution to the problem of bad behavior, yet it is, in effect, the last solution before expulsion.

The alternative school policy separates a disproportionate number of African Americans males from the traditional student population.

In this study, the participants voiced fond memories of schools and teachers. All of them except Scotty, who stated that he suffered from ADHD. Lucky stated he had to fight because he wore nice clothes. He said they expelled me from school for fighting: “I did not care!” Scotty had a behavioral problem; however, he stayed in school longer than any of the other men in the study. When school officials sent him to an alternative school, he quit school. He had been expelled and suspended on many occasions but he said that he did not think that he should go to school if he was not getting grades. Chase was suspended in elementary school and sent to juvenile for one year because he took a gun to school. He was twelve years old. Mikee-Mike said that he fought in school and was suspended in elementary school.

My grades were fair. I liked science. I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled.” They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn’t getting no school credit. I wouldn’t go so they kicked me out. Wasn’t no point in going to school if it didn’t count? They were working on my behavior. (Scotty)

I was suspended in elementary school. I got incarcerated in the 6th grade for having a gun in school. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. (Chase)

I used to fight in school. I got suspended. I got into about 4 or 5 fights in elementary school. (Mikee-Mike)

Epiphanies

Key events occur throughout life. Sometimes these events shape the way we perceive life and actually determine actions. McDonald (2008) suggested that epiphanies are sudden and abrupt insights or changes in perspectives that transform the individual’s concept of self and identity through the creation of new meaning in their lives. Epiphanies are momentary experiences of transcendence that endure and are different from other types of developmental change and transformation. When psychologists contemplate the nature of change they usually

refer to two broad areas: 1) the developmental changes that occur over the lifespan (from birth to death that are affected through counseling and psychotherapy and the developmental (changes in height, weight and intelligence) modification in the structure and functioning of human beings; 2) and the developmental change that refers to any qualitative change in process and functioning. The participants in this study looked back in their lives and reported key events in their lives. The participants were young when many of these life changing events occurred and they did not report any counseling or therapy when these events occurred. During the interview, key events were reported of what happened and what they see in the future.

Lucky said that his stepfather died when he was twelve years old and the family needed money. That is when he started to go astray. Today, he was worried about his mother because she is sick and cannot work he wants to do well in prison and go home and help his mother. Antonio got into trouble and went to wilderness camp. He was young and received his GED while in the camp. He did not learn the lesson he needed to stay out of prison. He has a daughter, he wants to go back and take care of his child. Scotty stated that his stepfather died when he was in the 10th grade. That is when he quit school. He was arrested for stealing and taking “weed’ to school. Chase went to juvenile when he was in the sixth grade. He came to Alabama when he was 16 years of age. He stated that he came here by himself and does not have any family in the state. He has been in prison since he was 17 years old; He is now 25 years old. He wants to get out and be a counselor for children at risk. Mikee-Mike stated that he went to a group home when he was 13 years of age. He said, “I wasn’t feeling that.” When he got out of the group home he went to live with his older brother. His brother got arrested and he lived alone until he was incarcerated at the age of 17. He stated that he did not want to go back and live with his family. Demontae was hit by a car when he was 7 years of age and started having seizures three years later. He said that on 4th

of July the year he was twelve years old, he and a cousin were shooting firecrackers and someone shot him. He does not know who it was. Demontae stated that “all hell broke loose” when he moved to another city. He stated that he was fourteen years old and could not cope with the move. He started running around with his older brother, using and selling drugs. He stated that his brother got life in prison without parole. He wants to get out of prison and take care of his daughter. Excerpts from the interviews are listed below:

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That’s when I started to go astray. My mother is sick, she cannot work. At one time she had two hair salons, but now, she has a brain tumor and lupus. I have to help her. (Lucky)

I got in trouble and went to wilderness camp. While I am here I am going to work on myself. I have a daughter and I want to visit with her. I should have gone on to school. Experience is the best teacher. Maybe I can give it another shot. (Antonio)

I was sent to juvenile for stealing, and taking weed to school. They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn’t getting no school credit. I wouldn’t go so they kicked me out. Wasn’t no point in going to school if it didn’t count? They were working on my behavior. My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I was in the 10th grade when I quit. I wasn’t getting any school credit, so I just quit. (Scotty)

I got incarcerated in the 6th grade for having a gun in school. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. I came here at 17 years of age. When I get out, I want to help young people by being a positive role model. I use to tell my younger brother about my crimes. (Chase)

I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I wasn’t “feeling” that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother. I stayed with my brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn’t get no job. I got locked up at 17 (Mikee-Mike)

I was shot when I was twelve! I got hit by a car when I was seven. I have seizures. Three years after I got hit by a car I started having seizures. I got shot on the Fourth of July. I got shot by a stray bullet. I moved in to Alabaster when I finished middle school. I was fourteen years old. All hell broke loose when I moved to Alabaster. My brother got life without parole. (Demontae)

Redemption

Many of the themes present in the movie *Redemption* were present in the reflective descriptions of the young men interviewed. I restoried the movie *Redemption* in chronological order. The movie depicts certain themes that were present in the stories told by the six interviewees. I interviewed non-violent participants to determine what experiences they had in their school systems; however, the movie depicted some of the same experiences by a convicted killer.

Tookie's mother and grandmother raised him. They could not provide the thing that he wanted and did not have the means to move out of the neighborhood (*theme: female headed households and lack of fund*). Another theme that developed in the movie was the community involvement. The people in the community as well as law enforcement did not seem to care, according to his view, what happened in the community with to the kids (*theme: lack of community support*). The movie depicted the older boys in the community making the boys fight as entertainment (*theme: influence from older guys*). Tookie and his friends took over blocks in the community. He became a fierce fighter and decided to become the leader of the gang (*theme: peer pressure*). They needed money to survive. Drug selling became natural. They divided the community into blocks that they called "turf." To violate turf would cause fighting and gang wars (*theme: making money selling drugs*). Moving from Louisiana to South Central Los Angeles California was one epiphany in Tookie's life. Another epiphany was when the police and authorities did not stop the fighting and he realized that he would have to defend himself. Tookie experienced a life changing event. I think the major epiphany in Tookie's life was when his father left him in a motel with a few dollars and did not come back. Of course going to prison was an epiphany, but he had already accepted a criminal way of life (*theme: epiphanies*).

In this narrative study themes were revealed within the participant's stories were depicted through direct quotes from the participants. Themes revealed in the movie *Redemption* were revealed through narratives. These themes answered the research questions:

- (1) What are the educational experiences of young Black male non-violent repeat offenders 19-25 years of age both inside and outside prison that led to the school-to-prison pipeline; and
- (2) How have these educational experiences contributed to the life choices they have made both inside and outside prison?

Research Question 1

The young Black men in this study revealed positive experiences in school. They did not report any adverse experiences in school. The men actually did well in school. The young men stated that they had positive educational experiences. They spoke fondly of their teachers. One of the participants stated that when he got out, he was going back to his school and tell the teachers that he now knows what they were trying to tell him. He stated that he wants to tell them he appreciated what they were trying to do for him.

Research Question 2

The young men in this study are continuing their studies in prison. This prison offers many courses in the trades. The young men in this study did not voice that the educational system played a negative part in their decision to enter the criminal justice system.

The participant talked about their experiences and voiced the fact that they did not listen to authority figures; teachers and parents who tried to help them make decisions that would prove to be advantageous in their lives. The young men stated that money, the lure of the streets, and drugs over powered their lives.

This narrative design described the experiences of six incarcerated Black men. The purpose of this narrative research is to reveal, describe and discover perceptions of incarcerated Black men, aged 19-25 years, who are non-violent repeat offenders housed in state prison concerning their perceptions of the educational system in and out of prison and how both systems influenced their career choices, as well as what opportunities and social benefits that the school systems afforded them.

The literature review in Chapter II provided the researcher with a myriad of themes that are contributing factors to answer the research questions. Information from research a priori revealed that socio-economic factors in these young men lives were all contributing factors to educational and career choices. Racial stereotypes, self-hatred, political pressures, the media, poorly educated teachers, under-educated parents, poverty, drug infested communities, family structures, zero tolerance policies, the Prison Industrial Complex as well as the lack of role models, fascination of the streets and making money, tracking within the school system, lack of funding for school districts, labor market conditions, differential hiring practices and peer pressure. The research exposed the numbing of the Black communities with drug infestation in 1970s. The research divulged that when prisoners were asked how they perceived their educational experiences both in and out of prison the young men reported negative experiences. The young men reported that they were not provided the educational and nurturing experience from their families, the community, teachers and society needed for a successful academic career and life's journey.

The research prior to my study discovered that when prisoners were asked about education while incarcerated, they reported that they did not feel that the education was adequate because the tutors in prison were not qualified to help and that the noise and disruptions did not help. The

research disclosed that, due to funding, prison education was not a priority in the U.S. Instead, prison labor has proven to be a viable need to help a staggering economy. Cheap labor is one of the ways America became a powerful country.

Regret was a factor that most of the prisoners reported when asked what they would do to change their decisions to take on a life of crime. The prisoners reported that they regretted making the decisions made and that they regretted letting their families down. Motivation was another variable that the prisoners reported. The prisoners were motivated to go to schools because they felt that they could make their families proud of them as well as make a living. Success to most prisoners meant being able to take care of oneself and their families. The more things change the more they remain the same.

The problems Blacks perceived were self-inflicted in many cases. The research revealed images in the media that perpetuated negative stereotypes and self-defeating behaviors that Black men are facing; however, young Black men still engage in this behavior. The inquirer is looking for overarching themes from a critical race perspective to provide new themes that have not surfaced, even though it is said that there is nothing new under the sun. I think that the research thus far has not revealed a variable that needs to be researched. During the interviews, the participants did not speak of any adverse effect of school or schooling. The men in this study made good grades and liked school. Perhaps school is a safe haven for some children who reside in crime filled neighborhood. The study has provided information to contradict the proponents of the school-to-prison pipeline. The participants in the study were all taking trades to avail and equip themselves to make a living and take care of their families when they get out of prison. The research provided society with information concerning the plight of young men during adolescence, the need for discipline and the need for resources in a community. The need for

fathers to participate in their children's lives was also heard in the voices of the men that participated in the study. The researcher is attempting to discover and describe a new themes that has not been uncovered. The present research will add to the body of knowledge to provide avenues of intervention within the lives of young Black men using narrative research from a CRT prospective using themes that guide the development of the life story of the participants to report the key events or epiphanies that mark people's lives in a cumulative manner to make sense of the events reported.

This narrative study described in Chapter IV allowed me to gain insight into the experiences of the participants as they told their individual stories to examine the data for themes. The chapter explained the rational for the study's design and framework. The chapter described the strategies I used for data collection and analysis procedures.

Research questions were answered by the themes and epiphanies present in the participants' stories. This research did not identify schools as a negative influence in their lives. The participants reported candidly throughout the interview process. The participants' expressed regret for not taking advantages of the educational opportunities offered them while growing up. They took ownership of the problem that caused them to pursue a life of crime. Decisions were made about school and career goals at an early age. The participants talked about the plight of their mothers, trying to raise them and work without any assistance from the fathers. The young men accepted full responsibility for not listening and disobeying parents and teachers. Involvement in drug trafficking was all to present in five of the men's lives. The participants enjoyed school in elementary school, however they also pointed out that older boys and men in the community used money and jewelry and clothes to lure them into the drug trade.

While incarcerated, the participants were motivated to go to school, get out of prison and take care of their families. Each of the participants expressed regret for not listening to parents, teachers, and positive adults. The participants expressed a great respect for teachers and enjoyed school until they reached middle school. They were all involved in the educational programs in the prison system. Most of the problems started in middle school. Lack of supervision and lack of discipline were some of the reasons boys were easily persuaded to commit criminal acts. Poverty and immediate gratification were among the variables that caused these young men to succumb to the pressure of selling drugs. Although only one student was referred to alternative school, he suffered from ADHD; all were suspended or expelled at one time or another. Two of the participant's older brothers pulled them into a life of crime. The men in this study were young, the oldest 25. They each stated that when they get out, they were motivated to help their families. Two had children and wanted to get out of prison and take care of them. All of the men were pursuing education within the prison system.

Implication for Educators

This study revealed a time in these young men's lives that intervention could have helped if there was someone who identified the need. Middle school is when the problems started for five of these young men. One of the participants was involved in gangs and selling drugs in elementary school. Educators can be made aware of this phenomenon and programs can be instituted to help adolescents at this time in their lives. Parents partnering with the school and social programs could help relieve families and society of this burden.

Recommendation for Future Research

The research revealed the time in life that supervision is needed for young men, the effects of poverty, single parent homes, lack of role models, peer pressure, lack of discipline, as well as

the need for crisis intervention when tragedy strikes. More research is needed to determine what kind of interventions families, schools, communities and society could make available that would lead young men to make decisions that will yield successful choices. All of the young men attended middle school. Middle school is the time the problems started. The problems faced by young men within this setting should be researched. Life changing events are going to occur, however, none of the men in the study stated that they were counseled or mentored through these events. One participant stated that maybe he should have been told of the long-term consequences of his actions. He stated that he was use to punishment; however, he did not know that his actions at twelve would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Conclusion

This study investigated the experiences of six young Black men housed in a state correctional facility in Alabama. The men took ownership of their problems; they did not put blame on schools, society, or the judicial system. They voiced regret that they did not listen to authority figures in their lives before they were incarcerated and stated that they were going to take advantage of the educational programs provided by the Department of Corrections. In this prison, there is a myriad of educational programs that can help educate young men. The Alabama Department of Corrections is leading the charge in educating incarcerated young men. Staton Correctional Facility provides a myriad of educational programs. Adult basic education, special services for special education, General Education Diplomas (GED) as well as courses in the trades: (1) auto body repair, (2) carpentry, (3) horticulture, (4) upholstery, (5) automotive mechanics, (6) drafting and design technology, (7) welding, (8) barbering, (9) furniture and refinishing, and (10) plumbing. Specialty courses are provided by Auburn University in the Alabama Prison Arts and Education Program that includes art appreciation, beginning drawing,

poetry and writing, literature and reading along with math. The young men in the study regretted the choices they made and are motivated to change their ways. All of the young men dropped out of high school. Two of the men in this study had received GED's while incarcerated and all were interested in trades. There was only one participant that had an intact family where the mom and biological dad lived together, however, he suffered health issues and is still was receiving education from the local LEA. Some of the young men stated that things would have been different if their fathers were in the home. The young men did not state that they had received any intervention during crisis in their lives. Some schools are implementing character building courses within the curriculum. The focus of school is on academics and learning. Should we as a society focus on conflict resolution and character building? Are schools in need of partnering with the community so that young people succeed? Theodore Roosevelt said, "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to create a menace to society."

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APPENDIX A

ADVISOR'S REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO STUDY

College of Education
Department of Educational
Leadership, Policy, and
Technology Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
E D U C A T I O N

To: Mr. Brian Corbett

From: Dr. Nirmala Erevelles 
Professor, Social & Cultural Studies in Education
The University of Alabama

Date: 4th June, 2013

Re: Permission to interview inmates for a Dissertation Study in Education

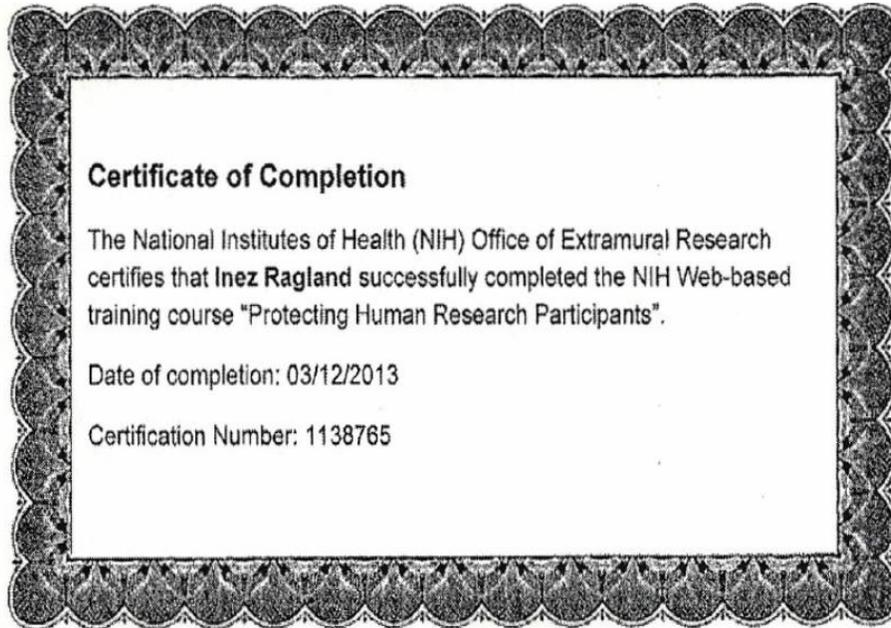
This memo is to confirm that Ms. Inez Ragland is a doctoral student enrolled in the doctoral program in Instructional Leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies at the University of Alabama. I am the chair of her doctoral dissertation committee. Ms. Ragland is conducting a study exploring the educational experiences of African American men between the ages of 19 – 22 who have been repeat non-violent offenders. Our hope is that interviews with these young men would give us information to improve the educational experiences of young African American students with similar life experiences so that they do not end up in prison.

I would like to thank you in advance for all the help and assistance you may be giving Ms. Ragland so that she can complete this study

301 Graves Hall
Box 870302
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0302
(205) 348-6060
fax (205) 348-2161

APPENDIX B

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



APPENDIX C
CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent for a Non-Medical Study

Study title: JUSTICE OR JUST US? VOICES WITHIN PRISON WALLS

Investigator's Name, Position, Faculty or Student Status

Inez S. Ragland Ed. D Candidate

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called JUSTICE OR JUST US? VOICES WITHIN PRISON WALLS. The study is being done by Inez S, Ragland who is a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Mrs. Ragland is being supervised by Professor Nirmala Erevelles who is professor of Social and Cultural Studies in Education at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?

This study is being done to find out what educational and other life experiences caused you to make choices that got you into the school- to- prisons pipeline. The school to prison pipeline refers to factors and experiences that cause young men to enter prison. The study also focuses on your perceptions of interventions that could have been put in place to help you make different decisions that would not have resulted in you being imprisoned.

Why is this study important or useful?

This knowledge is important/useful because it will help us understand the everyday experiences of young people in their families, schools and in their neighborhoods that cause them to enter the school –to- prison pipeline. The results of this study will help young Black men understand better ways of accessing the educational system in the US to make good career decisions.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

You have been asked to be a part in the study because you have expressed an interest in being part of the study and because you are a Black male 19-25 years of age and have been incarcerated for non-violent offenses.

How many people will be in this study?

About 8-12 other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 9/3/13
EXPIRATION DATE: 9/15/2014

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be interviewed by Inez Ragland a graduate student at the University of Alabama, for approximately two one hour interviews. These interviews will happen at a site agreed upon by all of us in the prison. All you need to do is show up and talk to me. I will tape the interview after you agree to be taped.

How much time will I spend being this study?

You will spend no more than 2 hours for the entire study. There will be two one hour interviews.

Will being in this study cost me anything?

The only cost to you from this study is time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

There is no compensation for being in this study. This study will not take any time off of your length of stay in prison or parole.

Can the investigator take me out of this study? (If appropriate for the topic)

I may take you out of the study if I feel that the study is upsetting you and or putting you at risk or you are in need of assistance.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

Little or no risk is foreseen in this interview, however, I will recommend a counselor or reschedule the interview if you become agitated.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?

You may experience some relief from talking about your experiences with an outside person. "There are no direct benefits to you." Although you will not benefit personally from being in the study, you may feel good about knowing that you have helped other teens avoid trouble with the law and make good career choices.

What are the benefits to science or society?

This study will help (parents, teachers, politicians, counselors, lawyers, probation officers, judges, etc.) to be more mindful of young Black boys and their dilemmas in life.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected by ensuring that the interview is conducted in a private room suggested by prison officials. The conversation will be private and not overheard by others. You will be told in advance where the interview will be held. You do not have to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. You will be told in advance that you and I will have to report any signs of spouse, child or elder abuse reported in the

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 9/3/13
EXPIRATION DATE: 8/15/2014

interview. If there is any criminal activity shared in this interview, I am compelled to report this to the authorities.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded and protected by using separate signed consents from data sheets, and providing you with a pseudonym a name, that you selected or one that was assigned to you. Your data will be stored in locked files drawers that are not accessed by anyone except me and my advisor. Information will only be reviewed by me and my advisor. The raw data or identifiers will be destroyed after the data has been analyzed.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no reflection on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and equitably.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call the investigator Inez S. Ragland at (256-589-0557).

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 9/3/13
EXPIRATION DATE: 8/15/20

The researcher receives no financial support for the research.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. Yes or No (circle one)

I agree to have my interview audio recorded. Yes or No (circle one)

I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep. Yes or No (circle one)

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

CONFIRMATION OF INTERVIEW SITE



ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR

State of Alabama
Department of Corrections

Alabama Criminal Justice Center
301 South Ripley Street
P. O. Box 301501
Montgomery, AL 36130-1501
(334) 353-3883



KIM T. THOMAS
COMMISSIONER

September 10, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Inez Ragland
FROM: Dr. Ron Cavanaugh, Director of Treatment *RC*
SUBJECT: Research Project

The Alabama Department of Corrections approves your research project to interview 8 – 12 non-violent repeat male offenders between the ages of 19 – 25 about their educational backgrounds. Interviews will be conducted at Staton Correctional Facility. Please contact me at 334-353-3875 to discuss interview dates.

APPENDIX E

IRB LETTER AND AUTHORIZATION

Office for Research
Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects



October 3, 2013

Inez Ragland
701 10th Avenue
Jacksonville, AL 36265

Re: IRB# 13-013
"Justice or Just Us? Voices with Prison Walls"

Dear Ms. Ragland:

The University of Alabama Non-Medical Institutional Review Board has recently reviewed the revision request for your protocol. The board has approved the change in your protocol.

Please remember that your approval period expires one year from the date of your original approval, 08/16/2013, not the date of this revision approval.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. **Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.**

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpentato T. Myles, MSM, CIM
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office of Research Compliance
The University of Alabama



IRB Project #: 13-013 (Revision)

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Identifying information

	Principal Investigator	Second Investigator	Third Investigator
Names:	Inez S. Ragland	Dr, Nirmala Erevelles	
Department:	Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies	Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies	
College:	Education	Education	
University:	The University of Alabama	The University of Alabama	
Address:	701 10 th Avenue Jacksonville, Alabama 36265	315 A Graves Hall Box 870302 Tuscaloosa, AL 35487- 0302	
Telephone:	(256) 435-6166	(205) 348-6060	
FAX:		(205) 348-2161	
E-mail:	isragland@crimson.ua.edu	nerevell@barmaed.ua.edu	

Title of Research Project: Justice or Just US? Voices Within Prison Walls

Date Submitted: 05/9/2013
Funding Source: None

Type of Proposal New Revision Renewal Completed Exempt

Please attach a renewal Application

Please attach a continuing review of studies form

Please enter the original IRB # at the top of the page

UA faculty or staff member signature: _____

II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION (to be completed by IRB):

Type of Review: Full board Expedited

IRB Action:

Rejected Date: _____

Tabled Pending Revisions Date: _____

Approved Pending Revisions Date: _____

Approved-this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Approval is effective until the following date: 8/15/2014

Items approved: Research protocol (dated _____)

Informed consent (dated _____)

Approval signature: _____

Date: 10/3/2013

APPENDIX F

FLYER FOR PARTICIPATION AND RECRUITMENT

Volunteers Needed for Research Study

We need participants for a research study:

This study explains and describes factors that lead to the school to prison pipe-line for young Black males aged 19-25.

Description of project: We are requesting your participation to tell your experiences in the educational system both in and out of prison. Your participation will take 2 one hour taped interview sessions at the Staton Correctional Facility.

To participate: You must be a Black male 19-25 years of age, incarcerated previously for a non-violent offense, and currently serving time for a nonviolent offense.

When:

To learn more, contact Inez Ragland, graduate student the Principal Investigator at the University of Alabama at (256) 589-0557.

Research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Nirmala Erevelles, Professor Social & Cultural Studies in Education at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

This research has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

UA IRB Approved Document
Approval date: 10/31/13
Expiration date: 8/15/2014

APPENDIX G

RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Recruitment Survey

Name _____

DOB _____ Age _____

PLEASE CIRCLE YES OR NO

Have you been incarcerated before? YES NO

Were you convicted of a non-violent offense? YES NO

Are you presently serving a term for a nonviolent offense? YES NO

How many years of education do you have? _____

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

- (1) What are your earliest memories of school?
- (2) Describe some good experiences? Describe some bad experiences? How did these experiences make able you to think about school?
- (3) What grade did you complete in school?
- (4) What kinds of trouble did you get in school? Why do you think you got into trouble? What were the consequences /punishments? What impact did this have on your behavior?
- (5) What do you think would have helped you stay out of trouble and make education a priority?
- (6) Describe some of your friends in junior high? Tell me some of the activities you participated in with friends?
- (7) Can you recall the teachers that supported you the most in school?
- (8) What were your favorite subjects in elementary and junior high school? How have these subjects impacted your life?
- (9) What was living in the community like? What were the good experiences in your community? What were the bad experiences? Do you think that the community where you lived supported you and the school system?
- (10) Are you receiving any training that will help you find a job on the outside? What kind of programs do you think would prepare you to re-enter society?
- (11) Can you tell me what is important in your life right? How will you achieve what you want in life?
- (12) Are they any questions you would like to ask me? This information will be stored in a locked file in my desk.

APPENDIX I

MEMBER CHECKING

Lucky

Member-Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling the letters A or D.

Each statement was extracted from the interview you provided.

(1) **Female headed households of lack of funds** (A) D

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That's when I started to go astray. (Lucky)

(2) **Lack of community support** (A) D

In my community there was a lot of killing and a lot of drugs and robberies. The people in the community did not support the school. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family. We looked up to the drug dealers. (Lucky)

(3) **Influence from older men** (A) D

The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help your family. (Lucky)

(4) **Peer pressure** (A) D

Your friends put you up to doing things. People think you're lame if you respect adults. I always tried to respect older people. I was teacher's pet from elementary school until middle school. They put you up to do things that normally you wouldn't do. So I started being non-compliant. (Lucky)

5) Making money selling drugs ~~A~~ **D**

After elementary I started hanging with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble selling drugs. The drug dealers in the community told us to sell drugs and help our family. We looked up to the drug dealers. I started carrying guns and selling drugs. (Lucky)

(6) Lack of discipline ~~A~~ **D**

My father was not in my life; my mother could not teach me how to be a man. She could tell me right from wrong. But I knew that she couldn't do nothing to me so I just did what I wanted to do.' If my father had been in my life, things would have been different. If I had someone to discipline me, I could have made it. (Lucky)

(7) Expulsion and alternative schools ~~A~~ **D**

They expelled me from school for fighting. I did not care! (Lucky)

(8) Epiphanies ~~A~~ **D**

My stepfather died when I was twelve. We needed more money. That's when I started to go astray. My mother is sick, she cannot work. At one time she had two hair salons, but now, she has a brain tumor and lupus. I have to help her. (Lucky)

I have read the above information and agree that it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed Lucky Date 10/16/13

Member Check
Antonio

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling the letters
A or **D**

Each statement was extracted from the interview you provided.

Peer pressure **A** **D**

I tried to grow up too fast. Started selling drugs. I knew where to go to get the drugs. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that. (Antonio)

Making money selling drugs **A** **D**

I wanted money to impress the girls. I had a couple of home boys who had cars and everything so I wanted that. I was in 9th grade when all of that started. I started dipping and dabbing and selling drugs. I use to take my things to my friend's house and leave it so my momma would not see it. I left shoes and clothes at my friend's house. (Antonio)

Epiphany **A** **D**

I got in trouble and went to wilderness camp. While I am here I am going to work on myself. I have a daughter and I want to visit with her. I should have gone on to school. Experience is the best teacher. Maybe I can give it another shot. (Antonio)

I have read the above information and agree that it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed



Dare 10-16-13

Member Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling the letters **A** or **D**.

Female headed households and lack of funds: **A** **D**

My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I use to go out and make money by cutting grass. I use to make money and buy video games a lot. I was incarcerated because I didn't even have a job. I was stealing and taking things. (Scotty)

Peer pressure **A** **D**

I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure. (Scotty)

Lack of Discipline **A** **D**

I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn't feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was bad in elementary school. They said I was moving too much. I started taking medicine, but I did not like the medicine. I was class clown. I had a step father who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad. **Scotty**

Expulsion and Alternative schools **A** **D**

My grades were fair. I liked science. I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled." They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn't getting no school credit. I wouldn't go so they kicked me out. Wasn't no point in going to school if it didn't count. They were working on my behavior. (Scotty)

Member Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling the letters **A** or **D**.

Female headed households and lack of funds: **A** **D**

My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I use to go out and make money by cutting grass. I use to make money and buy video games a lot. I was incarcerated because I didn't even have a job. I was stealing and taking things. (Scotty)

Peer pressure **A** **D**

I started fighting more in 7th grade cause people were bullying and picking on me, peer pressure. (Scotty)

Lack of Discipline **A** **D**

I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled. I didn't feel like school was for me. I use to disrupt school all the time. I was bad in elementary school. They said I was moving too much. I started taking medicine, but I did not like the medicine. I was class clown. I had a step father who tried to help me. But I did not listen. I guess I was just bad. **Scotty**

Expulsion and Alternative schools **A** **D**

My grades were fair. I liked science. I had ADHD. I got a lot of disciplinary actions and finally I got expelled." They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn't getting no school credit. I wouldn't go so they kicked me out. Wasn't no point in going to school if it didn't count. They were working on my behavior. (Scotty)

Epiphanies (A) D

I was sent to juvenile for stealing, and taking weed to school. They sent me to alternative school for behavioral problems. I wasn't getting no school credit. I wouldn't go so they kicked me out. Wasn't no point in going to school if it didn't count? They were working on my behavior. My dad died when I was going to alternative school. I was in the 10th grade when I quit. I wasn't getting any school credit, so I just quit. I had signed up for a GED when I came in to prison. I want to get out of here and get a job and start my own family. I want to sign up for welding. I need to make enough money to take care of my family, to keep food on the table. I want to go home and see my mother and my nieces. I want them to go college. (Scotty)

I have read the above information and agree that it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed Scotty Date 10-16-13

Member Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling **A** or **D**.

Each statement was extracted from the interview you provided.

Female headed households and lack of funds **A** **D**

My mother did the best she could. She raised us by herself. She had to work and come home late at night and help me with my homework. She would leave home at 7:00 A.M. in the morning and come home maybe 10:00 P.M. and try to help me with my homework. (Chase)

Community support: **A** **D**

My community was not involved in the school system. There was not a lot of killing in the neighborhood, but there was a lot of drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. I knew where to go and find the trouble. (Chase)

Peer pressure **A** **D**

I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. Me and my friends would walk around and look for trouble. (Chase)

Making money selling drugs **A** **D**

Things went down when I was in the sixth grade. I was fighting and selling drugs. (Chase)

Lack of Discipline **A** **D**

I was punished for everything. I got use to punishment. If people would have talked to me,

Expulsion and Alternative schools **A** **D**

I was suspended in elementary school. I got incarcerated in the 6th grade for having a gun in school. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. (Chase)

Epiphanies **A** **D**

I got incarcerated in the 6th grade for having a gun in school. I was involved in gang activity when I was 12 and 13 years old. I came here at 17 years of age. When I get out, I want to help young people by being a positive role model. I use to tell my younger brother about my crimes. (Chase)

I have read the above information and agree it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed Chase Date 10/16/13

Member Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the Statements below by circling the letters A or D.

Each statement was extracted from the interview you provided.

Female headed households of lack of funds (A) D

All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn't get no job. I got locked up at 17. (Mikee-Mike)

Lack of community support (A) D

I lived in a drug infested area. We had a boys and girls club in the community and church folks would come around and pick us up in a big yellow bus about twice a week. (Mikee-Mike)

Influence from older men (A) D

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I started selling drugs. (Mikee-Mike)

Peer pressure (A) D

In junior high I was still with my friends from the neighborhood. It was four of us. We started selling drugs, making money, and not going to school. (Mikee-Mike)

Making money selling drugs (A) D

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I started selling drugs.

(Mikee-Mike)

Lack of discipline (A) D

All my friends had single mothers except one, but he still did what he wanted to do. If I had more discipline, I would have seen better days." If I would've had a father figure! He would not have let me do anything that I wanted. My mother let me do what I wanted to do. (Mikee-Mike)

Expulsion and alternative schools (A) D

I used to fight in school. I got suspended. I got into about 4 or 5 fights in elementary school.
(Mikee-Mike)

Epiphifanies (A) D

I was sent to a group home when I was thirteen. I think that it took me away from my family and I wasn't "feeling" that. I got out of there. My folks said that I could come home, but I went to stay with my brother. I stayed with my brother until he got locked up and I had to stay by myself. I got in trouble because I couldn't get no job. I got locked up at 17. I got my GED and I got my barber's certificate since I have been locked up. My mother and my niece are important to me. I pray to God that I make it to see them. I am going to work in a barber shop. I've got two friends who own shops. If I don't, I will get me a 9-5. I am thinking about finding me a spot in Alabama to settle down. (Mikee-Mike)

I have read the above information and agree that it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed Mikee-Mike Date 10-16-13

Member Checking

Please indicate whether you **Agree** or **Disagree** with the statements below by circling the letters **A** or **D**.

Each statement was extracted from the interview you provided.

Influence from older men **A** **D**

It was nine of us children and only me and my oldest brother got into trouble. I traveled around with my older brother; he exposed me to bad things and I got into trouble. My brother got life without parole. (Damontae)

Peer pressure **A** **D**

I had positive and some not so positive friends. The kids who wanted to be positive and make good grades grow up to be successful, and the kids that want to wear clothes and look good end up on the streets with nothing. When you look around, you wish you had stayed with a different crowd. I thought my friends were in my corner but they were not. They wanted me to get in trouble and be broke like them. You have to watch your surroundings and the atmosphere you're in, it's "Karma." (Damontae)

Making money selling drugs **A** **D**

In junior high I got out of hand, hanging around my brother, he was older. I was in the streets getting money, and being in the streets, you want to smoke so you make mistakes. When you smoke it makes you want to do things to get things. You want to make money. (Demontae)

Epiphanies **A** **D**

I was shot when I was twelve! I got hit by a car when I was seven. I have seizures. Three years after I got hit by a car I started having seizures. I got shot on the Fourth of July. I got shot by a stray bullet. I moved in to Alabaster when I finished middle school. I was fourteen years old. All hell broke loose when I moved to Alabaster! My brother got life without parole I 'm working on my GED, while I'm here. I'm supposed to be in college. I have a daughter and I hate that I'm in here. I am going home to take care of my little girl. I hate that my family has to help me while I am here. I'm supposed to be helping them. (Demontae)

I have read the above information and agree that it can be published under a pseudonym.

Signed Demontae Date 10/16/13