Stories from Black Men on the School-to-Prison Pipeline:

A Critical Race Theory, Phenomenological Inquiry

by

Elizabeth D. Livesay

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Major Professor: Steven Petrie, Ed.D.
Lisa Carter, Ph.D.
Julie Hasson, Ed.D.
Bernardo Blanco, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

For L.G.

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A word of thanks to…

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of black men who are on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline as a direct result of exclusionary discipline in their secondary school. Using the theoretical framework of critical race theory and the analytical framework of phenomenology, this study attempts to answer the following research questions: What is the lived experience of Black males who are in the gap between expulsion and incarceration? How does the relationship between Black males and the adults they encounter in their education (e.g. parents, teachers, administrators, and police) shape their perception of their lived experiences? What do Black males on the school-to-prison pipeline believe caused their path from desk to cell? What are the future hopes and dreams of Black males who are in the time between expulsion and adjudication?

The phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline was explored through the lens of five black men, ages 18-19. Each participant was interviewed three times following a semi-structured protocol; the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Meaning units were derived from the men's stories and then compiled into themes. The themes presented themselves as dualities—contrasts with which the men experienced and navigated the school system, the criminal justice system, and their communities. The study concludes with concrete recommendations for the institutions (i.e. schools, courts, and society) and the individuals (i.e. teachers, administrators, district personnel, police, lawyers, judges, and community members) who make up the systems.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Although Black students account for approximately 16%-18% of the public school population (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003), they account for nearly 35% of one time student suspensions, 48% of repeat suspensions, and 36% of student expulsions (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003). When compared to their White counterparts, Black students are 2.6 times more likely to be suspended (Huang, 2018; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Wadhwa, 2010). Exclusionary discipline techniques such as in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion have been shown to lead to academic achievement gaps, higher drop-out rates, and incarceration (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014; Welch & Payne, 2012).

The relationship between exclusion from school and the prison population has been highlighted in the past three decades by a phenomenon known as the school-to-prison pipeline. This pipeline is a metaphor used to describe the "causal link between educational exclusion and criminalization of youth" (Wilson, 2014, p. 49). The journey from classroom desk to prison cell is the result of several policies including harsh zero tolerance discipline policies, high stakes testing, and the increased presence of police on K-12 campuses (Advancement Project, 2010; Archer, 2009; Casella, 2003; Mallett, 2016; McGrew, 2016; Schept, Wall, & Brisman, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003).

The purpose of this critical race theory, phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of Black men who are on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline as a direct result of exclusionary discipline in their secondary school.

Problem Statement

The United States of America holds approximately 5% of the world's population but houses 25% of the global prison population (Stullich, Morgan, & Schak, 2016; Wilson, 2014). With over 2.1 million inmates, the USA has the largest population of prisoners in the world (Kaeble & Cowhig, 2018; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Raible & Irizarry, 2010; Wald & Losen, 2003). In 2016, 860 per 100,000 adults in the United States were incarcerated (Kaeble & Cowhig, 2018). In many states, more money is budgeted to corrections than higher education, and prisons are built at much faster rates than colleges and universities (Meiners & Winn, 2010; Stullich et al., 2016). It is estimated that 66% of the prison population enters the system without a high school diploma (Stullich et al., 2016), and research suggests that nearly three-quarters of the juvenile prison population have learning disabilities and one-third read below a 4th grade level (Wald & Losen 2003).

The school-to-prison pipeline disproportionally impacts students of color, in particular, Black males. While President Barack Obama's 2007 statement that there are more Black men in prison and jail than in universities or colleges is more myth than research-based fact (Cook, 2012; Wald & Losen, 2003), Black students do comprise over 46% of juveniles sent to criminal court (Spiller & Porter, 2014), and a 20-24 year old Black male without a high school diploma or equivalent certificate is more likely to be incarcerated than employed (Stullich et al., 2016). According to one report, Black boys born in 2001 have a one in three chance of being incarcerated in their lifetime (Spiller & Porter, 2014). In the late 1990's, Black students with no criminal history were six times more likely to be incarcerated than their White peers for the same offense (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Americans are paying a high price for this disparity. Pushing children out of education will eventually lead to less tax dollars collected and greater dollars needed for healthcare and welfare (Advancement Project, 2010). It is estimated that once a student reaches the prison system, s/he costs taxpayers approximately $240 per day; in 2011, the cost to house the number of Black students currently in juvenile facilities was approximately $5.8 million daily (Spiller & Porter, 2014).

If district personnel, school administrators, and teachers are unwilling and unable to address the social phenomenon that has created disparities in the academic achievement, discipline, and criminalization of youth of color, specifically young Black men, America will not be able to progress (McGrew, 2016). As with all systems of oppression, they prevent the flourishing of both the oppressor and the oppressed (Edwards, 2006). In regards to the school discipline gap, the oppressors are collectively the school district policy makers, administrators, and teachers, and they will continue to oppress until they are forced to hear counterstories and take time for self-examination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In light of recent school shootings and a nationwide cry to increase the number of armed police officers in schools, which may have unintended consequences for students of color (Advancement Project, 2010; Schept et al., 2015), the discipline gap must be addressed. The future success of students of color sitting in classrooms all across America hinges on the ability of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to commit to examining and reexamining the current gaps until quantifiable change has been achieved.

Significance of the Study

Quantitative research has shown that Black students do not behave more offensively than White students, and Black students do not commit more violent crimes than White students

(Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008; Welch & Payne, 2012). Skiba et al.(2002) conducted a study with over 11,000 middle school students in a large urban school district in the midwest and concluded that the large discrepancy in the number of referrals and suspensions given to Black students compared to their White peers could not be explained by "either socioeconomic status or racial differences in behavior" (p. 335). Wallace et al. (2008) surveyed a random sample of 10th graders from around the country and concluded that Black students are significantly more likely to experience exclusionary discipline when compared to White students despite the fact that there is not a discrepancy in zero tolerance related behaviors. Welch & Payne (2012) surveyed a random sample of principals, teachers, and students and found that schools with higher percentages of Black students are statistically more likely to implement exclusionary discipline regardless of discrepancies in behavior (Payne & Welch, 2010; Welch & Payne, 2012). They believe that their "results suggest that exclusionary punishment may issued for reasons beyond student misbehavior" (Welch & Payne, 2012, p. 165). Huang (2018) examined a data set from 1990 and found that Black students are suspended and expelled at higher rates than White students despite reporting less drug and alcohol abuse. Mizel, Miles, Pedersen, Tucker, Ewing, and D'Amico (2016) conducted a longitudinal study based on student and parent surveys administered yearly from 2008-2014. Their findings "suggest that African American students are suspended and expelled at a greater rate irrespective of behavior" (p. 109). Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, and Booth (2011) conducted the Breaking Schools' Rules study, a multivariate analysis of the discipline data for over 900,000 students in the Texas school system, and found that Black students were more likely to be suspended and expelled for discretionary behavior, but Black students were less likely than White students to commit offenses that require mandatory

expulsion. Even when socioeconomic status is accounted for, Black students are still more likely to be referred to the office and suspended than their White peers (Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011). At the suggestion of Skiba et al. (2002), a growing body of research suggests that teacher and administrator bias plays a role in the discipline gap ultimately increases the risk of accessing the school-to-prison pipeline (Huang, 2018; Mizel et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2010; Raible & Irizarry, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014; Valles & Miller 2010; Wallace et al., 2008; Welch & Payne, 2012).

One way to continue to understand the implication of decisions that teachers and administrators make at critical moments (DeMatthews, 2016a; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Payne & Welch, 2010) is to hear the stories of Black men who are on the school-to-prison pipeline as a direct result of exclusionary discipline. Qualitative studies have examined the perspectives of men in prison (Hatt, 2011), the experiences of middle and upper class Black students in predominately White classrooms (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007), the stories of recent Black male dropouts (Caton, 2012), and stories of students who have entered alternative educational facilities after being expelled (McKnight, 2015). There is a limited amount of research that gives voice to the perspective of Black men who were recently pushed out as a result of exclusionary discipline and are currently awaiting trial for a crime committed in the months after being pushed out of the educational system (Gregroy et al., 2010). These men offer a unique and raw perspective in that they are hanging in suspense between desk and cell. Perhaps the telling of their stories will provide a depth of understanding of the school-to-prison pipeline that will help change the discipline gap for the next generation of Black males.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of Black males who are in the gap between expulsion and incarceration?
2. How does the relationship between Black males and the adults they encounter in their education (e.g. parents, teachers, administrators, and police) shape their perception of their lived experiences?
3. What do Black males on the school-to-prison pipeline believe caused their path from desk to cell?
4. What are the future hopes and dreams of Black males who are in the time between expulsion and adjudication?

Frameworks

Theoretical: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has roots in the legal system and was pioneered by scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Crenshaw (Bell, 1992; Capper, 2015; Delgadao & Stefancic, 2000; Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglasb, 2013; Tate, 1997). In the 1970s, frustrated by the notion that racial reconciliation and reform were happening at a painstakingly slow pace, Derrick Bell, a Black man, and Alan Freeman, a White man, partnered together to pioneer CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The framework was based on, though distinctly separate from, a methodology known as critical legal studies (CLS) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997; Tate, 2005). CLS challenged the belief that the civil rights movement was slowly progressing toward a more equitable society for all races by highlighting the ways in which civil rights law was influenced by the benefits to the White community (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Building on this scholarship, CRT "presented a new

paradigm using a variety of methodological tools including storytelling to inform understanding of racial injustice" (Tate, 2005, p. 122). While critical race theorists are not bound by a definitive list of methods and doctrines, they are united by a desire to expose the far reaching impact of White supremacy in systems that continue to perpetuate the oppression of people of color and a calling to "change the bond that exists between law and racial power" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). Critical race theorists are committed to social justice—exposing racial injustice and pursing revolutionary solutions—regardless of the impact on their individual reputation or popularity (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 2005). Many scholars have submitted variations on the core tenets of CRT (see Table 1). In honor of the twentieth anniversary of CRT in scholarly literature, Capper (2015) analyzed the educational leadership literature that employed a CRT framework and created a list of tenets that were common.

The pervasiveness of racism is a fundamental presupposition for CRT scholars. Bell (1992) wrote, "…it is time to 'get real' about race and the persistence of racism in America" (p. 5). He argued that racism was embedded in American society, but it masks differently with the passage of time (Tate, 2005). The discussion of race apart from the context of racism and the social construction of the meaning of race will not lead to racial reform or a more equitable society (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Lorde (1980), in a speech given at Amherst College, defined racism as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (para. 5). Racism exists in every part of American culture both on a macro and micro level; it permeates institutions and individuals; it creeps into conscious and unconscious thoughts of individuals and groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

America was founded on racist principles—Black slaves were counted as three-fifths of a person, and as early as 1790 the US census required participants to identify as White or Black

Table 1: *Critical Race Theory Core Tenets*

Scholar	Tenets
Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995)	1. Racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American life 2. Reinterpret ineffective Civil Rights Law 3. Challenge claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy
Ladson-Billings (1998)	1. Racism is normal 2. Storytelling is necessary 3. Critique of liberalism 4. White have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation
Delgado & Stefancic (2000)	1. Racism is normal. 2. Storytelling challenges the "status quo" (p. xvii). 3. Interest convergence/critique of liberalism 4. Call to context
Solorzano & Yosso (2001)	1. Race and racism are central and intersect 2. Challenge of dominant ideologies 3. Commitment to social justice 4. Centrality of experiential knowledge 5. Interdisciplinary perspective
DeCuir & Dixson (2004)	1. Permanence of racism 2. Whiteness as property 3. Interest convergence 4. Critique of liberalism 5. Counterstory-telling
Capper (2015)	1. Pervasiveness of racism 2. Whiteness as property 3. Counternarratives/majoritarian narratives 4. Interest convergence 5. Critique of liberalism 6. Intersectionality

(Alexander, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). One is either White or not White and the chasm between the two is as vast as the poles on which the Earth spins (Ladson-Billings, 1998). America is a nation built on property rights, and in the nation's short history, blacks have gone from property to citizens. This leads to a second core tenet of CRT—whiteness as property (Capper, 2015; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Whiteness is the paramount property in America (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Harris (as quoted in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995),

> possession—the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property—was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites. This definition laid the foundation of the idea that whiteness—that which Whites alone possess—is valuable and is property (p. 58-59).

Whiteness as property is seen in four main areas. The first is rights to disposition—by definition property can be transferred from one member to another; likewise when a student of color conforms to a White cultural norm, the student is rewarded and thus the property of whiteness has been transferred (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016). A White norm is defined as an attitude or action sanctioned by the majority White culture (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Secondly, whiteness as property is seen in the rights to use and enjoyment—one can fully enjoy the privileges of being White. Frequently, White children have access to better schools, more rigorous curriculum, higher level courses, and more academic resources (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Whiteness as property is also exhibited in reputation and status—one either improves or damages their reputation; thus, it is viewed as property. In schools, nonwhite forms of language acquisition, such as bilingual

education, are seen as less-than when compared to White forms of language acquisition—a native English speaker choosing to learn a second language in a academic class or using software. Another example is the word "urban" which can be used negatively to refer to the population of a school or positively to compliment cosmopolitan taste (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016). Finally, the absolute right to exclude is "the counterpart to the possession of whiteness, for owning something means those who do not own it have not rights to use it" (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p. 9). In education, this is exemplified in the resegregation of schools though gifted or alpha programs, advanced placement and honors classes, and school choice and voucher programs (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Students of color are often excluded from these programs because they are viewed from a deficit model—they are perceived as disadvantaged, at-risk youth with cultural deficiencies and unsupportive parents (Yosso, 2005).

A third core tenet of CRT is what Capper (2015) refers to as counter storytelling and majoritarian narratives. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), "stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting" (p. 13). Stories from marginalized groups eliminate myths and misperceptions held by the dominate group (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solozano & Yosso, 2001). Delpit (1988) believes the silencing of an alternative voice, specifically the voice of a minority group, is one the deepest travesties in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Counter storytelling empowers groups that have been cast aside by exploring their lived reality. This tenet is important for three reasons: reality is socially constructed, stories can bring healing, and stories highlight dysconscious racism in the dominant groups (King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The dominant group often defines the reality of experiences through the lens of their cultural norms, but the reality is

that "political and moral analysis is situational—'truths only exist for this person in this predicament at this time in history'" (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, storytelling can be a healing experience for marginalized groups because stories give authority to the reality perceived by marginalized groups. Stories, parables, and chronicles can reassure members of the marginalized group that they are not isolated in their experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solozano & Yosso, 2001). These stories give voice to the story teller. According to Tate (1997), "people of color in our society speak from experience framed by racism. This framework gives their stories a common structure warranting the term voice" (p. 210). Lastly, counter storytelling is essential because it challenges the perceived reality of the dominant group. Oppression is often explained as normative and rationalized as necessary, but when confronted with an alternative story, the listener must examine the perceived reality. This process can lead to the exposition and reduction of hegemony (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Delgado (1991) cautions, though, that "stories require suspension of disbelief" (p. 9) and in the current divided state of the country, listeners may refuse to hear.

The next two tenets of CRT that Capper (2015) identifies are closely related—interest convergence and critique of liberalism. Interest convergence is closely linked to the CLS critique of civil rights legislation. A well-cited example is that of Brown v. Board of Education (1954). This landmark civil rights legislation was essentially passed to give America credibility on the world stage as a nation that valued and respected all people (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Tate, 1997). Another example of interest convergence is the post Katrina reform of public schools in New Orleans. Schools were given over to charters, and the previously respected opinions of Black community members were excluded from the creation of new schools (Rector-Aranda, 2016). The critique of liberalism is linked to interest convergence

because it suggests that the antidote to racism is vast and radical reform, not simple laws based on research conducted by the dominant group of society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rector-Aranda, 2016; Tate, 1997). Education policy and American politics, contrary to the perception of the dominant group, are not racially neutral or colorblind and this contributes to the painstakingly slow process of racial reform (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Rector-Aranda, 2016).

The final core tenet of CRT is intersectionality (Capper, 2015). Some CRT scholars refer to this as an interdisciplinary perspective. CRT relies on the studies of other disciplines including "ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law" (Stovall, 2005, p. 97). A comprehensive perspective allows race and racism to be analyzed across disciplines and perspectives (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). When laying the framework for civil rights discussion and strategies, the many facets and descriptors of a person, specifically a person belonging to a marginalized group, are important (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

This study will primarily focus on the CRT tenet of using counterstories to "shatter complacency and challenge the status quo" (Delgado & Stafancic, 2000, p. 61). The researcher is a member of the dominant racial group but will amplify the voice of a marginalized group through listening to and sharing their stories. This will be supported by the analytical framework of phenomenology.

Analytical: Phenomenology

The purpose of a phenomenological qualitative study is to understand the essence of an experience by interviewing several individuals who have shared an experience. The phenomenon that will be explored in this study is the school-to-prison pipeline and how the lived experiences of the participants—both the people and events in their lives—have influenced their journey on

the pipeline. The data analysis of a phenomenological study focuses on the common experiences of the participants by examining significant statements in order to create overarching themes that will lead to an understanding of the "what" and "how" as it relates to the participants' experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This analytical framework is explained in comprehensive detail in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

The following terms may have different meanings for different groups of people. In order to provide consistency to this research, the terms will be used in accordance with the meanings provided.

Bias (explicit and implicit)

Explicit bias is a conscious attitude or belief about an individual or a group of people that is usually based on noticeable attributes of a person. Explicit bias most often exhibits itself when an individual feels endangered (Perception Institute, no date).

Implicit bias "refers to the automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways" (Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, & Shic, 2016). Implicit bias is held at all levels of society from institutions to individuals. These biases are shaped by the historical and biographical events that have influenced the life of an individual or organization (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Exclusionary Discipline

This is any form of discipline that excludes students from the classroom including office discipline referral (ODRs), in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), and expulsions (Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Welch & Payne, 2012).

Race

The US Census Bureau delineates race as White or Black/African American, and according to APA guidelines race should be capitalized when referring to an individual or group of individuals specific racial identities. For that reason, Black will be used throughout this paper to refer to anyone who self-identifies or is identified in a research study as Black. White will be used to refer to any person who has White skin privilege and self identifies or is identified in a research study as White (Alexander, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997).

Racism

According to Lorde (1980) racism is "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (para 5). This belief can be subconscious and is deeply ingrained in the policies and institutions that rule America (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

School-to-prison Pipeline

This is a metaphor that emphasizes the relationship between school discipline policies and practices and the juvenile justice system (Skiba et al., 2014).

White Privilege

White privilege is defined by Peggy McIntosh (1989) as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (para 3). These privileges include the ability to buy a house in any neighborhood one can afford with a guarantee that the neighbors will not be suspicious, walking into a store with a purse or large bag and not being harassed by security, a wide array of skin color products that match your skin color, the positive framing of your race when history is told, and the ability to represent yourself, not your race, when you accomplish great tasks (McIntosh, 1989; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005, 2005).

Zero Tolerance Policies

These “no-nonsense” policies require harsh mandatory sentences for infractions that are most frequently related to the possession of drugs or weapons (Skiba, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Making of a Pipeline

Discipline Gap

Research on the topic of racial disparity in school discipline began in 1975 when the Children's Defense Fund suggested that Black students were more likely than White students to be suspended multiple times (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Skiba et al., 2002). As mentioned above, Black students account for approximately 16%-18% of the public school population (NCES, 2017; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003), but they account for nearly 35% of one time student suspensions, 48% of repeat suspensions, and 36% of student expulsions (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, Belway, 2015; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003). When compared to their White counterparts, Black students are 2.6 times more likely to be suspended (Huang, 2018; Skiba et al., 2011; Wadhwa, 2010). Fabelo et al.'s Breaking Schools Rules study (2011) found that 83% of Black male students had experienced at least one instance of exclusionary discipline as the result of a discretionary action between 7th and 12th grade, and nearly 25% of Black students experienced 11 separate instances of exclusionary discipline compared to only 10% of White students.

The school discipline gap has become so pronounced that the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division issued a letter to public schools across the country, advising them to be cognizant of the disparities that exist within the discipline system. The letter states that all schools will be held accountable for discipline policies and procedures that violate the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The disparities specified in this letter include schools that make rules targeting one particular race (e.g. "hair cannot be worn in dreads") or the enforcement of a particular rule for one race while willingly looking aside for another. An example of the latter

offense is issuing Black students a harsher punishment, such as out-of-school suspension, for a discretionary behavior like talking too loudly during class that might earn a White student an after school detention. Discipline policies must be linked to the academic enrichment of the student body (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

Welch and Payne (2012) studied disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions in a national random sample of schools and concluded that exclusionary discipline is more likely to be used in urban schools and in schools with a higher population of Black students. They found that these schools did not suspend more frequently than schools with a predominately White student body for reasons of tobacco, alcohol, or gun use, but these schools were more likely to "automatically expel or suspend students for the possession of drugs and knives" (Welch & Payne, 2012, p. 165). Based on their findings, the perceived racial threat of students of color influenced the disciplinary decisions made by school leaders so that exclusionary discipline was issued for reasons that went beyond the scope of misbehavior. The study found that schools with higher enrollment of Black students issued a greater amount of exclusionary discipline "regardless of school characteristics, including teacher and administrator leadership and training, reported crime and crime salience, and the poverty, disorganization, and urbanicity of school communities" (Welch & Payne, 2012, p. 166-167).

Many hypotheses exist that suggest racial bias is not a factor in the discipline gap. Perhaps Black students are more violent than their White peers; perhaps Black students are more disruptive than their White peers; perhaps Black students engage in more behaviors prohibited by zero tolerance policies than their White peers; perhaps socioeconomic status is a factor (Mizel et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Research shows that even when accounting for socioeconomic status and family structure, Black males are still suspended and

expelled at higher rates than any other demographic (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Mizel et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Research for the past twenty years has consistently shown that "disciplinary disparities between Black and White students occur most often in subjective categories, like defiance and disrespect" (Skiba, 2014, p. 30-31).

A study conducted by Huang (2018) examined the hypothesis that Black students misbehave more than their White peers. Using data from students in 10th grade during the 1990 National Educational Longitudinal Study, a study conducted by the U.S. National Center for Educational Services in which 25,000 eighth grade students from over 1,000 schools were followed in two year intervals and asked about their attitudes regarding school behavior and discipline, Huang (2018) concluded that Black students admitted to participating in fights more frequently that their White peers, but they had lowers rates of alcohol and recreational (tobacco and marijuana) drug use. White students were three times more likely to smoke, and Black students were 37% more likely to fight, but "Black students were twice as likely as White students to be suspended" (Huang, 2018, p. 289). Even though the study relied on a public data set from two decades ago, the results can be meaningful today given that in 2000, Black students were nearly 2.5 times more likely to be suspended than White students, and in the 2013-2014 school year the gap rose to 3.8 times (Huang, 2018).

Fabelo et al. (2011) tracked students in Texas Public schools from 7th-12th grade and found that the discipline gap is exaggerated even further when desegregating data by gender. Over 83% of the Black males in the study had at least one discretionary discipline issue compared to 59% of the White males. The disciplinary action issued to Black students was much harsher than what was issued to White students; 26% of Black students were issued out-of-school suspensions for their first violation compared to 9% of White students; in school

suspensions were issued to 86% of White students for their first violation. A majority of the discipline gap was found in discretionary violations; students were punished with similar frequency for mandatory offenses which constitute a felony (Fabelo et al., 2011, pp. 42-44).

Zero Tolerance Policies

The concept of zero tolerance can be traced to 1983 when 40 sailors were reassigned after being caught with drugs on a submarine in Norfolk, VA (Skiba, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Again, in 1986 the term was applied to a "program developed to impound seacraft carrying any amount of drugs" (Skiba & Peterson, 1999, p. 373). As a result of the sensationalization of several high-profile violent crimes in the late 1980s, criminologists James Wilson and John Dilulio coined the term "super predator" to describe the youth who were coming of age (Advancement Project, 2010; Schept et al., 2015; Wilson, 2014;) despite well documented evidence that school violence was on the decline (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, 2014). On the political front, First Lady Nancy Reagan championed her "'no nonsense' approach to drug enforcement" (Skiba, 2014, p. 28), and less than a decade later, President Bill Clinton passed the Gun Free Schools Act (Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wilson, 2014). In 1999, the horrific school shooting at Columbine High School solidified the fear already planted in the hearts of mainstream America. As a result of the media reports and the strong political policies, a fear of drugs and guns was deeply seeded in the American people (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Zero tolerance policies related to drugs were phased out of communities in the early 1990s (Skiba & Peterson, 1999), but the Columbine tragedy "effectively opened the floodgates to the increased use of zero tolerance approaches" (Advancement Project, 2010, p. 11) in public schools. They

expanded to include arbitrary offenses like excessive tardiness (Wallace et al., 2008), "alcohol, tobacco…fighting, insubordination, dress code, and 'disruptive behavior'" (Wilson, 2014, p. 50).

The enforcement of zero tolerance policies in the school system often relies on exclusionary discipline (Skiba, 2014). According to a series of interviews conducted by Anita Wadhwa (2010), district representatives and community members in Denver Public Schools shared the perception that teachers and administrators wanted to pass off the responsibilities for school discipline to the local courts. Zero tolerance policies are upheld by mandatory sentencing laws—rules that require mandatory punishment such as suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement officers, three strikes laws—arbitrary rules that may be broken only three times before mandatory expulsion, and "broken windows" theory—the idea that if you treat minor offenses with harsh punishment, it will make people afraid to commit more serious offenses (Advancement Project, 2005; Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, 2014). Under such strict policies, students have been suspended for sharing Tylenol, Mydol, cough drops, and inhalers, a student with disabilities was issued a police citation for using an expletive, students have been expelled for bringing plastic utensil knives to school in their lunchbox, students have been expelled for defending themselves against the school bully, students have been arrested for writing on desks, and students have been put in jail as the result of food fights (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). According to the Breaking Schools' Rules study, nearly 60% of students experience exclusionary discipline in 7th through 12th grade, yet "less than 3 percent of violations were related to behavior for which state law mandates expulsion or removal" (Fabelo et al., 2011, p. 38). After thirty years of zero tolerance policies plaguing the public school system, there is no data to support it creates safer schools or better behavior among students (Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba, 2014; Spiller & Porter, 2014).

Casella (2003) calls the interaction between fear and zero tolerance policies "punishing dangerousness" (p. 55). Although zero tolerance policies are colorblind in principle, the implementation of them shows evidence of racism. The "super predators" of the 1980s were often portrayed by media as Black males (Alexander, 2012). Casella's (2003) study highlighted the racist undertones in the definition of the word "dangerousness":

> definitions…that encompass not just acts but meanings of blackness that signify danger…the term dangerous is not unlike other classifications—deviant, colored, retarded, savage—that have been used historically to cut off certain segments of the population from pathways to success (p. 68).

The French philosopher Foucault (2000) claims that in labeling an individual or a group of people as dangerous, society is able to dominate and control by targeting that person or group into the criminal justice system. Dangerous individuals will be punished simply because of who they are, not what they have done (pp. 189, 199).

Alexander (2012) claims that the labeling of Black men as dangerous has instigated a new Jim Crow caste system in America. As a result of zero tolerance policies, Black men have been held captive by mass incarceration. A common misperception exists that Black men and women make up a majority of drug users and dealers. A research study in 1995 collected data from 400 participants in Washington D.C. who were asked to envision a drug user. Over 95% of the participants described a drug user as a Black man or woman (Alexander, 2012; Burston, Jones, & Roberson-Saunders, 1995). Interestingly, in 1995, Blacks only accounted for 15% of the total population of people who had used drugs within the past month (Alexander, 2012; Burston et al., 1995) and 10% of the total population of people who had ever used drugs, and yet during the same time period, Black men and women accounted for 96% of the drug related

arrests in Washington D.C (Burston et al., 1995). Five years later, White youth aged 12-17 were 33% more likely than Black youth to have sold drugs, but over 80% of all drug offenders sent to prison were Black (Alexander, 2012). Between 1983 and 2000, the incarceration of Black men and women increased by 26 times, and while the number of persons supervised by the US correctional system has decreased steadily over the past decade, Black men and women are still incarcerated at disproportionate rates (Alexander, 2012; Kaeble & Cowhig, 2016). Zero tolerance policies and their relationship to exclusionary school discipline have created a metaphorical pipeline that allows Black men to be shuffled from desk to cell (Skiba et al., 2014).

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The term school-to-prison pipeline first appeared in academic literature in 2003 at a conference held at Northeastern University (McGrew, 2016; Wald & Losen, 2003). The conference was titled "Reconstructing the School to Prison Pipeline: Charting Intervention Strategies of Prevention and Support for Minority Children" (McGrew, 2016, p. 343). Wald and Losen's (2003) summary of the research presented at the conference highlights the undeniable and troublesome failure of school systems to serve the students who are at the most risk. They define the pipeline as the following:

> a journey through school that becomes increasingly punitive and isolating for its travelers. Many will be taught by unqualified teachers, tested on material they never reviewed, held back in grade, placed in restrictive special education programs, repeatedly suspended, and banished to alternative outplacement before dropping out or getting pushed out of school altogether. Without a safety net, the likelihood that these same youths will wind up arrested and incarcerated increases sharply (Wald & Losen, 2003, p.11).

After that conference, the phrase made its way to mainstream media including news reports and organizations that frequently report on inequities in education such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Children's Defense Fund (McGrew, 2016). The school-to-prison pipeline, or rather the policies that have created it, has perpetrated systemic racism in education by excluding students, particularly Black boys of all ages, at alarming rates (Meiners & Winn, 2010). Sociologist Loic Waquant argues the following:

> since colonial times America has been trapped in a quandary over what to do about the Black people they captured in Africa and enslaved. Slavery was motivated…to exploit Black labor, but there was also a competing desire to exclude Black people…from all facets of public life" (Noguera, 2003, p 349).

He argues that urban public schools are one modern way of controlling Black youth; schools have not set out to educate, but to oppress and shuffle Black males away from society and into prison. The adults, then, who work most directly with children in schools need to serve as their advocates, not prison guards (Noguera, 2003).

One aspect of the school-to-prison pipeline metaphor is that schools are becoming more like prisons. Caton's interviews (2012) of 10 Black males who had recently dropped out of high school revealed an interesting observation of school environment. The men noted that the school was cold and unwelcoming. The lack of attention to facilities created an environment that felt similar to a correctional facility. According to the young men, this environment made them feel angry, frustrated, hurt, and resentful. They felt disconnected from the school, and when they expressed this in a typical adolescent way, they were referred to the office by a teacher or security guard and suspended (Caton, 2012). Their school and many others utilized a Panopticon surveillance system. Based on the work of Foucault, this system was used in prisons in the late

18th century as a means of controlling prisoners by creating fear that they may at any time be watched, unbeknownst to them, by prison guards (Marion & Gonzales, 2014). Foucault believed that the purpose of prison was to "serve as the instrument that creates a criminal milieu that the ruling classes can control" (Droitt, 1975).

The similarities between schools and prisons are not limited to environment. Zero tolerance policies are "accelerating student contact with law enforcement" (Skiba, 2014, p. 27), and they are directly and indirectly leading students from the classroom into the criminal justice system (Mizel et al., 2016). The most direct pathway is when "schools refer students facing suspension/expulsion directly to the police and courts" (Mizel et al., 2016, p. 102). As a direct result of zero tolerance policies, school based arrests in Pennsylvania tripled between the 1999-2000 school year and the 2006-2007 school year, and 70% of referrals and arrests in Florida during the 2007-2008 school year were for disorderly conduct and misdemeanor offenses (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba, 2014). Additionally, in Baltimore City Public Schools approximately half of the school based arrests and referrals in 2007-2008 school year were in middle and elementary school (Advancement Project, 2010).

The indirect pathway between zero tolerance policies and incarceration is seen in the long term impacts of exclusionary discipline (Mizel et al., 2016): "Suspension and expulsion are moderate to strong predictors of future incarceration" (Meiners & Winn, 2010, p. 273). Students who are suspended miss instructional time and will likely fall behind academically which places them at greater risk of repeating a grade and dropping out of school and entering the justice system (Advancement Project, 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Mallet, 2016; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014; Spiller & Porter, 2014). Research suggests that students who are suspended or expelled once have an increased likelihood of experiencing numerous exclusionary discipline

(Fabelo et al., 2011). Additionally, zero tolerance policies may challenge students' perceptions of "fairness and justice" (Spiller & Porter, 2014, p. 76). This is particularly important in light of the findings in one study that our nation's youngest students, preschoolers, are expelled at a rate that is three times higher than K-12 students (Yale Study, 2005). Young children are still formulating their understanding of fairness, but the high rates of expulsion for childish behavior can potentially create in them a negative perception of the entire education system that will continue to impact their behavior as they progress through school (Spiller & Porter, 2014).

Skiba et al. (2014) conducted a review of the scientific research to date that links exclusionary discipline with the school-to-prison pipeline. Their meta-analysis confirmed that exclusionary discipline is commonly and increasingly used in schools; suspension is used the most frequently. Additionally, Black students when compared to their White peers in studies conducted within the last decade receive harsher discipline for similar transgressions. Based on the review of the research, Skiba et al. (2014) suggests that the school-to-prison pipeline is a bit more complex than merely excluding students from school and pushing them into the criminal system. Rather, they propose that based on the literature, four potential variables—-school climate, student achievement and behavior, school engagement, and access to educational opportunities—influence a student's potential to dropout or be pushed out of school via expulsion which strongly correlates with contact with the juvenile justice system. One or more suspensions increase the risk of dropout, and students who dropout are eight times more likely than students who graduate from high school to be incarcerated. Their review of retroactive studies, studies of juveniles already in detention facilities, revealed that 61 per 100 detainees had experienced exclusionary discipline from school during the year prior to their arrest, and "suspension and expulsion for a discretionary school violation merely tripled a student's

likelihood of juvenile justice contact" (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 555). Finally, some of the research they reviewed suggested that for a significant amount of students who land in juvenile detention facilities, a serious wrongdoing was not even committed until after their first suspension. Skiba et al. (2014) concluded that there is not enough research to suggest intentionality, but there is a clear path to defend directionality from schools to prisons.

Some districts invite students to attend alternative schools after exclusionary discipline exits them from the classroom (Vanderhaar, Munoz, & Petrosko, 2014). Alternative schools were allegedly created to address the needs of students who are failing to thrive in the traditional classroom, and between 1998 and 2002, the number of alternative schools around the country tripled by some counts and quintupled by others (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). While they can offer individualized assistance to some students, there is a strong link between placement in an alternative school and encounters with the juvenile justice system. Vanderhaar et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study of over 7000 students, and they concluded that 39.5% of the students who were placed in an alternative school between third and twelve grade also experienced juvenile detention; of the students placed in an alternative school during their elementary years, 52.9% were subjected to juvenile detention. The authors conclude that Black males are referred to alternative schools and detained at higher rates than their White peers: "the salience of race is undeniable" (Vanderhaar et al., 2014, p. 21).

Exclusionary discipline tactics in schools, like prisons, seek to banish offenders by removing them from society (Welch & Payne, 2012). Nearly two-thirds of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma, highlighting a clear link that students who are marginalized out of one public institution—an institution that is meant to provide a free and public education to all students—are pushed into another public institution—one that is meant to protect society against

criminals (Welch & Payne, 2012). This is the consequence when the youngest and most precious members of society are feared by the adults in their community and their school (DeMatthews, 2016b).

While schools have immolated prisons in environment and exclusionary practices, there has also been a rise in the usage of police on K-12 campuses (Advancement Project, 2005; Advancement Project, 2010; Schept et al., 2015). The increase in police presence on school campuses was partially a reaction to the public's fear of the "super predators" that were supposedly going to terrorize the safe haven of public schools across America (Schept et al., 2015). Some school districts create their own police force and limit jurisdiction to the school grounds, and other districts are assigned police officers from the local police department (Advancement Project, 2010), but the end result is the same: the officer, often referred to as a School Resource Officer (SRO) becomes "a central enforcing agent of the pipeline" (Schept et al., 2015, p. 105). In 2005, nearly 68% of 12-15 year old students reported police presence on their school campus (Advancement Project, 2010). The role of SROs typically varies from district to district, but it can include enforcing criminal laws as well as school rules. SROs may use discretion when implementing consequences to students and involving an administrator (Fabelo et al., 2011), but this can sometimes lead to horrific results. In South Carolina, the SWAT team raided a school in response to an alleged drug problem; no drugs or weapons were found (Advancement Project, 2010). In Florida, a six-year-old Black female was handcuffed by the biceps, shoved into the back of a police car, and fingerprinted at the local police station for throwing a temper tantrum. She was charged with battery of a school official (Herbert, 2007). In New York City, a five-year-old boy was handcuffed and transported to the psych ward at a local hospital for throwing a temper tantrum and knocking items off of an administrator's desk; his

race is not mentioned in the news report (Melago, 2008). In Los Angeles, students were ticketed for tardiness by the school district's police department (Advancement Project, 2010).

School districts pay a hefty price tag to keep police in their schools. In 2005, the federal government contributed $60 million to school districts to hire SROs (Advancement Project, 2005). Between 2002 and 2010, New York City increased their budget for security staff and equipment by 65% (Advancement Project, 2010). Following the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook in Newton, CT, in 2012, many states approved bills to increase funding for school security. In Florida, property taxes increased, in Mississippi a special fund was created, in Alabama a lottery was proposed, and in Indiana grants were awarded to local districts (Schept et al., 2015). At such a high price, districts place a huge priority on safety in schools, but most research suggests that the increased presence of police and security measures like cameras and metal detectors do not increase safety on school campuses (Advancement Project, 2005; Schept et al., 2015). The result is that "childhood is at the heart of prison expansion as false promises of safety and employment, particularly for our most 'innocent' (children) are repeatedly used to expand a prison nation" (Meiners, 2011, p. 555). In large districts, including Denver, Chicago, and Palm Beach, the presence of police means students can be taken directly from school to the juvenile justice system (Advancement Project, 2005).

Schools with large populations of students of color are more likely to have metal detectors, police pat-downs, and locked doors throughout the school day (Advancement Project, 2010). Couple this with the fact that police officers are not primarily trained to deal with adolescent misbehavior (Advancement Project, 2005), and the result is that a disproportionate amount of Black students fall victim to discretionary school based arrests (Advancement Project, 2010). Racial profiling by police is well documented in many urban areas (Advancement Project,

2005; Alexander, 2012), and police officers "are often the ones who enact violence on communities of color" (Schept et al., 2015). In a society where policies claim to be colorblind, the discrepancies in race are alarming (Alexander, 2012).

History of Racism

Education System

The fight for the equal education of Black and White children in America is as old as the country herself (Bell, 1973; Daniel & Walker, 2014). In 1787, just eleven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Massachusetts' legislature ignored petitions to grant Black children access to public schools or to create separate schools (Bell, 1973). Although the Civil War freed Black families from being counted as property, little was done to afford them the same property rights as their White counterparts (Alexander, 2012; Daniel & Walker, 2014). Black codes and Jim Crow Laws were written and enforced throughout the south to keep Black families from truly experiencing freedom even though the Civil Rights Act of 1866 "extended citizenship to freedman" (Daniel & Walker, 2014, p. 257). At the turn of the twentieth century, public schools for White children were growing and expanding, but Southern states like Georgia did not provide educational opportunities for Black students (Daniel & Walker, 2014). The case of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) declared that transportation systems could be "separate but equal," and eventually this legislation was used to determine cases regarding the constitutional requirements of educating Black students (Bell, 1973; Daniel & Walker, 2014).

In 1952, set against this history of racial inequality coupled with the end of World War II during which Black men fought alongside White men (Alexander, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998), five cases involving the education of Black students in White public schools made their way to the Supreme Court (Alexander & Alexander, 2015; Bell, 1973). Due to the similarities in each

case—prosecutors representing Black students who wished to be granted access to the White public schools—they were argued under one case, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954). The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Warren decided in favor of the plaintiffs and claimed that "separate education facilities are inherently unequal" (Brown v. Board, 1954). Justice Warren's opinion section on the case infers three key promises. First, separate educational facilities are not equal, so Black students should be granted access to historically White schools. Second, de jure (i.e. by the law) segregation is a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Warren quoted another case in his opinion statement, "segregation with the sanction of the law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and deprive them of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system" (Brown v. Board, 1954). The third promise made by Brown is that education is "the very foundation of good citizenship…it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment" (Brown v. Board, 1954). CRT requires us to examine the ways in which the Brown decision aided White citizens more than Black citizens (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Brown (1954) was fought and won at a time that was advantageous for White men in America who were viewed on the world stage as hypocritical—they had fought the attempted genocide in Nazi Germany but did not treat members of their own society as equals (Alexander, 2012).

While the Brown decision was monumental and the promises grand, little was done to enforce the declaration made by the court (Alexander & Alexander, 2015). Now, nearly 64 years later, the American school system is ruled by seemingly colorblind policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTTT), and high stakes testing that continue to give

advantage to White students over Black students and prevent desegregation from becoming a reality (Daniel & Walker, 2014; Freeman; 2005; Johnson, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

For nearly a decade after the passage of Brown, American history was peppered with brave Black students like the Autherine Lucy, the Little Rock Nine, and Ruby Bridges who were among the first to integrate historically White schools in Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2004). Ten years after Brown, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided the legislation necessary to enforce desegregation (Johnson, 2014). During this time two phenomena happened that gave the appearance of desegregation in the southern states. First, many southern Black families migrated to the north seeking financial and educational opportunities. Simultaneously, White families began to move out of the cities and into the suburbs (Johnson, 2014). The combination of Black migration and White flight made it necessary for schools to implement busing, one of the first models used to encourage desegregation (Johnson, 2014; McDermott, Frankenberg, & Diem, 2015).

Busing coupled with the impact of Black migration worked temporarily; during the Nixon-Ford administrations (1969-1977), segregation was at its lowest: "Southern schools that were at least 99 percent Black declined from 99.5 percent in 1962 to 17.9 percent by 1975" (Johnson, 2014, p. 199). In 1974, the court's opinion relaxed, and the progress toward desegregation took a judicial hit. While Brown had been clear that de jure segregation was unconstitutional, the case of Millikan v. Bradley (1974) ruled that de facto (i.e. by fact) segregation was unavoidable. White flight in Detroit had resulted in newly formed suburbs, but Chief Justice Burger upheld that Detroit did not need to bus across urban-suburban district lines to meet the requirements of desegregation (Millikan v. Bradley, 1974). This case "signaled the

end of the Supreme Court's willingness to make Brown's mandate of equality 'a living truth'" (Daniel & Walker, 2014, p.260).

In addition to busing, many districts implemented variations of school choice programs under the guise of adhering to the anti-discrimination policies laid out by Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District (1971). These programs included charter and magnet schools, school lotteries, and neighborhood zones with complicated choice algorithms (McDermott et al., 2015; Roda & Wells, 2013). Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, these "so-called freedom-of-choice and tuition voucher programs specifically… assure[d] that schools remained racially segregated" (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 261). During the peak of desegregation, these policies focused on racial diversity, and like busing, they created momentary success.

Segregation has continued to permeate the school system post Brown v. Board of Education (1954) in the curriculum and instruction (Johnson, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008;). Students of color have less access to AP courses (Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008), rigorous curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1998), and strategic college guidance (Chapman, 2014). Segregation is embedded in the social studies curriculum taught throughout American schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Swartz, 1992). Social studies curriculum has stripped Black students of the identities and stories that make their place in history unique and beautiful as well as acknowledge the reality of their struggle: "A society founded on genocide, built on the labor of African slaves, developed by Latino serfs and Asian indentured servants, made fabulously wealthy through exploitation and masterful manipulation and mystification—a society like this is a society built on race" (Ayers as quoted in Chandler & McKnight, 2009, p. 218).

If curriculum and instruction are a means for modern day segregation, standardized testing perpetrates it. Most theorists agree that high stakes testing finds its roots in IQ tests which were originally designed by the following:

> eugenicists who believed whites were genetically superior to other races; and they designed these tests—the predecessors of today's achievement tests, college entrance exams, and other standardized tests to rank and sort students, effectively determining their futures—according to white, dominant norms and using only white students to measure their validity (Rector-Aranda, 2016, p.3-4).

Today, the high stakes testing market is a multi-million-dollar industry. Students, particularly Black students, are evaluated by tests written to promote White power and privilege and punished with punitive, dumbed-down curriculum and deficit based instructional strategies when they cannot demonstrate mastery of the standards written in large part by White men in Washington (Rector-Aranda, 2016).

Race as a Social Construction

Race as a way of describing groups of people did not appear in history until the mid-1800s on the cusp of the era of European imperialism (Alexander, 2012; López, 2000). In 1855, Count Arthur de Gobineau's book, "Essay on the Inequality of Races" was published in France (López, 2000) and four years later Charles Darwin authored his scientific theory, "On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life". Both authors, the former primarily relying on religious belief and the later relying on scientific theory suggested that there was a biologically significant ranking among the races. While modern theorists, both scientific and philosophical, dispute the idea that there is a biological hierarchy among racial groups, there is a still a debate regarding the origin of race—is

race socially constructed or biological (Alexander, 2012; López, 2000; Reich, 2018; Yudell, Roberts, DeSalle, & Tishkoff, 2016)? The answer to the debate is important because if race is indeed a construct of society than the racial gaps that exist in the discipline system must be accounted for by the people who hold power within that system; if race is biological it allows for deficit doctrine to be preached and discrepancies in discipline to be blamed on Black boys (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Racial theorists argue that because there is not a specific genome that makes one White or Black, race is socially constructed (López, 2000). In America, race was not significant until slavery was introduced and one's status as freeman or property was determined based on the race of maternal ancestors (Alexander, 2012; López, 2000). The concept of being Black or being White was determined by more than the color of one's skin; other physical characteristics aligned a person with one race or the other—namely hair texture and the shape of one's nose (López, 2000). Race, as we know it in the 21st century, is constructed by the values and norms of society (López, 2000) and is often constructed to preserve White power and privilege (Alexander, 2012). Socially constructed notions of race are complex; nice words such as "school achievement…middle classness…maleness…beauty" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9) are attributed to "whiteness" while peripheral words including "gangs…welfare recipients…basketball players…underclass" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9) are assigned to "blackness." López (2000) claims that in his experience "race reveals itself as plastic, inconstant, and to some extent volitional" (p. 166). As evidenced by the ever-changing racial categories on forms which ask one to self-identify their race, definitions of race are fluid and understood only when contrasted against one another (López, 2000).

Some geneticists claim that race is more than a social construction, that it is rooted in biological similarities. According to Reich's (2018) controversial article, recent genetic research has shown significant similarities in the genome of people from the same geographical regions. This information can be used to find genetic markers for potentially harmful diseases as well as provide people with ancestral information specific to geographic location. He acknowledges that a biological argument for race can be and has been misconstrued by some as a rational for racism and oppression, but fear of this should not keep scientists and racial theorists from exploring the genome among specific racial groups. Other geneticists, however, acknowledge the complexity in the semantics of the debate on the origin of race. Yudell et al. (2016) claims the following:

> It is important to distinguish ancestry from a taxonomic notion such as race. Ancestry is a process-based concept, a statement about an individual's relationship to other individuals in their genealogical history; thus, it is very personal understanding of one's genomic heritage. Race, on the other hand, is a pattern-based concept that has led scientists and laypersons alike to draw conclusions about hierarchical organizations of humans (p. 565).

They propose that geneticists should use words such a "ancestor" and "population" so as not to confuse scientifically based research with the social and political meanings of racial terms (Yudell et al., 2016).

Teacher Impact

Implicit Bias

One plausible contributing factor to the discipline gap is the implicit bias of teachers (Gilliam et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2010). Researchers claim that 85% of American public school teachers are White, middle class females (Bryan, 2017; Milner & Laughter, 2014; Raible & Irizarry, 2010). Although most teachers enter the profession with the intent of positively

impacting children, pure intentions are not sufficient to educate an economically and racially diverse classroom (Milner & Laughter, 2014; Raible & Irizarry, 2010). As a result of the culture around them, media, and big screen entertainment, White teachers have been trained to view Black males as dangerous (Bryan, 2017). According to Gregory et al. (2010), "cultural mismatch between teachers and students can contribute to misunderstandings, fear, and conflict" (p. 64). Systems of power and oppression are so deeply embedded in American culture that Tatum (1997) describes it as part of the polluted air Americans breath; one cannot always discern the ways in which it impacts us, nor can any one person take responsibility for the racist structures that pollute the air.

Bryan (2017) discusses the idea of intergenerational mindset construction. Most young White girls are impressed by the ways their teachers throughout the K-12 schooling experience dominated and controlled the Black males in the class. For example, a young White student may have witnessed a teacher scolding a Black boy for getting out of line while walking down the hallway, ignoring similar behavior from White boys in the class. In turn, when the girl grows into a White, middle class woman, a teacher at that, she is likely to treat the Black males in her classroom with the same sense of dominance and control (Bryan, 2017).

The standard social studies curriculum taught in most schools introduces Africans chained to one another on ships rather than as prosperous members of the country from which they were stolen (Bryan, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Media and big screen entertainment also perpetrate Black male stereotypes by portraying Black men as criminals rather than role models, troublemakers rather than leaders, or lost souls who desperately need a White savior (Solomona et al., 2005). The result is what King (1991) refers to as dysconscious racism—"a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges" (pg. 135). If this marred perception of

reality is not examined critically, the result can be detrimental to Black boys (Bryan, 2017; Gilliam et al., 2016; Milner & Laughter, 2014).

As a result of the socialization that young White girls receive in their primary years, White culture and norms are viewed as superior (Bryan, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Milner & Laughter, 2014; Solomona et al., 2006). White female teachers are silently and subconsciously trained to maintain this superiority; they fear losing control of their classroom when Black boys are out of line in the hallway or speaking out of turn (Bryan, 2017; Gregory at al., 2010; Milner & Laugher, 2014) and react with hyper-sensitive surveillance to the behavior of Black boys (Raible & Irizarry, 2010). According to Foucault (2000), dominance can stem from a quest to maintain power by keeping a perceived threat under control. If Black men are culturally viewed and portrayed as perceived threats, White females may react to Black male pupils based on who they are rather than what they actually did.

Gilliam et al. (2016) conducted a study of early childhood educators to determine if bias impacted their expectations regarding the behavior of preschool students. The participants in the study were asked to watch a six-minute video, comprised of 30-second clips and press the noted key on the keyboard each time they observed behavior that they perceived could lead to a potentially disruptive situation. Each clip showcased a Black boy, a Black girl, a White boy, and a White girl; at the end of all 12 clips the teachers were asked to indicate which student they felt needed to be supervised the most. According to the researchers, none of the video clips showcased any potentially disruptive behavior. Using eye tracking technology, the researchers concluded that the participants spent a statistically significant greater amount time surveying the Black boy than any other student. Additionally, 42% of the participants indicated that the Black boy required the most surveillance. This study is significant because it indicates that a racially

diverse group of educators—22% self identified as Black—exhibit implicit bias regarding behavior expectations for students who are sitting in classrooms for the first time (Gilliam et al., 2016; Huang, 2018). Preschool students enter the classroom virtually unknown to the education system; they do not come with long records of misbehavior or academic failure, and yet, the Black boy is already potentially at risk of a teacher's lengthened gaze anxiously waiting for him to misbehave (Gilliam et al., 2016).

Colorblindness and the Ethic of Care

Colorblindness, the notion that all students are treated equally and no attention is given to the color of one's skin, as exhibited by teachers in the classroom can have negative impacts similar to implicit bias. Critical race theorists are committed to critiquing liberalism (Caper, 2015; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This means arguing against the idea that America is a post-racial colorblind nation in which all members have equal access to opportunity and success (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998). People who defend liberalism will often reference the success of Black members of society such as the fame and wealth of Oprah Winfrey and the political success of America's first Black president, Barack Obama (Alexander, 2012), but in doing so they ignore the realities faced by Black men and women who feel muted and pushed aside by White dominated institutions (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Despite the ever-growing volume of research surrounding the racial bias evidenced in the discipline gap and the school-to-prison pipeline, many still want to argue that race is not to blame.

One main way that colorblindness exhibits itself in the school system is in the way teachers care for their students (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Gerstl-Pepin, Killeen, & Hasazi, 2006; Rabin, 2010; Thompson, 1998; Wilder, 1999). The notion of caring, specifically for children, has

always been closely linked to the teaching profession (Rabin, 2010; Wilder, 1999), but often "preconceptions of care tend to reflect a warm/fuzzy or static personality trait that a teacher either possesses or lacks, as opposed to an ethical stance that requires action" (Rabin, 2010, p. 141). Furthermore, when the ethic of care is defined and examined in scholarly journals and books, it is presented from a colorblind perspective (Gerstl-Pepin et al., 2006; Thompson, 1998; Wilder, 1999). As a result, teachers who entered the profession out of care for students may be acting in uncaring ways toward their students of color (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Gerstl-Pepin et al., 2006; Rabin, 2010; Thompson, 1998; Wilder, 1999).

Historically, the ethic of care was the feminine response to the androcentric ethic of justice (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Noddings, 1984; Thompson, 1998). The ethic of justice, made accessible by Lawrence Kohlberg's moral stage theory, was mainly concerned with "public-sphere values and principals" (Thompson, 1998, p. 525) such as equality, rights, and moral absolutism (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). According to Kohlberg, women were often stuck in stage three—"that stage in which the moral agent wants to be a 'good boy or girl'"(Noddings, 1984, p. 42)—of his six stages of moral development, so feminist scholars like Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan developed an explanation for morality that focused on the private-sphere values (Noddings, 1984; Thompson, 1998). Gilligan, a graduate student of Kohlberg's, found that when women encountered ethical dilemmas similar to the ones used in the development of his theory, they relied on a "voice of care, concern, and connection" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 27) rather than abstract moral codes.

The ethic of care, then, is largely based on the decision making process that we observe a maternal figure make within her own household (Noddings, 1984; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Thompson, 1998). It is concerned with the interaction between two people, the one who is doing

the caring and the one who is being cared for (Noddings, 1984), and it "appeals[s] to ideals such as innocence, the perfect home, and selflessness, or virtues like trust and reciprocity" (Thompson, 1998, p. 543). Contrary to Kant's call to morality as a sense of duty, the ethics of care requires participants to move toward someone, to lean into obligation, as a way of motivating "natural caring" in a manner that mimics a mother's pure love for her child (Noddings, 1988).

The ethic of care requires teachers to view students as they would their own children (Caruthers & Poos, 2015) and to build relationships that "promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, and moral people" (Noddings as quoted in Wilder, 1999, p. 356). Like a mother-child relationship, the teacher-student relationship is reciprocal (Noddings, 1984; Noddings, 1988; Wilder, 1999). Reciprocity is accomplished when a teacher values the student over the subject, and the student receives the care bestowed by the teacher (Noddings, 1984).

The very act of caring requires the one giving care to recognize the perspective of the one for whom they care (Rabin, 2010), but this task has been convoluted by the fact that the ethic of care is colorblind, meaning it pays no attention to the color of one's skin. According to Thompson (1998),

> Colorblindness…is parasitic upon racism: it is only in a racist society that pretending not to notice color could be construed as a particularly virtuous act. In a society that is both culturally diverse and racist, colorblindness is a willed ignorance of color, that, although well intended, insists on assimilating the experience of people of color to that of Whites (p. 524).

Colorblindness has long been a virtue in the White community (Thompson, 1998; Wilder, 1999), as evidenced by teachers proudly proclaiming, "I don't see color; I just see students…I treat all

my kids the same" (Wilder, 1999, p. 357) and parents recounting stories of their White child's interaction with a child of color and marveling at how their child never noticed the color of the other child's skin (Thompson, 1998). Unintentionally, these expressions teach children that "being natural means not noticing racial difference" (Thompson, 1998, p. 523). The failure to see color is not a neutral stance (Solomona et al., 2005; Wilder, 1999), and the racial-innocence prescribed to children and adults who boast such perspectives is merely indicative of the "privilege of ignorance" (Thompson, 1998, p. 523).

Colorblind caring, that is "when a caring ethic is used without explicit recognition that racism operates as a norm that can shape social and cultural interactions" (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006, p. 253), perpetuates White privilege and power in the school system which can lead to the oppression and exclusion of students of color (Delpit, 1988; Solomon et al., 2005; Wilder, 1999). Delpit (1988) defines power as a set of explicit and implicit rules that are enacted and expected based on the standards of the dominant culture, and she argues that "those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—it's existence" (p. 282). Delpit dissects the culture of power that undermines a White teacher's claim, "I want the same thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine" (p. 285). To a White listener, this sounds exactly like the ethic of care that Noddings (1984, 1988) proposed, but upon closer examination of the culture of power that is at play, this statement could potentially harm a child if race was not taken into account. Embedded in this statement is the acknowledgement that White privilege and power have constructed codes by which everyone must abide (Solomona et al., 2005). Black children do not need to come to school and learn how to be Black; they need to learn, in addition to the academic material, how to live under the rules of the dominant White culture (Delpit, 1988). White privilege allows White children to ignore systematic lessons that Black children

must learn, including lessons about "economic struggle, racial trouble, and their own history as props supporting the American dream" (Thompson, 1998, p. 535).

White privilege and power and the interaction with the ethic of caring result in the notion "that 'genuine' forms of caring can be identified without reference to questions of race" (Thompson, 1998, p. 529). Thus, students are presumed as caring only if they prescribe to the dominant norms of caring, which may in fact be very different from their cultural norms (Rabin, 2010). Tate (2005), argues that the "sound moral reasoning" (p. 126) upheld by the ethics of care cannot "be divorced from matters of race" (p. 126). The colorblind ethic of care has lead to detrimental consequences for students of color.

Students of color report feeling devalued, misunderstood, and invisible in colorblind classrooms (Davis & Wilson, 2013; Gerstl-Pepin, 2006; Wilder, 1999). A doctoral student who participated in a self-study at the University of Vermont examining the relationship between caring and social justice wrote this reflection:

> Overall, faculty demonstrated care…it was very challenging to be the only student of color, particularly since I work with marginalized populations and see on a daily basis how policies, education, etc….are not created for our populations…I certainly feel like one of my Black students when she said, 'I feel invisible' (Gerstl-Pepin et al., 2006).

When teachers fail to see color, it communicates lack of individual importance and worth to students (Wilder, 1999). It denies students the confirmation component embedded in the ethics of caring because it fails to recognize an important piece of a student's identity (Davis & Wilson, 2013; Noddings, 1984). Eventually, students of color may begin to assume that the school has nothing valuable for them (Thompson, 1998). This can lead to them being pushed out the classroom as a result of poor academics or behavior (Rabin, 2010).

The opposite of a colorblind ethic of care is a color conscious ethic of care. To be color conscious is to recognize "color and culture as they are lived and understood by students of color" (Wilder, 1999, p. 361). In this approach, teachers seek out and listen to the opinions of students and teachers of color (Delpit, 1988).

The colorblind approach to research on the ethic of care perpetuates systemic racism (Thompson, 1998):"White researchers have tended to look for the culturally White practices and values that they—and their theories—already recognize as caring" (Thompson, 1998, p. 531). White researchers, such as Noddings and Gilligan, have emphasized childhood innocence in the ethic of care. Children don't see color, and the home is a haven; it is the job of the family to provide care, and women can remedy the shortcomings of Kohlberg's theory (Thompson, 1998; Walker & Snarey, 2004). Contrast that with Black feminist theories that, out of necessity, value knowledge as a realistic counterpart to innocence. The home is not synonymous with care, and no home is spared from the oppression and violence that is born out of White privilege and power. The job of caring for young people belongs to the church and the community, and care cannot be separated from justice and a deep desire and action to change the community (Thompson, 1998). What White theorists separate into the maternal and paternal ethics of care and justice, Black theorists embrace as a true ethic of care (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Thompson, 1998; Walker & Snarey, 2004)

Walker and Snarey (2004) have developed a matrix to explore the dichotomous relationship between the ethics of care and justice that is revered in Black communities. The matrix explores the relationship between two values—one from the ethic of justice and one from the ethic of care—that when held simultaneously create a new virtue which encapsulates a color conscious ethic of care. The combination of race and gender creates liberation: "a sense of being

set free from interlocking race and gender stereotypes about what one, as a person and as a people, can and cannot do" (p. 133). A liberated person is unable to separate care from justice; a caring person must oppose oppressive systems in order to justly care for the oppressed, and a just person must care for those they defend. Pluralism, the second virtue named by Walker and Snarey (2004), is produced by resistance and accommodation. In this virtue, one comes to uphold and respect diversity and welcomes dialogue with those who are different from themselves. Thirdly, the marriage of ethics and religion creates hope. This hope ultimately stems from the belief in a God who is both just and caring and controls all of human history, and it produces a sense of expectation that one day what may be will become what is. Another virtue forms when agency and legacy are mixed; the result is empowerment. This virtue encourages members of the community to speak and act "assertively—authority with control" (p. 136). Empowerment is needed as the tool to realize the hope that has been instilled (Walker & Snarey, 2004). Lastly, the ability to uphold the individual and the community creates uplift, the idea that the self and the community rely upon and need one another (Caruthers & Poos, 2015;Walker & Snarey, 2004). From a traditional Black perspective, "a split between the self and the group is pragmatically dysfunctional" (Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 137). When White educators are trying to care for Black students and families without acknowledging what it means to be Black in America, they are not able to care effectively for their students.

Family Factors

Several research studies suggest that students who are raised in two parent homes experience lower suspension rates (Huang, 2018). Additionally, research suggests that schools with higher levels of Black students and lower income levels give more suspensions (Welch & Payne, 2012). In a study conducted by Chetty, Hendren, Jones, & Porter (2018), generational

wealth was examined and compared across lines of race, gender, and class. Using data from the US Census Bureau, approximately 20 million children born between 1978 and 1983 were tracked and analyzed. The study concluded that "Black children starting from families in the top quintile have nearly the same chances of falling to the bottom income quintile (16.7%) as they do of staying in the top quintile" (pg. 18). On the contrary, 41% of White children born into families in the top quintile stayed in the top quintile as adults. Most of the variation is seen when comparing Black boys to White boys, and the differences exist even for boys who grow up in close proximity to one another. The one factor that strongly influenced the likelihood of a Black boy and a White boy landing on the same wealth trajectory was the presence of Black men in the community. Black boys who grew up in neighborhoods where at least 50% of the Black fathers were present also experienced lower suspension rates. Communities with low levels of racial bias, high presences of Black fathers (>50%), and low levels of poverty (<10%) exhibited insignificant generational wealth gaps between Black and White boys. Unfortunately, less than 5% of all Black boys in the study grew up in such a neighborhood, compared to 63% of the White boys. This study begs the question "Where are the Black men?" but the study provides the answer. 21% of Black boys born to parents in the bottom 1% of income level were incarcerated as adults compared to only 6% of White boys born into the same income level. Even those born into the highest 1% of income level were not spared from this disparity—2% of Black men were incarcerated as adults compared to only .2% of White men (Chetty et al., 2018). So, do Black men not value family or are they being systemically removed from it?

According to Quane, Wilson, & Hwang (2015), the number of Black children with an incarcerated parent quadrupled during the time of the Chetty et al.'s (2018) study from 1980-2008. The result of the mass incarceration of Black men, in particular, has devastating impacts

on the Black community. Jeffries (2001) examined the systemic removal of Black men from the community by studying several cases of police brutality against Black men, and he found seven lasting impacts on the lack community. When men are systemically removed from their community by police, it places the economic burden on the women in the community. Women become the sole breadwinner and may have to relocate to find work, affordable childcare, and housing. Secondly, the availability of eligible men decreases, so women have a shrinking pool from which to select a life partner. Jeffries (2001) explains, "If the individual is convicted and sent to jail, that person may no longer be an eligible mate prospect. In the event that the person is released from jail, he is practically unemployable and it is difficult to get a loan, rent an apartment, or obtain insurance…again making him an ineligible mate for some marriage minded black women" (p. 123). This leads to lower marriage rates and higher incidences of one man having multiple partners which skews the community view of marriage (Jeffries, 2001; Nealy, 2008). Third, when Black men are systemically removed from the community (Alexander, 2012), fathers and role models are removed from families (Jeffries, 2001). Fourth, the expectation of police brutality or even regular drug sweeps and pat downs can create anxiety in Black men that inhibits their ability to be positive contributors to the community (Alexander, 2012; Jeffries, 2001). The fifth and sixth impact of systemically removing Black men from the community, specifically by means of police brutality, are closely related. Black men may view White police officers with contempt which leads to tension in an already complicated relationship, and Black women may question a White police officers intentions and be hesitant to ask for help (Alexander, 2012; Jeffries, 2001). This can lead to higher instances of domestic abuse. The final impact identified by Jeffries (2001) is that the Black community is robbed of

"political, spiritual, and community leaders" (p. 124). Black communities need Black men (Chetty et al., 2018).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Method

Since Skiba's landmark quantitative study was published in 2002 (Skiba et al., 2002), many researchers have affirmed and added to the quantitative research surrounding the discipline gap (Fabelo et al., 2011; Huang, 2018; Losen et al., 2015; Mizel et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2010; Raible & Irizarry, 2010; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Valles & Miller, 2010; Wadhwa, 2010; Wallace et al, 2008; Welch & Payne, 2012) and the school-to-prison pipeline (Advancement Project, 2010; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Noguera, 2003; Schept et al., 2015; Spiller & Porter, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003; Yale Study, 2005). There are few studies, however, that examine the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon through the perspective of the men who are the most impacted by it. Quantitative research allows the researcher to identify problems, gaps and trends across populations, but in order to explore the answer to questions such as "why?" and "how?" and the emotions behind an experience qualitative methods must be employed (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative studies allow researchers to explore the meaning behind a specific phenomenon by conducting interviews, making observations, and gathering reflective data from the participants (Creswell, 2013; Newhart, 2015).

One core tenet of CRT is the importance of story telling as a means of effecting change in society (Capper, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). While quantitive research is able to show disparities among populations and emphasize the power and privilege held by certain groups in society, story telling is best accomplished through qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). Since the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black men on the school-to-prison pipeline, a qualitative approach will be implemented.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology: A Philosophy

Phenomenology as a method of qualitative research is anchored in a philosophy developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl's philosophy was designed to be an analysis of how one knows and is known; essential to the philosophy are the Latin phrase Carpe Diem (Husserl, 1999, p. 1) and the German principle, Zu den Sachen selbst! (van Manen, 2017b, p. 811), which is translated as "to the things themselves." Husserl believed that "knowledge is a mental experience: knowledge belongs to a knowing subject" (Husserl, 1999, p. 17) and that one's perception of reality is a valid form of knowledge. He sought to understand the experience of a particular present moment before time quickly passes and the next moment replaces it in the present (van Manen, 2017b). According to Husserl, perceptions are complete in and of themselves and do not need to be affirmed by quantifiable facts—-"[perceptions] are given—whole and entire—in the reflective apprehension I have of them" (Husserl, 1999, p. 7). Husserl's philosophy was initially criticized by his contemporaries to the degree that he was parried from an associated professorship at the University of Göttingen for what he described as "the lack of my scientific significance" (Husserl, 1999, p. 1) in his philosophy. Drawing from his knowledge and work in the fields of arithmetic and logic, he wrote and defended a comprehensive philosophy which he later referred to as "a science of pure phenomena, a phenomenology" (Husserl, 1999, p. 35). His philosophy eventually paved a way for modern researchers to examine "the human predicament when something hangs in the balance: of needing to feel with a crisis that confronts us in the now, but that will be too late to face when the now has passed" (van Manen, 2017b, p. 821).

Phenomenology: A Qualitative Method

The philosophy of phenomenology laid the foundation for a qualitative research method that allows researchers to explore participants' perceptions of their experiences with a particular phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). A phenomenological study seeks to understand the "what" (a phenomenon experienced by as few as one and as many as thousands) and the "how" (each person's perception of the phenomenon, not as they reflect and analyze it, but as they relive it) of a specific experience (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). According to Seidman (2013), the purpose of a phenomenological study is to "come as close as possible to understanding the true 'is' of our participants' experience from their subjective point of view" (p. 17). As a research method, phenomenology does not give researchers a step-by-step guide for collecting and analyzing information (van Manen, 2017a), but phenomenological researchers uphold several core principles that shape the method. Giorgi (1997) suggests three core principles and five concrete steps that guide a phenomenological approach to qualitative research; see Table 2 for a summary.

Table 2: *Giorgi's Phenomenological Approach*

Core Principal of Phenomenological Method:			Concrete Step:
Description			Collection of Verbal Data
	Epoché/Reduction		Reading of Data
			Breaking Data into Parts
		Search for Essence	Organization and Expression of Raw Data into Disciplinary Language
			Expressing the Structure of the Phenomenon

The first core principle is the need to clearly describe the phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). The researcher accesses and acknowledges prior knowledge and existing research about the phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997). This knowledge is used to frame the interview questions so that participants will be able to effectively communicate their experience to the researcher (Adams & van Manen, 2017). According to Giorgi (1997), the description of the phenomenon as a concrete experience (as opposed to an academic postulation) is obtained from the participants in a study. Most often, this is accomplished through interviews (Seidman, 2013; van Manen, 2017b), though some studies may include observations of the participants or a collection of documents, such as reflective journals and notes from the participants (Bevan, 2014; Creswell, 2013). The description by the researcher should be as precise and detailed as possible and focused only on the data collected. The researcher must refrain from making assumptions, and since "the details, biases, errors, and prejudices that we carry with us in the everyday life are exactly what have to be understood" (Giorgi, 1997, Modifications section para.2), the participant's perception of the experience is valid, and the researcher does not need to cross-reference the participant's story with bystanders who may have observed the phenomenon from the periphery (Giorgi, 1997; Seidman, 2013). In accordance with Husserl's philosophy, the researcher does not claim "this is reality;" instead, the researcher claims "the participant observes and experiences this as being a reality" (Giorgi, 1997).

Another core principle of the phenomenology research approach is known as reduction. This principle requires the researcher to bracket his/her own prior knowledge or experience with the particular phenomenon being examined and exempt it from the data collection and analysis portion of the study (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997). Bracketing is

essential because the purpose of a phenomenological study is not to interpret or analyze an experience, but to understand the essence of it (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). The process of bracketing enables a researcher to be fully present to the participants descriptions of the phenomenon as they experienced it. Bracketing is sometimes used synonymously or in conjunction with the Husserlian term of epoché—an opening up of oneself by suspending any prior judgements, stereotypes, or biases (Adams & van Manen, 2017; van Manen, 2017b). Reduction ensures, "the only claim that the researcher will make is that the concrete experience is an indication of what the [participant] was present to, and not necessarily that the description is an objective account of what really took place" (Giorgi, 1997, Modifications section para.3). In van Manen's description of this principle, epoché and reduction work in tandem—"epoché (opening up) and the reduction (closing down and focusing on something)" (pg. 822)—to lead the researcher to a deeper, meaningful understanding of the phenomenon as it was perceived by the participant.

The third and final core principle of a phenomenological method is searching for the essence (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997). After data has been collected and analyzed, the researcher seeks to identify "insights into the lived meaning of a phenomenon" (van Manen, 2017b, p. 823) that can be shared with the academic community (Giorgi, 1997). The essence should be presented in alignment with the core discipline of the researcher; in educational research the essence is typically reported by describing the themes highlighted in "what" and "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology: A Guide for Research

According to Giorgi (1997), there are five concrete steps for implementing a phenomenological method in a qualitative study. The first step is collection of verbal data.

Typically, this is gathered through a series of interviews with participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Bevan, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; Seidman, 2013). Giorgi does not specify the number of participants needed, but Creswell (2013) suggests as few as three or as many as fifteen. The number of participants is less important than what van Manen (2017b) emphasizes—the data in phenomenological studies is the lived experiences of participants. A phenomenological interview should be semi-structured, and the questions should be broad and open-ended (Bevan, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; Seidman, 2013; van Manen, 2017b). Seidman (2013) proposes a three interview format with the first interview as a comprehensive overview of the participant's life, which serves to give the researcher background information and build rapport between the participant and the researcher; the second interview explores the participant's perception of the specific phenomenon as they recount a lived experience and the third interview confirms and clarifies the participant's experience in a way that creates meaning. An authentic phenomenological interview will allow the participant to return to the event in his/her consciousness and relive it as though it were happening for the first time (van Manen, 2017b), so semi-structured questions should be constructed to this means (Adams & van Manen, 2017). All interviews should be recorded and transcribed (Giorgi, 1997).

The second step is reading through the data (Giorgi, 1997). The initial readings serve to give the researcher a holistic view of the participants conscious perception (Giorgi, 1997), and the researcher should read and listen to the transcripts until the information has saturated the researcher's thoughts. In order for phenomenological insight to be obtained, the researcher will need to be familiar enough with the data that in moments of quiet, even boredom, the researcher can spend time pondering and reflecting on the data (van Manen, 2017b). This step is essential to a phenomenological study because the researcher is not aiming to theorize or conceptualize a

particular phenomenon, but rather to understand the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon as it was experienced (Bevan, 2014; van Manen, 2017b)

The third step described by Giorgi (1997) is breaking the data, that is the examples obtained through interviews, reflective journals, observations, or descriptions (van Manen, 2017b), into parts. The goal is for the researcher to identify "meaning units" revealed from the data (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997). These units cannot be presupposed or construed by the researcher; instead, they must be obtained by reading and hearing the experience as expressed by the participant (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). According to Giorgi (1997), these meaning units can be identified by a methodical reading and re-reading of the data; each time a new unit of meaning is expressed by the participant, the researcher should mark the text. Meaning units should be expressed in the language used by the participant as opposed to language congruent with the researcher's discipline. According to van Manen (2017b), these meaning units often become clear in quiet moments when the researcher may least expect clarity; he encourages the researcher to be comfortable with silence, boredom, long walks, and moments spent simply doing nothing at all. As a point of illustration, he tells the story of Ananda, a beloved disciple of Buddha. After Buddha's death, Ananda was to be appointed to the council of enlightened leaders, but he had not received an insight worthy of the appointment. After days of fasting and meditating, he finally resigned himself to sleep, and in that moment, experienced the enlightenment he had so desperately sought:

> He became enlightened finally by letting go, by simply stopping and seeing things just as they are…so, the problem is that some researchers are so consumed by the idea or promise of a 'method' (such as a procedural scheme)…that will yield important qualitative understandings and insights that they don't allow themselves to recognize an

> insight when they stumble over it in a 'nonmethodical moment' (van Manen, 2017b, p. 820).

The goal in this step is to begin to develop a deep understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomenon by identifying the meaningful moments they describe as they relate to the phenomenon. Throughout this step, the researcher still brackets herself out of the data and searches for the meaning as described by the participant (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b).

The fourth step is the organization and expression of raw data into disciplinary language (Giorgi, 1997). Most phenomenological researchers agree that this step cannot be contrived with prescribed coding techniques, fool-proof methods, or fancy software (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). Once the units of meaning have been identified in the participant's own language, the researcher inserts her knowledge about the discipline and states the meaning units in language that is consistent with the discipline (Creswell, 2013; Giorgia, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). In this step, the participant's concrete, lived experience is described through the lens of the researcher's discipline. The next step aids in the stabilization of the meaning units (Giorgi, 1997).

The fifth and final step is to express the structure of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997). According to Giorgi (1997), "with the help of free imaginative variation one describes the essential structure of the concrete, lived experience from the perspective of the discipline" (The Concrete Steps section para. 7). The "free imaginative variation" is essentially the essence of the phenomenon as the participants have experienced it (Giorgi, 1997). In van Manen's (2017a; 2017b) work, he often refers to this as the wonder with which a researcher examines and understands the participants' lived experiences. According to Giorgi (1997),

> Ultimately, the use of the method depends upon the ability of the researcher to awaken possibilities. Whatever is given factually becomes one example of a possible instance of the phenomenon, and by multiplying possibilities one becomes aware of those features that cannot be removed and thus what is essential (Philosophical Method section, para. 10).

The researcher, having bracketed him/herself out of the study, casting aside all previous knowledge and judgements, listens to and genuinely hears the participant's experience and is able to assemble all of the participants' lived experiences into one or many structures, sometimes called themes, that define and bring meaning to the experience (Giorgi, 1997).

Phenomenology: Rationale

Phenomenology, when practiced with fidelity, is a complex research method (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017a). In order to tell the stories of Black men who are waiting in the limbo between school desk and prison cell, such a complex method allows me to hear their stories, compile their experiences into meaning units, give the meaning units language consistent with educational research, and describe core structures that make up the essence of their experience (Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). According to van Manen (2017b),

> Phenomenology, if practiced well, enthralls us with insights into the enigma of life as we experience it—the world as it gives and reveals itself to the wondering gaze—thus asking us to be forever attentive…the realization that phenomenology is the pursuit of insight into the phenomenally of lived experience should strike fear in the heart of anyone who hopes to practice it. Yet, the sheer satisfaction of experiencing moments of meaningfulness is worth the effort (p. 779).

Since critical race theorists use story telling as a means for confronting reality and showing oppressors the depth of their oppression, the phenomenological research method allows me to tell the story of the men behind the quantitative data.

Data Collection

Participant Selection

Since the purpose of this study is to amplify the voice of Black men experiencing the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline, participants must be Black males between the ages of 18-21. They must have been expelled from or dropped out of their school within the past 24 months and currently incarcerated (e.g. bail has not been posted) and awaiting trial or not incarcerated (e.g bail has been paid) and awaiting trial. The participants will be selected based on recommendations from relationships the researcher has previously established with local youth, community advocates and high school deans. If necessary, a "snowballing" approach will be implemented—that is one participant may suggest another participant (Seidman, 2013). Participants must read and sign the consent form or have a third party read the consent form prior to the interviews (see Appendix A). The consent form will be written in language that is consistent with the presumed reading level of the participants to ensure that they are able to understand the study in which they agree to participant. If requested, the consent form will be read aloud to the participants prior to the interviews.

As described above, phenomenological studies do not require a specific number of participants since it focused on understanding the lived experiences of the participants. This study will be comprised of five young men who will be interviewed using a semi-structured format as is common in phenomenological studies (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Bevan, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; Seidman, 2013; van Manen, 2017a; van Manen 2017b). In order to

protect the participants and the researcher, all contact will be arranged through a third party—a high school dean and a community advocate. The meetings will be held in a public location that is agreed upon by the researcher, the participant, and the third party. The third party will not be present for the interviews, but he will know the date and location in which they will take place. A defense attorney has been consulted to ensure that the semi-structured questions are appropriate for men awaiting adjudication.

Data Description

The study will follow Seidman's (2013) recommendation of a three interview format. Table 3 summarizes the semi-structured method that he proposes. Each interview will last 45-70 minutes, and they will be spaced three to seven days apart (Seidman, 2013). The purpose of the first interview will be to acquire general background knowledge about the participant's educational history and relationships with adults and peers from kindergarten-12th grade (or the last year they attended school). The interview will conclude with a general discussion of the man's experience with school-based discipline. The purpose of this interview is to establish trust between the researcher and the participant as well as to give the researcher a comprehensive knowledge of the participant's educational experience prior to focusing on their lived experience as a man on the school-to-prison pipeline. The second interview will exclusively focus on the exclusionary school discipline that led to being pushed out of the school system and the events that led to (probable) incarceration. The purpose of the second interview is to hear the participants' perception of the way in which they have experienced the school-to-prison pipeline (Seidman, 2013). This interview will be guided by "What is it like…" questions (Brevan, 2014; van Manen, 2017b). The researcher will not discuss any details that involve the current crime for which the participant is awaiting adjudication. The third and final interview will focus on

Table 3: *Seidman's Interview Process*

Description	Key Purpose	Proposed Time	Sample Questions
One: Focused Life History	To understand the educational history of the men from the moment they entered school (presumably kindergarten) until their first exclusionary discipline experience	45-60 minutes	Describe your earliest school memory. What schools did you attend? Who were your closest friends? Who were your favorite teachers? Do you remember the first time you got in trouble?
Two: The Details of the Experience	To understand the men's perceptions of how they got on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline and what it is like to live there	60-75 minutes	What is it like to be suspended (or expelled) from school? What is it like to be waiting for trial? What is it like to encounter the law (police/deans)?
Three: Reflection on The Meaning	To hear the men's conscious perceptions of how they experience life on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline	45-60 minutes	Describe life in the present. Do you have any regrets of the past? What hopes and dreams do you have for yourself?

allowing the participants to make meaning of their lived experience on the school-to-prison pipeline (Seidman, 2013). This interview will conclude with a discussion of the participant's future hopes and dreams (see Appendix B for a list of interview questions). The interview questions are inspired by Walker's (2012) phenomenological study of men on the school-to-prison pipeline who dropped out of school before high school and have already been adjudicated

for a crime. She interviewed the men in focus groups and used guiding questions to scaffold semi-structured discussion.

All three interviews will be recorded, and the interviewer will take notes on nonverbal responses during the interviews as well as keep a journal between meetings. Transcripts will be created from the audio recordings. Observations and descriptions from a third party, such as an administrator or teacher, will not be utilized in the data collection due to the documented amount of racial bias and prejudice that fuel the school-to-prison pipeline (Advancement Project, 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Mallet, 2016; McGrew, 2013; Meiners & Winn, 2010; Mizel et al., 2016; Noguera, 2003; Schept et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba, 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003).

Data Analysis

As is typical in a phenomenological study, the researcher will complete all of the interviews and then saturate herself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts as well as listening to the audio recordings multiple times. Then, as suggested by Giorgi (1997), the researcher will begin to notate meaning units in the transcripts. Each time the participants switch to a new unit of meaning, the researcher will make a note. These notations will initially be made in sync with the participant's language. The researcher will heed the warnings of van Manen (2017b), that “phenomenological analysis does not involve coding, sorting, calculating, or searching for patterns, synchronicities, frequencies, resemblances, and/or repetitions in data” (p. 813).

After all of the transcripts have been notated with meaning units, the researcher will look for broader themes represented in each story and prescribe them language congruent to educational research (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2017b). Finally, the researcher will use Giorgi’s (1997) “free imaginative variation” to label and describe the essence of the

experiences of all the participants collectively (Creswell, 2013). This essence may result in one or many themes depending on the participants' perception of their experience on the pipeline; all structures will be analyzed and reported (Giorgi, 1997).

Questions of validity will be resolved by the three interview process proposed by Seidman (2013). The three interview format establishes validity by making certain that the participant does not contradict statements made in prior interviews. When contradictions occur, the researcher can ask for clarity (Seidman, 2013). Additionally, the researcher will offer to do member checks with the participants by allowing the participants to read the transcripts. If a participant is unable to read the transcript, the interviewer will offer to read the transcripts or a summary of the transcripts during the third interview. According to the father of phenomenology, Husserl, the men's perceptions of the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline is valid because it is what their conscious self has experienced. There is no need to prove or even explain the subject-object relationship (Husserl, 1999). Ultimately, the goal of this study is not to prove or examine the participants' guilt or innocence, to identify a critical point on the school-to-prison pipeline, or even to offer suggestions for revolutionary change in the school and legal system. The primary purpose of this study is to capture the essence of a Black man's experience as he travels from desk to cell; it is to give a voice to the men who are experiencing the school-to-prison pipeline. Therefore, circumstantial proof is not needed. According to Husserl, their perception is the way in which they experience this phenomenon, and that is a valid source of knowledge (Husserl, 1999).

Pilot Study

Participant

A pilot interview was conducted in the fall of 2017 as part of a qualitative methods course. I interviewed a nineteen-year-old Black man, Lawrence (pseudonym), who was expelled from the local school district during his senior year due to a series of discipline infractions that concluded with truancy. Our initial contact was made prior to his alleged crime; he was a friend of my family. Throughout the period of the interviews, he was awaiting trial for allegedly committing a robbery; he was not in prison because his mother had paid his bail fee.

Data Collection

The interviews took place in a location that was safe and familiar to both of us. I conducted two interviews and a third meeting, rather than the Seidman's (2013) proposed three interviews. The first interview focused on Lawrence's educational background and the relationships he made in school throughout his K-12th grade years. The second interview primarily focused on Lawrence's experience with the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline. Since the pipeline is a metaphor for the transition from desk to prison (McGrew, 2016), the interview focused on the concrete experiences he had with discipline, deans, and police officers from the moment he first encountered exclusionary discipline in 9th grade until the moment that he was arrested. A third encounter took place three weeks after the initial interviews, but the meeting did not the follow the interview protocol prescribed by Seidman (2013). I offered to give Lawrence a copy of the narrative I composed from our interviews or to simply read it to him. He asked for me to read it, so we sat together for over an hour going through his story, the meaning units, and the themes page by page. Periodically, I would pause and ask for verification or edits.

Logistically, the interviews were challenging. Lawrence and I scheduled both interviews to take place during the afternoon and evening prior to one of his court dates. My own limited knowledge of the legal system combined with his lack of clarity regarding his trial date and the process created an urgency in both of us to wrap up the interview in case his hearing resulted in him going back to jail. I interviewed him for 40 minutes, with approximately 10 minutes dedicated to the consent form (see Appendix C), and then he went to work. After work, he returned, and our second interview lasted 60 minutes. Both interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix D), and an Olympus audio device was used to record. The device was left on for the entirety of both interviews as Lawrence never requested that I turn it off. I transcribed the first two minutes on my own to get a feel for the process and then paid for a transcription service to complete the job.

Data Analysis

As Giorgi (1997) and van Manen (2017b) recommended, I read and listened to the transcripts many times before searching for units of meaning. I took time to ponder the data and understand the story as best as I could from Lawrence's perspective. I silenced the nagging in my brain to fact check and question the credibility of the story, and I listened until I could hear Lawrence, and Lawrence alone, recount his story. Then I followed Giorgi's prescribed method of notating each time Lawrence switched to a new meaning unit. I wrote these units in his original language. Then I printed the transcripts, cut them up, and arranged them in a way that was consistent with educational research. I labeled each common meaning unit with a theme in discipline appropriate language. Table 4 summarizes my findings.

A few days after my third and final planned meeting with Lawrence, we had another chance encounter. I discussed my paper with him, and my intention to interview other men as

part of my dissertation. He smiled. After a moment of silence he told me, “I’m a free man, but I’m not free.” Lawrence was still awaiting adjudication a year after my pilot study.

Table 4: *Meaning Units (Pilot Study)*

Relationships	Discipline Encounters	The Gap Year	Reflections
“…he just popped, popped up out of nowhere”	“Oh snap!”	“Think it Harris, Harris, Harris*”	“I wish, I wish I would have…”
Family: Mom: Confusing Brother: Disappointing Dad: Peripheral	School Level: Deans	Job #1: Produce	Moments of Confusion
School Staff: Teachers: The Good, the Bad, and The Ugly Administrators: “trouble just comes”	Law Enforcement: Police	Job #2: Bakery	Moments of Clarity
Friendships: Elementary: Innocent Secondary: Toxic	Legal System: Court	“You’re Fired!”	Moments of Emotion
		*pseudonym	Moments of Regret

Researcher Bias

I would be remiss if I did not disclose the bias that I bring to this research. According to Peshkin (1988), researchers—both qualitative and quantitative—must frequently and systematically examine the lens through which they view their work. As a White middle-class woman who is the fourth generation of women in my family to be college educated, I enter society with a great deal of privilege. I have spent the past thirteen years attempting to dissect my own power, privilege, and bias, but I know that I still bring dysconscious bias to my research. I conducted Lawrence's interviews as consciously as possible, pausing before each unscripted

question to identify any hidden bias I might have brought to consciousness. For the past three summers, I have led teachers through diversity training as part of a preservice teacher program. My experience in those trainings has led me to believe that we can continually become more conscious of our bias, but that we are ever completely free from it.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of men on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline. Black men are expelled from public schools at an alarming rate as compared to their White male counterparts, and the American prison system is filled with a high population of Black men, many of whom lack education. The phenomenon costs American taxpayers large sums of money each yea,r and more importantly, shuffling our youth out of schools into prisons prevents society from thriving. The pipeline from school desk to prison cell is well documented in academic research, but few studies give voice to the men who are impacted.

Interview Data

Finding participants for the study turned into a year-long search. Before I received IRB approval in June of 2018, a community leader and central Florida high school administrator had promised to help connect me to participants, but when it came time to actually begin the study, excuses were made. The community leader expressed that he did not know anyone who currently fit the profile for my study, and the school administrator expressed that he felt a hesitation to ask students if they wanted to participate in the study as he was working to build trust and rapport. Thus began a 12 month long quest for participants. My committee and my IRB required that I find participants through a third party-for my safety and the participants—so I started sending emails and making phone calls. I emailed school officials—deans and assistant principals—and district personnel in charge of county wide discipline programs and alternative schools throughout counties in central Florida. I contacted community advocates, local pastors, and other religious leaders. I shared about my research as often as possible and contacted every lead that

was given from willing audience members, friends, and local business leaders. I pursued out of state contacts that promised participants, even going so far as to buy a plane ticket to have a face-to-face meeting. The contact promised to have participants for me "next week" and promptly ignored all further communication—the in person meeting never took place. I reached out to city leaders, law enforcement officers, and employees at a juvenile detention center. Their responses varied—some ignored multiple emails and phone calls, some were willing to help but then were told by their superiors that it would be a breach of trust even to ask young men if they would like to participate in my study, and some were willing to help but did not know anyone who fit my description.

My committee chair was kept abreast of my attempts, and about sixth months into the process we began to discuss the option of changing my study. I was convinced that there were men whose stories needed to be told. Eight months after IRB approval, I was given contact information for the principal of a school in small rural city in central Florida. She was interested in my study and agreed to meet me face to face. I was greeted by a warm Black woman who took an hour of her busy work day to meet with me. At the end of our meeting, she told me she believed in the work I was doing and would help me find participants. She followed up from that meeting with several contacts, and I was invited to an HBCU college fair to meet them. Her contacts and I exchanged business cards, dozens of texts, and one more face-to-face meeting. Three months later, nearly eleven months after IRB approval, I sat down with my first three participants.

The participants were part of an alternate school program in central Florida. The morning of our scheduled interview, I waited for my contact to assure me that the three men had shown up at the location we had agreed upon for our meeting. All of the interviews took place in a

private office inside of a building filled with other people, including my contact. For privacy sake, the door was closed during the interviews but the blinds were open on the windows. I did all three of the first interviews back to back, one on one, with each participant. On that same day, I also started the second interview with one of my participants. When the participants were not in the office with me, they were working on a computer under the supervision of my contact. At the conclusion of the interviews, all of the participants promised to return two days later for follow-up interviews.

When the morning of our next scheduled interviews arrived, my contact let me know that none of the men had shown up at our designated location. Using my contact as a liaison, we agreed upon a new meeting date, and this time all three participants arrived at the designated place in the designated time. I conducted the second round of interviews as I had the first. Each participant came into the office with me one at a time and participated in the second interview. Given all of the scheduling issues and the lack of a consensus of when they would be able to return a third time, I took a short break after the second interviews and launched straight into the third interviews. Each participant had a least an hour and half break in between interviews. During this time, they worked on computers with my contact.

After this round of interviews, I began to cycle through all of my potential contacts again—sending emails, texts, and phone calls to the people I had contacted nearly a year prior. In June, the friendly principal reached out again to check on the status of my study. She encouraged me to cycle back to a contact she had given me previously. After several missed calls, the contact answered her phone and agreed to meet with me. We had a face-to-face meeting and she introduced me to teachers who would be running a summer program for her at an alternate high school in a small rural city in central Florida. The teachers told me that they knew of students

who would be good candidates for my study, and they promised to reach out to the young men and contact me. I left my cell number, and within 24 hours two teachers had contacted me with willing participants. The following day, I met with my fourth participant. The teacher introduced us, and the interview took place in a conference room in a building occupied by summer school students. The door was left partially ajar to ensure privacy and safety. After our first interview, we took a short break and launched straight into the second interview. He promised to return in two days for a third interview, but knowing that he had a judicial hearing scheduled between the second and third interview made us both skeptical if we would see each other again. I listened to the tapes carefully and prepped for our third interview, hoping he would be able to attend. Thankfully, my contact reached out to me on the morning of the planned third interview, and he was there. We met in the same space as we had for the first two.

Immediately following my third interview with the fourth participant, I drove to a second location to meet with the other teacher contact and my fifth participant. As before, I met the teacher first, and she introduced me to the participant. We conducted our first two interviews in a private office in a building occupied by summer school students. The door was closed for privacy, but all the blinds on the windows were open. We took a short break in-between the first and second interviews. Prior to conducting the third interview, I listened to the audio files and took notes of necessary follow-up questions.

Before the first interview began with any participant, we read the consent form (Appendix A) together and I answered any questions that were presented. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded the men that they could opt out without consequence at any moment, and I asked them to refrain from discussing any circumstance that had yet to be adjudicated. All fifteen interviews were recorded with an Olympus audio device, and I assured the men prior to

turning it on that we could turn it off at any moment. The audio files were professionally transcribed. The first nine interviews were transcribed by a private transcriptionist who signed a confidentiality agreement. The final six interviews were transcribed by a service that has a confidentiality agreement embedded in their policy. I established report with the participants by dressing professionally, being introduced to them by my contacts, and sharing a few tidbits of information about myself and my research throughout the interview process. During the interviews I assumed a listening position with open body language and limited the notes I took. I told them that my research would be published, but their names as well as specific locations would be given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Additionally, I told them that if we should ever run into one another in a public location, I would act as though we never met unless they wanted to approach me and say hello. The interviews were semi-structured but followed the protocol described in Appendix B. One participant asked to look at a copy of the questions while I interviewed him. At the conclusion of the third interview, all of the participants were given a handwritten thank-you note, along with a $25 gift card to Walmart and a bag of candy. The specific logistics of each interview are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: *Interview Logistics*

Date	Pseudonym	Age	Interview #	Start Time	Time Stamp	Location
5/16/19	Oliver Brown	18	1	9:22am	40:30	Alternate School
5/16/19	Terrance Roberts	18	1	10:10am	20:23	Alternate School
5/16/19	Oliver Brown	18	2a	10:32am	25:24	Alternate School
5/16/19	Ernest Green	19	1	11:06am	38:09	Alternate School
5/21/19	Terrance Roberts	18	2	8:04am	31:48	Alternate School
5/21/19	Oliver Brown	18	2b	8:39am	24:00	Alternate School
5/21/19	Ernest Green	19	2	9:04am	55:33	Alternate School
5/21/19	Terrance Roberts	18	3	10:01am	5:23	Alternate School
5/21/19	Oliver Brown	18	3	10:09am	15:29	Alternate School
5/21/19	Ernest Green	19	3	10:28am	15:59	Alternate School
7/17/19	Abon Bridges	18	1	9:21am	25:25	Summer School #1
7/17/19	Abon Bridges	18	2	9:47am	29:39	Summer School #1
7/19/19	Abon Bridges	18	3	9:11am	22:32	Summer School #1
7/19/19	Jefferson Thomas	18	1	11:59am	18:49	Summer School #2
7/19/19	Jefferson Thomas	18	2	12:19pm	35:56	Summer School #2
7/22/19	Jefferson Thomas	18	3a	9:20am	3:19	Summer School #2
7/22/19	Jefferson Thomas	18	3b	9:26am	25:36	Summer School #2

Description of Participants

Oliver Brown

Oliver Brown (pseudonym) was the first to volunteer to participate in my study and was thrilled to take time away from his classwork and tell me his story. When I first met him, he gave me a firm handshake and sat comfortably in a chair, leaning forward, eager to share his story with me. He had turned eighteen a few weeks prior to our first interview. Football is his first love. After the warm up questions about his family, he wanted to talk about football and kept

bringing the conversation back to it over and over again. He often cross referenced his stories with evidence I could check—video surveillance footage, phone records, names, and dates. Trust and rapport was established quickly, and Oliver shared his story in a circular fashion—I had to ask many follow up questions to get a sense of the progression of his experiences in education. In elementary school, he bounced back and forth between schools in the midwest and central Florida. He had to repeat second and third grade as a result of the transition. He finished elementary school at an alternate education location that students typically attend in order to catch up on coursework. His first school wide discipline issue was in third grade when he helped himself and his classmates to candy that the teacher had left on her desk during her absence. A friend turned him in as the instigator, and he was given his first out of school suspension. In the second half of the second interview Oliver told me that he had not been in trouble with the police except for one incident in 8th grade where a girl had accused of him of misconduct. The police interviewed him, and in the end charges were not filed. I circled back to the question about his involvement with police many times; prior to the interview he knew the criteria for participants was that they had been asked to leave a school and were currently in trouble with the law. I am not sure if he was unwilling to share his trouble with the law or if there had simply been a miscommunication about the requirements for participants. However, since he has been asked to leave multiple schools, and is an 18 year old still working on completing tenth grade, his data is still valuable to this study.

Terrance Roberts

Terrance Roberts (pseudonym) spoke with a deep, bass voice and carried himself like a gangly teenager. Our interviews were short and to the point, and we began with him stating that he wasn’t sure if he wanted to participate. As the interviews progressed, he grew much more

comfortable with me, but he spoke softly staring into the water bottle that he twisted in his hands. Once the interview began, he talked easily, and we chuckled together over some of his escapades. Terrance was the only participant who told me he couldn't think of anything he was proud of in his entire education. When asked who could have supported him, he said, "My father…could have stepped up to the plate and been a father like he was supposed to be." He spoke very matter of factly and expressed many times that he had been told things but now he knew them. Specifically, he told me of situation in which he ran from the police after being pulled over in a vehicle he later learned was stolen. He told me, "When I was running from the police, I knew, I knew, like, the shooting and stuff was going on with the Black kids, but I wasn't thinking about that. I was just thinking about trying to get away." He was very introspective and thoughtful about each response.

Ernest Green

Ernest Green (pseudonym) was on the cusp of high school graduation when I met him. He was not originally slated to be a participant but was present at the location of my first interviews. When he heard about my study, he expressed interest in participating, and we sat down for an unscheduled first interview after I interviewed Oliver and Terrance. Ernest was eager to share his story with me, and the end of our second interview left a lifelong impression on me. I asked if he had anything else he wanted to share with me relating to school discipline and his encounters with the law and he said, "How much time do you have?" He was bullied throughout elementary school and shared that he was proud of making it to high school graduation—one week after our third interview he was expected to graduate from an alternate school. The bullying made him want to drop out of school and at one point he had even contemplated suicide. Ernest had been expelled from school for a series of unfortunate events

that crescendoed with three felony counts for playing with a fire extinguisher. He was not currently awaiting adjudication for a crime but had just recently come off of probation. Throughout the interviews, Ernest's demeanor was that of a boy stepping into manhood; he told his stories with a steady voice and a calmness as though he was talking about someone outside of himself. He did not mince words or make excuses, and he occasionally laughed at the mistakes he has made along the way.

Abon Bridges

Abon Bridges (pseudonym) was confident and sat with both hands folded in front of him on a conference room table during our interviews. He spoke candidly and was eager to share his stories, but unlike with Ernest and Oliver, I had to ask the right questions to get the information he wanted to share. He had grown up in new England and felt the students in central Florida did not appreciate what they have been given. He had a positive relationship with his father and grandfather and was currently enrolled in an alternative high school; he spoke of attending college many times throughout our interviews. He was the smallest in stature of the five men I interviewed and displayed a level of deep maturity. Throughout our first interview he spoke very highly of his girlfriend-a young woman who I later learned had accused him of domestic violence. Unlike the other participants, his education experience was not marked with exclusionary discipline. He was asked to leave a school due to the number of classes he skipped and was arrested for trespassing when he came back to school and was caught in a foggy car with his girlfriend. He was keenly aware of his position as a Black man in the world of "me-too" and racial unrest.

Jefferson Thomas

Jefferson Thomas (pseudonym) was tall and animated in his story telling. He stood up several times, mid-interview, to act out a story he was telling me. He was the youngest brother of six sisters and a one brother, but one of his sisters died when he was young. Many of the older siblings played an important paternal and maternal role in his life. One of his sisters "could have went to Harvard. That's a long story. We ain't going to even get into that…," and his older brother is a doctor who lives out of state. His first memory of school was earlier than any of the others—he recounted crying on his first day of kindergarten when his twin sister and mom dropped him off and left. He had not expected that his sister would not be with him in class that day. His encounters with the law included an acquittal for grand theft auto, harming a teacher, and smoking a blunt. He was hoping to catch up on his work during the summer and be able to re-enter a public high school to play football in the fall.

Additional Limitations

Despite my preparation and vetting of the interview questions as well as my own personal work to examine my explicit and implicit bias, there were still moments in the interviews where my limitations as a White woman revealed itself. Two specific examples were highlighted in my review of the data. First, there were many moments in which I wanted the interview to progress linearly, and the men wanted to tell me their stories as disjointed narratives. In order to allow them to tell their stories, I listened to the non-linear version numerous times between interviews and created a validity check but recapped the narrative in a linear manner, making sure I understood each step. The second moment my bias was revealed was in my second interview with Jefferson.

Jefferson: It was out of school suspension.

> **Beth**: What did you do? Wait. Let me retract the question. Tell me not what did you do because that's unfair. That's me assuming something. Tell me what happened. How come you got a suspension? Why did they think that you deserved that?

I noticed my bias and quickly addressed my assumption that Jefferson had done something wrong. Jefferson brushed it off, but I had broken my promise to him to listen openly to his story.

The other unexpected limitation in this study was the transcriptionist's inability to transcribe Black Standard Vernacular. Both services I employed made mistakes in the transcripts; the men spoke in heavy Black Standard Vernacular throughout the interviews, and several words and verbal utterances were transcribed incorrectly.

Finally, I was surprised to learn that I knew many of the characters mentioned in the men's stories. True to my promise, I will never mention my participants to the characters and I did not let the participants know of my connections, but the world is truly smaller than one can imagine. As I listened to each man, I found that I was often personally connected to many of the people, places, and events we discussed.

Data Analysis

I listened to each interview over and over until I could listen without hearing new information. Additionally, I printed the transcribed interviews on copy paper and read them innumerable times—sometimes with the audio recordings and sometimes in silence. This process took many months of listening and reading morning and night. Once I was able to listen and read without hearing new information, I coded the interviews using meaning units I had deciphered from the months of immersing myself in the stories (see Table 6). According to the phenomenological method, the meaning units should be in the participants' language.

Table 6: *Meaning Units*

football	island
mom (maternal interaction)	wrong crowd
dad (paternal interaction)	administration (dean and principal)
lawyer OR public pretender	police
school: student and teachers and building	White/Black
skip	fight
discipline (ISS, OSS, jail, booking)	family or community in prison
"I…" (self perception)	probation

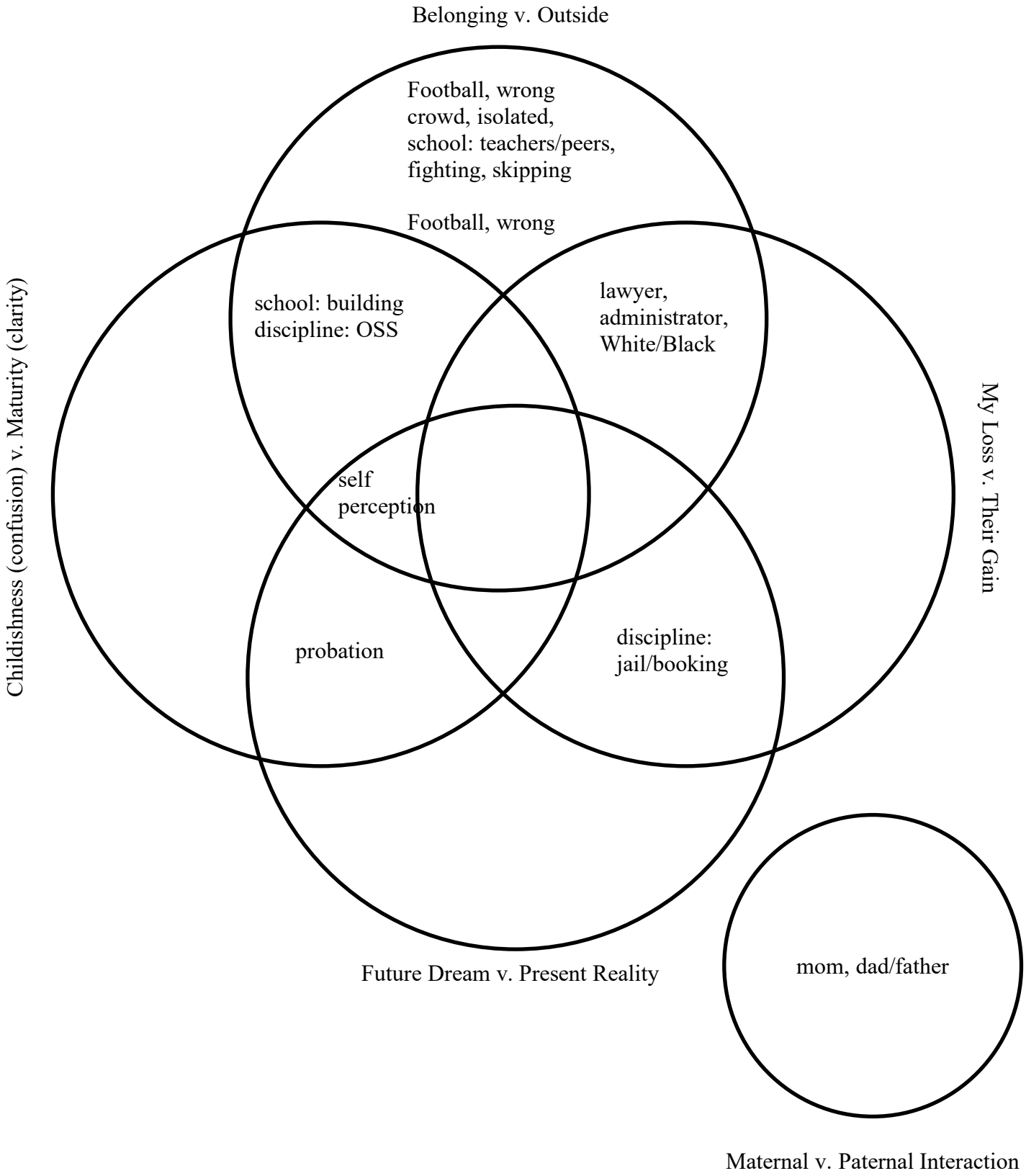
Then, I cut the transcripts according to the codes and hung them on posters labeled with each meaning unit. I spent weeks pouring over the posters to identify themes that emerged from the meaning units (see Table 7). According to Creswell (2013) the themes should explain the what and how of the participants' experiences of the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon. As a solo White woman researcher, I took care to eradicate White bias and privilege from my themes, but I acknowledge that there is still a possibility of implicit bias tainting my research.

The themes are seen in all of the meaning units, but Figure 1 explains the interaction between the most common themes in each meaning unit.

Table 7: *Themes*

Belonging v. Outside
Childishness (Confusion) v. Maturity (Clarity)
Maternal v. Paternal Interactions
My Loss v. Their Gain
Future Dreams v. Present Reality

Figure 1: *Interaction of Meaning Units and Themes*



Results

In response to my question, "So describe life right now…what's it like to be you?" Ernest stated, "Confusing….I really don't know what to do…I don't know what to say…" His comment summarized the experience described by all five men. They are navigating life in a world of dichotomies. A colleague challenged me with the notion that perhaps, dichotomies is a White-washed word and the better term is duality— W.E.B. DuBois describes this as a "'double-consciousness' felt by African Americans" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50):

> the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-site in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others…one ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body (DuBois, 2007, p. 8).

The school-to-prison pipeline has in some ways created the modern version of a double-consciousness. The young men expressed, in their own ways, the feeling of being "othered"—a modern way of expressing W.E.B. DuBois words (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50; Valles & Miller, 2010, p. 332). The act of othering can lead to deficit thinking, a state of mind where faculty and administration are waiting for a student to misbehave. This othering can lead to the creation of school discipline policies that target behaviors specific to one race, which can lead to the disproportionate amount of referrals and suspensions in such a school and create a negative socialization that prepares Black students for a lifetime of institutionalized punishment (Valles & Miller, 2010). The young men I spoke to, boys on the cusp of manhood carrying the weight of years of being othered by the systems that should protect them, described life in the duality.

Belonging v. Outside

Throughout each interview the men communicated a strong notion of belonging to something outside of themselves contrasted with feeling like an outsider in a world they were eager to join. This interaction causes joy when part of the group but leads to skipping and fighting in order to defend their honor and maintain status in the communities from which they have been excluded.

Jefferson and Oliver expressed the notion of belonging each time they discussed football. Oliver's stepdad told him, "You're a big town football player. You can't be getting in trouble." The men also felt belonging in classrooms where teachers cared for them. According to Abon, "There's teachers that care about us, and there's some teachers that's just there for a paycheck." I asked how he knew if a teacher cared. Abon responded, "The way they treat kids. If an issue breaks out, you can tell by their actions and how they value kids." In our second interview, Abon elaborated, "A teacher that care was my 11th grade year…they mostly cared about me. Individual-wise, they always told me what to do in a good way and as a good view, always talking about my future. Those are the only two teachers that actually wanted to sit down and talk about what I really wanted in life."

In addition to teachers, there are examples where administration made the men feel like they belonged on the school campus. Terrance described the relationship with an administrator at his school: "Yeah. He'd smile…he'll always talk to me…he even try to pull me up…he could tell when I'm having a bad day. That's like when I won't go to class. He'll look at me…then he'll call the class and be like, 'I need Mr. Roberts, come to the office.'"

Most of the second interview was spent discussing the progression of discipline from ISS to OSS to expulsion and eventually jail or probation. Instead of telling their stories linearly, the

men told beautifully woven tales from one event to the next. When they recounted the discipline encounters at the school level, the rationale is themed under the belonging v. outside theme, but the description of the event is in the childishness v. maturity theme.

Belonging is in direct contrast to feeling outside. Oliver recounted a teacher's response to his behavior in elementary school: "Well, I did give her a hard time, too. And she'd start talking to me, putting me…on the island." The island, as Oliver, Terrance, Ernest, and Abon explained was an isolated desk or space in the classroom—one to which they were sent if they were talking or disrupting the class. Oliver said, "It was all right because something happened over here (pointing to a distance), she can't blame you…I felt safe…we'll have this right here (pointing to a distance), I sit right here (pointing to his seat)." When Oliver was on the island, he could not be falsely accused.

In middle school and high school the feeling of being outside shifted from a specific location to a metaphorical feeling that many described in terms of their relationship to football. When they were playing, they felt like life was great, but when they were asked not to return to school at any point during the spring—Oliver for poor grades at one school and an accusation of battery at another, Abon for trespassing after skipping too much school, and Terrance for falling behind in his studies—the world was unfamiliar and cold. The thing that gave them identity and belonging in school was taken away and they were forced outside the community. Regarding the first time Oliver had to leave a team, he said "Grades dropped. Couldn't play. Couldn't practice." The second time Oliver left a team he explained it this way, "I put on Twitter. "Why everybody at practice but me?" So he (a friend) called me." According to Oliver, the friend said, "'He did you wrong…imagine how he gonna do us.' Like, yeah, you right" Jefferson said, "I don't know. I kept feeling the pressure of not playing football."

Often the feeling of being outside lead to fights usually in order to defend the respect and honor that was deserved. Terrance explained fights like this: "…say that you and this boy arguing, that you and this girl arguing…people start rumors and stuff…they'll try to boost everything up, make it into a fight…And then, hey'll call you, soft or weak…Trying to make you fight…they really did that just to, they really just want to see some people fight, basically." Terrance had gotten into a fight during the previous school year as a way of defending his name, his honor:

> So, I got this girl staring at me and she know I didn't like her. So I like, what you looking at? She said something slick. I'm like, you can't even me be talking, that's why egg me. And then she, like, she called her boyfriend. And then she made this big old scene in class, started crying, trying to pick up a table and hit me. So, like, it was like right between lunch. So, everybody outside…Everybody be in front of his class when the bell ring, because it's time to go to lunch. So he probably standing out there. So, she had called her boyfriend or whatever and she got in my face, touching me like this.

Terrence's cousin became involved in the fight to help defend him. In the end, Terrance was taken to a room to cool down, but he took off his clothes in protest.

Ernest also got into fights to defend his honor and his status of belonging. One fight occurred in his neighborhood. He explained, "We had a little altercation and then my brother stepped in and then his older brother stepped in and then his older brother was trying to fight me." In first grade, he encountered a boy who bullied him while using the restroom that connected two classrooms. He described the fight:

> I'm not trying to talk to him. I'm just trying to use the bathroom, I said. So, uh, then he started hitting me, so I was, like, "Oh, no, no. This is"- "No. That's not okay," so then we

> started... I started fighting back and…we had a little tussle. And then the teachers didn't hear none of it..they didn't hear none of the slapping, anything until the last second whenever I... clearly came in the upper hand in the fight. That's whenever the teachers came in, so I got mad at that because I was, like, now... it's a problem whenever you see me fighting…So, um, my teacher came and pulled me back into the class, but before I got...to class, I broke loose and then I ran over to him and I jammed his face into the corner of the... the door frame and years later I saw him again and... he had this-... scar where I jammed his face and and so I was, like... I was, like, "Ah, bet you he ain't fooling nobody with nothing."

Ernest's feeling of being outside led to his action of defending his reputation, but he was caught and received OSS.

Jefferson got into a fight in middle school that almost sent him to jail. A gang member attacked him and he defended himself:

> It was one of they homeboys. He just kept talking or something. He told the teacher he was whistling, and the teacher is saying, "Who's whistling and junk?" I said, "He whistling, and he need to stop that." He started cussing me out. I'm like, No, I ain't trying to hear that, man. Just stop whistling. We in class." He kept whistling.Then we get out of class. He called me a snitch. I'm like, "All right. Whatever." I don't really care about that. When we was going for lunch, I guess he told his other homeboy. This kid keep stepping on the back of my shoes. He just keep stepping. I look back, it's a Mexican…I'm like, "Dang, I just got into it with one of them in class." He kept stepping on the back of my shoe. I'm like, "Dang, you got a problem?" He looks at me, and he walking with his girl. I said, "All right." I kept walking, did it again. I don't know. I turned around, and I pushed

> him. After that we started fighting, and I broke my hand. I tried to pull it out of place though. [laughs] It didn't work.

Jefferson, like Ernest and Terrance received OSS for the altercation.

Oliver's fighting incident resulted in much more serious consequences. He was asked not to attend the school as a result of his fight. A student threatened to slap him in retaliation for an offense that Oliver did not commit:

> I told the kid…I didn't slap him. He a new kid, so I was like, I didn't slap people. But I said, "If you slap me, I'm going to fight you today." So I'm sitting, like, right here. And he's sitting, like, right there... So I put my head down…we was arguing for about 25 minutes…so I put my head down, listened to my music. And I just, "Boom." I had, like, I had a fresh cut, and he slapped me…And everybody like, "Why would you do that?" And they was videotaping it. I jumped over the seat, and he, like, balled up. I just about to hit him, and the coach stopped me, and I said, "We fixing to fight again." I said, "You shouldn't have slapped me. This not over with."…So we get to the next stop. I fought him again. Then we got stopped, because the boy's grandma, like, auntie, was like, "I'm gonna call the police."

Oliver wanted to defend his honor, and when he was attacked and placed outside, he retaliated. The result was an expulsion from the school.

In addition to fighting, Ernest would skip class as a means of coping with the feeling of being on the outside of the group. The first instance of skipping, or as Abon referred to it "bunking," that he related began in middle school: "I kept skipping class because I didn't like my reading teacher. I didn't really like the class…as a whole, because I used to get picked on because I wasn't in the best financial, um, setting." The skipping continued into high school:

> I used to just get up and walk out of class, and they always just give me referrals for that. Um, in my freshman year I kind of stopped caring because…I was still getting picked on. So I was like, "I'm done. I'm done with school. I- I aint even caring no more." And then so I just started doing whatever I wanted to do and that costed me like 20 something, or almost 30 something referrals.

I asked Abon if he skipped classes and he said,

> Yeah, a lot of times when I was in ninth grade. I cut a lot of classes…I was moved down here, so I never really get with anyone. Not because I couldn't, because I didn't want to, because of my attitude. I feel like no one could really understand my attitude…I had a horrible attitude, I feel like...they saying I have an attitude, but I feel like it's just my voice. I don't know. So, I didn't really try to talk to people because they always think I have to give them attitude. It's just the way I speak.

Skipping became a pattern for Abon, so much so that he was eventually asked to leave the school. When I pried about the reason for skipping, he said, “Sometimes if there's too many kids in the class and there'd be nowhere to sit, so there's no point. I'm not sitting on no floor, I'm not standing, so I just might as well go to the steps, sit down until my class is done or not go to school at all.” Oliver tried to skip class, but the punishment from his football coach was so severe that he did not repeat that offense. Oliver said, “I was like, ‘Coach, I will never skip again. I can't do it.’” Jefferson skipped school, off campus, “nowhere I was supposed to have been” because he couldn’t play football. He missed a significant amount of school, “If I'm not mistaken, I missed a whole semester probably…Yeah or half a semester, one of those. I was skipping. It ate me up, not playing ball. It was about real easy to stop going to school.”

Ernest's desire to belong lead to an incident that resulted in three felony counts. He was often willing to fulfill the requests of students who encouraged daring behavior:

> ... if you had dared me to do something, I would automatically do it. And like, but you didn't have to say, 'I dare you to,' it was just a natural thing for me. Like, if you said, 'I bet you won't do this,' I'd have to do whatever you said I wouldn't do there…so he dared me to, um, to go... to pull the fire extinguisher off the wall, and come back to class with it. And I was like, 'All right, bet. I'm gonna do that.' So then, I asked the teacher if I could go use the bathroom. She says yes. So I got there, and I opened the case for the fire extinguisher, and I'm like, 'Dang. It all comes down to this. Do I really wanna bring this back to class?' I was like, 'Nah.' So I just pulled the pin out, and then I walked back to class. And I was like, 'Here's the pin for the fire extinguisher.' He's like, 'Nah. I want you to bring the whole fire extinguisher.' So I was like, 'All right, bet.' I was like, 'Yo, Miss XX. Can I go... can I go back to my other classroom? I think I left my glasses there.' She said, 'Yeah, sure, go ahead.' So I go back. I go back out, and I... this time I grab the whole fire extinguisher. And I'm walking back to class. And um, and I'm, I'm at the classroom window. And I hold it in front of the window so that everyone can see it. And then I point to the... to the guy that told me that I wouldn't do it. And he looks at me, and then he, he's like, he started laughing…So then, I started walking back to where the case was, because I was about to put it in the um, put it back. But then… I saw my other friend turn the corner. So I was like, I was like, 'Hey, yo. XX!' And he looked at me, and I started chasing him with the fire extinguisher, and he ran back to class, knocked on the door, and went back in. And he told them he doesn't need to use the bathroom any more.

Ernest, the victim of many bullies, a kid who always felt "different" was willing to accept any dare to fit into the group.

The sense of belonging encouraged the men, while the sense of being outside sent them into bouts of depression. This lead to skipping class as a means to avoid boring and embarrassing moments. Additionally, the passive exclusion from the community lead to fighting as a means of expressing their refusal to be disrespected and pushed aside.

Childishness (Confusion) v. Maturity (Clarity)

The experience of these five men is marked by childish decisions and behavior typical of children coupled with adult like consequences. As young as second grade, they were told that they could go to jail for their behavior. They were all asked to repeat grades, they have all served countless days in ISS and OSS, and all except Oliver had been in trouble with the law. Terrance, Jefferson, Abon, and Ernest have spent time on probation and experienced the feeling of booking and courtrooms and short moments in jail. Abon was the only one who was currently awaiting adjudication.

Jefferson recounted an instance from second grade when he had entered school on the weekend following a neighborhood paintball fight, and spewed paint balls across the floor. The police threatened to take him to jail. I asked him to remember his feeling in that moment, and he said,

> Dang. I didn't know I did that bad. I didn't know it was that bad (laughs). I thought, it was just nothing really. It was just something because I brung paintballs in, but they cleaned it up. I'm thinking, 'Hey, we're just going to clean it up.' No he's saying, "you vandalized the school."

Later in the interview process, I asked him to reflect back on that experience and give advice to that little boy:

> (laughing) I'm the same little boy. I'm going to say that right now. I'm the same little boy. I haven't changed….it really wasn't that bad. (laughs) It's not that bad to me…I'd be like, 'What's wrong with you? Just chill out. Just chill out.' I'd say that, and that's what I have to say my whole life, 'Just chill out.' I've never ever been so bad, but I got to the point where I said I got to chill.

Jefferson has been on and off probation since sixth grade.

Ernest also recounted moments from his childhood when he had encountered the police. "I used to get in trouble when I was a kid. I forgot how old I was. I don't think I was a teenager…I was acting bad just for the fun of it. And next thing you know, we're walking down the street. I forgot what we did, but…we hear the siren, and then the cop stops beside us." The cops took him home and "tells me, don't do it again."

Ernest continued his story of the fire extinguisher, by explaining what went through his mind when he was left alone with no one watching or daring him any longer:

> So at that point, I was like, you know what,... I have to use the fire extinguisher. I don't know why, but I always loved fire extinguishers. So I used the fire extinguisher in the bathroom. And... uh, what was going on through my mind? ... I don't know. I saw all the powder there. And then, at first I wanted to go running through all the powder in the bathroom... and I was like, I was like, 'Nah. You're not... I'm not doing that thing. I might get in trouble for that.' So I ran back-

Ernest was an adolescent engaging in adolescent behavior without knowledge of the severity of the consequences. He was merely trying to appease a dare, a normal behavior for a teenager, and

like a child, he had no notion that he was committing a felony. Now, he can reflect back on the moment and realize the trouble that could come from expelling the fire extinguisher, but he had no way of knowing that the consequence would be three felony counts. When I asked what the three counts were, he stated, “So, I mean, I forgot what the other two charges were exactly, but that, that one stuck with me, because I, I was assuming they were, like, how, how is that grand theft of fire extinguisher?” He was penalized for a childish crime he committed as a child.

Jefferson’s world ended when he had to leave the school where he was a football star. His grades kept him off the team when spring ball was started:

> I wish last year I would have had this mindset [just chill out], but then again this probably wasn't meant to me. I don't know. I really don't understand because I felt like I was in a hole and I was trying to get up, but I couldn't. I was stuck. I was trying to get up every day and do stuff that's going to benefit. I don't know how I felt…. I could have played in spring. Yeah because I found out I couldn't play, so I was like, ‘Dang.’ That really hurted me…. I was like, ‘Dang, this close. Could have got there.’ Then again, I got to get at myself because I knew what I wasn't doing.

When I asked if an adult could have helped him, he replied, “Hmm…no…It ain't nobody else's job to me. I don't feel that way.” Jefferson made child-like decisions as a child and faced adult level losses.

When I asked Terrance to recall the first time he had been in trouble in school, he said, “I don't even remember…I got in trouble so many times from elementary to high school.” When I asked, “What sorts of things would you get in trouble for?” he responded, “Insubordination, um, walking out the classroom ... I was terrible, I ain't even lying. I was terrible. Cussing, cussing teachers out…if I'm in a bad mood and somebody blow me, I'm just going to see

anything…(clears throat) Couldn't control my anger." As a man reflecting back on his experience, he was able to say, "sometimes teachers just be talking, they want you to get in trouble, want you to say something to them." Regarding the first time he had to go see the principal, he said, "I thought it was cool at first, but then I was like, I'm going to get in trouble, this going to be on my school records…I didn't think about that." He said around middle school he learned that his referrals would be on a school record, but "not elementary because little kids don't really know nothing about that in elementary." As a child, he committed childlike offenses, none even memorable enough to repeat, but as an adult he knew insubordination and the consequences, "It's like you doing something and the teacher's telling you to stop, and you just constantly doing it over and over and over and they just keep telling you to stop and you keep going on and on… say you teaching and I'm talking to my friend and you telling me to stop talking and I'm steady talking. I just keep talking. They just get tired of it because people start turning…You got your referral." Little boy actions lead to big consequences and Terrance spoke matter of factly.

At one point, in high school, Terrance found himself in a situation where he was in a car that was being followed by police sirens. During the ordeal he realized that the police believed the car was stolen, so when the driver stopped the vehicle, he got out and ran into the woods, away from the police. In the moment, I asked him to reflect on what was going through his mind, he said, "When I got out and ran, all I was thinking about, I hope he don't shoot me." When he evaluated the experience he said the following:

> I ain't no better. Now I know…Like, when I was running from the police, I knew, I knew, like, the shooting and stuff was going on with the black kids, but I wasn't thinking about that. I was just thinking about trying to get away…Uh, I growed up and realized that jail

> ain't for me…I can't sit in jail. Not when all I do is... and I got to see them every day and we shower together.

Terrance was a child, interacting with the world as a child, but he was expected to approach the world with maturity and ownership of a man.

As mentioned in the belonging v. outside theme, the men discussed the events that transpired leading to school level discipline from the childish v. mature theme. There is a constant wrestling between being a child, committing childish offenses and experiencing adult level punishment. Oliver had a mischievous spirit and was always looking for ways to make school less boring. In middle school he served OSS for hustling candy, participating in gambling games between class periods, and bringing a backpack of filled water balloons to school.

Abon did not face exclusionary discipline as much as the other men. He got in trouble one time for not having a pencil in class. The week prior, a student had thrown the pencils out the window and the entire class was punished if they did not have a writing utensil. When I asked if he had been suspended any additional times, he replied, "I got suspended for being rude to a dean, because he was giving me attitude…Yeah. I kept giving him attitude and then being disrespectful…Most of the time I went to the Choice Room. Sometimes if I didn't want to go to class, I would just go to the Choice Room."

Ernest told me he was in trouble once for throwing a chair in class. He was upset by something and threw a chair toward the teacher, but not aiming for her:

> I threw it in her general direction, but I didn't... I wasn't trying to aim at her and I got in trouble for that. Um, another one of my teachers, uh, my first and second period, 'cause I had double block math, she, uh... She used to always kick me out of class. Sometimes it was justified and sometimes it wasn't. I don't remember the scenarios, but I remember the

> majority of the times it was my fault, but she ended up kicking me out of class and I used to always skip ISS…So they used to always be looking for me and then whenever they'd catch me, they'd make sure I went to ISS and then I got suspended.

Ernest battled his emotions throughout his school years, and explained that when he was a child he had trouble controlling himself.

One area that remained confusing for all of the men was the need to repeat a grade level. Oliver repeated second grade and third grade. Ernest repeated eleventh grade. Abon repeated tenth grade. Jefferson repeated eleventh grade, and Terrance was over a semester behind in high school credits due to skipping class but was uncertain if he repeated a grade. Abon explained, "I would go to one of my teacher's classes and then I'd throw my backpack in the corner, or on the desk, or next to the cabinet and then I would just walk out and then keep going. Like I would be smart with it. I would take an old pass and then have a notebook on me and act like I'm going somewhere, but I'm just waiting for my class to be done, so I can go to the class I actually want the next period." Skipping class was commonplace for all the men, beginning in middle school and exaggerating itself in high school. Jefferson summed up the duality of childish v. maturity perfectly. He said when it was time to go to high school, "I was just living. I wasn't ready to grow up. I wasn't." The reality was that Jefferson was a child and he, like the other men, behaved as a child, but experienced adult level punishments.

Maternal v. Paternal

Every man that I interviewed lived with their mom, and she played an integral role in how they viewed the world around them and their circumstances. The relationship with mom varied from incredibly supportive to loving but stressful to navigate. Terrance's relationship with his mom was the most supportive. When I asked him who had his back, he said, "My

mother…She's always been there for me. Right or wrong." Later, in the same interview, Terrance told me the following:

> She's always on me. (chuckle)…Like every morning she would like, she would be going to work, she'd be like, 'Good morning, son. Have a nice day. Love you.' And I won't even be having a nice day, that'd be the crazy part…Like my days, like sometimes I have good days, sometimes I have bad days. Like, she'd pick me up. Like I would go, I'd get my phone, and look at the message, and remember what my mom said and then I'd like try to make my day go better.

Oliver's relationship was slightly more complicated. His mom did not keep up with his grades in the same way his stepdad did, and he even admitted that his GPA went down while living with just mom. She did, however, help him navigate a complicated situation when he was expelled from the private school for allegedly slapping another student. He denies the offense and claims he acted in self defense. He told me, "You know, when I, when I found out I couldn't go [back] to XXX, I just laid on the bed….For like three days that I'm just crying. My mom was like, 'Everything gonna be okay.' I'm like, 'You saying that, but, no, it's not.'" His mom hustled to get paperwork and transcripts to re-enroll him in a public school that would allow him to play football in the fall. In the end, the private school would not turn over the paperwork. Oliver's mom helped enroll him at an alternative location because the administration at the private school never turned over his paperwork.

Abon's mother also helped him navigate difficult situations. When he started skipping classes in high school, she would check in on him as soon as she was alerted that he was absent. He said, "She'd text me and tell me, "Why aren't you in class?" I took a picture of the class she was talking about and said, "I'm in class." I just took it from outside the building." Abon spent

25 days in jail—when he was arrested for the domestic violence charge shortly following the trespassing charge it resulted in a mandatory time period in jail. His mom was distraught. He said, "…it's hard to hear her crying though." I asked why she was crying, and he said, "That I was in jail. She know when I was coming out, so when I got out, I walked to 7-Eleven and I called her from my phone. Then she was all exciting and stuff."

Ernest and Jefferson had a more complicated relationship with their mom. Both of them had tried at some point to move out of their mom's house and in with another family. Jefferson, when asked to tell me more about his mom, said, "She go to work. She got a little funds. She's good. I can say that but I don't know…It's difficult talking to her because we always bump heads." He said that she didn't know how to guide him. Jefferson spent a period of time staying with his "homeboy," but he struggled to get up and go to school in the morning. He explained, "If I ain't home, then that's really what's messing me up when I wasn't home because I was staying away. I ain't got nobody there to tell me to get up. I would try to get up on my own, but it wasn't enough. My mama, she's going to bash me. Oh, my God. I'm telling you." He wanted his mom to go to college and make a better life for herself:

> I tell my mama right now, she need to go to college and be doing something with ya'll life. She need to be trying to push me to get there and try to use me. This life not over with. That's why I say she don't know how to guide because she never pushed everybody to their fullest position, what it could have been. That's how I'm going to say…It's my mama though so I don't know. It's crazy.

Jefferson was reluctant to talk further about his mom.

Ernest also had a complicated relationship with his mom. At one point he had drawn up paperwork for her to sign so he could live with his friend's family. He explained,

> 'cause his stepmom and his dad were saying that since I'm cool with, since they see how their kids react to me, whenever I used to come over there, because I used to be over there, like everyday. Always saying that I would be a good fit for them-So, one thing led to another, she was talking about giving my mom legal papers to, um, give me over to them, but then she's over talking about, 'Oh, none of that's true. Everything that he said is a lie'. So…

I asked, "What did your mom say when you gave her those papers?" and Ernest replied,

> Oh, we didn't give her them. We didn't, she's saying that she printed them out and gave them to her 'cause she was on board but at one point, my mom was like, 'Yeah, sure. I'm on board, too,' but then, when it actually came down to it, when she saw that I was being serious, then she want to tell them that I'm just lying and that they shouldn't believe anything I said,…

His mom was the one he attributed to looking out for him throughout school and helping to navigate him from one school to another as he went through the system.

Just as the relationship with mom varied from supportive and stress-free to loving but stressful, so did the relationship with dad. Two of the men—Abon and Oliver grew up with father figures and two of them—Ernest and Terrance had no relationship with their father. In the middle of the extremes was Jefferson, who had a complicated relationship with his father. Abon lived with his mom and step-dad, but we did not talk much about stepdad during our interviews. His father lives out of state, and while the relationship is complicated, he is supportive of Abon's impending adjudication: "I want to say my dad is fine. I want to say there's no issues, but we did have issues like any other child with their parents. I think we're fine. He's mostly on my lawyer more than me, so he makes sure that everything is correct." The only other time Abon mentioned

his father in the interview was when he recounted a story from fifth grade in which his father had told the teacher to call him if Abon caused any trouble:

> My dad got so tired that when she called he didn't even pick up the phone call no more. He started getting mad at the teacher, and told the teacher to stop calling him, even though he's the one that told the teacher to call him. But she kept doing it. The teacher would call dad for 'anything.'

Oliver was raised by a stepfather whom he referred to as Dad: "I have a step-dad. He's been there for us since we was kids. So he's like a real father figure to us." When Oliver's mom and stepdad split he stayed with his stepdad for a portion of time and did a better job at keeping up with school under his stepdad's roof than under his mom's.

Ernest and Terrance had never met their fathers, and they did not mention the word dad or father in their interviews until I got to probing questions about what adults could have done to help. When asked the question, "Is there anything that adults in your life could have done to help you?" Terrance said, "My father [pause] could have stepped up to the plate and been a father like he was supposed to be…I just feel like a boy, a boy should have his father in his life." When I asked a slightly different version of the same question, "Do you feel like there was any adults that were looking out for you at school?" Terrance stated, "Most definitely…Coach…like, he like, basically a dad. Like he there for you if you need him. If you need anything come to his room, knock on the door, talk to him, he'll talk to you…if your day going bad, go to Coach and he'll make you feel better."

Ernest described the pain of his encounters with bullies throughout school, admitting that at one moment he had even thought he would not continue in school or life: "it's a pretty…dark thing of what I'm proud of… it is kinda sad….when I'm being picked on … I started thinking

about…Suicide? I'm kinda proud that I didn't." When asked, "do you think adults could have stepped in more to help with getting picked on by bullies?" Ernest stated this:

> I was just so mad all the time. I still kinda get mad thinking about it, but uh, I used to always be so mad at the fact that that my dad…and I never really actually saw him except Google Images, uh, seeing his mugshot and hearing stories about him, and how my family doesn't want me being like him…I'm 19 and I still haven't seen him.

Ernest did not have contact or a relationship with anyone from his paternal side.

Jefferson had the most undefined relationship with his dad. He did not mention him in any of the interviews so I asked a probing question at the end of the third interview.

> **Beth**: …I haven't heard you mention a father at all.
>
> **Jefferson**: Oh, my God, no.
>
> **Beth**: Do you have any relationship with your dad?
>
> **Jeffeson**: [laughs] I do, but I probably hit him up once or twice a month. No.
>
> **Beth**: Does he live here in Lakeland?
>
> **Jefferson**: Yeah, he do, but I don't hit him up because I feel like it's his job. He never ever tried to be in my life, so it is what it is. He want me to try to come to him. I don't like that. I really don't like that… He be like, "You don't call me," this and that. I never ever been like I got to call him. I feel like that's on him. Like you said, I'm 18, and it been that way. Then again, I don't really care. I feel like it ain't never affect me because my mom…Then I tell my mom let me live on my own because I know I don't got no dad, and I feel like that'd make me better. Now I try to stay with my mom, but I try to help her figure out what be going on between me and her when I feel a certain type of way. Sometimes she don't understand…

The men who grew up with fathers were appreciative and talked with respect about their dads. The ones who did not seemed to feel anger toward their missing father figure. The relationship with mom was much more complex because in all five instances mom was the primary caregiver.

My Loss (freedom, jail, etc.) v. their Gain

Throughout our interviews, there was a strong sense that every time the men were disciplined (at the school or legal level) another individual was gaining from the resulting consequence. In the younger grades, it was perceived that a teacher would gain relief when they were given OSS or ROYed—a term used to refer to "rest of year" suspension. Terrance told me he had been ROYed before, but he did not know what the term meant. He described the experience:

> (laughs) …it's basically like, you could do anything, like, one mistake, you go on...They don't want you…It's like, about what, about 15 to 30 people already got ROY'd at XXX…I can see it on Snapchat. Like, they'll post it, and like, they upset…you know, they all that social media stuff, and people like to post stuff….For attention I guess. …I got ROY'd... almost every year, but it was like, one or two days left of school.

The teachers gained perceived relief in his absence, and he felt like he had no fighting chance of staying through the end of most years. He summed it up this way, "They don't care. Like, if they sick of you, you gone." Oliver had also been ROYed many times. He said, "Oh, they just referenced I was bad…You know, once you have a lot of suspensions it's tough.'"

Terrance related a story in which a teacher gained from his misbehavior. The men talked about being able to discern teachers who care from teachers who do not, but Terrance's story inferred that the teacher was antagonizing and gaining from his mistake:

> I ain't going to say she didn't like us because I hate using judgmental stuff. I felt like she had it out for me, and one day I was getting up out my chair from the computer. She was sitting down. She got a cast on her leg, and I slide my chair. She was right there or something, and I slide my chair and I don't know if it hit her or what. I walked back to the desk, and I went to sleep. When I woke up, I got the police on my desk. They're telling me I hit my teacher with the chair. I said, 'What?'

This issue combined with a fight during the same era, led to Terrance being kicked out of school and charged with a crime. I asked how he responded and he said, "I couldn't do nothing. I'm a little kid. I'm not a little kid, but I ain't got no say so over a teacher…I was in eighth grade, and she had on a cast. That's what I'm saying, how could you feel that even if I did? I got charged for that. That's crazy." Terrance to this day—four school years later —cannot make sense of that incident.

Once the men grew older, the loss became more pronounced and there was significantly more to gain. There is a keen sense of feeling targeted as the gains become more significant. Abon felt that judges were getting paid to put people in prison:

> It's because they get paid. They get paid a lot of money for putting anyone in jail and have them stay in there….The judges, if they don't...I don't know how to say it, but I was denied ROR previous from the judge and I had to go back. Then he did tell everyone what their charges were and how much the bond was. Some people $10,000, $15,000, $25,000, $100,000. There was a guy in there for a hundred thousand bond. I was like 'Damn, you are not getting out.' The reason how I found out was when I had a $25,000 bond and the judge was like, 'They need to up these bonds, because this is crazy how it's like a low price.' Everyone was like, 'What?' Even the lady that was on the side of the

> screen was like, 'No, the bond is fine. There's no reason to up the price.' Then she just gets to the next person. Yeah, so that's how I know they get paid for throwing people in jail.

To ensure that I had a correct understanding, I asked, "You think the judge gets paid for throwing people in jail?" and Abon, replied, "Mm-hmm. They get paid more money than they do having you released. There's like so many people that go in there for domestic violence and it can be over an argument. Domestic violence is anything." Not only was Abon keenly aware of his gender as he navigated the world, he was also aware of his race—"I mean, it is a White man's world. Everybody know in the highest chair, you barely see a Black man in that chair. A White man always gets his credits even if a Black man has it."

Jefferson related his experience of sitting in court for an incident involving a stolen car. When I asked if he had an adult representative for the car incident, he replied, "A public pretender…" Initially I thought I misheard him, but he corrected me and said "…Pretender. I had one of them." In a later interview I came back to the term, and he explained the phrase:

> **Beth**: You said a public "pretender." Tell me about that..
>
> **Jefferson**: I don't know, because I don't really think he really tried. I don't know.
>
> **Beth**: You feel like he's pretending at his job just to get a paycheck?
>
> **Jefferson**: Yeah, that's why, I don't know. I should have got a lawyer, even. I don't know. It was crazy, though.
>
> **Beth**: Did you come up with that term, or have you heard other people say that?
>
> **Jefferson**: No, I heard it.
>
> **Beth**: Is that a term people would use in your neighborhood maybe? Public pretender?

> **Jefferson**: Yeah. Say if you 18, you can't have one of those. It's going to be worst. You got to get a lawyer.
>
> **Beth**: Tell me about that. Because you're an adult?
>
> **Jefferson**: Yeah. You can't go trying to fight no charges with one of them.
>
> **Beth**: Because the public pretender won't take care of you?
>
> **Jefferson**: Uh-uh.
>
> **Beth**: You'll get charged?
>
> **Jefferson**: Mm-hmm.
>
> **Beth**: Do you wish that you had gotten a lawyer?
>
> **Jefferson**: I don't know. I was a juvenile, so I was like, "It is what it is." I knew I wasn't going to go to jail. I knew that it was going to be on my record, but then again it was something I learned for myself. You can judge, but I don't know.

Abon and Jefferson felt as though their loss—of time, of reputation, of freedom—was the financial gain of the adults who were supposed to be helping them. Jefferson elaborated on this:

> … it is what it is to me. I just feel like they doing that, but the people who innocent they worse than them because they keep going back. I can't sit here and be pity for ya'll. I don't know—it's crazy. It's a lot…I see people in the neighborhood, and they get out of jail and do the same thing. That's crazy. If they let you out then you should embrace that, try to do better. I said myself I'm 18. I know I ain't been in a bad situation, but I know how to not get in trouble. Everybody got to own up. Everybody got to bring your mind thinking the way I think. It's crazy. A lot of people don't act like they got one.

Jefferson was uncertain if the people in his neighborhood deserved the jail time or were falsely accused. He did not want to elaborate.

Ernest went through a series of appearances in court for the incident involving the fire extinguisher. After one of his hearings he asked his mom to take him back to school:

> Oh, coming back from teen court, I had... My mom told me she's just gonna take me, …home. Because if I got to school, it would be like fifth period or something. So it was like, why are you gonna show up to school during fifth period? 'Cause at that point you might as well just stay home… So, and I was like, yeah, just take me to school. I got nothing better to do at home. So I ended up going to school. And at that time it was my P.E. class. So I go in there, and I'm doing work on the computer, and then next thing you know, two [Deans 00:41:06] come in there, and they're making a beeline straight for me. And in my mind, I'm wondering, like, 'Jeez, I haven't even been here for 10 minutes, and I'm already in trouble again?' So, um, they get... they get to me, and then they're calling me out into the hallway… I don't want to cause a scene, since everyone is taking a test, I walk with them out into the hallway, and then, they unlock this uh... this weird little... spare room or something like that. And they tell me to take a seat. And I was like, 'All right, cool.' So I sit down, and then as soon as that door closes, they played that 'good cop/bad cop' bull crap…one of them come in … he stands on awk- like he seems awkwardly close to me, which I don't really like... he didn't even ask me like any warm up questions... like he didn't want to know anything that I was doing before. Said he had... he just randomly came up, and he was like, 'Your name was involved in a drug deal.' And I was like, 'What?"... he said, "Yeah. Your name was involved in a drug deal. So um, so have you got any drugs on you?' And I'm saying, 'Okay, first, who... who was the person that, that, that... that put my name in the drug deal?' He told me it's none of my business. And I was like, 'Okay, how is it... how is it not my business, but you're

sitting here telling me that my name was involved in a drug deal, and I ask you the person's name, and you say none of my business? How is that none of my business?' And he tells me not to worry about it. So I was like, 'Yeah, you're playing the bad cop.' And… I started getting mad, and I started... Usually whenever I get irritated, I start... I started cursing a lot. Which is... I mean, I regret it. I've gotta get over that... I start cursing at him. And then I started yelling. And then he's telling me that I need to... that I need to stop cussing, and yelling. But I told him that if he wants me to do that, then he gotta do what I want to do, and then back up. And then he's like, 'Well I'm the one with the power here.' And I was like, 'No, you're the one with like... you're the one making false accusations here.' And uh, uh... so then I told him that I just came back from court. So why would I... why would I jeopardize that? And I just put... I just got put on probation. And I was like, 'Why would I jeopardize that?' And then run around and do something this stupid. And he told me, he told me that since I pulled the fire extinguisher, maybe I'm not that smart. And I was like... I was, I started laughing. I was like... I was like, 'Oh man, you... you, you, you, you. Okay. You got me there. And uh... um, so he tells me to take off my shoes and empty my pockets. I was like, all right, just to hurry up and get this over with. And one of my friends had drew a picture of me with red eyes, like my... it was the pupil but the background was like a light red.

And he's like... he's like, 'Oh, what's this picture mean? I was like, 'It's just a picture, dude.' Because my... one of my friends drew that picture that morning. And I was like, 'It's just a picture, dude... you guys are just gonna arrest me over... over a drawing that one of my friends made of me?'

> But he's like, he's like, ‘Well, I don't know. The... I could use it as evidence. I was like, "Of me being involved in a drug thing? You know what, go ahead, Mr. Sanford.’ So he took the paper in his pocket. [laughs] He took the paper in his pocket. And I was like... I was like, ‘Wow. You guys are... you guys are crazy.’ So I put my shoes back on, and then he's telling me that he's gonna... keep it on... keep an eye one me. So I was like-okay, should I be concerned? Because I don't want no... no grown man always looking... looking at me. I... he's like... I forget what he said, after that. But then I said something extremely disrespectful. I can't even... I have a really short fuse, at times. Like depending on... depending on if I like you or not, like the... the fuse is extremely short.

Ernest, a student, a child enrolled in a public school, felt the scorn from the administrators. His loss—eventually the right to a free, public education—would be their gain—freedom from his tirades, a boost to their ego.

Abon had a similar experience with the administration at school. Even though his school experience was not marked by days in OSS, he felt that the administration was out to get him. When I asked about the school resource officer, a member of local law enforcement, he said, “That man hated me. He hated me…he hated me. I would never get into trouble like that where I would end up in his office. I barely got in trouble…” When I asked about his relationship with the deans at the high school he said, “Was complicated, some days he'd go months without liking me. Then there's that day where you would like me. He would be complication so I stayed away from it. Well, I was cool with the assistant principal and some of the other teens.” Abon spent time in jail, and was transferred to max security as a result of two felony counts against him. I asked how he felt in jail, and he said, “I was scared, mad, aggravated, hurt, betrayed, confused, probably depressed.” He was keenly aware of who he claimed to be and the ways in which he

interacted with the world, and he felt as though the peripheral adults in his life—law enforcement and school disciplinarians—were against him.

Future Dreams v. Present Reality

Ernest was facing adult charges for his three felony counts regarding the fire extinguisher. As he was waiting to be called into the court room, his case manager offered him a deal that would make his present reality grim, but still leave hope for future dreams:

> And she, she was walking up, and they're talking about…Is there an Ernest Green? So I, I look around, and I was like, oh, man. We're getting saved by the bell. So, I, I tell her I'm Ernest Green, and I ask her what she needs. She tells me that, um, that she's sent from... uh, I forget her company's name…I had two choices. I either go into the courtroom, get tried as an adult, and God knows what's going to happen, or I could do the program. And at the time, I heard that the program was actually like... one of those foster home things? thought it was that type of program, but she told me it was a…random drug… test…I had to follow every exact, um, like, every rule to the, to the exact... I didn't really think about it for too long, um, because I didn't want to be tried as an adult, so I told her I'll sign, I'll sign the paper, do the program. So I signed it, and then she tells me that my case manager's gonna get back with me. So… a couple days later, my case manager comes…and, um, she tells me that since I wasn't arrested over any drugs or nothing, it's not gonna be any random drug testing, it's just gonna be on drug testing, and that's gonna be at the end of it. Man... one time my brother… I'm still on probation. My brother's like, hey, man. You wanna smoke with me? I'm sitting there like, dog, you know I'm on probation, right?

Ernest served six to nine months of probation for that incident, which is far less that what he was facing had he been tried as an adult. Ernest was expected to graduate from an alternative program a week after our third interview. By the time this goes to publication, Ernest will be on a career path with the armed forces, a process that was severely slowed because of the trouble from his past.

Abon was awaiting adjudication for an altercation between him and his girlfriend, but we did not discus the incident in order to protect him. I asked Abon if he felt free now that he is out of jail. He said, “Even though I don't have an ankle bracelet on, it feels like I'm still on a chain. I'm still getting watched. I can't go out. I can't get in trouble at all. Even if the slightest issue that involves a cop, they can just run my record, and I have to go back to jail. I think that I don't have to worry about no bond, being on bond or pretrial, that would be free.” Abon was hopeful that the charges against him would be dropped completely and that he would be able to graduate high school from an alternate education setting and head to college. He is in a state of waiting while his trial is in motion. I asked him to describe how his present reality feels: "It feels like exactly that. It feels the waiting, not even for my case, but something is waiting for me. Now, I feel like there's something out there, but I don't know yet. I feel like I'm just stuck right now.” I asked, “Something positive waiting for you?” and he continued, “I don't know. Positive, negative. I don't know what that feeling is yet. I just feel waiting.” When Abon was in jail for the trespassing charges, he had been told that he could be facing life in jail for the accusations made against him by his girlfriend. He was now facing the possibility of ten to twenty years. Abon had hopes for success in his future. He said, “I probably say optometry or a dental assistant, just work my way up throughout the years. Probably go to college for a business degree. While I'm a dental assistant or an optometrist, and then invest into some profits and then win coming in each way.”

He was hoping his case would be settled and sealed so that he could move forward with a clean record.

Jefferson was hopeful to return to the bright lights of the football field on Friday nights in the fall and graduate from high school in the spring. He has been on and off probation since sixth grade, but his perception was different than Ernest and Abon: “Probation is just a...I don't know, man. It's how you take it. Other people take it different. See me, I wasn't even taking it that bad because the stuff that they telling me to do, I know I don't even need to be doing. The only thing is my curfew. I have to go in real early now, but other than that, I don't need to be smoking, or none of that…” Regarding the Friday night lights, he said this:

> I just look at it like...I don't even look at it as football. I just want to make it to college. I'm just going to take everything step-by-step because I know I put myself in the hole already. I just got to...I don't know… I'm still playing and I know this is going to be up, so I'll be good. That's how I look at like. I just got to get to college and focus on when I'm in college. Then I'll be right…. Play football, try to take care of my sister and them. One sister, she do hair. I'll probably get her a hair shop. Then I got to go from after that.
>
> My mama and them probably want something. I ain't going to lie. They ain't going to just get it like that. I don't know…I want to invest in my people though.

Jefferson knew that the environment at school would be difficult for him: “I don't know. Probation ain't nothing to me I feel like because it's juvenile. My biggest problem with myself is trying to become somebody better. That's all…in high school really. I wasn't ready for it. I'm going to say that, honestly…I was just living. I wasn't ready to grow up. I wasn’t.” After catching up on credits in an alternative school, though, he felt fearfully excited to try one more

season under the lights, one more year in a public school setting, one more attempt to navigate life without the restrictions that come from being on probation.

Oliver, though not navigating trouble with the law or probation, was eager to play football again in the fall. While Jefferson and Ernest described an internal struggle, Oliver's was external—proving himself to people who doubted. He described an interaction he had with a teacher like this:

> So I'm just sitting there, and she talking. So one day.., 'Listen, man she come at me sideways again I'm gonna speak up 'cause it's not fair to get trying to tell me where I'm gonna be in life.' So next week after that she like, 'Oh, you ain't going to the NFL. You ain't gonna be a homicide detective. You ain't gonna be none of that. You gonna be sitting right over there where all, where all your brothers and them be sitting at. Where my brothers gonna be sitting at.' I look, everybody was quiet, like, listening.

His present reality was navigating expulsion from a private school that refused to release his records so he could transfer back into a public school; his dream was to earn his high school diploma and play for the NFL. If football did not pan out for him, he wanted to be a homicide detective. He said, "I watched my cousin., He got shot. I got family members that got ... My brother got shot, my cousin got shot, and guess what? They don't know who did it….Be a homicide detective, you could find out…That's a cold case. I could be a homicide detective… go in the file, grab that."

Terrance had hopes of playing in the NFL or NBA and "if neither of those work, I want to be a plumber." More immediately, he had his eyes focused on earning a high school diploma. He told me that the road from our interview to his dreams would require: "Hard work. Patience. Stay focused." During our first interview, I asked Terrance to tell me about a moment that made

him proud and he said "I ain't." When I pushed for an answer, he said, " I just wanted to be great…Like, I wanted to be noticeable. Like, I want everybody to know me, and everybody to feel more comfortable." He told me that, "Well when I graduate I'll go back like, 'Hey, I did it.' …A lot of people that doubt." He clarified that it was students who doubted him more than adults.

Several of the men mentioned looking forward to a clean record. Terrance had to go to court for a year for his case regarding the stolen car, and in the end he was acquitted. He said, "It, oh, it's, it's been over, because if it were over, it would have been on my record, and, um, I got a clean record. I'm gonna stay that way." When discussing the future, Abon said this:

> Yeah. I'm going to finish up these classes, and then I'm going to move up north and then work with my dad. Throughout that time, I'm going to have my case sealed. Then when I have my case sealed, I'm going to have my other trespassing charge to be dropped…you can only seal one case in your life. I would say that the federal government or something like that, or whatever it is, it goes through that process. They seal it where no one can see it, no jobs, none of that, except the cops, obviously. Then I'm going to have my trespassing case dropped from my record. Cleaned off so my record can be clean on both sides.

A clean record means freedom and hope. Friday night lights in the fall means one more chance to make it big, one more chance to feel a sense of belonging.

Summary

To be a Black male navigating the school system is to be an adolescent living in a duality. One world respects certain behaviors and attitudes, and the other world expects another. Black men are treated like adults from the moment they step foot on a campus, and they must learn

with child like maturity to navigate the world as a man. Feeling a sense of belonging motivated the men, but when they were pushed outside they sank into despair and engaged in skipping class and fighting as a means of refusing to be disrespected. All of the men behaved like children when they were children but quickly learned that as a Black male the consequences were harsh regardless of age. Reflecting back, they display maturity and ownership coupled with the notion of being a child. The parental relationships were complicated. Mom was the primary caregiver of all five men, and while they could all identify at least on male role model, two of them expressed a need for the dad. Life in the duality meant that loss was the perceived gain for someone else. All of the men had future dreams to be successful financially and personally, but the dreams were hazed by their present reality.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this critical race theory, phenomenological study was to give a voice to Black men on the metaphorical school-to-prison pipeline as a direct result of exclusionary discipline in their secondary school. A great volume of quantitative research exists about the discipline gap, the prison gap, and the school-to-prison pipeline, but there are limited studies that give human voice to the experience. This study was intended to add humanity and perspective to the current volume of research. In order to stay true to the phenomenological method in which I was trying to capture the essence of what it is to be a boy on the school-to-prison pipeline coupled with CRT which upholds the value of story telling, this chapter will briefly provide a reminder to the problem statement, research questions, and methodology, followed by a short discussion of the data as related to the research questions, implications, and recommendations.

Problem Statement

While the United States of America holds approximately 5% of the world's population, it houses 25% of the global prison population (Stullich, Morgan, & Schak, 2016; Wilson, 2014). In many states, more money is budgeted to corrections than higher education, and prisons are built at much faster rates than colleges and universities (Meiners & Winn, 2010; Stullich et al., 2016). It is estimated that 66% of the prison population enters the system without a high school diploma (Stullich et al., 2016), and research suggests that nearly three-quarters of the juvenile prison population have learning disabilities, and one-third read below a 4th grade level (Wald & Losen, 2003).

The school-to-prison pipeline disproportionally impacts students of color, in particular, Black males. Black students comprise over 46% of juveniles sent to criminal court (Spiller &

Porter, 2014), and a 20-24 year old Black male without a high school diploma or equivalent certificate is more likely to be incarcerated than employed (Stullich et al., 2016). According to one report, Black boys born in 2001 have a one in three chance of being incarcerated in their lifetime (Spiller & Porter, 2014). Americans are paying a high price for this disparity. It is estimated that once a student reaches the prison system, s/he costs taxpayers approximately $240 per day; in 2011, the cost to house the number of Black students currently in juvenile facilities was approximately $5.8 million daily (Spiller & Porter, 2014).

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of Black males who are in the gap between expulsion and incarceration?
2. How does the relationship between Black males and the adults they encounter in their education (e.g. parents, teachers, administrators, and police) shape their perception of their lived experiences?
3. What do Black males on the school-to-prison pipeline believe caused their path from desk to cell?
4. What are the future hopes and dreams of Black males who are in the time between expulsion and adjudication?

Methodology

This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological method. Five participants, 18-19 year olds who had been kicked out of traditional schools and were in trouble with the law were interviewed three times each. The interviews ranged from five minutes to 55 minutes in length. The first interview was used to establish trust and get a basic understanding of the men's education history, family, and community. The second interview focused on the men's

experiences with discipline—ISS, OSS, and booking/jail. The interview centered around what it felt like to be them not on the perceived actions that caused discipline. The third interview was used to validate information from the first two interviews and to discuss future hopes and dreams. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed by a paid service. I immersed myself in the data for several months, listening to the interviews, and reading the transcripts until I was able to discern meaning units. The interviews were organized according to meaning units, and themes were derived from those units.

Discussion

While the experiences of the men in this study cannot be applied universally, several key findings from this study can help shape the systems that form the basis of the school-to-prison pipeline—namely schools and courts. According to critical race theorists, widespread change will be required to counteract racism in America as it permeates every level of society—systems, institutions and individuals. In order to stay true to the methodology of phenomenology and the tenants of CRT, I will not expound too much here. The purpose of the study was to amplify the voice of Black men who have experienced the school-to-prison pipeline; therefore my voice must be minimal. The findings presented here add to the current body of research.

Research Question 1

The lived experiences of Black males in the gap between expulsion and incarceration is more nuanced than I imagined when I began this study. There is a spectrum of expulsion—some men are handed official paperwork and kicked out of the system while others are told not to come back to a specific campus and others are sent to alternative locations. The men did not use the word “expulsion” in the interviews; they used term “kicked out” to reference all of the above mentioned circumstances. Likewise, incarceration was more nuanced than initially expected.

One of the men was on probation, two had been on probation and were now free, and one had served jail time and now had regular court hearings. All of them expressed a notion of waiting and a sense of confusion felt by them and their parents as they navigated their current circumstances. Rather than being in control of their situation, they had a sense of being swept up in them. All of life seemed to be on hold for a moment.

Research Question 2

The men had various experiences with the adults in their lives ranging from positive and supportive to negative and cold. There was a keen sense of awareness and discernment between when adults cared for them and when they were out to get them. The relationship with mom and dad seemed critical to their viewpoints. The men who had a positive relationship with mom were able to navigate the daily struggles with some encouragement, but the men who had stressful relationships with mom were eager to move out of their homes. The men who did not have a relationship with their father were disappointed that he was not in their life. Teachers and administrators ranged from supportive and caring to harsh. All of the actions that resulted in exclusion from the classroom were subjective forms of misbehavior while the actions that resulted in being asked to leave a school and getting in trouble with the law were objective. From early ages the men were exposed to police both in their school settings and outside of their school settings. While the men felt that some of the administrators and teachers were only looking to get them in trouble, they did not express this viewpoint of the police. There was a consensus that the police were merely doing their job.

Research Question 3

The answer to this question was not clearly articulated in the data collected during this study. The men did not seem to believe any one factor caused them to be on the pipeline.

Research suggests that men access the pipeline by falling behind in coursework due to exclusionary school discipline, dropping out of school, and committing an act that leads to incarceration (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014; Welch & Payne, 2012). All of the men spoke very candidly about their behaviors, and they took responsibility for any action that had caused them to experience exclusionary discipline, but their perception of the route from OSS to trouble with the law was not clearly articulated. There are many moments in which the men experienced what appears to be the harshest possible punishment. Beginning in elementary school, four of the five men experienced OSS and they were ROYed numerous times. They did not articulate being behind in academics, but once they entered middle school, class became boring so they committed minor infractions like skipping, fighting, and selling candy. This led to more time out of class, which likely created a bigger academic gap, and by high school skipping was a regular occurrence. Two of the men first encountered the pipeline in elementary school, though, which suggests that more is happening than just exclusionary school discipline. Black men are often time perceived as dangerous, and their neighborhoods are patrolled more closely (Alexander, 2012; Bryan, 2017; Jeffries, 2001) . This is one plausible explanation of why they encountered police prior to experiencing exclusionary discipline in school.

Research Question 4

The hopes and dreams of the men in this study align with what you might expect of most boys on the cusp of manhood—success as measured by wealth and status. They want to live in nice homes and play a sport professionally. All of them have a backup career goal in the event that professional athletics disappoints. While looking toward the future, they have the added challenge of needing to graduate high school in an alternate setting and enter adulthood with a

clean record. They are eager to begin adulthood with a clean record, but the reality is that some offenses cannot be erased.

Implications

The sample size in this study was appropriate for a qualitative, phenomenological study but the results are not applicable universally. The purpose of this study was to give a voice to the men who have lived on the school-to-prison pipeline. The stories of Ernest, Oliver, Terrance, Abon and Jefferson add value and meaning to the current body of research on the discipline gap and the school-to-prison pipeline. First, from a CRT lens, telling their stories validated and empowered them, and I was able to see places where I have been the oppressor (Edwards, 2006; McGrew, 2016). According to CRT, storytelling is valuable both for the marginalized and the oppressors. In the instance of the school-to-prison pipeline, young Black men are marginalized and pushed out of our school system from the moment they enter a school building (Gilliam et al., 2016). Seeking them out and creating a place they deemed safe to share their stories gave power to their voice. As the interviews progressed, you can hear confidence and trust and emotion building in their tone. Ernest's honest question, "Have much time do you have?" shows the need to tell and the value of being heard. As a White woman who is an educator, I was impacted by hearing their stories as well. I saw ways in which I have been an oppressor. I was alerted to blind spots and prejudices I have held without ever asking for the opinion or feelings of my students of color. I was also awakened to my inability to be free from implicit bias even when I fully aware of it and immersed in it.

Secondly, from a phenomenological viewpoint, the telling of their stories gives a human voice to the perceived experiences of a problem that has mostly been discussed quantitatively in the current research. Skiba's et al. (2002) landmark study began the process of quantifying the

discipline gap and Wald and Losen's (2003) article brought awareness to the school-to-prison pipeline. The current body of research, though, fails to give voice to the men. The numbers represented in the existing research are valuable, but they point to actual people, and giving a voice to them is equally important. If the voices behind the numbers are not heard, true and transformational reform will not be possible. The men living the school-to-prison pipeline are the ones best able to present that phenomena as they experience it. Be it right or wrong, true or false, their perceptions of the institution and individuals that compose the pipeline are of the utmost importance as we work toward true and transformational change.

Finally, while the stories from these five men cannot be universally applied, they can shed light on the current problems with the various institutions and people who comprise the school-to-prison pipeline. The notion of wanting to belong but constantly feeling outside, navigating childish behavior of the past with the maturity developed from experience, traversing parental relationships where reality misaligns with what should be, grieving personal loss in light of the perceived gain of an oppressor, and bridging the divide between future dreams and present reality are insightful dualities that the men in this study must navigate on a regular basis. Paying attention to their perceived reality can expose a path forward to ending the school-to-prison pipeline.

Recommendations

According to CRT, racism and the impact left in its wake permeates nearly every level of American society. In order for change to be effective in the school-to-prison pipeline, the key systems, institutions, and individuals need to be addressed. The primary institutions are schools and courts, and the key individuals are teachers, administrators, police officers, and judges. The systems include public education policy and the criminal justice system. Additionally, key

stakeholders in the community can play a role. This study examined the institution and individual levels, so the recommendations will not extend to polices and systems. While well intentioned systemic policies have gotten us into a predicament of the school-to-prison pipeline, further research and discussion will need to be conducted to create systemic change.

Recommendation for Schools

On an institutional level, schools need to provide ample opportunities for students to feel as though they belong to a community outside of themselves as an individual and that they are a vital part to the success of that community. Students, particularly Black males, need to feel validated and welcome in the hallways, classrooms, and desks of the school community. Extra-curricular clubs and sports should be available to students in every school—not as a reward, but as an expectation for students who are members of the community. These opportunities for community cannot be based on White cultural norms—they must be created using a color-conscious perspective.

In addition to providing ample opportunities for belonging, schools need to provide access to alternative education within the walls of the traditional school. Students who have fallen behind academically should be allowed to work in a safe space on a self-paced curriculum, not as a form of discipline, but as a strategy to help them catch up without feeling the boredom that comes from sitting in large class with students who do not want to take two reading and two math classes each day. The men in this study skipped class for a variety of reasons, but when they fell behind, the only option for catching up was to be excluded from the community which made them feel further behind. If they had had a safe space in the school to work independently as they did at the alternative settings, the need to skip and fight might have lessoned. They could have participated in the community of school while working in an environment that felt safe.

Finally, as an institution, schools need to focus on restorative justice. Often times, the men enjoyed their days in OSS, but it did not change their behavior. Rather, it gave them a day to breathe without being under the critical eye of teachers and administrators. Upon returning to school, they should have been scheduled for a restorative conversation with an administrator, a teacher, and a parent. Restorative justice focuses on restoring a community member (e.g. the student) to the community (e.g. the school) in a way that acknowledges the consequences of the member's actions on the community and a successful path to return. In order for this to be possible, schools will need to be given a budget to afford an extra administrator who can focus on restoring students to the community after being disciplined.

Recommendations for District Officers, Superintendents, and School Board Members

Superintendents and school board members need to have regular and ongoing conversations with key stakeholders in the school-prison-pipeline including administrators, teachers, and students. The conversations should not only focus on the discipline processes but on the discipline experience. I contacted many district personnel in several central Florida counties, and they were unwilling to even engage on this topic, so an earnest look at how students of color experience the discipline system should be prioritized and considered. Often district level administrators focus solely on quantitative data, but in order for true and lasting change to take place, the qualitative data is vitally important. Merely reducing the number of referrals and suspensions for students of color will not result in the wide sweeping change necessary to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline.

Recommendations for Administrators

Administrators already have more tasks that can be successfully accomplished in one day, but their actions and inaction can have ripple impacts. Based on this study, it is highly

effective for administrators to prioritize students who frequently get in trouble and check in with them daily. Administrators should make space daily to have informal meetings with students who are frequently referred to the office. By establishing this trust and rapport, administrators will demonstrate to students that they are not seeking to gain something from them.

Obviously, one of the roles of administrations is to issue disciplinary action to students who do not abide by the school policies and procedures. In fulfilling this role, administrators need to be as fair as possible, approaching each day as a new day. Administrators should take part in restorative justice as described above when a student returns to school after experiencing exclusionary discipline. Restorative justice does not equate to fewer suspensions and expulsions. The demographics of the school should be fairly represented in the discipline data, and the students who return to campus after experiencing exclusionary discipline should be welcomed back to the community.

Finally, administrators should regularly review discipline data to determine the demographics that are primarily contributing to referrals, ISS, and OSS. Using this information, administrators can determine targeted groups and educate their staff accordingly. Research has shown over and over again that Black boys are not misbehaving at rates higher than their peers, but they are more frequently in trouble for discretionary misbehavior. In addition to identifying targeted groups, administrators can identify specific times and locations that are creating the greatest discipline issues and make proactive decisions to set students up for success.

Recommendations for Teachers

Students can quickly discern teachers who care from those who are there for an easy paycheck. Therefore, teachers must establish and communicate clear boundaries and routines to their students and then build loving relationships with the students. If a teacher finds himself or

herself perpetually angry with students, then a new position or career should be sought immediately. Angry teachers are harmful to students. In order for the school-to-prison pipeline to be disrupted, it is imperative that the teachers serve as advocates for their students (Nogurea, 2003). Teachers must value each student individually and lean in to care for them in a way that is meaningful for the student (Noddings 1984, Noddings, 1988, Rabin, 2010).

Additionally, teachers need to be educated in culturally relevant pedagogies and practices. Given that 85% of teachers are White females, there is a cultural mismatch between the teacher and student (Gregory et al., 2010). Teachers must see color (Rabin, 2010) and be aware of the double consciousness of their students of color and the unique challenges that Black boys face from the moment they first enroll in public school. This will enable them to formulate and communicate appropriate expectations and responses to students from a diverse background.

Recommendations for the Courts

The purpose of all juvenile punishment should be to correct the behavior and restore the offender to the community as quickly as possible. For the men in this study, probation was a time in their life in which they found an odd sense of belonging with their probation officer, but they were not able to work or participate in the community in meaningful ways. Thus, young men on probation should be trained in a payable service and required to work a given number of hours each week. This would equip juveniles with extra income, a sense of belonging and identity in the community, and the satisfaction that comes from hard work.

Additionally, the court system should provide more education to youth surrounding what constitutes a felony, a misdemeanor, and a petty crime. Students do not need to be subjected to a course on this necessarily, but education should be provided in a non-confrontational way.

Courts could partner with schools to create appropriate slogans, posters, brochures, or, when needed, mini-lessons.

Recommendations for Police Officers

As with teachers, police officers should be trained in culturally relevant practices as well as child psychology and development. Police presence on school campuses should be regularly examined and discussed at the school level and the community level. Community members and advocates should be involved in the discussions.

Recommendations for Lawyers and Public Defenders

The case load for many public defenders and paid lawyers is exorbitant, but as much as possible they need to make their clients feel like they are an integral part of the case, not like it is something being done to them. Students who miss school for court hearings need to be given access and support when making up their missed work. Given that approximately 66% of the prison population lacks a high school diploma, lawyers and public defenders should assume their clients will need help returning to school fully prepared for what was missed.

Lawyers and public defenders should also work closely with the parents or guardians of their clients to ensure that a support system is being implemented outside of the courtroom. They should communicate intentions and proceedings so that parents and guardians can help their juvenile understand the implications and process.

Finally, lawyers and public defenders should be be intentional to communicate with the juvenile and his parents that s/he is working for the best interest of the client. His/her job is to provide support and seek a the best possible outcome for the juvenile. The men in this study were perceptive about who cared for them and who was in it for the paycheck.

Recommendations for Judges

Judges should give the least restrictive sentence in each case coupled with the most amount of support available. When a Black man first has contact with the prison system, the purpose of a punishment should be to ensure it is the last time he had contact with the prison system. Given that two men in this study believed judges were benefitting from convictions, the judge should make it clear that no cash bonus or allowance is given when men are sent to prison.

Recommendations for Society

Black boys need Black men. Research proposes it (Chetty et al., 2018) and the men in this study articulated the need. All of society needs to place an emphasis on keeping Black men in the community. The data from this study combined with the existing body of research suggests several ways to help keep Black men in the community. First, the men in this study all expressed a need to feel a sense of belonging. Black men should feel welcome in the community, and given the history of racism in America, dating back to the beginning when much of the nation was built on the backs of Black men who did not even count as a full person (Alexander, 2012), this sense of belonging is something that must be intentionally created. It is going to take difficult conversations between White men and Black men and a willingness to listen and to engage. Secondly, Black men need to be kept out of prison. Ernest had never seen his father except for a mug shot on Google images and while this certainly cannot be applied as the universal experience of all Black men, quantitative research suggests it is not uncommon (Chetty et al., 2018; Quane et al., 2015).

Recommendations for Future Research

More studies of this kind need to be completed. Three young men, under the age of 18, wanted to participate in my study, but I did not have time or resources to add more participants

or to go through the IRB process for minors. Black men on the school-to-prison pipeline have stories to tell, so we need more researchers who will sit and listen to them. Focus groups inside of school districts, juvenile criminal systems, and communities could also lead to valuable information. Future research needs to provide recommendations of policies and systems. Additionally, future research is in dire need of transcription services that can accurately transcribe Black standard vernacular.

Concluding Thoughts

A tremendous amount of time and care have been given to this study. To be entrusted with the stories of Ernest, Oliver, Terrance, Jefferson, and Abon was an honor, and I felt the weight of the responsibility to tell them exactly as they had been told to me. In order to ensure this study was not White-washed by own bias, a dear friend of color read every page of chapter four and gave me feedback, and several other friends of color shared feedback based on presentations. I am merely the messenger to the realties experienced by these men. If the American school system is going to be what it was promised to be, these stories must be read with care, and they should propel us to seek out more stories and more stories and more stories until we can hear the stories free from bias and judgement and criticism. The stories should guide us to reflect and act. There will not be one solution to the epidemic of racism specifically in the way it impacts the school-to-prison pipeline, but my prayer is that the words of these men will begin a new conversation that will blossom into a movement that will lead to true racial reconciliation and a permanent end to the school-to-prison pipeline, so that Black boys born today in America will not face such overwhelming odds.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Florida Southern College

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Stories from Black Men on the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Critical Race Theory, Phenomenological Inquiry

Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Yeater

E-mail: eyeater@mocs.flsouthern.edu

Department: School of Education

INTRODUCTION:
I am doctoral student at Florida Southern College. Your life story matters. The ways you were treated in and out of school are important. Research suggests that young Black men are kicked out of schools at alarming rates. One result is negative contact with the criminal justice system. This is called the school-to-prison pipeline.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This purpose of this project is to hear the stories of young Black men who are on the school-to-prison pipeline. A man gets on the the pipeline when he is kicked out of school and accused of a crime.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to be in this study, you agree to:
Participate in three tape-recorded interviews. These will last up to 60 minutes each. You do not have to answer all of my questions. You can ask me to turn off the audio recorder.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
This study will allow you to share your story. You may express your views of teachers, schools, and the community. Your story may help other students like you. You will not be paid.

POTENTIAL RISKS
This project is not meant to be uncomfortable for you—physically or emotionally. However, you may choose to share personal and private stories during the interviews. If you discuss illegal activity, a judge may call on me to be a witness.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The results of this study will be published. Your identity will be hidden with made-up names and locations. You may request written copies of your interviews. I will hire someone to type the audio recordings. The person who listens to the audio will sign a statement of confidentiality.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer, you may withdraw at any time. There are no consequences if you withdraw. You may refuse to answer any questions during the interviews.

If you have questions about your rights as an individual taking part in a research study, you may contact the Chair of the Florida Southern College Institutional Review Board at (863-680-6205) or the FSC Vice President for Academic Affairs (863-680-4124).

SIGNATURE:
I understand the things described above. My questions were answered, and I agree to participate in this study. I was given a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Subject

_____ _____

Signature of Subject Date

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview 1 Questions:

1. Name/Age
2. Family:
    - Tell me about your family.
    - Who has your back?
3. Education:
    - Describe your first memory in school.
    - Describe your relationships with your teachers in school.
    - Describe your relationship with your peers in school.
    - Who was looking out for you?
    - Describe your family's involvement in your education.
    - What advice would you give to teachers like me to keep kids like you in school?
    - Describe a moment that makes you proud of yourself as you reflect on kindergarten-11th/12th grade.
4. Community:
    - Tell me about the values of your community.
    - Describe an adult in your community who supported you in school.
    - What advice would you give to your community to keep kids like you in school?
5. Discipline:
    - Tell me about the first time you got in trouble at school: Event? Teacher? Result? Parent's Reaction? Feelings/Thoughts

Interview 2 Questions (Note-These may change based on the first interview, and questions 3-4 will only be used if the participant has encountered the criminal justice system prior to the alleged crime for which he is currently awaiting adjudication.)

1. Discipline:
    - Tell me about your experience with school discipline in elementary school.
    - Tell me about your experience with school discipline in middle school.
    - Tell me about your experience with school discipline in high school.
2. Expulsion/Kicked Out of School:
    - Tell me about how you got expelled from school.
    - Describe the way adults interacted with you during the expulsion process. (For instance, did any adult discuss your expulsion with you—a principal? probation officer? teacher? parent?)
    - Tell me about life after expulsion: Have you attempted to return to school? Tell me about it. Have you attempted to work? Tell me about it.
    - Do you know others who have been expelled? How many? Tell me about them.
3. First Arrest
    - Tell me about your first encounter with the law (e.g police officers/arrest). What happened? How did you feel?
    - If applicable, tell me about subsequent arrests or encounters with the law. Describe how you were feeling. What was going through your mind?
4. Concluding Thoughts: Is there anything that you'd like to share with me that I didn't ask?

Interview 3 Questions (Note: Will be sculpted by the first and second interview):

1. Present
    - Describe life now. What is it like to be waiting? How do you feel?
    - Tell me your day to day thoughts and routines.
    - Tell me about days where you go to court. What's it like? What are you thinking and feeling?
2. Past
    - Do you have any regrets?
    - Tell me about how you would do things the same or differently.
    - Describe ways adults could have helped you to stay out of trouble.
3. Future
    - Describe your vision of personal success.
    - Tell me about the hopes and dreams you have for yourself.
    - Do you have a plan from here (present) to there (future hopes and dreams).
    - What hopes and dreams do you have for yourself?
    - What will it take?
4. Concluding Thoughts: Is there anything else that you'd like to share with me?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM (PILOT)

Consent Form (PILOT)

Florida Southern College
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Stories from Black Men on the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Critical Race Theory, Phenomenological Inquiry
Principal Investigator: Elizabeth Yeater
Phone: 908.907.8302
E-mail: yeater.beth@gmail.com
Department: School of Education

You are being asked to participate in a study because your story, your experiences inside and outside of the classroom, are important in light of the growing body of research that suggests young Black men are being excluded from the classroom at alarming rates.
Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This purpose of this project is to hear the stories of young Black men who have been excluded from the school system in order to shed light on the experiences and events that led to their exclusion from the public school system.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
Participate in two tape-recorded interviews, anticipated to last up to 60 minutes each. Following the interview, the researcher will transcribe the recorded conversation and will send you a copy. On being sent a copy of the transcribed interview, you are welcome to contact the interviewer to make editorial changes or add comments. This interview transcript will not be shared with anyone else, and all names will be kept confidential. All transcripts and tapes will be kept in a secure location and destroyed after two years. If you do not wish to answer any questions or you wish to turn off the tape recorder, you may let the researcher know.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
This study will not bring you specific benefits outside of an opportunity to share your views and opinions. Your participation, however, will contribute to the body of knowledge around the discipline gap in America.

POTENTIAL RISKS
This project is not intended to provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. However, you may choose to share sensitive and confidential information during the interview. All efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Confidentiality will be maintained by using a pseudonym instead of your name when transcribing the interview. The researcher will keep interview tapes and pseudonym keys in a secure location for two years, and they will then be destroyed.

The results of this study may be published. However, only group results will be reported. Data from all interviews will be synthesized into major and minor themes. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way. You will be given copies of your interview transcripts obtained during this study.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact the primary investigator or committee chair: Dr. Steven Petrie (spetrie@flsouthern.edu)

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Subject

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PILOT)

Interview 1 Questions (PILOT):

1. Name/Age
2. Tell me about your family:
    - Who do you live with?
    - Do you have any brothers or sisters? (Ages?)
    - If applicable: How often do you visit your dad/mom?
3. Tell me about your educational experiences:
    - What's your earliest school memory?
    - Which school(s) did you attend for elementary school?
        - Describe your relationships with your teachers: Who was your favorite teacher? Least favorite? Did your teachers like you? How do you know?
        - What was your favorite subject?
        - Describe your relationship with your peers: Who were your best friends? Did you have a group that you hung out with?
        - Who was looking out for you?
    - Which school(s) did you attend for middle school? (Repeat questions from above)
    - Which school(s) did you attend for high school? (Repeat questions from above)
    - What are you the most proud of as you reflect on your kindergarten-11th/12th grade years?
4. Tell me about your experience with discipline:
    - Do you remember the first time you got in trouble at school? Tell me about it.
    - Event? Teacher? Result? Parent's Reaction? Feelings/Thoughts:

Interview 2 Questions (PILOT):

1. Tell me about your experience with discipline:
    - Tell me about elementary school. Did you get sent to the office? Why?
    - Tell me about middle school. Did you get sent to the office? Why?
    - Tell me about high school. Did you get sent to the office? Why?
2. Let's talk about your expulsion (if applicable):
    - You've told me before that you started skipping school a lot. What led that decision? Why did you do that?
    - We've discussed this once before, but can you describe for me the incident that led to you being expelled?
    - Did any adults discuss this with you? (a principal? probation officer? teacher? parent?)
3. Journey since your expulsion…
    - Have you attempted to return to school? Tell me about it.
    - Have you attempted to work? Tell me about it.
    - How did you first encounter trouble with the law?
    - Please don't feel the need to share anything with me that you have not shared with the police already, but can you tell me about the events that led to your arrest?
4. Tell me about your future:
    - What hopes and dreams do you have for yourself?
    - What will it take?
5. Concluding Thoughts: Is there anything else that you'd like to share with me?