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# Dual-Detachment: The Plight Of Young Black Males Alienated From Work And School

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DUAL-DETACHMENT: THE PLIGHT OF YOUNG BLACK MALES ALIENATED  
FROM WORK AND SCHOOL

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

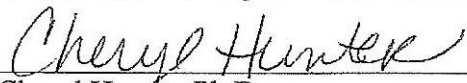
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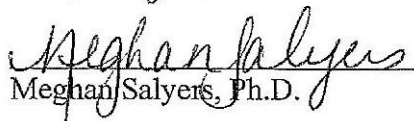
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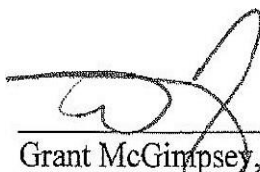
  
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## ABSTRACT

In looking at the plight of young Black males who drop out of school or leave school without adequate skills to compete in the local and global labor markets, scholarship has overemphasized the likelihood of this population's entrance into the juvenile justice system. Hence, many studies of these males have concentrated on their schooling experiences in the school-to-prison pipeline. While of crucial importance, prison is not the only danger for these young men. In time, some young Black males do end up in the juvenile justice system, but some remain stuck between school and employment. I term this "dual-detachment"—youth neither in school or employed.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate this underexplored phenomenon. Using Critical Race Theory and intersectionality frameworks, I explored the lived experiences of dually-detached Black males between the ages of 18 and 24, and the factors that lead Black males toward dual-detachment.

Data collection included in-depth interviews with six young Black males, three who dropped out of high school and three who graduated. An analysis of the data yielded five key themes. First, early in their schooling, the participants had positive attitudes toward education and career aspirations, but by the time they reached high school their career aspirations were derailed by lack of support from school personnel, yet they remain hopeful about the future. Second, suspensions, isolation in special classes, and tracking into alternative education led to broken relationships between these young men and school personnel, which led to decreased desire to be in school. Third, the

participants' negative school experiences constituted a barrier to academic engagement and school success, which led to some dropping out of school and others barely graduating. Fourth, upon finding themselves out-of-school and out-of-work, the young men experienced despair and discouragement, which led to their mistrust of the larger community. Fifth, the participants perceived that because of employers' racial biases, they were denied employment even for low-skilled jobs, but remained resilient despite concerns about racism.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

But the plain fact is there are some Americans who, in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society – groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions; groups who’ve seen fewer opportunities that have spanned generations. And by almost every measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color. Now, to say this is not to deny the enormous strides we’ve made in closing the opportunity gaps that marred our history for so long. My presence is a testimony to that progress. (Barack Obama, 2014, Remarks by the President on “My Brother’s Keeper” Initiative launch, paragraph 11).

While some Black males like President Obama have achieved success despite the odds, the above remarks suggest that an opportunity gap remains for millions of young Black males in this country. In fact, the education and employment literature is replete with descriptions of the bleak conditions and experiences of Black males in education and in their quest to secure gainful employment (Howard, 2008; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Levine, 2010; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Noguera, 2003; Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2014). Since the 1970s, the plight of young Black males has been a topic of interest for all education stakeholders, including educators, parents, policy makers, researchers, and the mainstream media. In recent years, research on Black males has focused on the social,

educational, political, and economic disparities and challenges this group faces in schools and communities across America. Much of the scholarship reveals individual, institutional, policy, and structural factors that work together to affect the experiences of this group, both in school and in society (Noguera, 2008; Toldson, 2008). Reports on Black males in the United States paint a bleak picture of the well-being of this group. For example, Davis (2003) asserts that “Black [males] are both loved and loathed at school; they set the standards for hip-hop culture and athleticism while experiencing disproportionate levels of punishment and academic failure” (p. 520).

Similarly, Ferguson (2000) declares that Black males are often revered, criticized, and stigmatized as criminals and endangered. In the employment domain, young Black males have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the structural changes in the economy, whereby a large proportion of jobs have been outsourced overseas or relocated to the suburbs (Mincy, 2006; Wagmiller, 2008; Wilson, 2008), thus leaving them with limited opportunities for employment, especially in large metropolitan areas (Mincy, 2006).

The terms “Black males” and “African American males” will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. “African American” will be used when quoting or referencing other researchers who used the term. Moreover, in using the term “young” I mean American-born Black males between the ages of 18 and 24.

Further statistical reports in the academic literature show poor academic achievement (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserty, 2010; Noguera, 2008; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011), and overrepresentation in special education and underrepresentation in honors/gifted education programs (Bridges, 2010; Ferguson, 2000; Ford, 2013; Jackson,



2008; Solomon & Palmer, 2006; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009) among this group. Moreover, Black males are also disproportionately overrepresented in all measures of school discipline, including referral to law enforcement, suspension, and expulsion (Cole & Heilig, 2011; Gilliam, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Lewis, Butler, Bonner, Fred, & Jourbet, 2010; Lewis, Simon, et al., 2010; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Nance, 2015; Scott, Allen, & Lewis, 2014; Whiting, 2009) and constitute a disproportionately large number of students referred to alternative schools (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamini, 2011). Other reports show high dropout rates (Beach, 2013; Caton, 2012; Holzman, Jackson, & Beaudry, 2012; NCES, 2012, 2014; Schott Foundation, 2012, 2015; Toldson, 2008; Toldson, Brown, & Sutton, 2009) and high crime and incarceration rates (CDC, 2005; Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011; Mincy, 2006; U.S. Department of Justice, 2013) for these men as well as high unemployment rates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2014); and stagnant patterns of college enrollment and completion (Harper & Harris, 2012; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014).

The commentary that accompanies these narratives frequently includes rhetoric about “endangered Black males,” “Black males at risk,” and “Black males in crisis,” to name but a few. Some scholars have gone so far as to perceive and stereotype Black Males as a group by at least one of the five Ds: dumb, deprived, dangerous, deviant, and disturbed (Gibbs, 1988).

However, more recent education research has shifted the dialogue on Black males from blame-the-victim narratives to looking at how wider social contexts perpetuate the marginalization of these males (Ferguson, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Noguera, 2008). Likewise, curriculum theorists such as Apple (1990) and Popkewitz (1998) have

framed their discourses along the same lines of not victimizing students, but rather paying attention to how the nature of the curriculum and the school contribute to the persistent academic underachievement of Non-White students, especially Black males. These researchers call for curriculum that considers both gender and race. Hence, there is a continued need to study the lived experiences of Black males in American communities, especially those males who leave high school early and those who graduate high school with inadequate skills to compete in the local and global economies.

In this chapter, I start by providing a brief overview of the education and social statistics regarding Black males. I discuss the crisis narratives of the lives of Black males, as well as what I will call dual-detachment, or young Black men being both out-of-school and out-of-work. This overview then informs the statement of the problem that guided this study. Second, I describe Critical Race Theory and intersectionality as the theoretical frameworks framing this study. Third, I describe the research statement and the rationale for this study, as well as its significance to the field of education. Finally, I present the research questions formulated to guide the data collection, analysis, and exploration of the dual-detachment phenomenon.

### **Crisis Narratives**

Statistical reports regarding the state of Black males in school and society are what Brown and Donner (2011) term Black males' "crisis narratives," which often garner "mainstream and scholarly attention" (p. 18). Crisis narratives report the dismal state of Black males without referring to the historical or current societal issues (Brown & Donner, 2011) that some Black males experience, such as poverty, unequal access to quality education, and barriers to employment. Accordingly, crisis narratives usually

portray Black males as being in a state of despair but fail to delineate the main causes of such misery or provide/explore solutions to the problems. Scholars such as David Berliner (2006) have stressed how poverty affects school and other life outcomes. Nonetheless, most crisis narratives continue to exclusively report the dismal educational and everyday life outcomes of Black males without looking at the effects of the poverty and unconcealed racism this population faces. Moreover, crisis narratives seldom stipulate *which* Black males are in crisis, thus depicting Black males as a homogeneous group.

Regardless, some of the most alarming crisis narratives include that, in 2012-13, only 59% of Black males graduated from high school compared to 79% of White males (Schott Foundation, 2015). Further, even though Black males represent about 8% of students enrolled in K-12 schools, they incurred one or more out-of-school suspension at a rate of 28%, compared to 24% for White males who represent 26% of students (U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, 2012). Furthermore, 1 in 9 Black males ages 20-34 were in jail as of January 2008, compared to 1 in 30 for all other American males in this age group (Pew Center on the States' Public Safety Performance Project, 2008). Black males have also not fared well in the labor market, with the most recent unemployment rate for those ages 20-24 hovering around 16%, compared to 8% for White males (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

The crisis narrative that has most clouded recent literature regarding Black males concerns their path from school to prison (Cole & Heilig, 2011; Dillon, 2009; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Justice Policy Institute, 2007; Losen, Hewitt, & Kim, 2010; Nance, 2015; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeire, & Valentine, 2009; Skiba, Michael, Nardo,

& Peterson, 2002; Smith, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). In some cases, the prominence of this narrative seems to be because of students being remanded to police custody and charged with law violations for school offenses that were historically handled within the school such as truancy (Hirschfield, 2008). The “school-to-prison pipeline” is a metaphor used to describe a trend in the United States education system whereby students are placed in restrictive special education programs, repeatedly suspended, retained in grade, and/or banished to alternative “outplacements” before finally dropping out or getting “pushed out” of school altogether (Advancement Project, 2010; Aull IV, 2012; Children’s Defense Fund, 2007; Cole & Heilig, 2011; Coleman & Lipper, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). More precisely, social equity activists describe the school-to-prison pipeline as a process whereby students’ education is interrupted by unrest, conviction, and sentencing (Advancement Project, 2010), as schools across the nation socialize a large percentage of minority students toward prison (Marsh, 2014; Smith, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). Unrest in this context means that students’ educational experience is often disrupted by police presence in the school and the use of metal detectors, creating students’ negative reactions, fear, and resentment toward school disciplinary and security measures (Bracy, 2010; Toldson, 2012).

In regard to socializing students toward prison, some scholars assert that the main objective of school is to prepare students for social and economic mobility (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Ferguson, 2000; Hirschfield, 2008) such that students later “assume their rightful position in the social strata and hierarchical work-place” (Hirschfield, 2008, p. 91). Therefore, “school activity is organized around the tasks of classification and socialization” (Hirschfield, 2008, p. 91). As such, through disciplinary practices that

sometimes make it more likely that students face criminal involvement with the juvenile courts than attain a quality education (Advancement Project et al., 2011; Toldson & Morton, 2011), schools may play a role in socializing students toward prison (Marsh, 2014). For example, in Ferguson's (2000) ethnographic study, many school authorities viewed chronically disobedient Black males as young as fifth grade as "bound for jail" and "unsalvageable." Therefore, research on the school-to-prison pipeline posits that disproportionate application of criminalizing discipline policies (Toldson & Morton, 2011) to youth who are perceived as "unsalvageable" would most likely make future prison terms inevitable for this population (Gregory et al., 2010; Mallett, 2016).

For instance, in 2011 Black youth "constituted 16% of the juvenile population but 33% of the delinquency caseload" (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014, p. 159). Moreover, the Justice Policy Institute (2007) reported that in 1999, "52% of African American male high school dropouts had prison records by their early thirties" (p. 11). Moreover, Black males were seven times more likely to spend time in a correctional facility in 2010 than White males (Guerino et al., 2011). As recently as December 2013, Black males had higher imprisonment rates than all other races across all age groups at 2,805 inmates per 100,000 black male U.S. residents, compared to 1% of Hispanic males (1,134 per 100,000) and 0.5% of white males (466 per 100,000) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). The notable difference in incarceration rate was in the 18-19 age group, in which Black males were 9 times more likely to be imprisoned (1,092 inmates per 100,000) than White males (115 inmates per 100,000), evidence of the aforementioned school-to-prison pipeline. Overall, Black males have a 32% chance of serving time in prison at some point

in their lives compared to a 17% chance for Hispanic males and a 6% chance for White males (Sentencing Project, 2012).

Moreover, as of June 2007, 9.7% of Black males ages 20-24 were being held in local, state, or federal prisons (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). Likewise, the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2010) reported that African American males ages 15-29 represented 40% of incarcerated individuals; by comparison, this same number of African American males represent only 14% of the U.S. population. Further, according to Pettit and Western (2004) and Western (2006), nearly two-thirds of Black males who leave high school without a diploma spend time in prison; thus, the term *school-to-prison pipeline*. In addition, cumulative risk of imprisonment for a male high school dropout born between 1975 and 1979 is 70% for Black males compared to 15% for White males (Western & Wilderman, 2009). Hence, the notion that schools are directly funneling Black boys into prisons through their disciplinary procedures, exclusionary practices, and police presence in schools might not be farfetched. In fact, research revealed that “a police officer’s regular presence at a school is predictive of greater odds that school officials refer students to law enforcement for committing various offenses, including lower-level offenses such as fighting or threats without a weapon” (Nance, 2015, p. 919). In essence, schools have involved police in disciplinary issues that were traditionally handled by educators. As a result, law enforcement officers stationed in schools have arrested students for minor school violations such as stealing, using a cell phone in class, arriving late to school, threatening a classmate without a weapon, and violating school dress code (Hirschfield, 2008; Nance, 2015; U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, 2012). Additionally, student arrests on school grounds have increased 300-

500% annually since the adoption of policies that require police presence on school premises (Advancement Project, 2005; Mallett, 2016; Thureau & Wald, 2010).

Black males' crisis narratives explicitly indicate that these males occupy a problematic space both in school and society. Hence, in recent years, much academic scholarship has focused on the schooling experiences of this group and their socialization toward prison (the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon). The school-to-prison pipeline effect ranks among the most disturbing socio-educational issues facing our education system; however, while crucially important, prison is not the only danger facing young Black men. While many Black males end up in the juvenile system over time, Black males being stuck between school and employment is a problem that education researchers need to explore. Being stuck between school and work is what I term dual-detachment.

### **Dual-Detachment**

I use the term dual-detachment to describe Black males who are not in school or in the labor force. In the social science literature, those who meet this criterion are often referred to as disconnected, disengaged, or idle youth (Edelman, Holzer, & Offner, 2006; MacDonald & Marsh, 2001; Sum, Khatiwada, Pond, et al., 2003). Others call these youth *opportunity youth*, thus describing them in terms of what they lack. Therefore, *opportunity youth* are youth who are “neither accumulating human capital in school or college nor accumulating labor market skills by working” (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012, p. 5). Within its definition, opportunity youth refers to chronic and under-attached youth. *Chronic* refers to those youth who left school at 16 and have never been involved in the labor market. *Under-attached* are described by Belfield et al.: “despite some

schooling and some work experience beyond 16, these youths have not progressed through college or secured a stable attachment to the labor market” (2012, p. 1).

Similarly, Macdonald and Marsh (2001) define “disconnection” as a lack of participation in key social activities such as education and employment. This broader definition encompasses both the chronic and under-attached dually-detached youth and will therefore be used to define dual-detachment in this study. The term “dual-detachment” differs from “opportunity youth” because its meaning encompasses youth alienation from both school and work and the barriers these youth face in the education system and in the labor force. On the other hand, “opportunity youth” focuses exclusively on youth disengaged from school and their subsequent lack of participation in the labor force, but less on the barriers these youth face in school and in the labor market.

Dating back to the early 1990s, Murray (1994) studied what he termed “the underclass” in poor communities in England. While he did not directly use the term dual-detachment, he alluded to this phenomenon of being out of school and out of work when he described a large number of young men who live off the “underground economy or are dependent on handouts” (p. 12). The “underground economy” describes an unofficial economy in which crime and dealing drugs serve as a form of human capital, with perceived potential for social mobility (Anderson, 1999).

Murray (1994) noted, “among 16- to 24-year-old black males not in school, the proportion that are not working or looking for work averaged 17% during the 1980s, and hit 20% in 1992. As of 1997, it stood at 23%” (p. 13), which is close to the overall unemployment rate during the Great Depression. Almost 20 years later, the proportion of Black males not working and not in school in the United States remains relatively the



same as this rate reported by Murray for England in the mid-1990s. For instance, in 2014 the percentage of Black males detached from school and work was 20%, compared to only 10% of White males (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014; Cordova, Wilson, & Morsey, 2016). In cities such as Chicago, the rate was as high as 29% in the same period. Moreover, among the 20- to 24-year-olds, 40% of Black males were detached from school and work in Chicago in 2014, compared to only 6% of White males (Cordova et al., 2016). Additionally, in a report titled, “Out of School, Out of Work...Out of Luck,” Levitan (2005) reported that in 2000, 16.6% of Black males in New York City were dually-detached, compared to 7.6% of White males.

In recent years, federal agencies and some non-governmental agencies have reported statistics on dual-detachment (Belfield et al., 2012; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; Edelman et al., 2006; Fernandes-Alcantra, 2015; Sum, Khatiwada, Pond, et al., 2003). Similar to the aforementioned crisis narratives, Black males account for the highest rates of those not in school or in the labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), especially in larger metropolitan areas.

Race and ethnicity, parental education, and receipt of public assistance are associated with youth disengagement from school (Brown & Emig, 1999; Fernandes-Alcantra, 2015; Sum, Khatiwada, Pond, et al., 2003). In addition, certain sociocultural situations are often associated with youth who are detached from school and work, including teen pregnancy, residence outside of the home because of incarceration, substance abuse, involvement in criminal activity, evidence of any disability, and head of household aged 18-24 with incomes below the poverty line (Belfield et al., 2012, p. 8). Consequently, because it is assumed that these youth lack both labor market and other

intangible skills that could be used to create economic value, they have limited economic and social mobility, which directly impacts their communities and society at large (Belfield et al., 2012). However, even though statistics regarding dual-detachment are readily available, the factors that contribute to this problem and the lived experiences of those who are dually-detached remain underexplored, particularly for young Black males.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Crisis narratives provide evidence that young Black males continue to struggle to achieve educational and economic success in America. These narratives also point to the fact that young Black males are disproportionately represented among those who are out-of-school and out-of-work (Belfield et al., 2012; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012; Cordova et al., 2016; Levitan, 2005). Yet much of the research on youth who are not in school or in the labor force has presented only cross-sectional data with no qualitative inquiries that explore the lived experiences of those in this predicament, with an exception of a few studies (Richardson & St. Vil, 2015; Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012). Incarceration has been found to intensify dual-detachment, as young Black males who have prison records tend to experience higher levels of disconnection from work and school (Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012). Likewise, Richardson and Vil (2015) learned from their qualitative study that when young Black males experience barriers to both school and employment, they perceive crime as work.

Being alienated from school and work not only affects the well being of these males, but the communities they live in suffer as well. Dually-detached youth are considered to be at higher risk for drug abuse, crime, teen pregnancy, and other adverse social outcomes (Belfield et al., 2012; MacDonald & Marsh, 2001; Swahn & Bossarte,

2009). Belfield and colleagues (2012) estimate that dually-detached youth cost taxpayers millions of dollars in social services benefits each year. Because of this, the federal government has become interested in this phenomenon because “detachment from both the labor market and school is an indicator that he or she may not be adequately making the transition to adulthood” (Fernandes-Alcantra, 2015, p. 1). Consequently, a dually-detached person may lack access to other necessities such as health insurance and housing, and the federal government will likely incur the costs of supporting this person in the form of social support expenses (Fernandes-Alcantra, 2015).

Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to dual-detachment is important to Black males’ education discourse and to communities in which these men live. Likewise, it is necessary to understand the lived experiences of those who find themselves out-of-school and out-of-work in order to formulate and implement policies that could curb the problem of dual-detachment. It is essential for research to include scholarship that places Black males who are not in school or in the labor force at the center of the analysis in order to understand how social, political, and economic forces contribute to their marginalized position in society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical perspective that informed this inquiry regarding Black males alienated from school and work was Critical Race Theory (CRT). In addition, the heuristic concept of intersectionality was used to focus on the interlocking categories of oppression that might limit dually-detached Black males. These two lenses are particularly useful in examining the complex identities Black males and dually-detached Black males maintain. Collins (2000) argues that limiting race, sexuality, and gender solely to poststructuralist

investigation ignores the material ways in which people experience their identities. Therefore, using CRT with intersectionality focuses on race as well as the interlocking categories of oppression such as gender, social class, sexuality, and language that might limit Black males who are alienated from school and the labor force.

Many CRT scholars hold that “race” is socially constructed and that “racial difference” is invented, perpetuated, and reinforced by society to maintain white supremacy (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Put simply, race becomes a tool that dominant racial groups use to marginalize the less dominant groups. Therefore, CRT was “developed to address social justice and racial oppression in U.S. society and speaks to the barriers of oppression such as racism, classism, etc. in institutions like schools” (Sleeter & Bernal, 2003, p. 247). Solórzano (1998) describes racism as a group’s belief that it is superior, and that the “superior” group believes it has power to carry out racist acts that affect the other groups. Hence, “CRT works to understand how race and racism intersect with gender, class, sexuality, language as structural [and] institutional factors to impact the less dominant groups” (Malagon, Perez Huber, & Velez, 2009, p. 253). Racism manifests itself differently among different minority groups. While only the cruder and more explicit forms of racism are viewed as problematic (Gillborn, 2010), CRT recognizes that racism exists to support an agenda of white supremacy, and challenges the myth of the fair American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

CRT was created by two legal scholars, Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, as a new strategy for dealing with the stagnant racial reform in the U.S. It has since been utilized in

fields such as education, ethnic studies, and critical studies to examine structural and institutional factors that impact minority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT is relevant to the topic at hand because it “examines racial inequalities... [and] serves as a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities” (Howard, 2008, p. 963).

Hence, scholars utilize CRT in order to surface evidence that racism, though universally condemned (at least rhetorically) by state policies and society in general, is still widespread in American society (Harris, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009). More precisely, CRT scholars’ main interest is to “explore how race inequities are shaped by processes that also reflect, and are influenced by, other dimensions of identity and social structure” (Gillborn, 2010, p. 278). Therefore, racism may affect the educational and employment experiences of youth of color, such as dually-detached Black males. As such, in this study I use CRT to focus on racism and its effect on this population, to address the consequences of racism, to challenge the myth that American society is fair (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; DeCuir-Gunby & Williams, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009), and to give voice to dually-detached Black males. Additionally, CRT allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of inequality in order to unveil deep-rooted schooling and employment barriers encountered by dually-detached Black males (Caton, 2012).

One specific component of CRT relevant to this study is counterstorytelling, described as a method of telling the stories of individuals whose experiences are underexplored or not told (Delgado, 1995). Dual-detachment is most likely viewed through the lenses of the community, parents, school personnel, and the media. In this

study, African American males who have experienced this phenomenon were given the opportunity to explicitly describe the web of factors that work together to keep them out of school and out of work—thus, this study reconstructed the reality about dual-detachment based on the voices of those whose views are not often heard in education research. Counterstorytelling was particularly relevant in this study, as I explored dual-detachment from the perspectives of the males who experienced the phenomenon. These young men were able to identify the factors that alienated them from school and work.

While CRT can be used independently as a theoretical lens, I use it with Feminist intersectionality—not to decenter race from the analysis, but to explore how race might intersect with gender and class in the repression of these dually-detached males. Historically, Black feminist scholars have used CRT in conjunction with intersectionality (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1992) because the two theoretical lenses are “both grounded in individuals’ lived-experiences according to their multiple category memberships” (Anderson & MacCormack, 2010, p. 953). Moreover, both intersectionality and CRT go beyond understanding social inequalities and the processes that reproduce them.

Intersectionality is a tenet of Feminist Standpoint Theory. According to Harding (1991) and Hartsock (1983), Feminist Standpoint Theory is ingrained in the Marxian analysis of class, which maintains that knowledge is and should be situated in people’s diverse social locations (Mann & Kelly, 1997). Harding (1997) further delineates the principal premise of Feminist Standpoint Theory as the fact that different social locations “tend to generate distinctive accounts of nature and social relations” (p. 384).

Therefore, Feminist Standpoint Theory begins with the notion that “the less powerful members of society experience different reality as a consequence of their

oppression [and] to survive subordinate people must be attentive to the perspectives of the dominant class as well as their own” (Swigonski, 1994, p. 390). More precisely, Harding (1997) asserts that the accounts of the less powerful can be used to gain insights into how power operates and to expose differences between what the powerful claim to be true and what people actually experience. Harding (1997) further argues that:

Feminist Standpoint Theory was developed primarily to account for the more comprehensive and empirically adequate knowledge about social worlds that could be generated by starting off research from feminist understandings of women’s lives instead of from dominant conceptual frameworks that expressed the interests and values of social institutions from which women’s voices had been excluded or which they were marginalized. (pp. 186-187)

Therefore, as White feminists originated their standpoint dialogue from “women’s lives and experiences” (Smith, 1987), Black feminist scholars recognized the need to account for the intersections of gender with other social identities as a starting point for creating a theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Walker, 1983). Intersectionality started as a critique of gender-based research that ignored multiple levels of inequality for people labeled with specific categorizations (Collins, 2000). Intersectionality scholars believe that an analysis is weakened if any form of oppression is ignored. In *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), Patricia Hill Collins argues that there cannot be one “fundamental” system of oppression. She further expounds that "oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (p. 18). In essence, race intersects with gender, sexuality, and class in the lives of both Black women and men, regardless of how these identities are constructed or ascribed.

For example, the Combahee River Collective (1977/1995), a group of Black feminists, argued, “we . . . find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously” (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995, p. 234). In studying the perspective of Black males who are detached from school and employment, I hope to show how they experience race, gender, and class oppression. These young men may be privileged because of their gender and marginalized because of their race and their inability to gain power in social institutions. By focusing this study on this population with a less privileged social position, I hope to gain more complete knowledge of dual-detachment.

Accordingly, the intersectionality framework allows me to place dually-detached Black males at the center of the analysis and focus on the intertwining types of oppression that cripple them. Essentially, Black males struggle against racial oppression as they are sometimes confined within segregated housing and schools in the same manner as Black women. Hence, discrimination and oppression are real for Black men and Black women, regardless of how gender, race, and class are constructed (Collins, 2000). In general, masculinity is valorized but not when it is held by the other. When it is, it gets inflated into hypermasculinity, thus becoming dangerous. The tropes of the “angry Black man” and the rapacious Black man are the result, and that negatively impacts Black males’ school and workforce success (Staples, 1982) because of more school suspensions and arrests for the same behavior as White males. Women, as the other, face a similar penalty if they are perceived as being too masculine.

Collins (2000) further reasons, “people experience and resist oppression” based on “personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by



race, class and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions” (p. 227). Inherently, race, gender, and class intersect constantly and repeatedly and thereby position dominant groups at the center and the rest at the margins. Therefore, situating race, gender, and class at the center of the analysis of dual-detachment should aid me in understanding these particular Black males’ perspectives from their lived experiences. More explicitly, CRT provides an outlet for these dually-detached Black males to express their experiences with oppression (Howard, 2008) and to give voice to the often silenced Black, while intersectionality helps me comprehend how race intersects with other modes of oppression to reproduce inequality (Gillborn, 2010) in the lives of these males.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the lived realities of those who are dually-detached—specifically, to explore the meaning of dual-detachment from the perspectives of those living the phenomenon. Specifically, I aimed (1) to develop a deeper understanding of the past school and everyday experiences of young Black males who are detached from the education system and the labor force, (2) to explore institutional, personal, and societal factors that contribute to these males leaving school when the prospects of obtaining gainful employment are slim, and (3) to construct knowledge about the phenomenon of dual-detachment.

### **Rationale**

Periodically, when dire statistics on Black males are reported, especially in the media or popular culture, it perpetuates the web of stereotypes that combine to racialize and marginalize this population (Howard, 2008) instead of instigating “moral panic” (Connolly, 2004) or inspiring solutions to the problem. For instance, some, without any empirical evidence, assert that entrenched African American males’ problems in the

education system and society are a result of their culture of coolness and detachment (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007). More sadly, Gordon and Nembhard (1994) emphasize that Black males' crisis narratives create leverage for "subtle racists to use data to paint the worst possible picture of Black males" (p. 509). Although crisis narratives only paint a partial picture of the lived experiences of Black males, the statistics are still alarming in that they show great educational and employment disparities between Black males and White males. Taken together, these statistics should indeed arouse social concern (Connolly, 2004; Donner & Shockley, 2010; Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007). Therefore, this study responds to a call for research that documents the lived experiences of Black males in school and society, in order to understand the broader institutional factors that affect their educational and economic success (Donner & Shockley, 2010; Noguera, 2008). Education research must move from viewing Black males as being deficient (Howard, 2008) to looking at how institutions socialize them toward being out-of-school and out-of-work, and how race and racism mediate their daily lives (Malagon et al., 2009).

Moreover, this study is important because it provides evidence that dual-detachment is not only an inner-city problem; rather, it is a chronic widespread problem based more on race and gender than location. I wanted to explore and document that Black males' dual-detachment is an American problem, which is real in both inner cities and small to medium size Midwestern cities. Therefore, this study is important because it attempts to demonstrate that Black males' schooling and employment barriers are race and gender issues that are evident in inner cities and other locations across the country.

## **Significance to Education**

In the July 8, 2015 issue of *Education Week*, Nicole Nguyen, an assistant professor of social foundations of education at the University of Illinois-Chicago, writes about how challenging racial injustice begins with education scholars. She particularly issues a challenge to colleges of education to “build reciprocal partnerships [with] communities...using all [their] resources for a common anti-racist, anti-imperialist future” (p. 32). Nguyen elaborates, “the university is a public good with public mission. That is, the intellectual society we fund and nurture extends beyond university borders and reaches into communities to solve social problems” (p. 32). This study embraces Nguyen’s call by highlighting dual-detachment as an underexplored social problem that educators and policy makers must collectively attempt to solve.

Moreover, this study argues that the more publicized school-to-prison pipeline may not be as direct or inevitable for all Black males. There are other factors that affect Black males that happen between school and prison with direct implications for the lives of these Black males. For instance, to address the dual-detachment problem, President Obama introduced the My Brother’s Keeper Program as an initiative to assist Black males who are not in school and not participating fully in the workforce (Obama, 2014). He declared that there are too many Black males caught between school and employment. Thus, this study is relevant to the ongoing debate about the education and employment of Black males. Consequently, this study will inform public policy on alternative education or skills training initiatives that might improve this population’s ability to compete in the labor market.

## **Research Questions**

This study explored the in-school and out-of-school experiences of Black males between ages 18-24. It was guided by the question: What are the lived experiences of young Black males who are detached from both the educational system and the labor force? Data collection and analysis was supported by the following questions:

- i. What are the lived in-school experiences that contribute to dually-detached Black males leaving school unprepared for the labor force when the prospects of securing rewarding employment are slim?
- ii. What do dually-detached Black males experience in their quest to obtain employment?

The first question was closely related to these males' school experiences and their relationships with school personnel, and how these relationships shaped or did not shape their future beyond school. The second question sought to explore Black males' experiences and challenges as they found themselves alienated from both school and work.

## **Delimitations**

This study explored the past school experiences and current lived experiences of six dually-detached Black males between ages 18-24 in Beaver City—a pseudonym for a small city in the Midwest. The experiences of these six males do not represent the experiences of all dually-detached Black males in Beaver City or other Black males across different cities in the country.

## **Conclusion**

Using Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, I explore the factors that lead Black males to become dually-detached and explore the lived experiences of dually-detached Black males. This chapter introduced the study, including its background, theoretical framework, statement of purpose, research questions, and rationale were identified. In Chapter II, the literature that guided this study, which includes literature on structural and policy factors that affect Black males' experiences both at school and in society, is summarized. In Chapter III, I describe the methodology and how it was used to explore dual-detachment, and present my data collection and analysis methods. In Chapter IV, I report the key findings. Finally, in Chapter V, I discuss the significance of these findings to Black males' dual-detachment and offer recommendations for future research on this phenomenon.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Using the framework of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, my goal was to uncover the institutional and personal factors that lead Black males ages 18-24 to be detached from school and employment. This study looked at the factors that contributed to why these males left high school early (“dropped out”) or who graduated without adequate skills for gainful employment or transition to higher education. Additionally, this study sought to illuminate the lived experiences of those who are dually-detached. It is informed by prior research that reports the disproportionate representation of Black males in all negative school and employment outcomes. This study builds on previous research on Black males by adding the voices of dually-detached males, who are often not provided an opportunity to contribute their voices to education research.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that underpinned this study was Ramaswamy and Freudenberg’s (2012) multilevel conceptual framework that links incarceration to social exclusion and explores how incarceration experiences exacerbate school and work disconnectedness. The framework posits that structural factors, together with national and local policies, influence schooling and employment experiences of youth of color. More specifically, the framework suggests that “policies that are based on broader social and economic trends influence who gets access to schooling and employment” (Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012, p. 2). Moreover, the authors postulate that youth who

are out-of-school and out-of-work, particularly Black youth, are often disproportionately targeted by police and criminal justice policies. Lastly, the framework suggests that youth experience with the criminal justice system and “reentry policies further block access to work or education, lead to subsequent criminal justice involvement, and ultimately contribute to even more profound exclusion from mainstream adult society” (Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012, p. 2).

The framework is depicted graphically as a representation of my own design in Figure 1. The original Ramaswamy and Freudenberg (2012) conceptual framework focused significantly on youth disconnectedness and incarceration, and subsequent social exclusion. In addition, the authors extended social exclusion beyond schooling and employment by exploring how disconnected youth may also be excluded from housing and healthcare.

The first change I made to the original conceptual framework was substituting “dual-detachment” for “disconnectedness” under the “outcome” heading. Second, because my study did not explore the impact of criminal justice policies on this population, I omitted “criminal justice policies” under the “policy factors” heading. Third, as depicted under the “policy factors” heading, I added “zero-tolerance policy” as an education policy that might impact Black males’ education experience. All other additions that I made to the conceptual framework are shown in dotted lines. For example, the model shows that there may be a direct path from school to prison as a consequence of school disciplinary measures under zero-tolerance policies. Further, there might also be a path from dual-detachment to prison and vice versa. In fact, Ramaswamy

and Freudenberg (2012) found that youth who were out-of-school and out-of-work prior to incarceration were likely to experience the same fate upon leaving prison. Moreover, the framework posits that discrimination and marginalization during the period of exclusion from school and work may lead some dually-detached youth to commit crimes that result to incarceration, as shown by a path from social exclusion to incarceration.

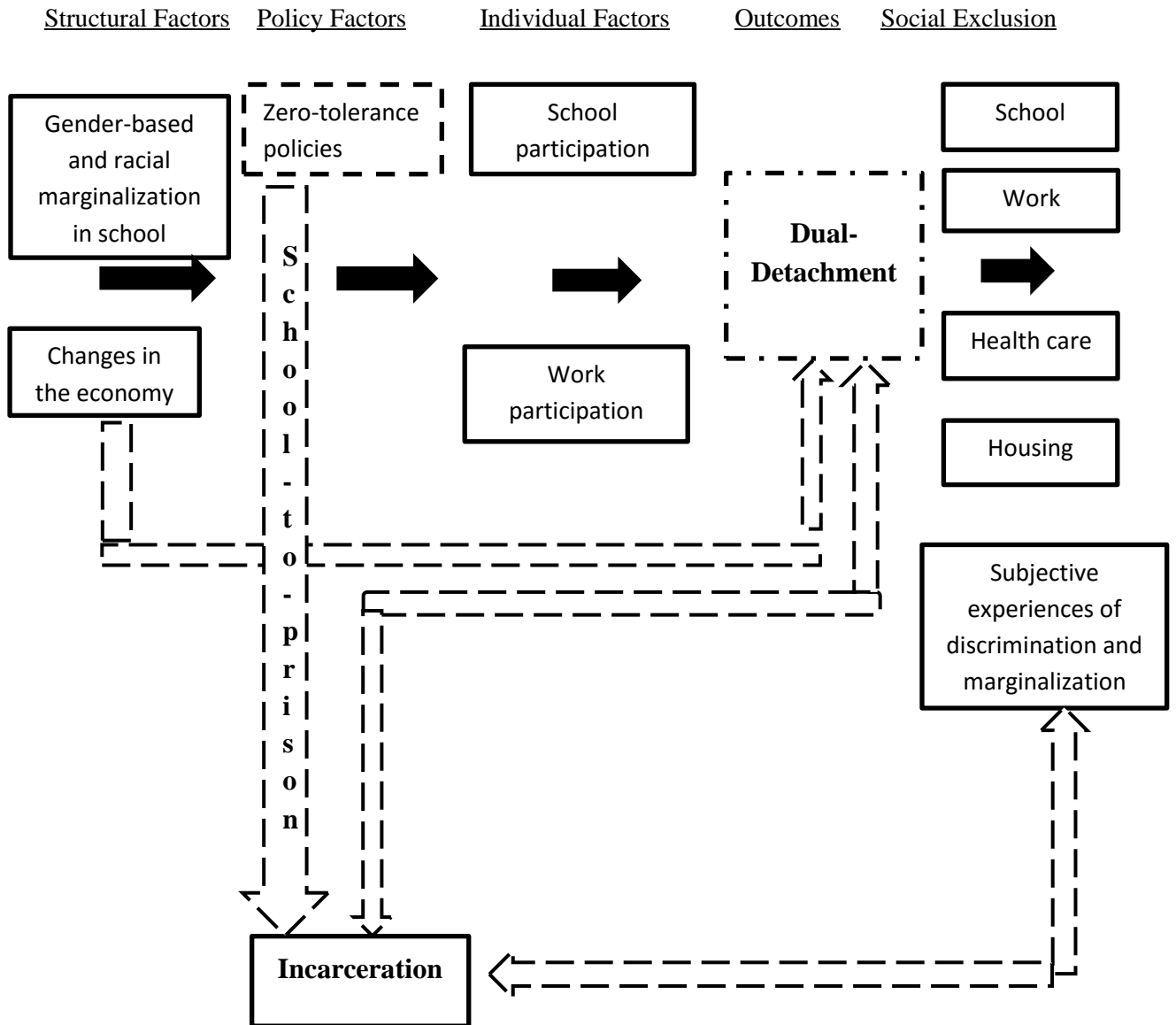


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Black Males' Experiences with Dual-detachment. (Adapted from Ramaswamy & Freuddenberg, 2012)



I adapted this conceptual framework both to organize the literature and to argue that while some young Black males may go directly from school to prison, others are likely to be dually-detached before entering the criminal justice system. As such, there is a great need to explore the factors that contribute to dual-detachment, as well as to explore what is occurring during this period of exclusion from school and work. Thus, the adopted conceptual framework posits that marginalization of young Black males in school and society shape schooling and employment opportunities for this population.

In this literature review I address a relevant body of research, arranging it in two broad themes: (1) structural factors and (2) policy factors. These factors frequently work together to shape schooling and employment opportunities for young Black males. First, I describe school narratives which reflect how Black males are marginalized in school and which subsequently lead to them leaving school unprepared for the labor market. Second, I discuss masculinity narratives that reflect responses from Black males regarding their marginalization in school and society. Third, I elaborate on changes in the economy and how they have contributed to joblessness for Black males in American cities in recent years. Fourth, I address policy factors and their impact on Black males' educational attainment. I specifically explore how the zero-tolerance policy in particular has exacerbated the dual-detachment phenomenon. Finally, I discuss the school-to-prison pipeline and its effect on schooling and employment options of Black males who find themselves victims of the phenomenon.

## **Structural Factors**

### **School Narratives**

Black males are subjected to school experiences that may impact their educational outcomes and aspirations, including covert and overt racism from school personnel, being viewed as “beyond love” and “bad boys,” low teacher expectations, being exposed to curricula and teaching practices that reflect mainly traditional Eurocentric cultural values, and negative relationships with school personnel.

Exploring the lived experiences of Black males who are not in school and not working requires an understanding of the racial and gender marginalization of Black males in the educational system. School narratives can help us understand this marginalization. They document the tensions between Black males and school personnel and the effects of these tensions on the lived experiences of these males (Conchas & Noguera, 2004). To put school narratives into perspective, I refer to a statement by Gibson (1986), a critical education theorist, on why schools fail to eliminate inequality and unfairness: “the economic system is unequal and unfair (in power, wealth and opportunity). Schools mirror that system, are subordinate to it, determined by it, and therefore function to reproduce it” (p. 47). Gibson further argues that schools are a means of reproducing “the power and ideology of the state by providing appropriately socialized workers into the economic and political structure” (1986, p. 49; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Likewise, Freire posits that “education is concerned with the transmission of knowledge, but education is controlled by the ruling class, and to protect their interests...the ruling class ensures that knowledge transmitted serves those ends...” (Quoted in Shor, 1992, p. 51). These critical theorists tend to attribute school failure or underachievement to social

structures and processes rather than to the student. As such, these theorists assert that the lack of social and economic mobility for subordinate groups such as Black males may be a consequence of larger structural and policy factors that disproportionately affect these young men in school and society. Hence the need to explore structures, policies, practices, and programs in schools that Black males attend (Howard, 2013) and how they might contribute to these males' detachment from school.

Numerous studies (Brooms, 2016; Duncan, 2002; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ferguson, 2000; Fordham, 1996; Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1988, 1994; Majors & Billings, 1992; Payne & Brown, 2010; Ross & Jackson, 1991; Toldson, 2008) have chronicled the school experiences of Black males, documenting this population's interaction with their teachers, peers, and schools at large. These researchers have detailed, in diverse ways, the role schools play in the social and cultural reproduction of society (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). In Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, "certain knowledge, dispositions, orientations, goods, and credentials unique to dominant social groups are privileged within the context of school and are often used for social and cultural exclusion" (cited in Allen & Boyce, 2013, p. 20). Social reproduction theorists argue that some racial groups benefit from school while others do not (Anyon, 1997; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Oakes, 1985, 1986).

For example, Duncan (2002) employs Critical Race Theory to conceptualize schooling, exclusion, and the marginalization of Black males. His study suggests, "because Black males are constructed as a strange population...their marginalization and oppression are understood [by their teachers] as natural and primarily of their own doing" (p. 140). In addition, it divulges an interesting phenomenon that, because Black males are

powerless to even define their own circumstances in school, they become “subjects of imperialism or [may be] defined by others” (Duncan, 2002, p. 140). For example, Duncan (2002) offers conflicting descriptions when positing why Black males are marginalized and excluded in the school in which he carried out his study. He established that other students, teachers, and administrators frame the plight of Black male students in terms such as, “they simply do not perform well in such environments” (p. 142). As such, these males are viewed as being “beyond love” because others see them as not belonging to such educational environments (Duncan, 2002). Consequently, because they are perceived as being “beyond love,” they are held (by school personnel) to low academic and behavioral expectations (Ferguson, 2000; Roderick, 2003) and often viewed through academic deficit lenses (Milner IV, 2007).

On the contrary, Black males frame their school experiences in *moral* terms such as, “people really don’t care too much about brothers here, or I think they set some of us to get in trouble” (Duncan, 2002, p. 142). Hence, hooks’ (2004) conclusion that because Black males lack privilege and status, and are “beyond love,” they remain a target of miseducation. Hooks further asserts that “educational systems fail to impart or inspire learning in African American males of all ages....[M]any African American males graduate from high schools with reading and writing levels at the third or fourth grade” (pp. 40-41).

In another school narrative, Payne and Brown (2010) surveyed and interviewed street-life-oriented Black males between ages 16-19 in the streets of Harlem, New York and Paterson, New Jersey, and found that while these males valued education, they were also aware that their teachers did not provide them with quality learning experiences that

would result in socioeconomic mobility for them. According to Payne and Brown (2010), “Street life is a phenomenological term essentially viewed by the young men as an ideology centered on personal and economic survival” often manifested through peer bonding by playing basketball or hanging out and participating in illegal activities such as burglary and interpersonal violence (Payne & Brown, 2010, p. 318; Payne, 2008). Therefore, because these males perceived school as the least viable avenue to social and economic advancement, street life became a better option.

Likewise, Howard (2008) learned that the Black males in his study experienced overt and covert racism from both teachers and administrators. These young men claimed that they were regularly scrutinized and excluded more than other students of different races and genders. For example, Black males were often expected to play and excel in sports, Black males were always the first accused of any form of misbehavior in school, and school personnel were often surprised when these young men behaved differently than they expected. Additionally, the young men in the study were often aware of the negative stereotypes in society regarding Black males and how these stereotypes impacted their educational experiences (Howard, 2008). Consequently, because of the overt and covert racism, these males were more likely to view school as an unwelcoming place and as a result, drop out of school or leave school unprepared to transition into the labor force or higher education, thus propelling them toward dual-detachment.

In another study, Kunjufu (1995) noticed that teachers did not stimulate enthusiasm for learning among Black boys during an eight-year period of visiting schools. He observed that problem solving was not incorporated into the curriculum; thus, some Black males lost interest in school as early as fourth grade. Accordingly, he

concluded that teachers failed to nurture Black males' passion for learning and as result, some of the Black males were more likely to be alienated from school by the time they reached middle school because they were not provided a fair opportunity to access their full academic potential.

Another study that provides reasons why some young Black males disengage from school is Ferguson's (2000) ethnographic inquiry, in which she writes about the making of the "Bad Boy." Her study is "an account of the power of institutions to create, shape, and regulate social identities" (p. 2). Ferguson expands on how Black males are "identified as 'at-risk' of failing, as 'at-risk' of being school drop-outs" (p. 91). She also discovered that teachers repeatedly divided students in terms of "ideal pupil at one end of the spectrum and the unsalvageable student [Black male] who is criminally inclined on the other end" (p. 90). Ferguson further expounds on how schools do not seem to grant young, Black males opportunities to display childish naughtiness. Rather, their naughtiness is often seen "as a sign of inherent vicious insubordinate nature that as a threat to order must be controlled" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 86). Howard and colleagues (2012, p. 90) add, "the bad boy image of Black males occurs early and can interfere with any efforts for normative social and psychological development." In addition, because those perceived as "bad boys" were frequently suspended and expelled from school, they lost valuable learning time, and some were likely to drop out of school or leave school unprepared for productive participation in the labor force, thus exacerbating the problem of Black males' dual-detachment.

Lack of culturally relevant pedagogy in the schools has also been linked to school disengagement among Black male students (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ladson-

Billings, 1994; Tatum, 2005, 2009). Gay (2010) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as using “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reverence, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective” (p. 31) for students, thus improving their academic achievement. In addition, Tatum (2005) posits that curriculum materials capturing authentic portrayals of cultural experiences that students can identify with and relevant to students’ lives are critical for students’ engagement. Sadly, most curricula and teaching practices still reflect traditional Eurocentric cultural values, which fail to engage minority students, particularly Black males (Howard, 2013).

Other school narratives (Conchas, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Pollock, 2004) affirm the significant role race plays in the schooling and achievement of Black students. In particular, Conchas (2006) writes about how schools are segregated and divided within racial groups, and students’ race generally determines the level of support one receives from school personnel. Comparatively, Lopez (2003) discusses how “hegemonic race and gender narratives about racially stigmatized communities filtered down to the classroom” (p. 88) and ultimately influence how students are treated. This finding echoes the arguments of many social theorists that some racial groups benefit from school while others do not (Anyon, 1997, Bourdieu, 1977; Oaks, 1985). Thus the literature on Black males provides evidence that the predetermined inferiority stigma placed on these males continues to impact their educational experience leading to high disengagement for some.

On a positive note, other school narratives found that a school culture that fosters good relationships between Black males and their teachers was crucial for Black males’

success (Brooms, 2013, 2016; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Toldson; 2008). In interviews with 20 Black males, Brooms (2016) found that their school experiences were positively shaped by their teachers. In addition to receiving academic support, these males learned how to face their personal challenges because of the positive reinforcement and care they received from their teachers. Likewise, Toldson (2008) found that the Black males in his study believed that their teachers were “interested in them as a person, treated them fairly, encouraged them to express their views and gave extra help when needed” (p. 45). Moreover, in Brooms’ (2016) study the Black males talked about the overall support they received from the school environment at large, and how this support enhanced their educational achievement.

School narratives provide poignant evidence that young Black males are more likely to leave school unprepared for the workforce if they did not establish a positive connection with the school and school personnel. As a result, some may find themselves detached from both school and employment. In conclusion, it is apparent from these school narratives that racial minorities, particularly Black males, continue to face closed doors to educational opportunities (Collins, 2004), which therefore necessitates giving voice to Black males, especially those alienated from school and work.

### **Masculinity Narratives**

This section of the literature review covers studies that describe how young Black males create their own masculinities and how their performance of masculinity in schools is often criminalized, thus impeding their educational achievement. Moreover, this section looks at “hypermasculinity”—gender-intensified behavior utilized by males to evoke respect—and “cool pose,” a mechanism Black males use to counter social



inequality. In short, this section covers content that shows that however young Black males choose to perform their masculinity, it is often viewed by school personnel as being in conflict with academic achievement.

Black males' masculinity narratives chiefly cover their response to their marginalized status both at school and in society at large. First, it is important to briefly explain the social construction of masculinity. Those who acknowledge social constructions of masculinity posit that men's stereotypical masculine behaviors such as aggressiveness, toughness, and competitiveness are things that men do, partially in response to external influences, with negotiated meanings, learned and reinforced through social interactions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel & Messner, 2007) at school and in society at large. Further, social constructionists identify multiple masculinities such as Black, White, gay, and heterosexual.

These masculinities are often situated in a sociocultural context that prioritizes White and heterosexual masculinities above Black or gay masculinities (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). Weaver-Hightower (2003) observes that, "individuals and social groups create and adapt versions of masculinity for their own uses within their own cultural frames" (p. 480). Connell (1995) brings the concept of hegemony into the multiple masculinity dialogue and "suggests that the multiple versions of masculinity constantly struggle for dominance and that some groups actually achieve dominance" (cited in Weaver-Hightower, 2003, p. 480). For Black males, the pervasiveness of institutional racism and their subordination "as racial minorities has more than cancelled out their advantages as males in the larger society" (Staples, 1982, p. 7). As such, the criminalization of young Black males is related to the performance of masculinity that

impedes their academic achievement and fosters their alienation from the education system (Ferguson, 2000), propelling them toward dual-detachment or worse, the criminal justice system. Ferguson further puts into perspective that societal representation of masculinity for Black males often presents them as criminal and endangered species because of the stereotype of street violence.

Collins (2005) posits that race, gender, and class intersect constantly and repeatedly in the lives of Black males. In an American culture where power is associated with economic and political dominance, Black males are often seen as weak. In addition, she (2005) conjectures that “rather than expressing masculine authority by running corporations or holding high-level government positions, Black men search for respect from their marginal social locations” (p. 190). She further expounds that because Black males are labeled as “weak” and unable to finish school, physicality and masculine aggressiveness become integral aspects of these males’ identities.

In general, African Americans who are frustrated with their racial status in life often express anger (Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, Cameron, & Davis, 2002). In particular, young Black males resort to hypermasculinity as a way to negotiate race-related stress in many contexts including school (Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005; Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, & Seaton, 2004). Cunningham and Spencer (2003) describe hypermasculinity as gender-intensified behavior males utilize to evoke respect, especially when their manhood is threatened or challenged. Accordingly, young Black males who are marginalized in both school and society make use of hypermasculine acts as a coping strategy to ensure their personal safety and livelihood, and at the same time give the impression of invincibility or noncompliance (Majors & Billson, 1992).

In some cases, hypermasculinity takes the form of more outward exhibitions of anger, such as rebellion, defiance, and direct physical aggression (Noguera, 2003a). Collins (2005) further infers that for marginalized Black males, physical and sexual dominance become identities of choice. Because Black males experience barriers in other areas such as schooling and employment, sexual dominance becomes an important indicator of masculinity. Likewise, Black males, whose power in the political economy remains bleak, commit violence against other men, women, and children, violence which then becomes a reality that affects their communities (Collins, 2005).

Returning to schooling, several studies have documented ways gender informs the experiences of Black males in school (Davis, 2001, 2003; Fashola, 2003; Ferguson, 2000; Gunn, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2008; McCready, 2008; Noguera, 2003a; Roderick, 2003) and how “masculinities are created” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003, p. 480) by and for these males. Masculinity narratives posit that achievement differences between Black males and their White counterparts could be “explained by hegemonic conceptions of masculinity among African American boys and teens” (Harper, 2006, p. 340). Hence, it is crucial for urban educators to understand multiple masculinities and how “Black male students’ gender identities are constantly being built, negotiated and maintained” (McCready, 2008, p. 341).

In a study of masculinity, Davis (2001) observed how middle school Black males adhered to what he calls a “strict masculine” code of conduct which involved romantic relationships (not just friendships) with females and being considered “cool”. He observed that this behavior was often in conflict with academic achievement. As such, males who failed to abide by this masculine code were “usually expelled from the

confines and benefits of boy networks at school” (p. 179). Roderick (2003) further confirms that Black males are more likely to form peer groups that regularly deter and discourage them from immersing themselves in rigorous schoolwork.

Similarly, in inner-city schools, Black boys who do not act sufficiently hypermasculine become targets of interpersonal violence (Gunn, 2008), and those who have not appropriately learned hypermasculinity are physically challenged by their peers, “using them as a way to establish their own masculine credibility” (p. 33). Then, by the time these young men get to high school, their teachers already hold stereotypes about young Black males. At this juncture teacher expectations are reinforced, as these men pay more attention to their peers and continue to perform their masculinity (Gunn, 2008). As such, inner-city Black boys are in a double bind because they have to “present themselves in ways that deter interpersonal violence against them on the street, but in doing so they also invite unwanted attention to themselves from school personnel” (Gunn, 2008, p. 36).

Masculinity narratives also include Majors and Billson’s (1992) concept of “cool pose,” a way to define patterns of masculine expression among Black men. They (1992) assert, “being cool is an ego booster for Black males comparable to the kind White males easily find through attending good schools, landing prestigious jobs, and bringing home decent wages” (p. 5). Black males display cool pose through distinct styles of speaking, gesturing, dressing, hairstyles, walking, standing, and shaking hands (Hall, 2009; Majors, 2001; Majors & Billson, 1992). Black males utilize cool pose as a demonstration of social competence and as a mechanism to counter social inequality.

In schooling, Black males use cool pose to counter negative responses and treatment by school personnel (Wright, 2007, 2009). Wright (2009) posits, “teachers are

often left unclear about their students' display of cool pose which often include slickness, bitterness, anger and distrust of schools and teachers" (p. 126). Hence, cool pose has been dismissed as a problematic behavior oppositional to school culture. Wright (2009) suggests that educators should try to comprehend students' use of cool pose and argues, "when school personnel understand that the cool pose can convey pride, strength, and control as well as a strategy to cope with oppression, invisibility, and marginality, they will be more apt to react more positively" (p.126).

The most widely used and controversial theory used to explain Black males' masculinity narratives is oppositional culture theory (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978, 1991). It posits that Black students—males in particular—develop an oppositional position to the dominant culture in which whiteness is regularly rewarded and people of color are routinely subordinated. In short, the theory suggests that because African American students perceive no upward mobility through education and view school as a social institution that maintains hegemonic power structures, they devalue and resist academic success (Ogbu, 1991). In essence, Black students may see no rate of return on education; therefore, "they display greater resistance to school; high-achievers are sanctioned by peers and accused of 'acting White'; and resistance to school accounts for racial gaps in achievement" (Harper & Davis, 2012, p. 106). However, others argue that Black students value education as much as White students (Ferguson, 2001; Harris, 2006) and believe that they can rise out of the depths of poverty through education.

Ferguson (2001) argues that Black students interested in education could negotiate racial solidarity with their peers and at the same time engage in rigorous schoolwork. He maintains that the real problem is the "cultural system of White

superiority within which negative racial stigma is kept alive and out of which insinuations of Black inferiority and marginality emanate” (p. 378). Hence, those who appear to act or even speak in ways that differ from “cool pose” and other postures traditionally adopted by Black students are often accused of “acting White”, but probably not because they have abandoned their racial solidarity.

In short, masculinity narratives portray Black males as being in a double bind. If they conform to the rules and engage in their studies, their peers accuse them as “acting White,” which is often perceived as being “wrong.” On the other hand, if they “present themselves in ways that deter interpersonal violence against them on the street...they also invite unwanted attention to themselves from school personnel” (Gunn, 2008, p. 36). Thus, it is crucial for school personnel to help these young men find balance between school and the outside world, and still succeed in both worlds.

### **Changes in the Economy**

This section of the literature review covers Black males’ high unemployment rates as a consequence of both deindustrialization and a shift toward service industry jobs that require more education. In addition, this section outlines employment disparities between Black males and White males and how these disparities exist during both recession and economic boom. Finally, this section of the literature summarizes several statistical reports that show these disparities and how young Black males lack access to employment in many communities across the nation.

The second major area of the literature that helps explain dual-detachment among Black males concerns the economy. Unemployment of Black males can be traced back to the 1970’s deindustrialization—that is, a decline in industrial activity in a region or an

economy—which removed many unskilled workers from the labor force (Bloome & Western, 2011; Kasarda, 1990, Wilson, 1987). This period of deindustrialization led to some manufacturing firms locating overseas in search of cheap labor. For example, during this time, four major metropolitan areas—Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia—lost over one million jobs in manufacturing, wholesale, and retail enterprises. Globalization, changes in transportation systems, advances in communication technology, and firm relocations to the suburbs also contributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs in inner cities across the country (Sassen, 2000).

This deindustrialization together with technological advancements, disproportionately affected lower-skilled Black males (Edelman et al., 2006; Mincy, 2006; Wagmilller, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Black males were also more adversely affected by these structural changes in the economy because of their overrepresentation in industries that were likely to relocate overseas in pursuit of cheaper labor (Bonacich, 1976). Moreover, some African American males were left jobless because of the shift toward service industry jobs with higher educational requirements (Kasarda, 1990). This economic restructuring left mainly low-paying service and production jobs, offering no long-term security, to racial minorities such as Black males (Edelman et al., 2006; Mincy, 2006; Sassen, 2000).

In subsequent decades, the unemployment rate of Black males continued to increase in communities across America (Anderson, 1999; Cordova et al., 2016; Kalleberg, 2013; Levine, 2010; Levitan, 2005; Pager, 2003, 2007; Quillian, 2003; Wagmiller, 2008). Anderson (1999) investigated the manufacturing job loss in Philadelphia and its contribution to Black families' migration in search of economic

opportunities. Such migrations contributed to loss of community infrastructure in these cities, which in turn fostered crime and violence as more and more Black males went jobless (Anderson, 1999). Likewise, Levitan (2005) examined Black males' employment in New York City, where deindustrialization contributed to a 50% decline in jobs that were historically held by these males. In the report "Out of School, Out of Work...Out of Luck," Levitan (2005) notes that sectors that traditionally employed large percentages of Black males (i.e., construction, public service, trade and transportation) lost over 100,000 jobs in New York between 2000 and 2003.

These changes in the economy have had a disproportionate impact on Black males ages 16-24. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), from 2008-2011 Black males experienced the highest rates of unemployment as compared to White males. For example, during this period, the average jobless rate ranged from 25-31%, peaking at 49% in 2009 for all Black youth in this age group. More recently, Cordova and his colleagues (2016) compiled male and female employment patterns by race/ethnicity from 2005-2015 and found some overwhelming rates. For instance, in 2014, 88% of 16- to 19-year-old Black males in Chicago were unemployed. In the same period, joblessness for 20- to 24-year-old Black males reached 59%, compared to 24% for White males the same age.

More studies (Edelman et al., 2006; Levine, 2010; Richardson & St. Vil, 2015; Wagmiller, 2008) report that overall, Black males' unemployment has remained high across the country. Edelman and colleagues (2006) reported that only half of African American males ages of 18-24 who have no more than a high school diploma and who are neither in school or in jail have a job. Likewise, Levine (2010) reported staggering



joblessness for Black males in major cities across the country. For instance, the unemployment rate among Black males in Milwaukee was 53% in 2009, double the rate reported in the 1970s. Levine (2010) summarized that more than 30 large cities in America had jobless rates greater than 30% for Black males, with rates hovering near 50% in Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh.

Interestingly, unemployment disparities between Black males and White males have remained the same in recession and in times of economic boom. For example, 30% of young Black males were unemployed nationally during the 2008 recession, compared to 15% of young White males (Kuehn, 2013; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). After the economic recovery, 13% of Black males remained unemployed in 2012 compared to 7% of White males (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

Wilson (2008) described these disproportionate rates of unemployment among Black males as “the new urban poverty,” meaning that in many segregated segments of the cities with a large number of working-age unemployed Black men, those men either never entered the workforce or had dropped out of the workforce altogether because opportunities for work appeared to be nonexistent. Ironically, Richardson and Vil (2015) found that these barriers to employment have caused some Black males to redefine the concept of work. For example, because of blocked opportunities for gainful employment, many men in inner cities gravitate toward viewing crime as a form of work.

In the Midwestern state where the current research took place, Black males’ unemployment has remained twice that of White males for more than 5 decades. Currently, Black males’ unemployment rate is over 15%, compared to less than 5% for White males (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

It is apparent from this body of research that Black males who leave school without a diploma, as well as those who leave unprepared for further education, are more likely to find themselves detached from both school and employment. While many researchers (Cawthorne, 2009; Edelman et al., 2006; Mincy, 2006; Quillian, 2003; Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012; Wagmiller, 2008; Wagmiller & Lee, 2014) have documented joblessness patterns among Black males because of structural changes in the economy, research on the lived experiences (the voices) of Black males who are affected by these changes in the economy is less prevalent. Hence, the need to document the experiences of dually-detached Black males.

## **Policy Factors**

### **Zero-Tolerance Policies**

Policy factors and their impact on educational experiences of Black males emerged as the third major factor that may help to explain Black males' alienation from school and work. Zero-tolerance policies—policies that punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor—have been adopted by many schools across the country as a way to curb violence. In the 1980s, the United States Customs Agency developed zero-tolerance as a mechanism to combat the drug trade (Henault, 2001). In 1994, Congress introduced the *Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994*, which encouraged each state receiving federal funds for education to follow suit and introduce their own laws mandating zero-tolerance laws. Congress then passed a law requiring schools to institute a zero-tolerance policy for students and enforcing a minimum of one year of expulsion to students who bring firearms on campus; otherwise, schools would lose the federal funds that the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act (1965) provides (Ashford, 2000). This legislation was intended to curb violence in public schools.

Beyond the federal zero-tolerance policy regarding weapons, some state legislatures and local school boards have since added zero-tolerance policies for drugs, alcohol, fighting, insubordination, swearing, tardiness, and threats (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Many school districts across America have inconsistently applied zero-tolerance policies such that in some districts behavior deemed disruptive resulted in some students being suspended or expelled, often with seemingly little to no regard for the severity of the offense (Lewis, Butler, et al., 2010; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Essentially, across various school districts, any behavior that a school administrator considers unacceptable and disruptive is punishable by expulsion or suspension.

Thus, institutions have adopted what Skiba and Kresting (2001) call the “philosophical intent of zero tolerance,” which dictates that both major and minor incidents be treated with “severity in order to set an example” (p. 23). Schools have overreacted and over-applied zero tolerance, and thereby have interrupted the educational experiences of some students, especially African American students (Caton, 2012, Hoffman, 2014; Morris, 2015). In fact, Hoffman’s (2014) study showed that expulsions for Black students doubled when an urban district adopted and expanded the scope of zero-tolerance policies.

Hence, the biggest debacle regarding zero-tolerance policies has been minority overrepresentation in school punishment, particularly Black males. For example, in an ethnographic study, Ferguson (2000) posits that through punishment, schools “create,

shape and regulate social identities” (p. 2), usually to the advantage of white middle-class students and at the expense of Black and working-class students.

In their study of middle school suspensions in 18 large school districts in the United States, Losen and Skiba (2010) reported that since 1973, suspension rates for African American children have increased from 6% in 1973 to 15% in 2006. When the data was disaggregated by race and gender, 28% of Black males were suspended compared to 18% of Black females. Moreover, isolating race and gender also showed Black males as the most frequently suspended students. In fact, one in three Black males was suspended in 11 of the 18 districts, with the highest suspension rate of 53% in Palm Beach County, Florida. At the school level, Black males were suspended at a rate of more than 33% in at least 175 of the schools, and suspensions were as high as 50% in some schools.

Other studies (Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003) reveal that although African American children account for 17% of the student population, they constitute approximately 33% of all suspensions. Similarly, Gregory and Weinstein (2008) investigated impact of zero-tolerance policies and found that although African American students constitute 30% of the total school population, they comprise 58% of students referred to the office for disobedience-related violations. Black males have been the subject of disciplinary measures that have negatively impacted their educational experience, alienating them from school.

Further, Black males are referred to the principal’s office more (Fenning & Rose, 2007) and constitute a larger percentage of all school suspensions and expulsions than White males relative to their numbers in K-12 schools (Garibaldi, 1992; Jackson, 2008;

Losen & Skiba, 2010; Moore, 2005; Scott et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Moore (2005) asserts that Black males have been dealt what he terms an “uneven hand” because overall, they are disciplinary targets in many schools across the nation.

Much of the research on zero-tolerance provides evidence that these policies have impacted the academic achievement of Black males because they lose valuable learning time when they are suspended or expelled (Darensbourg, Black, & Perez, 2010; Wallace et al., 2008). Similarly, while summarizing findings from an ample body of research, Lewis, Butler, et al. (2010) concluded that when zero-tolerance measures are applied toward African American youth in general, their outcomes include dropout, estrangement and alienation from school, delinquency, retention, and academic failure.

A recent study of the impact of state-mandated zero-tolerance discipline on district suspension rates and school administrators’ perceptions of problem behaviors found that “state zero-tolerance laws appear to differently affect students of color, thereby contributing to racial discipline gaps” (Curran, 2016, p. 664). It also found that the presence of zero-tolerance mandated discipline mechanisms in a given district predicts an approximate increase of 8% in suspension rates and higher suspension rates for Black students, thus impacting their educational experience. Moreover, while these laws have contributed to racial discipline gaps, there is no evidence that the learning environment of those who remain in school is improved (Curran, 2016).

Additionally, much research confirms that the removal of young Black males from the classroom contributes to low academic achievement and high dropout rates, and increases the odds that this population will continue on the school-to-prison pipeline

(Arcia, 2006; Dillon, 2009; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Smith, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). Further, Noguera (2003b) argues that because Black males are suspended more, they are ultimately pushed out of the school system. Eventually, these pushed-out students perpetuate the marginalization of Black males who are wandering through society with no marketable skills, because many states do not provide alternative education (Martinez, 2009). In addition, Townsend (2000) argues that the achievement gap widens as these students spend less time engaging in schoolwork because of suspensions. Moreover, regular suspensions engender frustration and feelings of school disengagement (Brown, 2007; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003) among this population. Frequently suspended and expelled Black males become academically disengaged (McNeely, Nonemaker, & Blum, 2002), thus perpetuating the aforementioned crisis narratives.

As stated above, Black males have been overrepresented in expulsions and suspensions in elementary, middle, and high schools for many years. The real question is: *why* do Black males receive disproportionate amounts of punishment when they are a minority in many schools? A legitimate argument would be that this group displays severe behaviors that necessitate harsher punishments. In general, research has documented that boys challenge rules repeatedly, engage in disruptive behavior, and protest more than girls (Villalobos, 2009). But if this were true, Black and White males would receive punishments proportional to their numbers in the school.

To find out if this severe behavior notion holds, Skiba and his associates (2002) reviewed school discipline records of a sample of African American and White students who qualified for free lunch at a Midwestern middle school. Surprisingly, they

discovered that African American children were referred to the principal for relatively minor offences such as disrespect, threats, and talking, but not severe behavior. Earlier research (Shaw & Braden, 1990; Townsend, 2000) also showed that Black males experienced harsher punishments for less severe behaviors. In a recent study of African American girls, Morris (2015) found that these harsher punishments not only apply to African American boys, but hold across genders.

However, Skiba et al. (2002) concluded that Black students, particularly males, committed far fewer severe behaviors, but were referred to the office more than their White counterparts for more subjective infractions. However, Noguera (2003b) provided an interesting insight about Black males' behavior, asserting that Black males sometimes adopted negative behavior as a mechanism to "avoid challenging themselves academically" (p. 437); thus, they become agents of their own demise.

One study particularly relevant to the present topic is Caton's (2012) inquiry that interviewed ten Black males who dropped out of an urban high school to explore the impact of zero-tolerance policies on their educational achievement. Its main findings were that school security measures including use of surveillance technologies such as metal detectors "created inhospitable school environments and poor student-teacher relationships" (p. 1055). Moreover, because of frequent exclusion from class, the Black males in the study ultimately dropped out of school. Caton (2012) concluded that harsh policies, such as zero-tolerance, are likely to alienate Black males, leading to some dropping out of school. However, this study mainly focused on the impact of zero-tolerance policies on these males, not their everyday lived experiences beyond school.

In summary, zero-tolerance policies hinder the educational achievement of Black males and thus perpetuate the aforementioned crisis narratives. Further, it is apparent from the literature that the educational experiences of Black males are persistently constrained by both teachers' and school administrators' conceptions of race and achievement (Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2008). It also appears that if disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of Black males under zero-tolerance policies continue in school districts across the country, it might reproduce educational inequality. However, studies that give voice to those whose education has been impacted by education policies such as zero-tolerance are lacking.

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline**

This section of the literature reports studies that show the consequences of zero-tolerance policies for students' educational experience. These studies show that extreme discipline measures taken under zero-tolerance policies may funnel students into the criminal justice system. Moreover, the literature on the school-to-prison pipeline provides evidence that Black males are disproportionately represented among students socialized toward prison. Lastly, the odds of graduating from high school are drastically reduced if a student comes in contact with the criminal justice system.

The school-to-prison pipeline emerged as the fourth major factor that I use to help explain Black males' alienation from the educational system. The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the process whereby schools adopt policies that criminalize schoolchildren and thus steer students *from* school *toward* the criminal justice system. The United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2012) reports that in recent years, many schools across the nation have increased prison-like features, such as



more police on school grounds, metal detectors, bars on windows and roofs, mandatory arrests, and expulsions. Consequently, more students are referred to law enforcement for any disruptive school behavior, making schools a pipeline to prison, especially for Black males, since they are referred to the principal's office more than any other group of students (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008).

The school-to-prison pipeline and its impact on students, particularly Black males, is well documented (Aull IV, 2012; Cole & Heilig, 2011; Coleman & Lipper, 2009; Curry, 2011; Edelman, 2007; Fowler, 2011; Losen, Hewitt, & Kim, 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeire, & Valentine, 2009; Sum et al., 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). Among all situational variables that perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline, zero-tolerance policies rank at the top. A linear relationship between zero-tolerance practices and the trend of pushing students out of school into prison, was explored by Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeire, and Valentine (2009). The study found that using exclusionary discipline practices with Black males increased juvenile court referrals for this group in all 53 counties the study examined.

In another inquiry that explored school-to-prison phenomenon, Wald and Losen (2003) found that Black males are six times more likely to be incarcerated for school offenses of similar magnitude than their White peers. Likewise, Curry (2011) and Coleman and Lipper (2009) postulated that Black males who leave school early are more likely to be given prison sentences than their peers of other ethnicities. In fact, one out of four Black males is more likely to go to prison than the other male counterparts of other races (Curry, 2011; Sum et al., 2009). Additionally, in their study of mass incarceration

in the U.S., Western and Pettit (2010) found that in recent years, more than 33% of Black males who have dropped out of high school are in prison on a given day.

In her book, *Being Bad: My Baby Brother and the School-to-Prison Pipeline* (2014), Crystal Laura examines her baby brother Chris' journey from school to prison. Even though the narrative is about Chris, it also explores the broader issues of the under-education of Black males, zero-tolerance policies and high-stakes testing, the mass incarceration of Black men, the role of the mainstream media in constructing Black masculinity, and the relationships between schools and prisons (Laura, 2014). Chris was once bright in school but struggled in high school. The school interventionist diagnosed him with a disability because of the perception that he had become inattentive and disinterested in class. In high school, Chris was arrested more than once and ultimately ended up in prison. School personnel failed to offer a helping hand to Chris and other young Black males. Further, Laura voiced her belief that extreme disciplinary measures under zero-tolerance policies and carrying the label of being "disabled" paves the path for students to go from school to prison—particularly young Black males.

The school-to-prison pipeline may play a critical role in perpetuating educational inequality in the U.S. An empirical study by Losen and colleagues (2010) concluded that the odds of graduating from high school are reduced drastically if a student gets arrested and appears in court. In a longitudinal study of 397 16- to 18-year-old young men interviewed in a New York jail, Ramaswamy and Freudenburg (2012) found that one-half of those who had not finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade prior to arrest (Time 1) went back to school and finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade. However, in Time 2 of the study, which was one year after they were released from prison, only one-fourth had graduated from high school. Therefore, the

study reveals that while it is possible to return to school after being in jail, the odds of graduating are drastically reduced. It also found that those who had been socialized from school to jail found it more difficult to secure employment upon release. Therefore, there are more Black males who are between school and prison as others enter the juvenile system, go back to school but do not graduate, and are then detached from both school and employment.

### **Conclusion**

Much of the scholarly literature on Black males notes that the education of these males gets interrupted. Thus, some Black males are pushed out of school and others leave school without adequate skills to compete for jobs in the global economy. It is apparent in the literature that Black males who are disconnected from school and work are more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system. Likewise, changes in the economy—particularly deindustrialization, globalization, and advances in technology—have contributed to astounding unemployment rates among Black males across the country. Consequently, those without adequate skills are at an even bigger disadvantage.

While much research has documented the school experiences of Black males, research that looks at other areas that Black males occupy between school and employment is needed. There is a significant gap between studies that explore the lived experiences of those who leave school and do not go directly to prison and those who enter the juvenile system and find it difficult to re-enroll in school or find productive employment upon their release. Therefore, the present study expands the existing literature on Black males by exploring the space between school and employment for

them, and the realities of being stuck in a seemingly inescapable limbo between school and employment.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of being a dually-detached Black male in a midsize Midwestern city. The central guiding research question was “What are the lived experiences of young Black males who are detached from both the educational system and the labor force?” This question was answered using a qualitative design that consisted of interviews, field notes, and participants’ demographic information. Qualitative methods are encouraged in inquiries where the voice of a group has been unexplored (Cohen, 2002; Glesne, 2011), as in the case of Black males who are neither in school nor gainfully employed. Additionally, Creswell (2013) posits that qualitative studies are appropriate when we want to empower individuals to share their stories.

Moreover, qualitative research designs are believed to be naturalistic in the sense that the researcher does not manipulate the research setting. Rather, the researcher aims to better understand human behavior and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, 2006) in its naturally occurring state. In essence, qualitative research designs are concerned with the meanings of individuals’ lived experiences. Therefore, data is acquired through face-to-face interactions with participants, including through interviews and observation. In this study I used qualitative research methods to explore and understand dual-detachment from the perspective of the young Black males who experienced this phenomenon (Trochim, 2006), and used Critical Race Theory and intersectionality as theoretical

positions to illuminate the voices of these males, which are often silenced or unacknowledged in education research.

### **Research Questions**

This study explored the in-school and out-of-school experiences of Black males between ages 18-24. It was guided by the question: What are the lived experiences of young Black males who are detached from both the educational system and the labor force? Data collection and analysis was supported by the following questions:

- i. What are the lived in-school experiences that contribute to dually-detached leaving school unprepared for the labor force when the prospects of securing rewarding employment are slim?
- ii. What do dually-detached Black males experience in their quest to obtain employment?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study were to explore the lived reality of dual-detachment, and to develop a deeper understanding of the past school and everyday experiences of 18- to 24-year-old Black males who are alienated from the education system and the labor force. Specifically, this study aimed to (a) understand the structural and political factors that perpetuate dual-detachment and to (b) produce a description of the meaning of dual-detachment from the perspective of those living the phenomenon. I therefore explored the in-school and out-of-school experiences of dually-detached Black males in order to uncover factors contributing to their detachment, then illuminated their lived experiences of being detached from school and work.

## Context and Choosing a Site

The setting where research occurs is an important element of qualitative research, because the main purpose of qualitative research is to examine the meanings of individuals' experiences and actions in the context of their social and cultural environment (Glesne, 2011). Therefore, it was important for me to interact and talk to dually-detached Black males in a city where this phenomenon occurs. I chose Beaver City (the city name is a pseudonym) as a place to observe and interview Black males alienated from work and school because of its large population of African Americans. Although Beaver City is not a large metropolitan area, it mirrors the economic and racial structures of an inner city, whereby residents are segregated along racial and economic lines. Much of the research on Black males has occurred in inner cities, and as such, the problems these males face in school and society are often considered inner-city problems. Therefore, doing research in a Midwestern town was important personally and methodologically. All the interviews took place in the participants' place of residence. I also spent some time with two of the participants at the YMCA, where many Black males gather to play basketball.

Beaver City is a Midwestern town with a population of over 120,000, and more than 5% of its residents are African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). It became a site of interest to me because of its vibrant economy and "good" K-12 education system, according to its website. The city's website also describes Beaver City as being among the happiest cities, best places to raise children, best places to live the American Dream, best cities to make a living, best places where poverty is falling, and best cities to live and

work. These descriptions made Beaver City appear an unlikely place to find inner-city problems such as dual-detachment.

Moreover, unlike other cities of similar size across the country, Beaver City has not been adversely affected by changes in the economy; thus, the staggering joblessness that other similar communities face is not a reality in Beaver City. The city still boasts more than a handful of manufacturing firms that employ its citizens. According to the city's website, there are jobs for every skill level in Beaver City. However, Beaver City has had a long history of disparity between Black and White employment rates. For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), in recent years, Beaver City has enjoyed unemployment rates below the national average of 5%. Additionally, unemployment for African Americans remains three times that of Whites, and the majority of employed African Americans are in low-wage jobs such as janitorial and food service work. As a result, many African Americans still struggle to make ends meet, with a median family income of less than \$30,000 compared to more than \$50,000 for White families (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

Moreover, the city is heavily segregated by race and socioeconomic status. This was evident during my time in the city as I drove from one section to another. The Black part of town has deteriorating infrastructure. First, the roads and houses are not as well-maintained as in the White part of town. Second, many of the city parks in the Black section of the city have less playground equipment, and what exists is poorly maintained, while parks in the more affluent White sections have updated equipment and are well maintained. Moreover, the Black community also had buses that drove by every few



minutes to transport people across the city, while I seldom noticed a bus in many of the White areas I explored.

The most alarming and clear difference between the predominantly White sections of the city and the sections with large numbers of Black residents was the presence of police. During my time in Beaver City, I stayed in the more affluent and predominantly White area of the city and drove each day to where the participants resided in the Black section of the city. In all my commutes back and forth from one section of the city to the other, I do not recall seeing a policeman driving around in the White section of the city. However, every time I visited the participants in the Black section, there was always a policeman parked nearby or driving around the block multiple times. In fact, because I looked unfamiliar in their section of town, a father of one participant asked if I was an undercover policeman.

Lastly, the Black section of town had no large businesses nearby with the exception of some convenient stores, whereas in the White section of town there were multiple big businesses, a large assortment of big grocery stores, restaurants, and some manufacturing plants. Therefore, residents in the Black sections of the city had to travel longer distances for both work and shopping, which created problems for those who mainly relied on public transportation.

I wanted to explore and document that Black male dual-detachment is an American problem, which is real in both major metropolises and smaller Midwestern cities. This study attempts to demonstrate that Black males' schooling and employment barriers are race and gender issues that are evident in inner cities and other locations across the country. In keeping with the Critical Race Theory framework and

intersectionality, the context in which this study was done is important, as it illuminates the experiences of people of color and explores how race and gender intersect with other forms of oppression to perpetuate inequality (Collins, 2004). This is especially true in communities such as Beaver City, where little research about schooling and employment of Black males has been conducted.

Beaver City School District has 20 schools and enrolls more than 16,000 students; African American students (including other students who identify as Black) represent about 12% of the student body. The schools mirror the city's segregation along racial and economic lines. The district does, however, have programs for at-risk students, especially for students of color.

Black males in Beaver City schools experience some troubling educational phenomena that are typical across the country: low graduation rates, overrepresentation in special education programs, high rates of suspensions and police referrals, and underrepresentation in honors programs. The district has a few minority school personnel (teachers, administrators, support staff, volunteers), especially at the schools that enroll larger percentages of minority students.

### **Participants**

I used purposive and snowball sampling methods to identify Black males who were not in school and not working. In summer 2015, I visited Beaver City (all names used in this study are pseudonyms, including the name of the city) to see if I could find Black males who were dually-detached. I went to barbershops, libraries, and the YMCA, and talked to local ministers. Through these conversations it became clear that dual-detachment was an issue worth exploring in this city. As I explored further, it came to my

attention that Beaver City was heavily segregated by race and socioeconomic status. Therefore, upon receipt of IRB approval in March 2016, I made more contacts with local leaders about my incipient data collection in Beaver City.

In May 2016, I met with Mr. Small, a retired local community leader who has worked with young Black males for over 20 years in the Beaver City community. We talked about the schooling and employment of Black males in Beaver City. Mr. Small recommended I speak with other community leaders to receive recommendations for research subjects. Many were reluctant to meet with me because I was an outsider. As I stayed in Beaver City from May-August 2016, I continued to visit barbershops and attend young fathers' network meetings. The people I talked with about this project acknowledged that there was an epidemic of Black male dual-detachment and anticipated that I still would have difficulties finding participants; this was because of the fact that most of these young men did not trust anyone. Finally, I was able to recruit three males in June and three more in July.

Participants in this study were Black males from Beaver City who were not employed and not in school. There were six participants total, three of whom did not graduate high school and three of whom did. Five of the participants went to the same high school while one participant went to a different high school in neighboring city 30 miles away from Beaver City.

## Participants' Profiles

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

Participant	Age	Age Left School	Suspended at least once	Arrested inside school	Graduated	Minor Legal Trouble	Juvenile Prison	Employed	Young Father
James	18	16	X			X			X
John	18	17	X	X		X	X	On & Off	
Lee	18	18			X				
Niko	24	18	X		X	X		On & Off	X
Pete	20	17	X						
Tino	20	18	X		X	X			

### James

James is 18 years old, never graduated from high school, and has been out of school now for about two years. While in school, he was placed in a special education class, which he hated. James was suspended several times at school, but did not feel comfortable expounding on the nature of these suspensions. Although he was vague about his living arrangements, I gathered that at the time of the interview, he was living with his father, and that his mother, who “didn’t care” about his education, lived somewhere else.

James has never held a regular job since leaving school because he got involved in selling drugs when he was 14; it was a way to “make easy money,” he said. James has one child and has not been involved in direct parenting or material support of that child. Even though James has had some trouble with the legal system, he has managed to stay out of prison so far. Of all the participants, James seemed to possess the most anger toward school and the community. The realities of being dually-detached are difficult for James to take. He stated during our conversation, “I just did it all at the wrong age.”

James knew that he should have stayed in school, but school was so alienating to him and his mother did not appear to care either. So James dropped out of school and got involved in the underground economy of selling drugs. He says he regrets his choices and wants a better life but has no sense of how to go about getting it.

### **John**

John is 18 years old and has been out of school for about nine months without graduating. He lives with his mother and several siblings in their family home. While John spoke well of the school and some teachers there, he also explained that many teachers did not have a great relationship with Black males. When we discussed why he was not in school, John explained that school was not a place for him right now. Without elaborating why, John explained that he was suspended and arrested several times while in school. He said he was “locked up” and taken to jail from school. John is fortunate that he is not currently in prison, but he has accumulated thousands of dollars in court fees that he is trying to pay. John did not open up about the nature of his arrests, and I assured him that he was under no obligation to do so. Even though school is not in John’s immediate plans, he is optimistic that he will someday go back to finish. At the moment, finding ways to pay off his court fines is a major priority.

John was polite and opened up a little bit more as the interview went on. I was interested in getting to know John, but we only met in person once and on the telephone briefly for our second visit. He missed all subsequently scheduled meetings.

### **Lee**

Lee is an 18-year-old high school graduate who lives with his mother and father in a residential neighborhood. Unlike the other young men in the study, Lee was never

suspended or had any other disciplinary issues while in school. He played several sports and plans to attend college. Lee explained that the teachers at his school were helpful and always wanted him to succeed. He described his relationships with all school personnel as being positive. In contrast to four of his peers in this study, who described the school as not caring for African American students, Lee thought the school was good. Because of the support that Lee received from school and his parents, he was optimistic that he would attend college; however, he was not enrolled in college at the time of the interviews. I included Lee in this study because he met the criteria of a Black male not in school and not in the labor force at the time of the interviews. His positive experience in school contrasts with the experience of the other participants in the study, but he now finds himself out-of-school and out-of-work just like the other young men.

### **Niko**

Niko is 24 years old and “barely graduated high school,” as he puts it. He was suspended at least once while in school. At some point, the school tried to send Niko to an alternative high school, but his mother, who has an advanced degree, fought the school to keep him at the regular high school. Niko has participated in the labor market on and off and has tried a few business ventures as a way to make a living. Unlike the other participants, Niko lives with his mother in a middle-class residential neighborhood in a White section of Beaver City. Niko’s father was killed by a gunman when Niko was only four and he has no recollection of the incident; therefore, he and his two older siblings were raised by a single mother. Niko is a young father who spends quality time every other week with his young child. Even though Niko has had some minor problems with

the legal system, he prides himself on being a law-abiding citizen and never wants to face jail time.

Niko, because of his age, understands the issues facing Black males better than the other participants. He talked about the poor relationships between Black males and school personnel, especially administrators, and how these negative relationships push Black males toward prison. He posits that if school administrators could understand students' background, maybe they could work with them better. Niko is optimistic about the future despite his current situation. All he wants is a better life for himself and his son.

### **Pete**

Pete is 22 years old and lives with his mother, father, and four younger siblings in a small apartment. Against his will, Pete was transferred from the regular high school to an alternative high school in years past. According to John, the alternative high school was mainly comprised of minority students, and the majority were Black students. While in the regular high school, Pete's grades had suffered and the principal told him that the alternative school would be the best place for him to get his grades up. Pete was suspended at least once at the alternative school. He was never suspended at the regular high school. Following the suspension, Pete left school in his senior year because he fell behind in most of his courses and he believed that the alternative high school was not meeting his educational needs. He said the classes were shorter, and most of the teachers did not really care. Pete described the alternative school as being similar to his neighborhood, where a policeman was always driving around the block. He said

everywhere a group of Black males were gathered, there was always a school administrator to watch what was going on.

One of Pete's goals was to join the Marines and serve his country, but this goal has changed over the years because of the racism he believes Black males experience in this country. He said, "Why would I want to serve a country that doesn't care about me?" Pete has been looking for employment for more than a year now. He attributes his lack of success in obtaining a job to racism, especially in Beaver City where there are "plenty of jobs." However, Pete remains resilient in his job search and optimistic that things will still work out. Pete has never had any trouble with the legal system. I met with Pete twice in his home and also talked on the telephone four times. I found Pete to be polite, respectful, soft spoken, and easy to talk to. To occupy himself, Pete volunteers at a local church and sings in the church choir three days a week.

### **Tino**

Tino is a 20-year-old who currently lives with his uncle, aunt, and four cousins in a three-bedroom apartment. His uncle is the sole provider for the family. When I met Tino for the first time, he was sitting on the porch cutting someone's hair. He told me that his dad taught him how to cut hair at a young age. Many of the young men from the neighborhood stop by Tino's place for a haircut at a much lower rate than the local barber. This has been his source of income for almost two years now. Even though Tino graduated from high school he was frustrated with the way his life turned out. He stated during the interview: "I graduated. I still didn't go to college yet. You know what I mean? It doesn't really make sense....We still ain't got no job. You know what I mean? That's pretty much why everybody...be like 'F school.'"



While he was in school, Tino was suspended more than once. One of his childhood dreams was to become a doctor. However, upon graduating from high school, he found himself stuck in neutral because of scarce resources for further education and closing labor market doors. Regardless of these barriers, Tino remains hopeful that he will seek out training to enter the medical field. Life has been stressful for Tino; he has tirelessly looked for a job without success and believes he has reached a wall. He talked about how this just “makes me mad.” Tino has had some trouble with the legal system, but has not been to prison.

Although we were discussing a sensitive subject in Tino’s life, he was easygoing and respectful every time I talked to him. We often sat on his porch for a few hours in informal conversation with him and his friends. On one occasion I went to the YMCA where Tino plays basketball with his friends. He said he has a lot of friends in similar situations—out of school and out of work—but many of them were reluctant to talk to me. Tino has uncharacteristically messy hair with dreadlocks, and his uncle is convinced that this is why potential employers are not calling him back.

### **Data Collection**

The most attractive thing about a qualitative study design is its compatibility with a wide range of data collection techniques, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and informal conversations, as well as any activity that yields data about a phenomenon. Because the purpose of this study was to hear the voices of Black males alienated from school and work, interviews and informal conversations with key informants were appropriate data collection techniques. Sloan and Bowe (2013) and Van Manen (1997) suggest that interviews are an effective way to gather people’s reflective

recollections. Similarly, Kvale (1996) described interviews as "...an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, [that] sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data" (p. 14).

Further, Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that "it is not the researcher's perception or perspective that matters but rather how research participants see events or happenings" (p. 47). Therefore, I used interviews to gather data to allow these dually-detached males the opportunity to express their experiences, feelings, perceptions, and views (Routston, 2010) liberally without restraint.

Six Black males participated in this study. I spoke on the telephone with each of them to introduce myself and the study, before the formal interviews. I held two interviews each with three of the participants (Niko, Pete, and Tino). Interview questions are listed in **Appendix A**. I also spent some time in informal conversations with each of these participants and their friends. For example, I went with Niko and Tino to the YMCA, where they play basketball with their friends. I also spent some time with Niko and his son on a Saturday afternoon. In addition, I sat on the porch with Tino four times as his friends came for haircuts and had informal conversations about school and life with some of them. On another occasion I sat in Pete's room with his friend Joseph as the two recounted their school experiences. In these informal conversations, I took note of the participants' interactions with their friends in the community and with some of their family members. Through these informal conversations I was able to verify that Niko, Pete, and Tino were indeed out-of-school and out-of-work. More importantly, I got to know these three participants well as I observed their interactions in the community.

The remaining three participants—John, Lee, and James—were more difficult to contact throughout my stay in Beaver City. Most of the participants used TracFones, which meant that their telephone numbers changed periodically. These three were more difficult because their telephone numbers changed more frequently than the other three. James left the state in the middle of the study to explore employment opportunities elsewhere; therefore, I was unable to schedule the second interview with him. I was not able to reach John and Lee for another interview after they cancelled our second interview appointments.

The first interviews started in June 2016. Two participants scheduled the second interview in November 2016 and December 2016, respectively. Each interview lasted 30-60 minutes. The interviews were all scheduled at the participants' residence to increase the odds of the conversations taking place. One interview was held on the porch at one participant's home. I recorded the interviews for later transcription. Each time I met with the participants, I took notes and recorded the participants' mannerisms and demeanor as they talked about their experiences. These notes provided me with rich descriptions of the observed phenomenon (Merriam, 2002), and served as my personal reflective process, which helped me make sense of what these experiences meant to these men. I also recorded the participants' personal and family information, as well as the connections between participants' experiences. Through this process I was able to note similarities and differences among the participants, and note how they each, in their own unique way, experienced and understood dual-detachment.

To deepen my understanding, I wrote memos throughout the interview process and during the data analysis process to establish connections between participants, the

studied phenomenon, and myself and articulate why I was doing this type of research (Saldana, 2013). One memo, for example, described my school experience, which was extremely different from that of the participants. Through reflection, I realized that in all my K-12 schooling in Lesotho, I do not recall anyone ever being suspended or expelled, except in one isolated incident in high school where a few individuals tried to burn down the school. For me, school was another safe place away from home where teachers cared about my wellbeing as much as my parents did. Thus, throughout my schooling, my teachers instilled in me a passion to learn and achieve. I tried to understand and imagine what school would be like in an environment where one day I could be kicked out or suspended from for up to 10 days, and how this would indeed damage my relationships with school personnel.

In another memo, I reflected on a statement made by James. Referring to his teachers, James said, “[T]hey were on, some like, they are still going to get paid. Let this kid fuck up his life, you know what I mean?” Even though I only have James’ side of the story, in the memo I wrote about how it was evident that James wanted affirmation that someone cared about his schooling and wellbeing. It appeared that James knew he was making wrong choices, but at the same time he longed for a caring relationship from the school. He wanted someone to love him and give him some genuine guidance, which was something he was not getting from his mother, as he later stated, “My mom ain’t care either.” James was then alienated from school because, according to him, no one cared about his education, including his mother. It was from this memo that the “relationships” category emerged. There seemed to be little if any relationship between James and the

school staff. Moreover, it was in this memo that the category “unsupportive school personnel” was refined and changed to “relationships.”

In another memo, I reflected on the phenomenon of being out of school and out of work, and how hard it would be for me to talk to someone about such a delicate experience. I discussed the restraint I needed to exercise in order to allow the participants to only talk about what they were comfortable with. For example, I could tell Pete was reluctant to talk to me during our first meeting, therefore I planned several initial informal conversations with him to get to know him. As a result, Pete actually called me to arrange the second interview, and it was during these interviews that Pete thanked me for what I was doing and also encouraged me to not give up on this study. Pete said he wanted people to know about the realities of dual-detachment in Beaver City, where there are plenty of jobs, but not for him and other Black males.

### **Consent and Confidentiality**

First and foremost, I received IRB approval before I conducted this study. Then during the interview process I provided each participant a written consent form. I offered each participant time to read the consent form and ask questions about any information or wording they did not understand. Following that process, the participants and I signed the consent forms and we each kept a signed copy. I then informed the participants of the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, and their rights to continue or discontinue their participation at any time (Maxwell, 2012).

In addition, I made sure to protect each participant’s confidentiality by using pseudonyms throughout data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). The notes that I took during the interview process were only identified by each participant’s pseudonym.

Likewise, findings were reported without any information that could reveal participants' personal information, the city where the study took place, or the school and district identity.

As I talked to the young men in this study, I was aware of the potential threats to their dignity as young Black males who are out-of-school and out-of-work. Therefore, I assured the participants regarding their rights to participate or not participate in this study. In particular, I informed the young men of their right to discontinue their participation at any point during my interaction with them. I also considered the potential emotional stress this could cause these young men. In doing so, I paid careful attention to their responses (verbal and non-verbal) throughout my interactions with them to assess whether they were uncomfortable sharing their experiences. If I noticed or sensed that they were uncomfortable, I would have discontinued the conversation. For example, I noticed that Pete was uncomfortable about scheduling a follow-up interview, so I asked him to call me when he was comfortable talking about his state of dual-detachment. As a result, when Pete called me, he was talkative and open because of the space and the respect I granted him.

Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality, data files of the interview transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer. Consent forms were stored separately from electronic data files. Electronic data files were also backed up on a private external hard drive. All study material, electronic and paper was stored in a secure location. While interview transcripts will continue to be kept in a secure location indefinitely, digital audio files will be deleted after five years and written documents will be shredded after

five years. All these methods followed an ethical protocol that ensured the protection of the rights of the participants in this study.

### **Data Analysis**

First, I listened to the audio several times following the first interview. This helped me capture my thoughts and jot them down as memos, which later helped me throughout the data collection and analysis. Moreover, upon completing the transcriptions of each interview, I read and reread the transcripts.

Second, I analyzed the interview transcripts following the principles of coding and the constant comparative method (Glaser, 2001). Coding is the process of breaking down data into distinct units of meaning for analysis and thereafter systematically re-evaluating them for their interrelationships, enabling the researcher to move the data to a higher level of abstraction (Gibbs, 2007; Saldana, 2013; Vaughn & Turner, 2016), while constant comparison method is the data analysis process whereby coded data is compared with other data and then assigned to categories (Glaser, 1978). I started the process of data analysis following the first interview, using the constant comparison method as a way to identify categories. In order to identify the categories that emerged from the data, I coded the data through the process of open coding, selective coding, and axial or thematic coding (Maxwell, 2005; Saldana, 2013). Final codes that emerged from data analysis are listed in Appendix B. To account for data that contradicted the findings (Bitsch, 2005), I also performed a negative case analysis.

### **Open Coding**

Glaser (1978) calls open coding the first step of a theoretical analysis, whereby researchers immerse themselves in the data. I carried out this process by highlighting

meaningful chunks of data, looking for information which contributed to my understanding of Black males leaving school without a diploma or leaving school unprepared for the labor force. In addition, I highlighted chunks of data about what the young men were experiencing now that they find themselves detached from school and work. I then coded these meaningful chunks of data while comparing code-to-code, incident-to-incident, in search of the similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal of open coding was to generate and tally as many codes as possible from the raw data. Throughout this process, I continually asked myself what does this data tell me? What category does it indicate? As the process of open coding progressed throughout the research, I identified categories.

### **Selective Coding**

The analysis proceeded through the process of selective coding, whereby I coded data to explore what categories would emerge. This process involved categorizing codes in order to identify relationships among them, and to uncover the central theme or problem—what this study is all about (Saldana, 2013). The result of this process was a list of codes sorted into categories.

### **Axial or Thematic Coding**

Finally, I used coding to “conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other...[and] weave the fractured story back together” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72), to generate meaning and scope. During this process, only categories and related codes that were relevant to the research questions were selected and the less important ones were eliminated (Boeije, 2010).



Consequently, through this process of open, selective, and axial coding, a list of codes emerged into themes. I then used color schemes to ascertain the proportion of codes related to each category, making it easy to draw from the data for evidence of the themes.

### **Coding Illustration**

One major category that emerged from the coding process was “relationships.” For example, when I asked Niko to talk about his interactions with his teachers, he talked about some of his favorite teachers in this manner:

I know my band teachers...show me the...music...as far as understanding being classically trained in music, reading music....They said like in the long run, no matter whatever you want to do with music...if you can do it classically, then you'll be better off in the long run....Those are the only people that I know helped me inasfar as what I wanted to do.

This quote was coded as “positive teacher relationships” and “encouragement.”

In the first and only interview with James, he talked about how he used to love school but when he got older he hated it:

I started hating it more and more. I just started leaving early every day....When I was in high school, I really didn't care what anybody was talking to me. I was just fucking up....School itself didn't care when I left. My mom aint really care....I was just doing whatever.

The codes that came from this quote were “broken relationships,” “fed up with school,” “parent relationships,” and “alienated from school”.

In an emotional conversation with Pete, he pointed out how he did not understand why he was always a target for school discipline.

I was always with the crowd....you know, I would always hang out with [the group of other Black males]....one guy out of the whole crowd...get picked. I am like, all right... I guess this is not my place.

The codes derived from Pete's statement were "discipline target," "peer relationships," and "alienated from school."

### **Negative Case Analysis**

A negative case analysis was performed to account for contradictions in the data (Bitsch, 2005) that could provide alternative plausible explanations of the experiences of dually-detached Black males. Triangulating all the participants' responses to the research questions to identify if there were any outliers—participants who had experiences extremely different from others—was accomplished and one participant did indeed have a different school experience from the others.

### **Trustworthiness**

Maxwell (2013) describes validity—what others refer to as *trustworthiness* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)—as the sound evidence that will demonstrate to the reader that the descriptions, conclusions, and interpretation given in the findings of qualitative research are credible. Therefore, to establish this credibility or trustworthiness, a qualitative study must adhere to strategies that can help lessen threats to validity.

First, I used purposive selection of participants. This means that I only sought participants who had experienced the phenomenon I am studying and could contribute to

answering the research questions. Therefore, only Black males ages 18-24 whom were not in school and not working were invited to participate in the study.

Second, I triangulated my findings by collecting data from interviews (formal and informal) as well as casual and formal observations of the participants' interactions in the community to ensure validity of the results (Maxwell, 2013) and to gain a broader view of dual-detachment. Triangulation "involves the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 239). Thus, I used data and theory triangulation to provide evidence that supported my findings and reduced the risk of systemic bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Maxwell, 2013). For data triangulation, I utilized multiple sources: Black males who graduated from high school and those who did not graduate, those who have participated in the labor force and those who have never held a job, those of different ages from 18-24 years old, and those of different socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, the six participants provided six perspectives about the factors that contribute to dual-detachment and the lived experiences of being dually-detached.

Finally, I utilized theory triangulation by revisiting the literature during the data collection and analysis process to see if my findings agreed with the literature. This triangulation caused me to expand the literature review to include changes in the economy and their effect on employment of Black males in the United States, and the literature on marginalization of Black males in school environments. This literature helped me gain a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to Black males being out of school and out of work.

Moreover, I established an audit trail by making sure that all data collected was carefully organized and stored. During the interview process, I audiotaped and transcribed all the interviews. I also used memos to capture my thoughts, reflections, and concerns throughout the study. Glesne (2011, p. 77) described memos as observer comments to note what surprises the researcher (to track assumptions), what intrigues the researcher (to note personal positions and interests), and what disturbs the researcher (to help track possible prejudices and stereotypes) during data collection and analysis. Another method I used to enhance the study's credibility was prolonged and persistent engagement in the field in order to collect rich data (Maxwell, 2013). I also used repeated interviews with participants to gain richer perspectives on dual-detachment.

Finally, threats to validity were also addressed through peer debriefing and member checking. I presented my study findings to colleagues who are experienced qualitative researchers to critique and give comments regarding my findings and conclusions (Bitsch, 2005). In addition, I used member checking—involving some of the participants in the data analysis for co-construction of knowledge (Bernal, 1998). I shared the themes with three of the participants for their input on whether they accurately captured their experiences as dually-detached Black males. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this technique as “member checking,” whereby a researcher seeks feedback about the data and conclusions from the study's participants. Respondent validation shows that the researcher values interviewees' perceptions (Robson, 2002). The participants were satisfied with the themes and believed they were accurate descriptions of their experiences in school and outside of school. Taken all together, these triangulation methods established the trustworthiness and credibility of this study.

## **Researcher Reflexivity**

According to Maxwell (2013), “reflexivity” means that researchers cannot separate themselves from the phenomenon they are studying. In essence, the researcher is part of the world he or she studies. Therefore, as a Black male who has experienced the dual-detachment phenomenon, I have honest empathy for dually-detached Black males. In agreement with Moustakas (1990), this study comes out of my “personal desire to know and a commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood” (p. 41). Moreover, as a Black male who has intermittently experienced dual-detachment, I am familiar with some aspects of dually-detached males’ lived experiences. Yet because I am also an immigrant to the U.S. and an outsider to Beaver City, my perspectives and experiences with dual-detachment might be remarkably different from those of a Black male born and raised in the U.S.

Indeed, the experience, knowledge, and value that I bring to this research has the capacity to enhance the research (Crotty, 1998). Likewise, as I try not to bracket my prior knowledge about this phenomenon, it creates an interpretive space.

Moreover, as a father of young African American males, I have been concerned about their schooling and overall wellbeing in society. This study focused my attention on the challenges African American males face in their everyday lives. The participants taught me about the realities of schooling in America for Black males and what my sons are probably already facing or soon will face. As the participants talked about their experiences with suspension, uncaring teachers, and closed labor market doors, I could not help but reflect on the incipient long journey from school to the labor force for my young sons. In one memo I reflected on this idea of schools preparing students for

participation in the labor force. I discussed my sons' current passion for learning and wondered how long it would be before they are suspended for a frivolous offense and are likewise alienated from school. Regardless of my fears for my sons, embarking on this study has helped me to better understand the realities of schooling and employment for young Black males in America and the need for more advocates for these young men.

Further, it is important for me to understand how the influence of my prior knowledge of how dually-detached Black males are treated and viewed in society impacts what the participants say and how this could affect the validity of the inferences I draw from the interviews (Maxwell, 2012). Therefore, while I see my own experience as a resource, it could also cloud my ability to see others' experiences if they differ.

Thus, I took several steps to minimize researcher bias. First, I allowed the participants to describe the phenomenon while I kept my personal opinions about dual-detachment out of the dialogue. Second, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, and therefore, what is presented in the findings are the quotes and statements from the participants' description of dual-detachment as well as my interpretation of the themes that emerged from the data analysis. Third, in keeping with Critical Race Theory, sharing the themes with the participants for co-construction of knowledge allowed me to involve them in making sense of dual-detachment. Three of the participants who were available for member checking agreed that the themes presented in this study reflected their stories and experiences about being dually-detached Black males in Beaver City as well as their lived school experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This study explores the factors that contribute to dual-detachment and the lived experiences of those who experience this phenomenon. In this chapter, I described the study methodology and design, context, participants, and data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, I discussed trustworthiness and researcher reflexivity. In Chapter IV, I present the themes that emerged from the data and my interpretations of their meaning.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This study was designed to explore factors that contribute to Black males leaving school without a diploma, and unprepared for competition in the labor market. Another aim of the study was to document the lived experiences of Black males who are alienated from school and work. The study involved interviews with six Black males, three of whom graduated high school and three of whom did not. In this chapter I provide a description of the study's major findings. The chapter presents the significant themes that emerged from the study. First, I review the research questions. Second, I provide an overview of the themes, relating them to the research questions. Finally, I discuss and present supporting data for each of the themes.

#### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the lived in-school experiences that contribute to dually-detached Black males leaving school unprepared for the labor force when the prospects of securing rewarding employment are slim?
- ii. What do dually-detached Black males experience in their quest to obtain employment?

#### **Overview of Themes**

Through the participants' descriptions of their day-to-day school experiences, and their lived experiences between school and work, five key themes emerged that answer these questions. The themes derived from the data analysis were: (1) Early in their schooling



the participants had positive attitudes toward education and career aspirations, but by the time they reached high school their career aspirations were derailed by lack of support from school personnel, yet they remain hopeful about the future; (2) Suspensions, isolation into special classes, and tracking into alternative education led to broken relationships between these young men and school personnel; (3) The participants' negative school experiences provided a barrier to academic engagement and school success, which led to some dropping out of school and others barely graduating; (4) Upon finding themselves out-of-school and out-of-work, the young men experienced despair and discouragement which led to mistrust of the larger Beaver City community; and (5) The participants perceived that they were denied employment because of employers' racial bias, even for low skilled jobs, but remain resilient despite concerns about racism.

The young men in the study viewed school as a means for achieving economic and social mobility; thus, early in their schooling they demonstrated positive attitudes toward education and had some career aspirations until such time as their relationships with school personnel were damaged. Moreover, as a result of these broken relationships, the young men described their anger toward the school that they believed did not care for them. Additionally, in their current state—alienated from school and work the participants described their frustration toward the city and employers who they believed discriminated against them. They also expressed their discouragement about being alienated from both work and school. Therefore, the themes presented in this chapter offer an understanding of the factors that contribute to dual-detachment, as well as the lived experiences or stories of dually-detached Black males. In presenting the themes, I discuss the meanings of each theme, using the voices of real dually-detached Black males

to illuminate these young men's experiences and thoughts, creating knowledge about dual-detachment. Moreover, as I present the participants' voices, I edited and reduced unnecessary fillers for readability.

The first theme was the participant's view of education as an important element in their lives, and therefore they expressed they had positive attitudes toward education and had career aspirations early on in their schooling. This was an important finding because it explains, and places into perspective, the extent to which these young men viewed and valued education. All the males expressed that they enjoyed learning and regarded school as being an essential part of their lives. In fact, these men envisioned that through education they could achieve a range of future possibilities. Additionally, each of the participants had a career aspiration, and they perceived that education would indeed lead them toward achieving that career. In short, early in their schooling journey all the participants viewed education and schooling positively but their dreams were deterred along the way.

Second, the participants' experiences with school were dominated by suspensions, isolation into special classes and tracking into alternative education, which led to broken relationships between these young men and school personnel and staff. Broken relationships between the participants and school personnel was the major finding that captured the interactions with school staff. For instance, five of the six males in the study talked about their enjoyment of learning and schooling, until their relationships with school personnel began to diminish each year they were in school. Consequently, school became less interesting and not a welcoming place for some of the males. These interviews provide evidence that the young men in this study regarded their relationships

with school personnel as an essential element of their education and learning. Thus, when these relationships were not nurtured or positively reinforced, some of the males found school an alienating place.

Third, as the relationship between these young men and their school personnel were damaged, the participants experienced resulting anger toward school. The young men described anger leading to opposition to school as they envisioned no benefits to being in school. Because they felt unwanted at school some no longer wanted to be there. Participants noted specific incidents that led to suspensions, stereotyping and isolation that took place within their school environment that made them angry.

Fourth, while the participants remain resilient in their job search, they believe that employers discriminated against them even for low skilled jobs, thus, closing employment doors for them and other Black males like them in Beaver City. This theme captures the essence of dual-detachment. The participants in the study described their difficult, almost impossible quest to secure gainful employment. At the same time, these young men show admirable determination as they share their stories, that regardless of being stuck between work and school, they are hopeful that things will work out somehow. The participants described that it was tough to find employment in Beaver City even though the city is known for having jobs for every skill level.

Finally, in their present situation, out-of-school and out-of-work, these young men expressed anger as the emotion they experienced the most. The participants expressed feelings of anger upon finding themselves dually-detached, with few prospects for employment, and few opportunities for further education. More explicitly, the males in

this study believed that they faced race-based marginalization in school and in employment, which made them angry.

**Theme One: Early in their schooling the participants had positive attitudes toward education and career aspirations, but by the time they reached high school their career aspirations were derailed by lack of support from school personnel, yet they remain hopeful about the future**

Dually-detached males in this study expressed positive attitudes toward learning, and dreamed of pursuing a productive career. There was a consensus across all six interviews that the participants understood the value of education and the prospect of becoming a productive citizen someday. Four of the participants wanted to go to college. Some even talked enviously about some of their friends who were fortunate enough to attend college and secure better employment. For instance, Niko, a 24-year-old who briefly attended the local community college, talked about his passion for becoming a music producer: “When I was younger I knew I wanted to be involved with music, that was my passion...I thought I was going to be a record producer...that was what I was working toward day-in and day-out.” Niko also expressed that at some point school “was an enjoyable experience, other than issues with administration.” For instance, he talked about the positive interactions with his music teacher who showed him how to “read music sheets” and other techniques of being “clinically trained in music.” Because of this encouragement from his music teacher, Niko was inspired to research colleges that offered a major in music production. Unfortunately, Niko’s passion for learning was negatively impacted when a school guidance counselor told him he was “better off going straight to the workforce.” Niko described his passion for learning music in this manner:

All right. Sure. Um, I knew ... I think about sophomore year what I wanted to do.

Um, this is going back to when I actually wanted to do music production, and I

went out there and researched schools and came back with, a college...down in Florida. But yeah, I knew what I wanted to do and I was prepared to actually go visit the campus and everything like that, just to see if the program was for me... I was so motivated when I was trying to find out about this college, and I was proud because I got all the materials together. I called their admissions ...They really wanted me to get down there and see the campus, but when I started hearing maybe that's not something that you want to do...Then it kind of starts to turn. You know, I didn't have the same passion if this was what I was going to be doing...So, yeah, it was a really big deterrence factor. I wasn't as enthusiastic about it anymore.

Niko was passionate about being a music producer and the possibilities of going to college to pursue his dream. He demonstrated this passion by narrowing his college search to one specific college that he perceived would offer him the best training. However, Niko did not get the support and encouragement that he was hoping to receive from the school guidance counselor who told him he was "better off going directly to the labor force." As a result, Niko perceived that the school guidance counselor's lack of support stood as a barrier that ultimately derailed his career aspirations. Over the years Niko acquired some entrepreneurial skills that include organizing community events such as music festivals at the local university and he hopes this will assist him in achieving the success he has long desired.

Another participant, Pete, a 22-year-old who dropped out of high school, expressed the importance of education and how he enjoyed learning. He stated: "School for me was great. I liked it... I was that quiet kid that just...focused, goes straight up to

class.” Pete expressed that he liked “classes that I can actually learn... I am a type of person who wants to be [challenged] in class.” Initially, Pete wanted to join the United States Marine Corps, but the ongoing killings of Black males across the country made him change his mind. He elaborated:

You know, the older I got, I am like, why am I going to die for a country that doesn't support my race...I am not trying to be a racist or anything. But, why would I die for them if they're not supporting me...so I gave that up.

I believe that Pete had been following the current events across the country whereby young Black males have been dying at the hands of police. For “them” Pete refers to the White society that he perceives does not support him—in school where teachers are predominantly White, in Beaver City where most residents are White and across the nation. In essence, much like Niko, Pete perceived that lack of resources and support systems for Black males stood as barriers that derailed his plans to be a Marine. Pete has since developed a passion for counseling. He talked about how he enjoyed talking to people, especially young African American males, who will soon face the realities of school and the labor market that he is now experiencing. Since the interviews, Pete and I have talked regarding community resources that show support of young Black males who often believe that they are not supported by their community, school and the nation. Pete remains passionate about working toward completing his high school diploma in preparation for a career in counseling.

Another participant, John, an 18-year-old who dropped out of school, also expressed his love for learning and how school was great before he got into trouble with a school administrator. First, when John was younger he wanted to be an “FBI agent and

make lots of money” but now wants to be a pilot, or to “fly planes,” as he put it. When I asked John why he did not want to be an FBI agent anymore he laughed and said, “I don’t know, I didn’t want to do that... ’cause there is probably something better I can do.” Although John was reluctant to talk about what derailed his aspirations he mentioned that “after going through some bad stuff” at school that included being arrested, he left school. However, even though John has been out of school for over 8 months now, he still has a passion for learning, and hopes to return to school someday.

Furthermore, Lee, an 18-year-old who graduated from high school, talked about his aspiration to play college sports. He said he was a “pretty good student in school,” and “teachers pretty much liked me, I mean I was never really, like, obnoxious in class or anything.” Lee was different from the rest of the participants because he was the only one who never faced any school suspensions. Although five of the study’s participants attended the same high school, Lee was the only one who expressed love for the school that the other young men believed was not welcoming. Lee is included in the study because he met the criteria of being out-of-school and out-of-work at the time of the interview.

Another young man, James, who dropped out of school at age 16, talked about his love for education when he was younger: “When I was younger, like, I used to love school, but then I started getting older, I started hating it more and more.” James wanted to be a chef but he said he realized early on that nobody cared about his education. Because of his perception that no one supported him, James started to disregard school as an important element of his life.

Finally, Tino expressed his feelings toward education and his desire to pursue a career. He said he “wanted to go to school to be what [he] wanted to be.” He wanted a career in the medical field, but his time in high school did not prepare him for college, because of multiple suspensions that put him behind his peers academically. Tino expressed that he “barely graduated.” Tino quickly noticed while he was in high school that “certain opportunities you’re not going to get” as a Black male. He said that because he barely graduated high school, he knew there were some scholarships he was not going to get and this “pissed him off.” However, Tino remains motivated that someday things will work out, especially, when he sees some of his friends “growing up, reaching their goals... that motivates me,” he pointed out.

This theme provided a good background of the participants, who these young men are, their value of education and their early career aspirations. These young men entered school with positive attitudes toward education, and with career aspirations. For instance, James wanted to be chef, while Niko and Pete aspired to careers in music production and school counseling respectively. Tino aspired to be a doctor, and John wanted to fly planes, while Lee wanted to play college sports. Accordingly, these young men perceived school as an institution that could facilitate their achieving these dreams. Their attitudes toward school and learning were hindered, however, by lack of support from school personnel. Therefore, this theme was notable and made a direct connection to broken relationships with school personnel and decreased desire to stay in school.

**Theme Two: Stereotyping, Suspensions, Isolation into Special Classes and Tracking into Alternative Education Led to Broken Relationships Between these Young Men and School Personnel, which led to Decreased Desire to be in School**

Through descriptions of participants’ experiences, I discovered broken relationships with school personnel as another major key finding. Throughout the



interviews, participants spoke frequently and deeply about their relationships with others. Participants talked about relationships with school staff and relationships with their peers, and how these relationships shaped or impacted their school experience. As such, the stereotyping, suspensions, isolation and tracking into special and alternative programs that led to broken relationships with school personnel emerged as a strong theme why some of participants became alienated from school and others graduated unprepared for jobs or transition into higher education. The participants in this study described their school experiences, particularly their interactions with school personnel, and how these interactions contributed to some of them dropping out of school, and some graduating without adequate skills to participate in the labor market or transition into higher education.

The lived school experiences of these dually-detached males provided insight into how school shaped these men's futures to the point where they now find themselves out-of-school and out-of-work. As noted in the previous theme, the young men in the study described that they valued education and had career aspirations, but their school personnel were not supportive of them. In fact, per the participants' accounts, school personnel did not appear to nurture these young men's love for education, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, James described when he lost interest in school, "school itself didn't care when [he] left." James said he believed teachers did not care much if he succeeded or not. With an angry expression on his face and in his tone of voice, he continued to elaborate on how there was no relationship between him and the school: "they were on, some like, they are still going to get paid. Let this kid fuck up his life, you know what I mean?" It is apparent from this statement that James got weary of

school because he believed that he was socially positioned as an outsider and school was the mechanism to not “fuck up his life”.

James believed he did not have access to teachers the way he thought he should and this positioned him outside of the resource network of school; he did not believe he had the self-efficacy to push back to empower himself. As such, desire to be in school diminished as James stated that when he reached high school “he started leaving school early”, but longed for someone to care about his well-being, especially at the young age of 16.

James further elaborated on how the relationship with school personnel got worse in his sophomore year as he was “put in a special class with 14 other kids,” most of whom later dropped out of school. According to James, this was a self-contained special education class created for students identified as having behavioral issues. He elaborated, “it was just kids that was at all different grades in high school...so they just put them all in one class together to learn the same shit.” James perceived that no one cared about him or his fellow classmates. He said they ate lunch in their classroom and were not allowed to associate with other students. It was at this point that James decided he “didn’t care about what anybody had to say.” James pointed out that because of being isolated into this “special class” and no one appearing to care whether he was at school or not, he lost desire to engage himself academically. As such, he only came back to school “to [see] who wanted to buy some weed and stuff.” Furthermore, James explained that even though some teachers cared about him, by then “[he] didn’t care.”

James also expressed a strained relationship with his mother who he believed “didn’t care” about his education either. He elaborated: “school itself didn’t care when I

left. My mom didn't really care...so I was just doing whatever, you know what I mean? Trying to make money." James lacked the crucial support from both his mother and the school at such a young age that he had no one to turn to but the "streets," as described by James and Tino. The lack of strong relationships at school and at home was a key component of why James disengaged from school.

Like James, other participants described how some of their teachers were supportive of their education while others did not seem to care. In particular, both Niko and Pete mentioned specific teachers who they believed cared about them. Niko stated that in addition to his music teacher, one history teacher was always "pushing [him] toward the right direction, and that this positively 'affected' [him]". It was not enough to keep Niko fully engaged in school because he was still behind in his school work because of suspensions. Likewise, Pete talked about his "favorite teacher in the whole district" who he said was aware that Black kids were being sent to an alternative school at higher rates. He questioned, "Why is it that she's the only teacher who actually will stand up for Black kids?" Pete was amazed that only one teacher expressed her concern that Black students were treated differently. In essence, Pete believed that young Black males like himself were being marginalized—pushed so much to the margins and made invisible that only few school personnel noticed that these young men were indeed treated differently. As such, the participants believed that many school personnel treated them differently because of their race.

Similarly, Tino expressed that he had positive relationships with some of his teachers but not others:

Because this is what it was...because of my personality...I am humble. You know what I mean? It was because of that I got along with most of my teachers, but the rest of them.... you can see that they don't care...if they don't care....That's why I used to skip some classes. Like, I realized certain things I thought weren't true and what not, like I realized that yeah, they are true, you know what I mean, in this world.... people do discriminate and judge based on how you look. You know what I mean? It's true because I have experienced that.

Even though Tino believed that he was humble, he perceived that he was still discriminated based on markers of race that included clothes he wore, his hair style and other behaviors that were perceived as belonging to young Black males. For instance Tino said he always had dreadlocks in high school (still does), and wore baggy pants that are often associated with young Black males and viewed negatively. As such, the participants sensed that the school cared less about them because of their race. Tino described how teachers failed to give attention to other Black students including himself or even get them involved in the school. He said, "Teachers not making the effort to teach...I mean for real...they just want the money...they don't care." Tino believed that teachers were generally apathetic to Black males, and he believed he did not get the support he deserved; as such lost desire to be in school. Furthermore, participants reinforced how their school experiences were made unbearable by school personnel who did not care and actively discouraged them. For example, Niko, the oldest of the participants who has had some labor market participation, wanted to pursue a career in music production; therefore, he recalled the time he went to seek advice and direction from the school guidance counselor. He said the experience was not positive:

Like I said, the guidance counselor told me I'd be better off going straight to the workforce...and just...I don't know. Ever since she told me that, I never forgot that, that comment that she made to me, and I just walked right out of her office. I never saw her again...it wasn't real positive experience—granted, I know that I wasn't the best, like, high school student at all, but, you know, I still had a path that I wanted to follow.

Niko further stated that this experience made him question his ability, thinking, “maybe they know better” and that perhaps he actually was not college material. As such, this lack of support not only disappointed Niko, but also barred his access to the guidance counseling all students need and rightly deserve.

Similar to Niko, Pete described his relationship with a school guidance counselor as a broken relationship, and unhelpful for his educational enrichment. He explained:

You know, they said they would be there for you and they [are] never around. You know....my guidance counselor, she is never around, and the thing that got me upset is that she would say something and then disappear on me. She was like “come after school”...I would stay after school.... she is not around. “Come during class.” Yes, I will be there. She is never around. When I need something, she is never around.

Pete described that this experience was difficult and he believed that school personnel demanded “respect” but did not reciprocate this same respect to the students. He explained: “For me to give you my respect, you got to give me respect back, you know.” Pete acknowledged that he understood his position as a student, that he was required to show respect toward school personnel, but he believed that school personnel

should treat students the way they (teachers) wanted to be treated. He was disappointed that the school guidance counselor always told him that he needed to “listen to teachers, do this,” but when he needed something he was not given the attention or the time to express his needs. In fact, Pete stated that school personnel paid more attention to him when he was being reprimanded for what school staff perceived as misbehavior than when he was seeking assistance on his own. Like Niko, Pete believed that he was marginalized and denied school services such as guidance counseling.

Another element of broken relationships with school personnel that the participants talked about was excluding students from school because of school suspensions and expulsions. In addition, they spoke of an ongoing practice of sending minority students to the alternative high school. The participants described their confusion and displeasure with school suspensions and expulsions. Some of the males did not know or understand why they were suspended. They believed that suspensions were often unfounded and unfair. Pete described getting into a conflict with a teacher in one of his courses over a lost item in the classroom. The teacher concluded that Pete must have stolen the item. Following Pete’s long suspension from school, the teacher later discovered that the item had been misplaced. With anger, Pete described that when the school discovered that the teacher was actually at fault, “I was already in trouble. So, I was expelled. I am like, I’m getting expelled for something that I didn’t do? I went back to school, they pretended like nothing happened. Literally, I was like so upset.” To Pete’s knowledge the teacher was never reprimanded or disciplined by the school. Pete was given a lengthy out-of-school suspension that he believed was nearly equivalent to an

expulsion because he lost learning time. Additionally, Pete lamented on how he often did not understand why he was always a target:

But you know, with the situation that occurred at school, getting kicked out, getting accused of stealing... being accused of selling weed during class hours... being accused of, you know, stealing people's stuff in the library... Like I was always the target? Like, I never understood it though, like ...I was always with the crowd... you know, I would always hang out with [the group of other Black males]...[I was the] one guy out of the whole crowd... [to]get picked. I am like, all right... guess this is not my place. Um, to be honest, I felt that they were racist. But I didn't want to say that.

Pete is a polite and respectful young man who noticed the injustices that he endured at school. Pete perceived that he was singled out and made a subject of school discipline and, as a result, his desire to remain in school diminished. However, he was always cautious about explicitly calling school administrators racists because he knew that he would get into further trouble with the school.

Like Pete, Niko described his school suspension as confusing and detrimental to his education experience. He explained that he is where he is today—out of both school and work—because a school administrator kept him out of school: “I wondered about some of the times that like, I got suspended from school... like they just literally suspended me from school and I never really understood that.” Niko elaborated:

I barely graduated because I had so many missing days of school. [I was] completely behind on coursework for a long time. Like I remember I was doing homework all the way up to day of graduation, just trying to get caught up.... It

rang clearly to me that, like, a lot of minority students get disciplined in a different way, and I understand that at an early point in high school...Like I have been suspended and I would get suspended with like two of my other Black friends who had nothing to do with anything really...it kind of bothered me.

While Niko understood that students must adhere to schools' code of conduct, he thought that school administrators could address school disciplines in a different way rather than "suspending kids...like holding them back because they are already disadvantaged" because of their race and socioeconomic status. However, unlike James, Niko always had his mother to advocate for him because of their strong relationship. Niko was on track to graduate high school and then pursue his dream. But, as he put it, he was so far behind following suspensions that he "barely graduated." As such, the damaged relationships with his school personnel affected his grades and therefore the ability to obtain scholarships or be accepted into college of his dreams.

Another participant, John, recounted his school experience as always being "locked up" –he was taken to jail between six and seven times while he was in school. He admitted that it was mainly his fault, and that he could have behaved better both in and outside of school. John also mentioned how his relationships with his friends affected his schooling. Because his friends already had broken relationships with school personnel, when John joined his friends to disobey school rules, he damaged his own relationships with school personnel. John said, "Bad friends get you in trouble but, at the same time you get yourself in trouble too, because you don't have to do what they do...you know, friends who tell you to skip class..."



John was fully aware that his choice of friends affected his school experience. While John accepts responsibility for his actions, the resulting suspensions led to him dropping out of school. For example, John described how his grades suffered following a 10-day suspension; “my grades [are] good, [then] I get suspended. I come back and my grades are all messed up.” When I asked John to elaborate on his school suspensions beyond just misbehaving he became reluctant and, after a long pause said, “I don’t, I don’t even know to be honest, I don’t remember but I was getting locked up.” Moreover, he could not remember how many times he got suspended, but he knew by then that school was not for him. He explained a little bit:

I couldn’t go to school.... you know...you got good grades but you get locked up out of school, you go to jail... You come back to school, your grades are bad...you get Fs, yeah Fs, or *maybe* you are going to come back to a D minus.

With no hope that he would catch up in school, he focused for a while on settling his debt. He had gotten occasional jobs, but none provided enough income to pay off the court fees. While John was reluctant to talk about being incarcerated, I could sense that he was unhappy about the situation.

Tino and James described their school suspensions and the anger they provoked. Tino described that because his mom would “get mad,” he tried hard not to get “kicked out of school.” Thus, he was only suspended rather than expelled and was able to catch up on his school work and graduate. James was suspended several times and without elaborating on the nature of his suspensions, he talked about how “angry” he was and still is “angry about it” two years later. While James admitted that maybe he could have behaved better in school, he believed that the suspensions were excessively harsh and

made school an alienating place. The personal nature of James's suspensions caused discomfort in talking about them. He said he "just gets angry" about it and he is "trying to make it right." James's expression in voice and body indicated his frustration and anger with himself for choices he might have made at school and with school personnel; he seemed to equate his detachment from school to the negative relationship with school personnel. This was evident by James' reluctance to elaborate.

As the participants described their school experiences, it was evident that at least five of the six participants had negative relationships with school personnel, and that this impacted these young men's school experiences. Although the participants held positive attitudes toward education early in their schooling, negative school experiences with school personnel were key factors in how participants described their detachment and anger toward school, thus resulting in either dropping out or graduating unprepared for participation in the labor market.

Another tenet of this theme was the undue policing of Black students. The participants described how Black students were always watched by at least one school personnel while on school grounds or placed in special classes where they were not allowed to associate with other students (as in James's case). For James, school was a prison-like environment wherein he and his friends were isolated into one class, required to eat lunch in this same classroom, and not allowed to associate with other students.

Niko also expressed how he was not even allowed inside the school building during suspensions. While Niko understood that suspensions meant being forced to stay out of the classroom, he believed that kids who were already disadvantaged should at least be allowed to stay in study halls in order to avoid other risky behaviors they could

get involved with outside of school. He recalled a study hall teacher mentioning this concept of keeping kids in the school during suspension. Niko's recollection of the study hall teacher conversation with an administrator:

You keep suspending him (Niko) and I don't know why you keep doing that...it's better to just have him here...because if you are suspending him, he's going to be out doing whatever he wants to do.

Niko explained that toward the end of his high school years, his suspensions were in school and this helped him to at least complete some schoolwork in order to graduate and prevented him from getting into trouble outside of school.

At the end of our first interview, Pete concluded that because Black students were given less academic attention and more disciplinary attention that the relationships between Black students and school personnel were damaged. He explained that the school sets different academic standards for students based on their race. For instance, Pete noted that school personnel paid more attention to "White students," followed by "Asian students," and "Black students" were always the last ones that school personnel were concerned with academically. Pete concluded that if school personnel "paid more attention" to African American students, these students would work even harder to succeed at school if they perceived that "they mattered" in the eyes of school staff.

Pete then continued to describe the excessive policing of African American students at school in this manner:

I sometimes go to schools and check, like, when I go in, I see, like, you know, like, a bunch of groups. And the most group they [staff] usually pay attention to is the Blacks because there's always that one group of Black people in there. It's

always that one person. Either assistant principal, or a teacher, administrator, somewhere around that Black group.

TM: But they are not around the other kids? To see what they are doing?

Pete: Huh, there's always that administrator somewhere around the Black group.

Pete paralleled school policing to his everyday life out of school whereby the police patrol his neighborhood several times a day. He shared an example of how he and a friend were followed inside stores. He explained: "it's like you get into the store and they start assuming you're not going to be able to afford whatever they have... I used to see movies and I think it doesn't happen. But it does happen." Pete's perception was that he was always being watched regardless of where he went, and in being watched he believed others would always find ways for him to be blamed for some trouble. He ascribed all these racial biases that were manifested beyond school to the larger Beaver City community.

Lastly, Pete thought that school personnel could do a better job to foster strong positive relationships with African American students. Pete described that school administrators "care more about their school ratings than the actual students." Pete was referring to the public's higher ratings of high schools in the more affluent areas of the city being perceived as performing better academically than those in the less affluent sections. Therefore, students who were believed to likely cause trouble were tracked to the other high schools and ultimately to the alternative high school. Pete perceived that high school administrators look at the neighborhoods in which their high school students live and then determine how to discipline or track them within the high school. In addition, he sensed that Black students were disproportionately channeled from the

regular high school to the alternative high school. Pete elaborated: “So, yeah. It seems like, okay, the kids that we don’t care about whether they succeed or not, so if I get rid of them...then my school will still succeed. He continued: “It would be really nice for the black kids to start getting help and attention from teachers. Be like, you know, we want you to succeed!”

While five participants in the study experienced varying degrees of broken relationships with school personnel, only one participant, Lee, had mostly positive relationships with school personnel. Lee played multiple sports, and proudly expressed that his teachers and school personnel loved him. Consequently, Lee never experienced any school disciplinary issues, such as suspensions, which each of the other five participants faced at least once. His educational experience was not impacted negatively by his relationships with school personnel. This was an interesting finding throughout the data analysis that relationships with school personnel was an integral component of both successful and unsuccessful school experience.

**Theme Three: The participants’ negative school experiences provided a barrier to academic engagement and school success, which led to some dropping out of school and others barely graduating**

The third theme that emerged from the data was that the participants clearly held feelings of resentment toward the school and school personnel. The young men described both their school experiences, and how these experiences often and repeatedly aroused negative emotions. First, upon finding that their educational experience was not what they had anticipated, because of the broken relationships with the school personnel, Black males in this study had feelings of anger toward the school and school personnel. They believed their childhood dreams might be on hold for a while. For example, Tino has

been out of school for almost two years now, but has not been able to find employment or further his education. He believes that school did not prepare him for the future:

I graduated. You know what I mean? But still we are experiencing the same thing.

We still got no job. You know what I mean? And we still not going to school.

That's pretty much why everybody, why most people be like "F" school.

Tino explained that having no options for further education or employment has placed him in an indeterminate state, and he is particularly angry about his high school experience.

Similarly, Pete, who dropped out of school, expressed his displeasure toward school when he was forcibly transferred to an alternative high school, with little explanation from the school administrator why he had to transfer:

I'm like, there's a lot of people who were in a deep[er] situation than I was, but I was like, why am I a target? And why am I being moved when I can still be here and build up [my grades] as fast as I can?

Pete believed he could have improved his grades at the regular high school. He did not find the curriculum at the alternative high school challenging. He was irritated that he was being held back. He elaborated: "I deserve to have regular classes like everybody else. You know, and that was holding me back. The credits I was looking for, it was holding me back." Pete's resentment increased when he noticed that "there was no single White kid" at the alternative high school at the time. He believed that Black males like himself were being targeted and tracked to the alternative high school. He explained:

You know...I was like, maybe there is [something] I must have done that triggered their mind, "he is a troublemaker." But...I looked and I was like, "I

didn't do nothing!" it made me upset that I never wanted anything to do with the school.

Pete said this experience alienated him from school, robbing him of economic and social benefits derived from education. While looking for other ways to escape the alternative high school, Pete discovered something regarding the Beaver City school district that contributed even more to his anger. When it became apparent that the alternative high school was not going to meet his educational needs, Pete tried to enroll in a different high school in the city. He recounted: "So, I was like, you know, there's... plenty of other schools that I can go to. But, the thing I found out, the principal talked to other schools. That [I couldn't] go to any other schools except the [alternative high school]." Pete described this as racist behavior from the school district that the only school in the entire city that he could attend was the alternative high school, which did not meet his learning needs. In anger, he explained further: "That's why I'm like, 'If I say they're racist, *I* might get in trouble for it.' You know. Saying something, speaking my mind up, you know." Even though Pete was pretty upset with the school, he maintained outward respect toward school personnel because he knew that by calling them racists he would further damage the already fragmented relationship.

Similar to Pete, Niko talked about how a school administrator tried to refer him to an alternative high school, but his mother fought the system and he remained in the regular high school. He asserted: "they were trying to get rid of a lot of minority friends by sending them to the alternative high school, and that seemed like to be the ongoing thing...my mother fought tooth and nail and it did not happen." Like Pete, Niko resented the school for this practice. Niko's and Pete's experiences show young men and their

parents struggling to get better education; these experiences do not demonstrate laziness or young men who do not care about their education.

Like the others, James described his emotions as being filled with constant anger since he was in middle school. When I asked him to describe his school experience further, he explained that he just wanted to make money because school was a waste of time:

James: When I was in high school I really didn't care what anybody was talking to me. I was just fucking up.

TM: What made you not care?

James: School itself, they didn't care when I left. I was just doing whatever, you know what I mean? Trying to get the money. That's it. My sophomore year I was like ... They put me in a special class. It was only like 15 kids and only 5 used to show up every day. So the rest of them just dropped out. It was just kids that was at all different grades in high school that couldn't complete so they just put them all in one class together to learn the same shit.

James elaborated further that he was placed in the class for behavioral issues, but he felt angry because every student in the class was required to study the same subjects at the same level. These were students from different grades, so this meant the instructional content had nothing to do with their grade level, future goals, or interests. This may perhaps be why many ended up dropping out of school. Following this experience, James described that he just wanted to make money as he saw no end benefit of school. He elaborated on how he is still "mad at the world" because he is not on the path to doing the



things he wanted when he was younger. His negative school experiences affected James's engagement and success in school and led to him dropping out of school.

Equally, Niko talked about his emotions while in high school and how he was annoyed with the school administrator who suspended him several times. He expounded:

I remember, you know...coming into school ... having to borrow somebody else's notes from what happened in the course, and then ... getting my homework and then going home, you know. And, you know, I don't think I would have made it without some of my other peers. Uh, there was the neighbor that used to live up the road from us... she would literally do my math homework and help me ... She was like, I know you weren't in class or whatever, and she literally helped me do everything which was, you know, great on that part. I don't think I could have made it through, do the math course without her, but yeah... I know that I was angry with the administrator. And you know, some, certain teachers as well.

Much like James, these negative school experiences whereby Niko had to depend on his friends to get access to school materials, not only aroused anger in Niko, but his school engagement and success were hindered.

Another participant, John, described his school experience in a similar manner. John talked about being suspended several times, and sometimes being banned from the school grounds altogether. Upon returning to school, he says his grades had fallen from an A to an F, and he was "just mad." At the same time his court fines were accumulating. Because John's educational success had been affected, as evidenced by his now failing grades, John dropped out of school.

This theme gave evidence that the participants were searching for hope to better their lives, and also wanted others such as school personnel to believe in them. However, these young men's educational engagement and success were so negatively affected that they developed resentment toward their school and the school personnel. In the end, this was a primary explanation given by many of the young men for leaving school.

**Theme Four: Upon finding themselves out-of-school and out-of-work, the young men experienced despair and discouragement, which led to mistrust of the larger Beaver City community**

Following their descriptions of their school experiences and having noted the emotions that the participants expressed about school, I asked them: "Can you describe some of the emotions you experience now that you are out-of-school and out-of-work?" The participants described that the emotions they experienced most were, again, anger and disappointment. Most of the males reported that they were angry to find themselves in a situation where they do not know what the future holds. For example, James expressed his anger and disappointment now that he is out of school and without gainful employment. He explained: "It happens to me all the time, I just get mad at the world... [and] I still have a hard time dealing with it." James's anger is also activated by the fact that he left school at age 16, and he has never held a job and does not know where to begin searching for employment. James is particularly unhappy with himself for dropping out of school so early. "I just did it all at the wrong age" he said, and he is trying to make things right, but remains dejected. He repeated the statement, "I still have a hard time dealing with it!"

Like James, Tino talked about the disappointment of being dually-detached, and how desperate he feels as he compares himself with some of his friends who dropped out of school. He lamented:

Just messes you up, it pisses you off. I mean I am discouraged. You know what I mean? I am discouraged for real... Sometimes I look at my life and be like angry about it because I haven't achieved those goals...it doesn't make sense... Most of my homies... they would be, like, they are dropping out of school and what not. But I couldn't do that because of my mom. She would get mad. You know what I mean? But [my friends] ...they didn't finish the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I did. We ended up the same thing. You know what I mean? In the streets.

By "in the streets" Tino means selling drugs. He elaborated on how the streets are a trap for many young Black males: "that's the way the enemy wants it! You [know what] I mean? You go back on the streets, then you definitely can't get a job if you get a criminal record." The enemy Tino is referring to is White society, particularly in Beaver City, where young Black males sensed that they were targets both within the school and in the larger community.

Furthermore, the participants were aware of the discrimination they faced while trying to secure employment and they were disappointed at the system within which they must survive. Niko, who is the oldest of the dually-detached males, expressed his disappointment about being out-of-work and out-of-school powerfully:

That's... a designed system, and I think it's... sick, as far as...you know, oppression and ... You know? Nowadays that you see it there [are] people out there that, you know, they do not want ... I guess, gentrification of a population or

something like that? And, uh, yeah. I mean if you look at it, I mean minorities, the human rights atrocities to minorities in the United States is horrible, and it continues to happen to this day, and I think a lot of people just keep brushing it off like it's nothing, and you know, we'll see. We'll see what happens eventually. We will... see...It's sickening.... It is...I hope people will start talking about something like this, and actually trying to, you know, get down to the problem.... It makes you feel disenfranchised. Basically, like, you know, you're not wanted... you feel like you are being oppressed.

Notably, Niko said he was especially angry because no one wants to talk about this issue of being out-of-work in a city such as Beaver City where the participants understood and knew that there were plenty of low-skilled jobs. Regardless of where one is located, Niko noted that the state of minorities was “pretty bad” across the United States. He explained further his frustration with the situation of Black males in Beaver City, particularly when they go looking for work:

I just want everything to be fair, on an even playing ground for everybody. So, yeah, I guess it gets frustrating when they don't even want to look at your paperwork because you don't... have the degree. They just skip you. So, um ... Yeah, frustration.

The participants' disappointment was also directed toward the community. Although the participants perceived that there were many Black males who were detached from work and school, the participants noticed that Beaver City's larger community did not appear to be bothered by the situation. Niko talked about his disappointment with the Beaver City community:

Oh, of course the main consequence is, after that you're going to find yourself either in jail or, you know ... I don't know. Something else. That's really what I think. That's the consequence of when, you know, when a community gives up on people. You know? Um ... And yeah, really that's what it is, is just, you know, you're going to have ... The community is going to have to pay more for policing, you know. Just everything. It's a downfall. I think it's just cheaper to help that kid out during the adolescent phase than to continuously cycle them through jail and back out, cause that's when the system starts working there. And then you're going down the road where no one even wants to look at your job application at McDonald's. You know? So yeah, that's pretty bad. But yeah I think that's what the community needs to realize, the effect is larger than just, you know, I guess, you know, just somebody not working. It's more than that. There's economics in it.

Pete also described his disappointment and frustration with the Beaver City community:

Nowadays...the thing I see the most, or I see on the news, or whenever I go on social media, I see Black people being killed, you know? And that's, like, I really don't get it, because I'm like, okay, we have cops for a reason. To protect! They're over here saying that they're helping... but really, the actions speak more than words... So like, the actions that they're taking, seems like they're really not helping, you know, like, now the schools here are planning to kick most Black folks out of high schools to send them to an alternative [high] school... it's really

tough and I don't understand it, you know, so that's why they're really not doing anything to help out, at all.

Equally, Tino expressed his disappointment with the community: "It's just a cold world out there". He explained further: "I know there are plenty of people with power out there to help people...in this community, you know what I mean? But they are not trying to find out what's your problem...if they would, there would be plenty of progress, you know?" Tino believed that the larger Beaver City community did not really care about the state of dually-detached Black males—or Black males in general—and this has him disheartened. He stated:

I mean, I am discouraged. You know what I mean? I am discouraged for real. But some things, I still want to achieve them and whatnot. But sometime I look at my life and be like angry about it, because I haven't achieved those goals yet.

Two of the participants, John and Lee, talked little about being out of work and out of school. For John, it was a sensitive issue to discuss. John has been in jail or "locked up" as he describes it. While John talked freely about his school experiences, he was reluctant to talk about his out-of-school and out-of-work experience. However, he did disclose that he has not been arrested for more than nine months now, and he plans to go back to school to complete high school. Lee, on the other hand, viewed his dual-detachment as being merely temporary and thus not stressful for him. It is instructive to mention that Lee lives in a middle class neighborhood with both of his parents. Although he has not been able to find a job, it was not a critical issue for him compared to the other participants because he could rely on his parents for his needs. At the time of the interviews, Lee was planning to attend a local community college.

**Theme Five: The participants perceived that they were denied employment because of employers' racial bias, even for low skilled jobs, but remain resilient despite concerns about racism**

Young Black males in this study understood the predicament in which they found themselves. They are not only on the margins, but in some ways they are a forgotten population. Therefore, this theme covers their quest to find employment in an environment where they believe they are discriminated against. The participants described their difficulty finding employment in words like "it's tough," or professional "career doors are closed." These young men saw that they were limited to low-skilled jobs, but they remain optimistic about the future. The young Black men in this study who did not complete high school believed they were at a disadvantage in competing for jobs. Perplexingly for them, however, is that those who finished high school find themselves with the same disadvantage as their peers who did not graduate high school. Therefore, the participants speculated that racism plays a central role in keeping them out of work, especially in Beaver City, which has a low unemployment rate because of many high and low skilled jobs available. The young men in this study were aware that without post-secondary training, they would have a difficult time obtaining any high-skilled jobs. However, they still believed that they could compete in the low-skilled labor market. The participants recognized that their race played a central role in being excluded from work. Regardless, the males remain resilient in their quest to find ways to improve their lives. For example, Pete explained why a job search was tough for him:

Oh, well it's more like, you know, like for me it's more... you know, I didn't finish high school... if you don't have...certain requirements... There's no way for me to get the job, you know? And, uh, for me it's because, you know,

nowadays this racism is coming up, you know... it's been really tough... You know, they won't tell you, but they'll make up excuses... 'Oh, yeah, you just missed the boss,' ...you just missed him, you just missed her,' you know? So... they'll keep delaying your appointment so you don't actually get the job. Well, it gets me mad, uh, well, it gets [me] really mad, but then, I can't do nothing about it...I really can't do that...you know, 'You guys are being racist.'

Pete knew Beaver City well and explained that, unlike other cities, Beaver City has plenty of jobs. But he perceived that Black males like him are kept out of the jobs because of discrimination. Additionally, Pete stated that constantly searching for employment could be "stressful for young folks" like himself. Nonetheless, Pete remained determined in his job search. As an unemployed Black male who dropped out of school, Pete also said he was aware that people expect him to have a couple of babies and be in jail or homeless. He explained with a sense of pride in his countenance and voice: "I have no kids. I am not arrested. I am not homeless." While Pete admitted that his situation was dire, he described with emotion how watching his father struggling to pay the bills has inspired him do all he can to prepare for a career that will provide him future economic stability. He stated:

That's the thing that keeps me going...every time I see my dad, you know, he is stressed because of work, bills, and all that stuff, trying to support the family...I am like, my life is not over...I still have opportunities. I am turning 23 soon, you know. I can still keep myself out of trouble...find that career. I really want to do that, you know. I want to live that life my parents didn't live, you know? Support them and, you know, just like the way they are supporting me...I would've been



kicked out of the house a long time ago. [My parents] accepted me for the mistakes I did, and they still love me, you know?

Much like Pete, Niko stated that while there are some opportunities for employment, doors to a meaningful career seem to have closed for him. But, like Pete, Niko talked about how he remains persistent regardless of the seemingly closed professional career:

As far as like you know, having a career... You know, that was where I guess I got doors closed on me um, and um, you know... I wasn't blocked out of... basic work... I knew a lot of other things that uh, you know, just basic skills that a lot of people just don't have, and uh yeah. I was still shut down from employment... But you know there's certain jobs that I knew they should have given me the job but it just, you know (Sighs) ...I don't know what it came down to. That was rough... Maybe just being, you know, not having a degree with a piece of paper that says that I've committed myself to a school you know, um, and then like, actually being a minority... I'm just determined, like I just keep going... it doesn't matter to me, I guess. If they told me... then I just keep going... I just keep going. Like there's nothing else that I can do, you know.

It is instructive to mention that Niko became a father when he was 20 years old, and he is an involved parent. Therefore, regardless of the situation in which he finds himself, being alienated from school and work, when I asked Niko to talk about what keeps him going, he said:

Just my son, that's really what keeps me going. And, um, knowing that, you know ... I guess, um...you know, anything to cope with that is, that I really ... I guess

I'm ... I'm determined to be successful. That's really what it is. And I want to at least be as successful as some of my peers that graduated with Bachelor's and Master's... So, that's what my coping mechanism is, that I set that bar up there and then that's what I want to pursue.

Talking about his job search struggles made Tino open up more about being dually-detached, and how he perceived that channels for employment had closed because of the way he looks. Tino is a tall Black male with dreadlocks. Tino said that his uncle had mentioned that potential employers were going to look at his dreads and judge him. Therefore, employment doors may have closed because of his race and the way he looks, and that he has been discouraged but he perseveres in his job search. He pointed out:

But, I got dreads, you know what I mean? And, certain places if I go, you [know what] I mean, and then people look at you from the outside and make certain judgments... I understand I have to be a respectable person, right? But, I am a respectable person, but why should I not get a job because of the way I look? I shouldn't have to change myself... I'm not a bad person!

The process of even going out to look for a job was constantly discouraging for Tino because he perceived that he was always racialized based on his style of hair. He voiced his opinion that it did not seem fair that he had to change his style of hair in order to get a job. Regardless of exclusion from employment, Tino stated that he was "still not giving up." Each of the participants described that they understood that their situation of being dually-detached was not desirable, but none had given up on the future.

James expressed that he was trying to make his situation better since he left school at 16. James was the only participant who had never looked for employment

because he spent most of the last two years “in the streets,” as he often phrased himself. For James, “in the streets” had evolved from dealing drugs around the block to being involved in a larger illegal enterprise that has kept him traveling from state to state. As such, James has only found illegal means of employment. Therefore, James did not know where to begin searching for a legal job. Although his situation is more complex than the others, James remains hopeful that things will work out in the end. He asserted: “I am here trying to make it right.” Making it right for James meant trying to find local resources that might help him obtain a high school diploma.

This theme captured the experiences of these young men as they went out to look for employment, their challenges and determination to remain hopeful even though their situation looked bleak. While these young men are faced with the reality that they may not obtain employment until they improve their skills through continued education, their optimism for a better future shows their abounding tenacity. The participants also understood that race contributed to their marginalization both in school and in the larger Beaver City community.

### **Summary of Themes**

In Chapter IV, I provided a description of the themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis. The key findings of the study were: First, early in their schooling the participants had positive attitudes toward education and career aspirations, but by the time they reached high school their career aspirations were derailed by lack of support from school personnel. Despite this, they remain hopeful about the future. Second, suspensions, isolation into special classes and tracking into alternative education led to broken relationships between these young men and school personnel, which then led to

decreased desire to be in school. Third, the participants' negative school experiences provided a barrier to academic engagement and school success, which led to some dropping out of school and others barely graduating. Fourth, upon finding themselves out-of-school and out-of-work the young men experienced despair and discouragement, which led to mistrust of the larger Beaver City community. Fifth, the participants perceived that because of employers' racial bias they were denied employment even for low skilled jobs, but they remain steadfast despite concerns about racism.

In Chapter V, two assertions that stemmed from the data analysis are discussed. I then present implications for Black males' schooling and employment, recommendations for school administrators and policy makers. Finally, I present limitations of the study, the study's contribution to Black males' literature, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that contribute to Black males leaving school either without a diploma or unprepared for competition in the labor market. Another aim of the study was to document the lived experiences of Black males who are out-of-school and out-of-work. The study included interviews with six Black males, three of whom graduated high school and three of whom did not graduate high school. The participants in this study shared their perceptions of the factors that contributed to their alienation from school and the barriers they face trying to secure employment. Moreover, the participants talked about their lived experiences of being dually-detached Black males in Beaver City, a small Midwestern city. In this chapter, I discuss findings from the data analysis, contextualizing the themes within Critical Race Theory and intersectionality theoretical framework. Moreover, in aligning the findings within the literature, I identify similarities and differences between these findings and the literature. I also address the implications of this study related to the issues of Black males' schooling and employment, as well as the limitations of this study. Finally, I discuss recommendations for Black males' education and employment as suggested by the findings, as well as suggestions and opportunities for future research.

- i. The research questions that guided this study were: What are the lived in-school experience that contribute to dually-detached Black males leaving school

- ii. unprepared for the labor force when the prospects of securing rewarding employment are slim?
- iii. What do dually-detached Black males experience in their quest to obtain employment?

The themes that emerged from the data collection and data analysis were pooled into two groups. The first three themes captured school experiences of the young Black men and the factors that contributed to their decisions to leave school before graduation or to graduate with limited skills to compete for highly skilled occupations or transition into higher education. In particular, the participants provided evidence that they valued education and had career aspirations, but their ambitions were negatively impacted by their relationships with school personnel. These broken relationships were a source of anger and resentment in the lives of the young Black males, and, for those who left school early, they frequently cited these relationships as part of their reasons for dropping out of school.

The last two themes addressed the lived experiences of young Black males in the space they now occupy, being alienated from school and employment. The themes captured the emotions these men experienced while searching for work. In addition, the themes identified the voices of Black males regarding their current position between school and employment, especially their view that they were excluded from low skilled jobs because of Beaver City employers' racial bias. Interestingly, even though these young men were discouraged about being out-of-work and out-of-school, these findings also revealed their resilience, as the young men remained hopeful that things would work out in the future.

## Findings and Discussion

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study were Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1982; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and intersectionality, a tenet of Feminist Standpoint Theory (Collins, 2000; 2005). I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to direct focus on the issue of racism and to address the consequences of racism, to challenge the myth that American society is fair (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; DeCuir-Gunby & Williams, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2009), and to relate the lived experiences of often silenced dually-detached Black males (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In addition, intersectionality was used to comprehend how race intersects with other modes of oppression to reproduce inequality (Collins, 2000; Gillborn, 2010) in the lives of dually-detached Black males.

### **Assertion One: Dually-detached Black Males Perceived that their Marginalization in School Impacted their Educational Achievement, Contributing to their Subsequent Alienation from School, but Remain Hopeful about the Future.**

The first theme that I derived from data analysis highlighted the participants' attitudes toward education early in their schooling and the derailment of their career aspirations because of lack of support from school personnel. In fact, *every one* of the participants expressed love for learning, and viewed education positively at one point in their schooling journey. The salient aspect of the theme was that the young men once had career goals that they wanted to achieve and perceived school as an avenue to achieve these goals, but lack of support from school personnel disrupted these career aspirations. Regardless of this perspective, all of the participants remain positive about the future. It was evident from the interviews that these young men recognized that they could achieve

economic mobility through education. Moreover, the participants understood that support from school personnel was essential for their success.

While some researchers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978, 1991) had for decades theorized that Black males perceive no upward mobility through education and therefore devalue academic success, this finding suggests otherwise. In fact, Black males' value of education in this study was consistent with Black males' literature that posits that young Black men do indeed value education as much as other students (Ferguson, 2001; Harris, 2006; Howard, 2008; Payne, 2010; S.R. Harper & Davis, 2012). But institutional factors tend to affect the school experiences of Black males, alienating some from school or from graduating with the advanced skillset necessary to participate in the local and global economy (hooks, 2004). For example, Payne and Brown (2010) found that while Black males in their study valued education, they became alienated from school upon realizing that their teachers did not provide them with quality learning experiences needed for social and economic mobility. This finding resonated with the current study, as Black males in this study also valued education, but became discontented with school when they believed that school personnel did not support them and their relationships with their school personnel became fragmented. The young men in this study missed large chunks of their learning because of suspensions or being moved to different schools. Although their behaviors may have been similar to others of different races and their suspensions were more than others, their behaviors were nonetheless the impetus to the suspension. The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was that stereotyping, suspensions, isolating into special classes, and tracking into alternative education led to broken relationships with school personnel and alienated these young



men from schooling, impacting their future economic mobility. The young men in the study were “pissed off” about their school experiences and how their teachers treated them or failed to nurture their love for learning. This theme was directly connected with the value that these Black men placed on education in the sense that the participants in this study recognized that once the relationships with their school personnel were at risk or damaged, school became a less welcoming environment —indeed, in some cases actively alienating. The participants stated that these broken relationships affected their motivation for learning. These broken relationships evidenced themselves in multiple forms such as teachers perceived as not caring, the young men perceived as being targeted for disciplinary measures, and not receiving the necessary and rightful affirming, respectful career guidance.

First, the young men believed that while some teachers cared about them, the larger population of school personnel did not appear to care about their learning. For example, James, a young man, who dropped out of school at age 16, needed some guidance and someone to show him that they cared when he started to lose interest in school, but there did not appear to be such a person present to tend to his needs. Instead, James was placed in a class for behavioral disorders with 14 other Black males, from different grades until 10 of the males, including James, dropped out of school. James expressed this lack of care in these terms: “school itself didn’t care... they were on some, like, they are still going to get paid. Let this kid fuck up his life, you know what I mean?”

Second, there was evidence of broken relationships between Black males in this study and some of the professional support staff. For example, Niko, expressed his

disappointment with the school guidance counselor who told him that college was not for him, and that he was better off going directly to the workforce.

Third, broken relationships between these young men and school administrators came in the form of disciplinary actions, such as suspensions and/or expulsions. Five of the participants were suspended at least once, losing valuable learning time, which resulted in three of the males dropping out of school, and two graduating unprepared for college or the labor force. The participants who dropped out of school had such damaged relationships with school personnel that they saw no benefit in remaining at the school. The two who graduated only met minimum requirements for graduation because of the suspensions that excluded them from valuable learning time. Their learning was incomplete, which left them unprepared for college, denying them the opportunity to compete for high-skilled jobs. In this segment of relationships, the participants recounted their displeasure with school administrators. Participants were perplexed why administrators targeted them and other Black male students. For example, Niko talked about how he was always suspended with at least two of his Black friends, who often had nothing to do with the matter. Similarly, Pete described his broken relationships with school personnel in this manner:

But you know, with the situation that occurred at school, getting kicked out, getting accused of stealing... being accused of selling weed during class hours... being accused of, you know, stealing people's stuff in the library... Like I was always the target? Like, I never understood it though, like ...I was always with the crowd that, you know, I would always hang out with...one guy out of the

whole crowd... [to] get picked. I am like, all right so... guess this is not my place.

Um, to be honest, I felt that they were racist. But I didn't want to say that.

The third theme, participants' negative school experiences provided a barrier to academic engagement and school success which led to some of the young men dropping out of school and others barely graduating, captured Black males' response to their mistreatment in school. Therefore, broken relationships between these young men and school personnel aroused negative emotions in them. The young men developed resentment toward school and school personnel. First, they believed that school personnel did not nurture their once abundant educational passion. Second, five of the six participants were given out-of-school suspensions that put them behind in their school work, impacting their academic engagement and school success. Moreover, the participants perceived they were repeatedly treated differently by school employees. Therefore, their response to this marginalization was often anger toward the school and for what it stood.

The idea of resentment toward the school resonates with the literature on Black males. Research on Black males' schooling has, for decades, documented racism, low teacher expectations and unfair punishments (Brown, 2007; Ferguson, 2000; Howard, 2008; Noguera, 2008; Losen & Skiba, 2010) toward Black males in schools. In response to this marginalization, young Black males have displayed behaviors such as antagonism toward teachers, academic disengagement, and truancy (Payne & Brown, 2010). Moreover, young Black males who are frustrated with racial bias often express anger (Stevenson et al., 2002), sometimes in the form of defiance and direct rebellion (Noguera, 2003), and in doing so, instead of school personnel instituting strategies that would

engage these males academically, they punish them through disciplinary actions or placement in behavioral classes, further disrupting their educational experiences (Losen & Skiba, 2010). This was especially evident in the case of at least five of the participants. For example, when James lost interest in school, the school personnel placed him in a special behavioral class rather than seeking out the root cause of his disengagement. James believed that his educational needs were not met in that course, and he ultimately dropped out of school. Similarly, when Pete's grades started to suffer in high school, a school administrator forcibly transferred him to an alternative high school rather than seeking out ways to help him. Much like James, Pete felt alienated from school when it appeared that the curriculum at the alternative school was not going to meet his educational needs.

Given their accounts, it may not be difficult to understand their angst and resentment toward school. Had the school provided the resources to engage these young men rather than tracking them into disengaging environments, their present and futures may be perceived as dramatically different from what they currently visualize.

As a result of being frequently marginalized in school, some of these young men dropped out of school or graduated unprepared to compete in the local and global economy because their learning was impacted by these damaged relationships. With regard to this, the young Black men in this study expressed that their relationships with school personnel were damaged largely because of the schools' racial bias. Essentially, the participants believed that being young male African Americans, school personnel frequently assumed that they were involved in wrong-doing. Consequently, this bias negatively impacted these young men's educational experiences, leading to their

departure from school unprepared for the labor market. Nonetheless, five out of the six participants have managed to stay out of prison unlike many young Black males who are socialized from school to prison.

The notion of broken relationships with school personnel as a factor that contributes to Black males dropping out of school or leaving school unprepared for the labor force resonates with Critical Race Theory, and is consistent with the literature. First, Ladson-Billings (1998) argues “if racism were merely isolated, unrelated, individual acts, we would see at least a few examples of educational excellence and equity together in the nations’ public schools” (p.55). It was apparent, from the stories of these young men, that school personnel treated them differently because they were Black in a predominantly White school district. The experiences of these young men provide evidence that the plight of Black males in school continues to be an expression of prevalent racism in society (Delgado, 1995). This disproportionate treatment hindered these young men’s educational progress (Mutua, 2006), contributing to their alienation from school.

In addition, school administrators may have perceived some of the young Black men were not “cut-out” for regular high school curriculum and therefore needed to be transferred to an alternative high school, as in the case of Pete. In fact, Pete perceived that there were other students who demonstrated deeper academic underachievement at the regular high school than he, yet they were not transferred to the alternative high school. Thus, the participants perceived that stereotyping, suspensions, isolation into special classes and tracking into alternative education was indeed a consequence of racial prejudice, especially because the majority of their teachers were White and all of the

school district's administrators were White as well. For example, Pete was not allowed to attend any other high school in the district except the alternative high school, which he believed did not meet his educational needs. Yet he also felt unable to honestly address the situation with the school personnel. Pete explained: "That's why I'm like, 'If I say they're racist, I might get in trouble for it.' You know. Saying something, speaking my mind."

Second, the insights of the participants regarding their broken relationships with school personnel were in accordance with Black males' literature. Howard and Colleagues (2012) posited that the way in which Black males are viewed in the larger society often filters down into schooling and influences the way teachers and other school personnel treat these young men. Accordingly, Black males continually experience overt and covert racism from school personnel (Howard, 2008; Noguera, 2008). In addition, African American males' educational experiences are often impacted by less caring school personnel (Duncan, 2002; Ferguson, 2000; hooks, 2004; Kunjufu, 1995). Thus, some males may leave school unprepared to participate in the local and global economy (hooks, 2004), or they leave school (Howard, 2008, S.R. Harper & Davis, 2012) because they perceive that school personnel do not care about them. Either option leads to an inability to attain social and economic mobility (Payne & Brown, 2010).

Another element of broken relationships manifested itself in school discipline, whereby Black males were disproportionately targets of disciplinary practices that excluded them from school (Caton, 2012; Darensbourg et al., 2010; Ferguson, 2000; Wallace et al., 2008). Five out of six young men in this study faced some form of out-of-school suspensions, which put them behind in their school work. These exclusionary

practices engendered frustration and alienation from school, affecting their learning opportunities and dropout rates (Brown, 2007; Lewis, Butler, et al., 2010). Additionally, in recent years disciplinary school measures have made school environments unwelcoming for young Black males (Caton, 2012), resulting in broken relationships between them and school personnel. Consequently, these broken relationships have had lasting effects on the quality of their education and their ability to achieve success (Skiba, Horner et al., 2011).

This study's participants placed much focus on their relationships with school personnel. They implied that if they had been nurtured in their school environments their educational experience might have been positive. In fact, literature on Black males has identified relationships with school personnel as an important element for students' success (Brooms, 2016; Chu, 2014; Duncan, 2002; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Laura, 2014; Reichert & Hawley, 2014; Toldson, 2008). When relationships with school personnel are nurtured and reinforced, young Black males are often motivated toward success in school (Brooms, 2016).

Therefore, because the participants' relationships with school personnel in this study were undeveloped or were damaged in some way, the decline in relationships contributed to them leaving school even though the prospects of gainful employment remained slim. As the young men put it, school became "less and less" of a place to be because they "felt like no one cared" or they did not receive the support envisioned. Thus, I conclude that the lack of support and broken relationships with school personnel functioned as a crucial barrier to the participants' educational success and directly contributed to their disengagement from school.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that it is the responsibility of both parties—the young males in this study and school personnel—to nurture their relationships and to tend to their repair. It is apparent that some of the young males in this study did indeed engage in behaviors that cannot be tolerated in schools. For example, even though John was reluctant to talk about his arrest in school, his behavior may have included some form of violence and subsequent arrest. Additionally, both James and Tino inferred that they were involved in selling drugs while in school. These are indeed behaviors that need interventions and, often schools intervene through disciplinary measures that are frequently biased—further damaging relationships with students (Payne & Brown, 2010). While both the males and school personnel are responsible for building strong relationships with each other, school personnel possess more tools to nurture and develop these relationships than the adolescents in the schools, and they need to be taught rather than punishing or excluding them from school. School personnel consist of adults with credentials to teach, guide and socialize students into life. Perhaps the greatest tool school personnel have is to love students, “to teach from the place of love, then, is to empower—to open eyes and see strengths and struggles” of the students “and to fearlessly put your ass on the line to help somebody meet a fuller measure of his or her own humanity” (Laura, 2014. p.70). Therefore, I conclude that even though these young men are partly responsible for the decline in relationships, school personnel are in a more poignant position to repair and nurture these relationships through ways other than punishments.



**Assertion Two: Young Men in this Study Perceived that their Participation in the Labor Market was Hindered by Both their Lack of Education and the Prevalent Employers' Racial Bias in Beaver City, But Remain Resilient.**

When the young men in this study found themselves in an inescapable limbo between school and work, they expressed emotions of despair and disappointment. The men were dissatisfied with the position in which they found themselves—out-of-school and out-of-work. Their despair also stemmed from noticing that many of their Black friends were also stuck in the same situation, alienated from school and work, yet the community did not appear to attend to the problem. Thus, the greater disappointment was directed toward the larger Beaver City community, which the participants believed had turned a blind eye on the issue of dual-detachment. Additionally, labor market exclusion of Black males in Beaver City where there were plenty of jobs also “pissed off” the participants.

Even though these young men were in deep despair, they understood that staying “off the streets” and not committing crimes were crucial for their continued well-being. Pete stated that everyone expected him to have a child, be in jail or homeless, and he was proud that he had managed to stay out of trouble. Likewise, Tino expressed that he was disappointed that he could not get a job, but he knew that the streets were a trap that would detach him from work forever once he had a criminal record.

Unlike many young Black males their age, five of the six participants in this study have managed to avoid the criminal justice pipeline through family support, internal fortitude and maybe luck for some. For example, Tino, who lives with his uncle, talked about how his uncle had a rule that he needed to choose friends wisely and always be home before dark. Together with adhering to his uncle’s house rules, Tino possesses an internal fortitude. For instance, during our second interview, Tino explained that the

“streets” were a trap that some people in the White society want young Black males to fall into, he stated, “that’s the way the enemy wants it! You [know what] I mean you go back on the streets, then you definitely can’t get a job if you get a criminal record.” This perception and view of the realities of “the streets” as a downfall for Black males has kept Tino out of the criminal justice pipeline. Much like Tino, Niko has both family support and internal fortitude. Niko has a deep bond with and support from his mother. Interestingly, Niko’s brother has been in and out of the criminal justice system. This has also deterred Niko from engaging in any illegal behavior after seeing his brother’s suffering and his mother’s anguish. Perhaps the most significant part of Niko’s life that has kept him away from illegal activity is the love that he has for his young son. During the interview, he talked about how he was determined to succeed for the sake of his son.

Family support and internal fortitude has also kept Pete out of the criminal justice system. Of all the participants, Pete talked more about the current events across the country whereby police are killing young Black males. He remarked that as a Black male who dropped out of school, people expect him to be “homeless” or “in jail” and that he was living proof that these stereotypes do not hold true for all Black males. What seems to have kept Pete out of the system is the support from his father. Pete commented that seeing his “father struggle to pay the bills” keeps him motivated to succeed so he could help his father. As for James, luck seems to be the only explanation for staying out of the criminal justice system. James is the only participant whose residence I did not see. It is unknown whether he was homeless or simply keeping his residence private.

The idea of these young men being in despair but not participating in crime is inconsistent with research literature on Black males’ joblessness. According to the

literature, for Black males who experience barriers in employment, physical dominance sometimes becomes their way of life (Collins, 2005). Because these men are sometimes labeled as “weak” for not participating in work, their lives become grounded in physical aggression to negotiate race-related stress (Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005). For example, Richardson and Vil (2015) found that inner city young Black males who were excluded from work often redefined crime as work, sadly perpetuating the stereotype of Blacks as criminals. Regardless, pervasive joblessness in many inner-city communities because of changes in the economy has resulted in a rise in crime (Anderson, 1999; Levin, 2005; Mincy, 2006; Sum, Khatiwada & Palma, 2014; Wilson, 2008).

For decades, most Americans, including employers, have depended on the media for pictures of crime in communities across the country (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001). In addition, in most TV news coverage of crime, young African American males are disproportionately overrepresented. It could be because of these contributions that viewers often assume that crime is largely committed by African American youth with a typical victim being White (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2012). Therefore, even in smaller communities such as Beaver City, young Black males are more likely to be viewed as criminals, making it difficult for them to find employment. This assumption may be more true for James, John, Pete and Tino because they live in the section of the city that has been zoned as the high crime area in need of 24-hour police surveillance.

The last theme in the study highlighted the stories of Black males in their search for employment. The young men described their employment search as “tough” or “rough.” The participants held strong perceptions that employment doors had closed for them. Regardless, these young men displayed their resilience by not giving up on their

future. The young men also understood that high-skilled jobs that required advanced training were likely beyond their reach. However, because of their familiarity with the city, they also knew that there were plenty of low-skilled jobs. It was evident that these men simply wanted to make a living for their families and build a future. As Niko put it: “As far as like, you know, having a career... You know, that was where I guess I got doors closed on me.”

Exclusion from low-skilled jobs in a thriving economy and in a city that boasts the availability of jobs for every skill level raises the question of whether discrimination is the sizeable factor in why these young men are excluded from work. While one cannot definitively prove what employers are thinking in their hiring practices, several experiments on labor market discrimination (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Pager, Bonikowski, & Western, 2009; Pager & Western, 2012) have concluded that race and gender marginalization persists for Black males (Collins, 2004). Black males in this study perceived that they were disregarded in school, and now they see a similar pattern in their employment searches.

The participants perceived that their inability to find employment was a consequence of prevalent racial bias in Beaver City. In fact, the young men were conscious of the discrimination they encountered in their quest to find employment, specifically in a city known to have jobs for every skill level. Pete’s observation and perception is worth repeating: “you know, nowadays, this racism is coming up.” Pete talked a lot about the current events whereby young Black males have died in the hands of the police, and the rising of the “Black Lives Matter” movement. At some point, Pete loved his country so much that he wanted to serve in the Marines but was deterred

because of recent killings of Black males by police officers. Pete views all of these events and his negative school experiences, and his difficulty in securing employment as consequences of racism.

This finding about the exclusion of young Black men from jobs is consistent with employment literature and resonates with intersectionality framework. Literature on Black males' joblessness has uncovered that while unemployment rates in White neighborhoods have remained relatively stable since the 1960s, low income Black neighborhoods have seen large increases in unemployment since the 1970s (Cordova et al., 2016; Levin, 2010; Mincy, 2006; Quillian, 2003; Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2014; Wagmiller, 2008). Additionally, moderate income Black neighborhoods have also seen similar declines in employment (Quillian, 2003, Wagmiller, 2008), making it difficult for Black males regardless of where they reside. Thus, joblessness has become both a racial and location issue, especially as communities such as Beaver City are getting more and more segregated. Moreover, unemployment has been especially high for Black males who dropped out of school as well as for those who did not attend college (Kuehn, 2013; Mincy, 2006; Edelman et al., 2006).

In Beaver City, where the economy was thriving at the time of this study, Black males' struggles to secure even low-skilled employment could likely be attributed to racial bias. Racism is still prevalent in our society, but it is increasingly manifested in subtle ways (Harris, 2012). For example, Pete shared how he was not given the opportunity to see the hiring manager when he was looking for a low-skilled job: "[You've] just missed the manager," said the screening employees. He was not called back for an interview. He stated:

You know, they won't tell you, but they'll make up excuses, like 'oh, yeah, you just missed the boss,' 'oh yeah, you just missed him, you just missed her,' you know? So, like, they'll keep delaying your appointment so you don't actually get the job.

This is a classic example of non-blatant racism where one is treated with superficial respect, but not afforded the benefits they need. The participants in this study expressed their confusion when they were not treated with explicit hostility yet were socially excluded. However, without having interviewed the employers, it will remain unknown what their reasoning is for their actions that are perceived as racially biased (Pager, 2007).

Exclusion of Black males in low skilled jobs in a city known to have jobs for every skill level also warrants a look at other intersecting identities that might have worked together to perpetuate the marginalization of Black males in Beaver City. Collins (2000) argues that regardless of how identities are constructed or ascribed, they work together to create different challenges. For Black males who are detached from school and work, there are aspects of their background and identity that work together to shape their experiences. First, race and gender were factors for all the participants in a predominately White location. The pervasiveness of the images that associate Black males with crime (Pager, 2007), which have been told for hundreds of years (Fultz & Brown, 2008), may have influenced how employers viewed these young men.

Second, dropping out of school was a significant barrier for James, Pete and John, which made them self-conscious as they attempted to enter the work force. For example, Pete mentioned that because he had no high school diploma, it was difficult to find work.

For James, it was even more difficult to know where to begin his attempt at the work force because he dropped out of school at an early age and he had never held a formal job. This resulted in him seeking other jobs “in the streets.” Third, even though Niko and Tino graduated high school, not having a college degree was something they were self-conscious about because it influenced the jobs for which they could apply. Lastly, as young Black males who are not in school or working, this background (being dually-detached) may intersect with race and gender affecting their experiences in Beaver City.

Therefore, I conclude that in a city such as Beaver City that advertises that they have jobs available for every skill level, race and gender marginalization clearly intersected with the dual-detachment of these young men to impact their participation in the labor force. Because these men dropped out of school and left high school unprepared for high-skilled jobs, they remain subordinate in the work force. Even if they find employment, there is a higher likelihood that they will be hired as janitors or food service workers, jobs often relegated to subordinate groups based on race and gender identity (Smith, 1987; Wilson, 2008) and level of education. Thus, Black males find themselves excluded from work based on gender, race and other identities. As a result, these young men are not only marginalized but they might also become abject—ostracized from society as hopeless beings consigned to the underground economy of drugs, and other self-destructive activities. In time, some of these males might end up in the prison system thus proliferating the Black males’ school-to-prison discourse. However, the young men in this study have remained hopeful and resilient despite finding themselves detached from school and work. As such, if they could combine their hope and tenacity with some

available resources, their pathways may be far more positive, especially because they have all so far kept themselves out of the criminal justice system.

### **Negative Case Analysis**

Lee was a star athlete at the high school that he and four of the other participants attended. At the time of the interview, Lee had graduated high school but was unable to find employment in Beaver City. I was interested in knowing his in-school and out-of-school experiences and exploring if young dually-detached Black males in Beaver City had similar in-school and out of school experiences. Surprisingly, even though Lee was now out-of-school and out-of-work, he had a remarkably different school experience than that of his peers in the study. Lee, like the rest of the participants, valued education but it was fortunate that his relationship with school personnel was mostly positive. For example, when I asked Lee about his school experiences, including some of the emotions he experienced, he expressed that he only experienced regular frustration with school work, such as classes being difficult. He said

I had it going on in high school, so I'm pretty happy where I'm at right now...my experience was good, you know? I had friends to talk to...everything was fine, you know? I socialized a lot with people, I played four sports. Yeah... I had a good time. Yeah, it was busy, but, you know, I'm just kind of getting myself prepared for college and stuff like that.

Unlike the other participants, Lee described his school experience as being mostly positive and rewarding. In fact, Lee's relationships with school personnel were hardly ever broken, making him the only participant in this study who was never suspended. As such, his educational experience was likely never interrupted. Moreover, Lee also pointed



out that “teachers pretty much loved” him. Lee’s vastly different school experience from that of his counterparts in this study provides some evidence (not proof) that the school personnel may treat Black males who play sports in Beaver City schools differently. However, it could also provide evidence that Lee’s personality and behaviors were such that school personnel were drawn to him. As such, it will remain a limitation of this study because I do not have school personnel accounts of why Lee’s experience was different from that of his peers who attended the same high school. However, one participant, Niko, perceived that Black males who played sports enjoyed an educational experience remarkably different from their non-athlete Black male peers. In fact, Niko further disclosed that out of six of his friends, the only one who never had broken relationships with school personnel was the one friend who played and was good in sports.

Unlike the others, Lee’s attachment to school and uninterrupted educational experience was likely an element that gave him hope that he would someday go to college. This finding provides a vital insight that an attachment to school gives one continued hope for social and economic mobility even if they find themselves out-of-work and out-of-school. Moreover, Lee’s dual-detachment points to the possibility that dually-detached Black males are not a homogeneous group who had broken relationships with school personnel and were alienated from school. As such, this study also shows the diversity of dually-detached Black males. In addition, Lee’s experience with the employment search in Beaver City points to the realities of employment barriers young Black males face regardless of prior positive or negative school experiences.

Lastly, Lee’s experience led me to reevaluate the factors that contribute to dual detachment. The fact that Lee was not alienated from school like the other five

participants may indicate that it is possible that there may be other more diverse factors that contribute to dual-detachment. In addition, the severity of each factor is likely to determine the length and magnitude of dual-detachment. For example, some of the other young men in the study lost large portions of their learning because of multiple suspensions. This could possibly have squelched their hopes for further education long before they left school—making their detachment from school and work longer and more severe. On the other hand, because Lee enjoyed an uninterrupted educational experience, his dual-detachment was not a consequence of alienation from school. As such, becoming dually-detached and remaining in this predicament is likely different for him, indicating that the length and severity of dual-detachment might be dependent on the factors that predict this phenomenon.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, I offer recommendations to school administrators, policy makers, employers, classroom teachers and community leaders and direction for future research on Black males' dual-detachment.

#### **Recommendations for School Personnel**

First, to accommodate the educational needs of Black males, school personnel must foster an inviting and welcoming school environment. Five of the six participants in this study echoed that school became less welcoming for them because they believed no one cared about them and their educational aspirations. Caton (2012) found that students, particularly Black males, tend to develop a sense of belonging in environments they perceive to be nurturing and supportive of their educational, emotional and social needs. Moreover, teacher relationships with students is a vital element in students' success (Chu,

2014; Brooms, 2016; Graham & Anderson, 2008). Therefore, school administrators should promote positive school personnel-student relationships. In particular, school administrators should promote the development of teachers' and professional staff positive skills with students on the importance of positive relationships with the students, and the impact of these relationships on students' learning, especially young Black males who already feel marginalized in the school.

Second, Niko, the oldest of the participants suggested that school administrators should:

know the background of the student...if there is a trouble maker kid, there is already something they are not receiving at home or they don't come from a well-polished background where two parents are in the home...I just think they can at least understand that and not...hold students back...it just seems to not actually work...I don't think they really understand the background of the students... I remember one I remember [one] friend like they used to come to school like early in the morning because that's the only time that they can get breakfast, and they'll eat lunch, and those are their two meals for the day, you know?... the cafeteria folks knew about that, but like, does the administration know about that.

Therefore, my suggestion adds on to Nikos's observation that school administrators should indeed get to know the challenges students face outside of school and react to these challenges accordingly in the interest of helping students have positive school experiences. In essence, school administrators should build a school environment whereby young Black males can feel free to talk about their out-of-school challenges and how those challenges affect their educational experience.

Third, school administrators should reexamine their use of disciplinary measures on Black males. Various studies (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Gregory et al., 2010; Lewis, Butler et al., 2010) have documented that students lose valuable learning time when suspended, often resulting in school failure. More especially, achievement widens when students spent extended periods of time not engaged in academic work. The young men in this study talked about falling behind in their school work, and the frustration they felt before they were ultimately disengaged from school (Brown, 2007). In addition, school administrators should address and curb the problem of disproportionately suspending Black students for relatively minor offenses.

Lastly, school administrators should institute initiatives to combat disengagement by soliciting students' interests and then connecting the students with local employers for mentoring. Based on students' interests, schools should invite local and national professionals to talk about their careers; the challenges they faced before settling on their current careers; how they chose and pursued such careers. In addition, local employers should come into the schools for discussions with students regarding the students' career interests and opportunities that might be available for internships.

### **Recommendations for Policy Makers**

Black males in this study talked about their positive attitudes toward education and learning. However, once their relationships with school personnel were fragmented, they either dropped out or graduated unprepared for either the labor force or college. Therefore, lawmakers could introduce policy that would require states and communities to establish continuing education learning centers that offer skills training for these men, either to assist them to obtain employment or prepare for further education. It is apparent

from the literature that the federal government is interested in dual-detachment (Fernandes-Alcantra, 2015) because being detached from work and school has direct impact on the communities where these males reside. In addition, the federal government may have to incur costs in the form of social services benefits (Belfield, et al., 2012) if dually-detached males do not successfully make the transition to higher education or labor force. Thus, mechanisms are needed that provide these men with opportunities to improve their lives after they have been detached from school and work.

Specifically, race- and place-based policies are needed. First, young Black males are disproportionately represented in out-of-school and unemployed populations; therefore, any policy enacted to curb dual-detachment should explicitly focus each student based on their needs. Second, policy makers should identify communities where dual-detachment is pervasive and provide incentives for companies to locate into such areas. Third, local and state policy makers should join with school administrators and employers to discuss dual-detachment in their immediate communities, and ways the parties could work together to curb the problem. Finally, policy makers should examine school policies to ensure that minority students are not disproportionately affected by such policies.

### **Recommendations for Classroom Teachers**

Classroom teachers spend critical time with students in school. This data might offer ways to better attach young Black males to the school. The young men in this study believed that while some teachers supported them overall, they believed that their marginalization remained invisible to the larger school community. Therefore, classroom teachers should consider the views and perspectives of young Black males regarding the

types of supports they deem critical for their attachment to school. Classroom teachers should then discuss these support systems with administrators and other teachers. Moreover, in addition to making classrooms welcoming, teachers should get to know their students and seek to understand students' lived circumstances beyond school. These relationships should go beyond just knowing the student and include genuine concern about each student's well being, especially young Black males who frequently feel marginalized in the schools. Additionally, classroom teachers should reflect and examine their biases toward students, particularly African American males, and how these biases might impact student engagement. Furthermore, classroom educators should seek to understand students' multiple capabilities, interests as well as limitations, and then strive to nurture each student accordingly.

### **Recommendations for Community Leaders**

Community leaders are an important link between the educational system, community and the local labor market, and they should ensure these links are indeed functional. First, they should have frequent communication with school districts to learn about youth who are disengaged from school. Upon acquiring this information, community leaders should locate these students and gather information about their interests, skills and future career aspirations. This interaction will play an essential component in salvaging the connections to school and/or work since the young men in this study believed that the community did not care about them and their situations. If the community leaders know about the interests and skills of the dually-detached youth, they could locate community resources that could help these youths attain marketable skills.

Consequently, leaders could then be better positioned to connect these youths with local employers.

### **Recommendations for Employers**

The young men in this study perceived that employers discriminated against them, even for low-skilled jobs. Without employers' accounts to validate or refute these young men's claims, it is still essential for employers to make sure they institute fair hiring practices, especially for low-skilled occupations. Further, employers should also have community outreach and mentoring programs for at-risk youth. This could be done by employers reaching out to the schools and inviting students from early grades to talk with them about career possibilities in the community and what they need to do to prepare for such careers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of this study is the number of Black males who consented to participate. Despite my continual efforts to recruit more participants only six young Black males agreed to take part in the study. As such, this study is centered on the perceptions and experiences of these six young Black males in Beaver City, who were neither in school nor in the labor force; therefore, the findings from this study are strictly the views of these young men. Because of this, they cannot be generalized beyond the six Black males included in the study.

Second, using the framework of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality this study focused solely on marginalized Black males by giving them an opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences on institutional factors that detach them from school and work. However, while it is possible that other minority males as well as White males

experience dual-detachment, this study only explored the experiences of Black males. The perspectives and experiences of Black females, other minority students and White students would have enriched an understanding of dual-detachment by making comparisons. However, my research attempted to understand young Black males' experiences with dual-detachment.

Third, I was aware that the young men in this study were recounting their school experiences from the past. Although I believe the participants were forthcoming in their recollections, it is possible that there were holes in their perceptions of what happened in school before they left, especially because of the sensitive nature of the topic for some.

Fourth, this study only sought dually-detached Black males' perceptions of school factors that alienated them from school and barriers they experienced in their search for employment. The young men in this study described their school environments as alienating and the labor market as biased against them. The limitation of this study is that I do not have data from school personnel or employers to either support or refute these dually-detached Black males' assertions.

Fifth, my personal bias as a researcher contributed to the limitation of this study because as a father of two Black sons I have a vested interest in the social and economic mobility of young Black males. Although I talked to my dissertation committee chair to reveal my perceptions of dual-detachment on the onset of this research, my concern for the educational and employment opportunities available for young Black males is manifested in the final report.



## **Directions for Future Research**

Based on the analysis and the findings in this study, I identified several implications or directions for future research. First, using a larger sample of 10 or more males, and staying in the community for a least one year for a deeper understanding of the essence of this phenomenon would allow the researcher to gain more trust from the participants. Moreover, a larger sample would provide a richer perspective of dual-detachment. The participants in this study were reluctant to talk to a stranger about such a sensitive issue of being detached from school and work. I noticed that those with whom I had a second in-depth interview were significantly more open to discussion after we had had several informal conversations over the telephone and in person.

Second, more investigation on the academic and personal factors that contribute to dual-detachment is necessary because these factors did not emerge in this study. Participants talked more about their school and out-of-school experience without delving deep into their personal barriers to school and work.

Third, a similar study that collects school information about dually-detached males would shed more light about their lived school experiences. For example, this study did not consider the academic records of the participants nor the reasons and frequency of their school suspensions.

Fourth, I would propose a study that looks at dual-detachment in other communities of similar size across the Midwest, comparing the magnitude and impact of this phenomenon on Black males' economic and social mobility. Looking at other communities would provide some evidence that dual-detachment is indeed a widespread problem in areas across the Midwest.

Fifth, it would be interesting to delve into the family backgrounds of the participants; for example, their parents' educational accomplishments, socioeconomic status, two-parent home vs. one-parent home, and parents' home ownership. Taking this further into the exploration of the lived experiences of dual-detachment as well as the differences and similarities among the males from various backgrounds would create a much more holistic picture.

Sixth, a similar study might delve more into the reasons for long-term dual-detachment, and the coping mechanisms used by males in this predicament to cope with the realities of everyday life. This type of study could include housing and health care because dually-detached youth are more likely to end up homeless and without healthcare (Ramaswamy & Freudenberg, 2012).

Seventh, I would recommend a longitudinal study that follows young Black males at the same school who successfully overcome seemingly challenging odds to succeed and go on to college. Rather than focusing on those who were alienated from school, such a study would seek to understand the reasons other Black males succeed or persevere in an environment where others struggled. S.R Harper (2009, 2012) argues that while it is important to raise consciousness about racism and structural and policy factors that impact Black males' educational experience, it is also critical to explore the experiences of Black males who overcome difficult odds to succeed.

Finally, future research should explore dual-detachment experiences of other minority males, contrasting them with those of Black males found in this study. That would provide evidence about whether or not dual-detachment is a cross-cultural

phenomenon perpetuated by race or factors that contribute to this problem hold across all races or not.

### **Researcher's Reflections**

When I finally decided to take on this study, I did not know what I would uncover, except that young Black males occupy this space that people perceive as just a temporary state that young men enter before embarking into college. I also knew that finding and talking with these young men would be difficult. But I did not anticipate so many gatekeepers who knew about the impact of dual-detachment on the well being of these young men, yet still resisted granting me access to them. Moreover, I expected to find that young Black males were marginalized in school and society, but did not envision the impact this exclusion had on the lives of these men. As data analysis proceeded, I was saddened by how much the lives of these young men were grounded in dual-detachment, meaning they were indeed stuck in a seemingly inescapable limbo between school and employment. This was emotional for me, especially as a father of Black sons, who will probably experience the realities of marginalization in school and society. I found myself pondering the seeming disregard for Black males by the school and labor force, and wondering if these men will ever cease to occupy the place of the “other” in communities across the country.

Furthermore, I found myself contemplating on the reality that if educators continue to disregard race and racism as a central factor that influences students' gendered schooling and educational experience, Black males' marginalization will remain an endless cycle. In fact, I pondered the experiences my young sons may possibly be going through at school today. How do their teachers and other school personnel view

them? Do they see their potential as productive members of society or do they see them as hopeless beings destined to fail?

I further reflected on the inevitable idea that if the subordinated groups cannot speak, they subsist in their plight until they are unsilenced or given platform to speak and be heard. Gayatri Spivak (1988) expresses the position of the marginalized eloquently in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak.” In simple terms, a *subaltern* refers to low ranking personnel in the British military. However, Antonio Gramsci also used the term to refer to other subordinate groups (Mann, 2012). Spivak articulates that, “those who are truly ‘subaltern’ [or] the most marginalized cannot ‘speak.’ If the subaltern could speak, he or she would no longer occupy the place of the subaltern” (cited in Mann, 2012, p.371). This assertion coincides with Black males’ schooling and life in general. Spivak contends that regardless of all efforts, the subaltern remains silenced until those in power (e.g., educators, policy makers, and politicians) can imagine themselves as the subaltern, and recognize and acknowledge their own privilege. For example, Pete in this study was virtually certain that racial discrimination was a factor in the way the school treated him, but he had no power to address anyone within the school system.

The experiences of Black males in school and society have been researched and documented for decades. Yet the marginalization of this group remains intense because they are yet to be granted a contingency to speak for themselves. However, if dually-detached Black males in this study could speak from their less privileged economic and social location, would the dominant groups pause to hear them?

Lastly, when I embarked on this study I did not know the resilience of those who experience this phenomenon. However, even though the young men in this study remain

hopeful regarding the future, their voices illuminated the ugliness of Black males dual-detachment and how race continues to play a central role in impacting these young men's economic and social mobility. Therefore, findings in this study suggest that even though it is going to be an uphill battle, there exists an imminent need to formulate and implement policies that would provide educational attainment and employment training for young Black males who have become detached from school and work.

### **Conclusion**

While participation in education and employment is essential for transition into adulthood, young Black males continue to face barriers that obstruct their participation in both school and work. In fact, for many young Black males, their lives are stalled between school and work because of constant and frequent marginalization in both domains. Structural and policy factors have repeatedly impacted the educational experiences of these young men. At the same time, changes in the economy and hiring discrimination have contributed to their high unemployment rates. Efforts to reduce Black males' dual-detachment have been unsuccessful largely because structural and policy factors that contribute to the marginalization of these males remain unchanged. Participants in this study reported marginalization in school and racial bias in the labor market as key factors that contributed to their dual-detachment. These are capable young men who value education and want social and economic mobility; unfortunately, they have found themselves discriminated against by the educational system and the labor market, and therefore feel consigned between school and employment. While these young men remain tenacious regardless of their predicament, society needs to break down the factors that contribute to the detachment of this population from school and

work. The educational system should be embedded in rich pedagogical practices capable of improving young Black males' attachment to the school and the simple transfer of that attachment to the labor force instead of socializing these young men toward dual-detachment or worse, the criminal justice system.

## **Appendix A Interview Protocol**

Dual-detachment: The plight of young Black males alienated from work and school

Consent form signed: yes/no (circle one)

Review purpose of the interview:

Background Information

Did you graduate high school? (1) Yes (2) No

If you didn't graduate high school: When did you leave school? (Circle one): Freshman

Sophomore Junior Senior

How long have you been out of school?

When you were in school, were you suspended at least once: (1) Yes (2) No

What is your age?

Are you currently employed? (1) Yes (2) No

How long have you been unemployed?

### **Interview Questions**

1. Please tell me about what you thought your life would be like when you were younger? Guided question (if necessary)
  - How has school prepared you for these childhood dreams? If not, why?
2. Can you please describe your school experiences to the point when you left school? What was school like for you?
3. **For those who dropped out of school:** Can you please talk about the reasons you left school before graduation? (guiding question)

4. In your interactions with your teachers, administrators and other employees what emotions did you experience? (Guided question if necessary, give examples of emotions)
  - Can you please describe these emotions?
5. Can you please talk about some of the experiences you have had since you left school?
6. How has looking for work been like for you?
  - What challenges have you encountered/faced? Please explain
7. Can you please talk about your experiences in the community as a young Black male?
8. Earlier we talked about your emotions when you were in school. What emotions are you currently experiencing? Can you please describe them? (Guided question if necessary)
9. How have you coped with being out of school and unable to find employment? Please explain.
10. What advice would you give to young Black males in this community?
11. What do you think school administrators could do to help young Black males in school?
12. What do you think the community could do to help young African American males who are not in school and not working?

**Close of interview one:** Thank you very much for allowing me to visit with you. What questions do you have for me? I would like a follow-up meeting with you in the next



week or so to talk more about your experiences. Would you be willing to meet again (yes/no). What's the best phone number to call and set up our next meeting?

### **Second Interview**

1. How have things been with the job search since the last time we talked?
2. How long have you been looking for work?
3. What challenges are you facing? Please explain.
4. How have you coped with being out of school and unable to find employment?  
Please explain. What keeps you going?
5. Can you please describe some of the emotions you have been experiencing lately?
6. How long have you been out of school?
7. Can you please describe your school experiences to the point when you left school? What was school like for you? What challenges did you have?
8. **For those who dropped out of school:** Can you please talk about the reasons you left school before graduation? (guiding question)
9. What are some the emotions you experienced when you were in school? Guided question if necessary, give examples of emotion. Can you please describe these emotions?
10. Can you please talk about your experiences in the community as a young Black male?
11. What advice do you have for young Black males in this community?

**Close of interview two:** Thank you very much for allowing me to visit with you. What questions do you have for me? I would like a follow-up meeting with you in the next

week or so to talk more about your experiences. Would you be willing to meet again (yes/no). What's the best phone number to call and set up our next meeting?

## **Appendix B**

### **List of Codes Substantiating Categories and Themes**

List of codes substantiating categories and themes

#### 1. Category: Attitudes toward Learning

Definition: *(Theme one) Early in their Schooling the Participants had Positive Attitudes toward Education and Career Aspirations But by the Time they Reached High School their Career Aspirations were Derailed due to Lack of Support from School Personnel, Yet They Remain Hopeful about the Future*

Relevant Codes:

- Enjoy learning
- School was great
- Liked classes
- Enjoyed learning
- Positive teacher relationships
- Career aspirations
- Dreams
- Good teachers

#### 2. Category: Relationships

Definition *(Theme two) Stereotyping, Suspensions, Isolation into Special Classes and Tracking into Alternative Education Led to Broken Relationships between these Young Men and School Personnel which led to Decreased Desire to be in School*

Relevant Codes:

- Teachers didn't care
- No one seemed to care
- Unsupportive teachers
- Encouragement

- Suspensions
- Lack of guidance
- Disciplinary target
- Lack of attention to Black males' educational needs
- Alienated from school
- Confusion
- Relationships
- Minority students disciplined differently
- Broken relationships
- Lack of preparation
- Reason to stay in school
- Peer relationships
- Discrimination

### 3. Category: In-School Emotions

Definition (Theme three) *The Participants' Negative School Experience Provided a Barrier to Academic Engagement and School Success which Led to Some Dropping out of School and Others Barely Graduating*

Relevant Codes:

- Angry with teachers
- Angry with administrator
- Angry with school personnel
- Pissed off
- Confused
- Disappointed
- Fucked up

- Upset with school
- Mad about school experience
- Enjoyment
- Resentment toward school

#### 4. Category: Out-of-School Emotions

*Definition: (Theme 4) Upon Finding Themselves Out-of-school and Out-of-work the Young Men Experienced Despair and Discouragement which Led to Mistrust of the Larger Beaver City Community*

Relevant Codes:

- Pissed off
- Mad
- Angry
- Confused
- Discouraged
- Stressful
- Disappointed

#### 5. Category: Employment Search

*Definition (Theme Five) The Participants Perceived that they were Denied Even Low Skilled Jobs because of Beaver City Employers' Racial Bias but Remain Hopeful Despite Concerns about Racism*

Relevant Codes:

- Shut down for employment
- Tough to find employment
- Doors closed
- Keep going
- Hopeful

- Racism
- Plenty of jobs
- Discrimination
- Determined
- Alienated from work
- Not giving up
- Lack of preparation for jobs
- Relationships
- Frustrated
- Difficulty finding employment

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