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Examining the Phenomenon of Dropping Out of High School Through the Perspectives and Experiences of the African American Male

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Examining the Phenomenon of Dropping Out of High School Through the Perspectives and Experiences of the African American Male

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

We expect all students to achieve and succeed in school, yet current data shows that 23.6% of African American students in Arkansas drop out of school (Bailey & Dziko, 2008). The African American male high school dropouts are much higher than the number of male dropouts from other ethnic groups. As the researcher reviewed the current data about African American dropouts, it was the impetus behind this study. Although many have discussed and written about African American male dropouts in educational forums, essays, short stories, dissertations, and even movies, few have captured the experiences of the African American males in qualitative research, allowing them to have a voice.

The study focused on the African American males' perspectives and their educational experiences during high school and how these experiences influenced their decisions to drop out of high school. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the reasons why African American males decided to drop out of high school. The researcher engaged subjects in an in depth assessment of the issues that influenced their decisions to leave high school. The researcher felt that, in order to glean a true picture of the facts as it relates to the African American dropouts, it was imperative to relate the issues to those who were affected. As we examine this dilemma, it is very important that educators understand how African American students might respond or not respond in the learning environment.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to my late wife, Cheryl J. Colbert, for her unwavering support of me throughout this project. This would not have come to fruition without her encouragement and constant reminder to stay the course. I would also like to thank Dr. Holt, Dr. Bengston, Dr. Miller and Dr. Johnson for their guidance in making this project come to fruition. I would also like to extend a thank you to Dr. Denise Hoy for her support throughout this project. I would like to express to Julie Brannon a special thank you for her technological support.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my late wife, Cheryl; my daughters, J'onnelle and Janneesa; and my granddaughter, Sy'Ree. Thanks to my family and friends for believing in me. Thank you for your continued support, love, understanding and patience while I completed this awesome accomplishment.

Table of Content

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter One

Introduction

More than 50 years after Brown vs. Board of Education, the landmark United States

Supreme Court decision that ended racial segregation in public schools, most African American

children in this country are still denied the education they need to find meaningful and well-

paying jobs, to thrive in college, to participate fully in this nation's economic and civic life, and

to join and continue the fight for a truly just society (Wilkins, 2006). This landmark case was

one that was to bring about equality as it related to the educational needs of the African

American students in this country in comparison to their White counterparts.

Brown vs. Board of Education was the leading case that was won in hope to close the

education disparity between African American and Caucasian students. As years passed, the

achievement gap between African American and White students has been widely researched and

well documented (Osborne, 1997; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). According to a 2009 report

from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an achievement gap exists between

Black students and their White counterparts. Methods of increasing student achievement and

reducing dropout rates have been the focus of educators around the world for many years. In

2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was ratified to close the achievement gap. NCLB

(2002) was based on the premise that accountability, flexibility, and choice would prevent a child

from being left behind. Congress as a whole accepted the bill as a means of establishing a

system that requires states to develop assessments in basic skills and supporting a standard-based

education reform. This mandate by the federal government was founded on the belief that

schools with high standards and measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education.

Each state was allowed to establish its own system of testing and accountability. As part of the

NCLB law, the accountability element required that every student be proficient in literacy and math by the year 2013. The Act had merits but it failed to deliver the ultimate goal of closing the achievement gap where all students are proficient in literacy and math. Even with this Act in place, the achievement gap between African American male students and their Caucasian counterparts continued to increase throughout the nation (Holzman, 2010). Unfortunately, the number of African American males in the U.S. prison system exceeds that of the educational system according to Davis (2006). Davis further stated that this Nation continues to face a major challenge with African American students dropping out of school with many ending up in prison.

We expect all students to achieve and succeed in school; yet current data shows that 23.6% of African American students in Arkansas drop out of school (Bailey & Dziko, 2008). As the researcher reviewed the current data about African American dropouts, it is the impetus behind this study. Although many have discussed and written about African American male dropouts in educational forums, essays, short stories, dissertations, and even movies, few have captured the experiences of the African American males in qualitative research, allowing them to have a voice. As reflected in the movie, School Dropout by Nollywood Realnolly TV (2012) depicts two troublesome brothers who were a nuisance in the community even at the local school. The climax of their story was manifest when they have to drop out of school to become businessmen. This movie and others like it are often written and directed by authors who have captured the story from a young African American male who dropped out of school because they do not fit into the system. The researcher has learned a lot from movies that were written through the eyes of young people when they are allowed to tell their stories. Likewise, this research will allow the participants to have the opportunity to share their life experiences through their perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act ended legal apartheid in America, there are many more Black students enrolled in college; however, while 35% of the young Black college enrollment is made up of Black women, only 25% are Black men. This is inline with the research that identified 17% of young Black men drop out of high school as compared to 13.5% of young Black females (NCES, 2000). The African American male high school dropouts are much higher than the number of male dropouts from other ethnic groups. In 2000, 67% of African American males who were high school drop outs were also jobless by the time they had reached their 20's (Eckholm, 2006). By 2004, the research revealed that the jobless rate had grown to 72% as compared to 19% for Caucasian males and 34% of Hispanic dropouts. Eckholm (2006) reported that the incarceration rates for African American males climbed in the 1990's and reached historic highs in the past few years. In 1995, 16% of African American males in their 20's who did not attend college were in jail or prison; by 2004, 21% were incarcerated. The ratio of African American men who dropped out of school had been incarcerated before they reached their mid-30's is 6 to 10 (Eckholm, 2006). Eckholm found that in inner cities, more than half of all African Americans men did not complete a high school education. With such a high percentage of African American men not finishing high school, it brings about other problems like unemployment, receiving government assistance or in and out of the prison system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2013).   The problem identified in this study is to determine why the current practices in public schools seem to be so unsuccessful in keeping African American male students enrolled in high schools.   As we examine this issue of African American dropouts, it is very important that educators understand how African American students might respond or not respond in the learning environment. Once educators understand how the African American

students learn, they will be able to establish an environment that is conducive to the learning for all students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the reasons African American males decided to drop out of high school. As an African American male and an educator who has experienced some success within the educational system, the researcher desired to probe further into the motives behind the decisions of why African American males leave the traditional educational framework, specifically in a town in Northwest Arkansas. In particular, the focus will be on what transpired in the educational environment that caused the exodus of academic milieu. There has not been a study conducted in the mid-south school district to ask the "at-risk" African American male student "why?" or "what happened?" This study focused on the African American males' perspectives and their educational experiences during high school and how these experiences influenced their decisions to drop out of high school. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the reasons why African American males decided to drop out of high school. The researcher engaged the subjects in an in depth assessment of the issues that influenced their decisions to leave high school. The researcher felt that, in order to glean a true picture of the facts as it related to the African American dropouts, it is imperative to relate the issues to those who are affected.

Guiding Research Questions

A phenomenological research approach was used to obtain information from lived experiences of African American male dropouts. The following questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

2. What are the perceived consequences of being an African American male dropout?

3. What descriptors do African American males use to describe the choices they made to become high school dropouts?

4. What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

By acquiring the answers to these questions, the researcher will gather information based upon the perspectives and experiences of the African American male students who dropped out of high school. These answers will help provide educators with a better understanding of why African American male students are dropping out of high school in disproportionate numbers. Hopefully, this understanding will assist educators in developing learning environments that will help our African American students stay and finish high school.

<center>**Subjectivities Statement**</center>

For this study, special emphasis was placed on the African American male who dropped out of high school. When the staff analyzed the results of the Fresno High School's graduation rate in 2010, a 33% (15 students) dropout rate was reflected for the African American Student population (Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Public School Accountability, 2010). The conversations the researcher had with students about why they dropped out of school echoed the response, "I was bored and seldom engaged in the learning." As an African American Educator who has seen this problem first-hand, the researcher was more determined to identify the reasons why the African American males dropped out of school. Education is a very powerful tool and when implemented effectively, education can be altruistic in ensuring that all

students become successful and productive citizens. What is seen here, instead, are bleak and

devastatingly alarming statistics about the African American male students who are dropping out

of high school.

Significance of the Study

The important outcome of this study is to continue to discover best practices that will

eventually eradicate the alarming and dismal statistics concerning the dropout rate of the African

American male student. The fact that there is still ample opportunity to help a large population

of students to succeed in reaching their potential is an enormous benefit. Dianda (2008)

identified several significant negative consequences for the individual and society due to students

dropping out of high school. Some of those include the following:

- Dropouts Hurt the Nation's Competitive Edge. The U.S. ranks 18th in high school graduation rates among developed countries, and workers with more than a high school diploma are predicted to increase by only 4 percent through 2020.

- Dropouts Earn Less and Contribute Fewer Tax Dollars to the Economy. The lifetime income differences between high school graduates and dropouts are estimated to be $260,000; the difference in lifetime income tax payments is $60,000. The combine lifetime earning losses of one group of 18-year-olds who never completed high school (about 600,000 students) is $156 billion or 1.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product. If the U.S. could cut the number of high school dropouts in a single cohort of 20-year-olds (approximately 700,000 individuals) in half, the country would gain $45 billion through extra tax revenue and reduced public health, crime and justice, as well as welfare payment costs and the $45 billion would accrue for each successive cohort of 20-year-olds.

- Dropouts Drive up Criminal Justice Costs. About 41 percent of inmates in state and federal prisons have less than a high school education. Schooling significantly reduces criminal activity self-reported crime, arrests, and incarceration. Increasing the high school completion rate of men ages 20 to 60 by one percent would save the U.S. as much as $1.4 billion per year in criminal justice costs.

- Dropouts are less likely to Vote or Engage in Civic Activities. In 2004, college graduates were nearly three times more likely to vote than Americans without a high school degree, replicating a longstanding pattern of political participation directly proportional to educational attainment. Americans with the least education are the least likely to be engaged in civic participation, voting, community involvement, volunteering, charitable works, etc. (p. 3)

Keeping students in school will affect the district's dropout rate and will also have a financial impact on the district. The participants will reflect upon their experiences and provide valuable information to the schools as it relates to their high school education. By keeping students in school, the number of young African Americans gaining employment will increase and more young men will be able to contribute as citizens to the community at large. The research revealed that unemployment rates for high school dropouts run more than half as high as those for high school graduates, while those with some college education experience unemployment at less than one-third the rate of high school dropouts (Schreiber, 1967). This thought was in the researcher's mind, as he realized the challenge that has been laid out for him. The researcher as an African American looks forward to synthesizing and analyzing the results from the ongoing research in order to discover the causes for African American male dropouts. In order to accomplish this task, the researcher must continually be prepared to study, to postulate and to organize information on the topic of examining the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male.

Assumptions of the Study

The researcher made four assumptions at the inception of the study. These assumptions were:

- The participants who were selected would be honest and truthful in their responses to the researcher.

- The participants would be cooperative with the researcher throughout the study.

- The participants who were selected would have the cognitive ability to articulate what has led them to their current situation.

- The researcher would remain neutral while collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data by recording accurate and factual information.

Definition of Terms

Achievement gap. This term refers to the observed, persistent disparity of educational measures between the performances of groups of students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity and gender.

African American. This term refer to the students who are black and multi-racial. Constructivist. This term refers to the researcher who places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants.

Dropouts. This term refers to the students who did not finish high school.

Participant/interviewee. These terms refer to the African American male dropout participants within this study.

Limitations of the Study

Although there is value in this study, there are, however, also limitations. This study was limited to one small urban high school with a small sample of African American males because of a small minority population. The final limitation reflects that the study includes only participants living in Northwest Arkansas.

Overview of the Research Procedures

This study was conducted in Northwest Arkansas. The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling of 6 to 10 participants who were African American male high school dropouts. Once identified, each research participant took part in a semi-structured intensive open-ended interview with the researcher. Charmaz (2006) stated that an intensive interview is a very useful

data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research. These semi-structured intensive open-ended interviews were held in a natural setting that was interactive for the participants. To document these interviews, the researcher used both notes and verbatim transcriptions that were recorded.

The researcher executed a qualitative inquiry by using a phenomenological approach to gather information based upon the life experiences of the participants. Creswell (2007) referenced a qualitative research as being a study of individuals' past experiences in hope to gain a deeper understanding and meaning about their daily events and activities. This approach allowed information to be collected based on interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The phenomenological approach allowed the voices of the African American male student to be heard throughout the study. From a theoretical perspective, the researcher wanted the respondents to share their high school experiences and be able to interpret the meanings and actions behind the specific situations. As a constructivist, the researcher placed priority on the phenomena of the study and saw both data and analysis created from shared experiences and relationships with the participants (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher worked as closely as possible with the participants to reconstruct and interpret their experiences. The intention was to glean an understanding of the way participants view the phenomenon by collecting and examining rich and thick descriptions of their perceptions as it related to their experiences in high school. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) wrote "The purpose of a phenomenological research is to investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people to identify the core essence of human experience as described by research participants" (P. 11). As an African American male and an educator, the researcher assessed and called upon his personal experiences as he reviewed and interpreted the collected data. In an effort to better understand and to identify events that

keep African American male students educationally engaged, a qualitative study incorporated the aforementioned phenomenological method. Information for the study was formulated through the eyes of the African American male dropout. This information was used to identify situations and events that deterred the eagerness of the participants and situations they had attempted to achieve before deciding to drop out of school.   Through the eyes of a constructivist, the researcher approached this study with the understanding that information was gathered and interpreted: (1) based on a live account of experiences that were shared by participants with similar experiences; (2) the target population was allowed to express personally independent experiences about the phenomenon; and (3) the participants were allowed the opportunity to voice opinions that may have the potential to improve their situation and lives of others. The researcher selected the framework of social constructivism to guide the development of the interview questions, the data collection, and the analysis of the data. As supported by Charmaz (2006), the constructivist approach incorporated the researcher's views; uncovered experiences with embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships; and made visible hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity.

Chapter Two

Introduction

Content of the Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature that examines the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male student. After reviewing keywords like African American Students and African American Male Dropouts, the researcher was able to receive 32 searches. It produced 10 journals, 10 professional books, 4 journal articles, 4 online reports, 1 law review, 1 online National Center Report, and 2 Eric Publications. The University of Arkansas research librarian directed the researcher in narrowing the search by using the following keywords reflected in the dissertation title; African American, males, dropout, perspective and experiences. From this search, the researcher discovered a limited amount of research covering the perspectives and experiences of the African American male dropouts, which suggested that further research is needed. In light of the limited research conducted on this topic, the researcher's aim was to conduct a study on the topic in order to help fill in the gap that currently exists in the literature. The researcher was able to identify theoretical and empirical literature examining topics including dropouts, African American students, dropout preventions, causes of student dropouts, and high school completion rates. The study examined the research as it related to the perspectives and experiences of the African American male dropouts.

Review of Related Literature

Looking at the Data

The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) has reported annually on the issue of children dropping out of school and school completion rates. This report typically also examines

the characteristics of high school completers and high school dropouts. According to the latest

data collected (NCES. 2015):

1. Five out of every 100 young adults enrolled in high school in October 1999 left
   school before October 2000 without successfully completing a high school program.

2. Among 2009 ninth-graders, 2.7 percent had dropped out by 2012, when they should
   have been 11th-graders.

3. Male's ages 16-24 had a higher status dropout rate than females in 2012, 7.3 and 5.9
   respectively.

4. In 2012, the dropout rate of students living in low-income families was greater than
   the rate of their peers from high-income families, 5.9 and 1.3 respectively.

5. In October 2012, approximately 2.6 million 16- through 24-year-olds were not
   enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative
   credential.

6. The status dropout rate for Caucasians in 2012 remained lower than the rates for
   African Americans. Dropout rates for Blacks and White students were 4.3% and
   2.1% respectively.

The statistics reflect a higher percentage of African American male students dropping out

of high school as compared to their White counterpart. As reported by the National Center for

Education Statistics (2015), the dropout rate for White students was 2.1% as compared to 4.3%

for African Americans. These figures had a close correlation to the number of high school

dropouts who were jobless and incarcerated. In 2000, 65% of African American males who

were high school dropouts were jobless by the age of 20. By 2004, it had grown to 72%,

compared to 19% of Caucasian and 34% of Hispanic dropouts. Eckholm (2006) stated that the

incarceration rates climbed in the 1990's and reached historic highs in the past few years. In

1995, 16% of African American males aged early to late 20s, who did not attend college were in

jail or prison; by 2004, 21% were incarcerated. By their mid-30's, 6 in 10 African American

men who had dropped out of school had spent time in prison. In the inner cities, more than half

of all African American men do not finish high school (Eckholm, 2006). The Schott 50 State

Report on Public Education and Black males revealed that the graduation rate of African American males is much lower than their Caucasian counterparts (Holzman, 2010). In Arkansas, the African American male graduation rate is 54%; in comparison to 70%, for their Caucasian counterparts. The graduation of African American males in Oklahoma is 52%, also compared to 70% for Caucasian males graduating from Oklahoma's school districts. The comparison of the overall United States graduation rate for African American males is a low 47% with 78% of their Caucasian counterparts graduating (Holzman, 2010). As we can see from these statistics, it is apparent that the schools must find ways to meet the educational, emotional and psychological needs of the African American male student. If the schools are to reverse these trends, it is imperative that educators find creative ways to educate and engage all students. In view of these alarming statistics as they relate to African Americans, the researcher examined the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male.

Addressing the Barriers

African American males encounter various obstacles in high school that correlate with their dropout and graduation rates. Numerous studies have concluded that factors such as living in poverty, single-parent families, and performing poorly academically are contributors to the plight of these African American male students (Ferguson, 2003). Researchers have also found that teacher practices of engagement versus disengagement, student participation in extracurricular activities, the students' community connection, and the students' mental health in relation to racial issues are factors that must be considered, as well. The research discovered that African American students as well as other students felt motivated and challenged by their teachers' deliverance of the lessons through collaborative engagement practices. The researcher

further states that teacher expectations and goals can directly and indirectly affect student achievement (Ferguson, 2003). Researchers have shown when you are exposed to several risk factors simultaneously one tends to experience learning or behavioral problems (Luster & McAdoo 1994). These risk factors include living in poverty, larger family size, low levels of family support, and lower levels of maternal intelligence, self-esteem, and education (Luster & McAdoo, 1994). In an extensive review of predictors of underachievement in urban children, confirmed by experts and practitioners, Arroyo, Rhoad, and Drew (1999) identified the following variables as the 9 most strongly associated with underachievement in urban settings:

1. Teachers' demonstrations of caring, respect, and interest in children's growth

2. Teacher expectations for children's achievement, curriculum relevance

3. Class size

4. Disengagement from school related activities

5. Students' own confidence in their abilities to achieve

6. High mobility in school attendance

7. Parental expectations and involvement

8. Level of parents' education

9. Poverty or low income

According to Deggs and Miller (2009), other factors like community's expectation of what youth should or should not do has an impact upon the individual's decision making about life roles and perceptions. These researchers identified the following five elements that are factors affecting the decisions made students in the future: formal education bodies, civic agencies, informal associations, religious affiliations, and home life. Deggs and Miller's model of community expectancy had a direct correlation to college enrollment as you compare it to how

an individual learns from both formal and informal actions and a lifetime of informal actions and expectations are conveyed to a youth throughout a community.

Racism

According to Thomas (1996), in order to meet the academic needs of the majority of African American students, educators must acknowledge and address the different barriers that exist because of institutionalized racism. When teachers are empowered to teach from this perspective, they are able to create educational experiences that bridge existing gaps and allow students to explore opportunities that will foster a sense of awareness in wanting to work towards the improvement of themselves and our society. Thomas (1996) indicated that this approach would add to the informed calling for substantive change for equal education of all in our society. This approach encourages the use of the student's cultural background as a way to impart and enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes that helped students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically. In a study done by Thompson (2010), the results revealed that 25% of the educators and nearly half of the pre-service teachers who completed the questionnaire said that racism is the main reason why many African American K-12 students do not do as well as they could academically. The data also noted that an overwhelming majority of respondents disagreed that most teachers treat and view black K-12 students in the same ways as most nonblack students. An overarching concern was the fact that many educators believe that our country has not made much progress in the area of racism and many appear to be hopeless about our nation's future in terms of race relations. The author concluded by stating that racism will be eradicated when each individual take an active role in destroying racism – the big fat stinky elephant that continues to sit right in America's living room and in classrooms throughout the nation. As stated by Thompson, "without a doubt, educators can and must play a crucial role in helping the United States move forward in terms of race relations. The question is how?"

Understanding the African American Learner

Understanding how African American students respond in the learning environment is very critical in knowing how to support their style of learning and keeping them engaged throughout their high school experiences. Kern's (2006) longitudinal study found that subject knowledge and basic skills, pedagogy, and relationships are key factors for being a successful teacher, but of the three, student-teacher relationships had the greatest impact on the achievement of minority students. According to the Ferguson theory, the Tripod framework, i. e., knowledge and basic skills, pedagogy, and relationship, teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors help to sustain, and perhaps even to expand the African American achievement as compared to their white counterparts.

The findings from the use of this Tripod framework supported the idea that African American students can achieve and sustain academic growth if the following practices are present: (1) students must believe success is feasible, (2) lessons must seem relevant to students' lives, (3) time in class must be enjoyable, (4) teachers and parents must be encouraging as well as hold students to high standards, and (5) peers should behave in ways that foster a positive and focused classroom climate.

The Tripod framework also reinforces the concept of teachers sharing instructional strategies that allow students to be engaged and successful. These strategies are revealed through teacher collaboration and professional development. This approach is in line with the Standards in Practice theories from the Educational Trust (Winter 2004). These Standards in Practice allow teachers to focus on the rigor and relevance as well as on identifying individual strengths and weaknesses. The studies revealed that these and other practices when implemented by the teachers improved student learning and achievement for all students, including the African

American students. The studies revealed that the data from the surveys were conclusive in that African American students were academically successful when their teachers were engaging in delivering high quality instruction. The study by Wiggan (2008) stated that high achieving African American students concluded that the teacher practices were the most instrumental school effect benefitting their performance. The research revealed that academically successful African American males had parents who exposed them to educational materials at an early age (Berry, 2005). The students also reported that they had positive educational experiences in the early elementary grades. The research revealed that African American students' academic success also was based upon their feeling of being a part of a community not only at home but at school as well. School-community relationships helped build self-esteem and a sense of pride.

Polite and Davis (1999) concluded that the pedagogical problem to improve teaching and learning for children of color, particularly African American males, is not how to improve their assimilation into the mainstream culture. Rather, the problem is how to structure school cultures so that the quality of non-mainstream students' educational experience or the integrity of their identity development does not depend on the degree of assimilation to mainstream culture (p. 86). Several researchers emphasized how important it is to be cognizant of the messages that students and adults in the school community convey about race. These messages have an enormous influence on shaping the learning and social environment for African American students (Arrington, Hall, & Stevenson, 2003).

In studying the role of schools in determining students' achievement, Ferguson (2000) found that school labeling processes and punishment systems often steer African American students, particularly males, to a life of delinquency while promoting white students' achievement. In contrast, Barry (2005) found that the highly successful African American

student depended not only school but community resources as well. These resources provided support to the students through encouragement and resources. The three components are: (1) church involvement, (2) participation in special academic programs, and (3) participation in athletics. Students' participation in each of these events was contributory factors in fostering student success (Barry, 2005). Wilson-Jones and Caston (2003) ascribed that African American students favored cooperative learning as a preferred method of learning. The results described cooperative learning as a method of learning that was conducive for academic achievement.

Informing Research, Policy and Practice

Moore and Lewis (2014) approached the subject of African American male students in PreK-12 schools as it related to race-gender inequality across residential and school contexts. The authors focused on how policies could help eliminate racial differences in test performance as set forth in the No Child Left behind Act of 2001. Moore and Lewis' research revealed that inequality in test performances was greater in the city than elsewhere, and African American boys shoulder a disproportionate educational burden related to city residency and enrollment in city schools. Additionally, children in city neighborhoods – where drugs and burglaries are big problems – experience large shortfalls in reading in school and non-school evidence. With these problems came higher dropout rates amongst the African Americans. The study implied that future educational policies, practice and research, especially NCLB, which had mandated that public schools achieve parity among racial groups by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year. One can say that the charge about changing policies was reflected in the reauthorization of NCLB in 2016. The policy itself failed to intervene where its impact was needed most, closing the achievement gap.

In addition, racial bias in the instruction of African American students has been documented at length in ethnographic research, laboratory experiments, and relocation studies according to Moore and Lewis (2014). The researcher gleaned from the studies that the educational instruction often lacked the cultural relevancy required to engage children of color and prepare them to be effective citizens. From this study, it would suggest that schools should review their curriculum to ensure that the instruction will be appealing to a diverse population of students in the school. Thompson (2010) also stressed the importance of making the curriculum interesting and the ability to make the curriculum comprehensible were two factors viewed by African American students in identifying good teaching. The respondents in Thompson's study all cite the fact that an effective teacher must make the curriculum relevant while teaching the students, including the African American students. Moore and Lewis (2014) concluded that there is a link between what is taught, how it is taught, and African American underachievement. Their work went as far as to state that education inequality develops while children are engaged in schooling, therefore, federal policies that target their school experience may yield the greatest benefit.

Critical Race Theory 20 Years Later: What Impact does it have on our Students?

According to Howard and Navarro (2016) race and education have always been an essential element in the way opportunities for learning have manifested in U.S. schools. Navarro's research supports the fact that the realm of education has endeavored to support educational inclusion from a number of marginalized groups throughout the last several centuries. It was evident in Navarro's findings that the premise has always been straightforward; marginalized groups, be they African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latina/o, the poor, or women, have sought education as a pathway for economic mobility,

economic empowerment, political voice, and social transformation (2016). Even though the

pathway exists and some educational improvement has occurred across racial lines over the past

several decades, disparities still remain largely intact as revealed by Navarro's findings (2016).

For the area under study, the researcher has gleaned from the inquiry and his experience a

revealing fact that the ethnic and racial realities of U.S. schools have exhibited a notable shift in

terms of the makeup of youth that schools are serving. As an educator, the researcher witnessed

this phenomenon as he reviewed today's schools' ethnic landscape. The school data reflected the

change and will continue to reflect a change in the future because of the record number of Latino

and Asian American children. As noted by Navarro (2016), news of increasing ethnic, racial,

and cultural diversity is not a novelty to many large urban cities and districts, it does warrant that

educational practitioners and scholars to think innovatively about how educators meet the

academic, cultural, and social needs of a diverse student body. Even though, the ethnic and

racial diversity continues to increase in the nation's schools, the achievement discrepancies

between non-white and White students have been chronic as reported by Navarra (2016). This

was evident through the analysis of critical race theory (CRT) in 2015 where it was noted that

the state of affairs for students of color remains one of the most pressing concerns in education

and data suggest that students of color experience schools in a distinctly different way than their

Caucasian peers (Donnor, 2011; Milner, 2013). Despite a plethora of school reform efforts over

the past three decades, under the guise of neoliberal reform, and the intensity of standards-based

education movements, scripted curriculum, heightened accountability, corporate influence, and

legislative mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Common Core State

Standards (CCSS), students of color continue to underachieve in comparison with their

counterparts from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Howard, 2010). From these reform

effects, the researcher has noted that the different school outcomes across racial and ethnic lines has been an explicit focus on the role that race and racism play in school policies, pedagogies, and practices (Dixson, 2014; Kohli & Solorzano, 2015). As noted by Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) many students of color are expected to learn in schools where content, instruction, school culture, and assessment are often racially hostile, exclusive, and serve as impediments for school success. The opportunity gaps and learning outcomes between students of color and their Caucasian counterparts have been well documented by Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum (2006) and Milner (2010).

As we continue to review the research, some contend that issues around performance disparities are due to a combination of various factors such as structural inequality (Massey & Denton, 1993; Spring, 2006), poor teacher quality (Darling Hammond, 2010), lack of cultural relevance in school instruction (Gay, 2000), and racial re-segregation of the nation's schools (Donnor & Dixon, 2013), and some have called for a new social movement aimed at authentic access and equity for all students (Anyon, 2014).

Race and Education: From Past to Present

Gloria Ladson-Billings and Williams Tate's (1995) introductory work on CRT in education provided a significant spotlight on the salience of race, school, and educational outcomes in the mid-1990s. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) built on the work of multicultural scholars and critical race scholars in the legal field by suggesting that social inequity in education was based on three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.

2. U.S. society is based on property rights.

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity (p. 258).

CRT can be used to analyze schooling experiences as it relates to the growing chasm between the makeup of classroom teachers in the United States and students. Data from the U.S. Department of education informs us that more than 80% of classroom teachers are white, middle class, and monolingual (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Howard and Sleeter's (2010 and 2012) research revealed that many teachers, if not most, may be quite unaware of the racial experiences, cultural knowledge, practices, and dispositions that their students bring from their homes and communities. The racial and cultural knowledge gap between teachers and students mirrors the current demographics in today's schools as noted by Gay and Howard (2001). Gay and Howard (2001) refer to this as the demographic divide.

Summary of Literature and Discussion

Hawkins (1999) went on to say that in order to address the needs of the African American male students, we must address the "Race-Related issues, a more radical plan is needed to eliminate achievement differences, make sure the plan is focused on those who need help the most, African American boys are not encouraged to be academically challenged, and African American parents who know better don't necessarily do better. The solutions to helping the African American students were first to talk about the race-related issues by having open and honest dialogue about the issues. Secondly, the system must aggressively address the issues by incorporating a plan that would make a significant difference in the lives of the African American students. The system must be willing to invest in the structural changes that lead to better outcomes for African American students (Hawkins, 1999). Thirdly, the system must develop a plan that is focused on those who need the assistance. Districts must target its limited

resources on those schools that need help the most. Schools must eliminate racism and encourage African American students to take academic challenging courses to remove their fear of taking those courses. Lastly, parents who know better must do better to ensure that their children are taking advance courses in high school.

The literature by Hawkins (1999) revealed that African American students are more likely to succeed if the following are in place:

1. An environment that fosters the belief that success is feasible for all students.

2. An environment that provides lessons that is relevant to all students' lives.

3. An environment that provides class time that is enjoyable.

4. An environment where teachers and parents are encouraging and students are held to high standards.

5. An environment where peers behave in ways that foster a positive and focused classroom climate.

6. An environment where students are allowed to participate in community activities, special academic programs and in athletics.

7. An environment that foster honest dialogue about racism.

8. An environment where radical plans are in place to address the needs of those who need help the most.

With these findings in mind, this study further examined the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of African American male students.

The review of the literature confirmed that a high percentage of the African American male students who dropped out of high school were out of a job and/or incarcerated. From this research, the literature also revealed that the African American males encounter various

obstacles and risk factors in their lives that contributed to the dropout and graduation rates. Even though these factors existed, the literature also revealed that African American students indicated that they enjoyed learning when their teachers engaged them collaboratively in the learning. The literature also revealed that African American students were affected directly and indirectly from teacher's expectations. The researcher utilized the results from the literature review to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male dropouts from a mid-south school district.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the reasons influencing African American males decisions to drop out of high school. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) wrote "The purpose of phenomenological research is to investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people to identify the core essence of human experience as described by research participants" (p. 11). As noted by Creswell (2007), qualitative research is the study of individuals' past experiences to gain a deeper understanding and meaning about their daily events and activities. These events and activities include the way the individuals think, feel, behave and respond to their environment. Qualitative research is conducted in the field where the participants live and work. This method provides the researcher a deeper understanding of how the individuals explain and view their natural setting (Creswell, 2007). In view of the fact that qualitative research is aligned with the philosophical belief of a phenomenological study in that both deals with the investigation of the lived experiences of people, the researcher has determined that the most appropriate method to conduct the qualitative research involves a phenomenological study. The researcher's intention was to glean understanding of the way participants view the phenomenon as he collected and examined rich and thick descriptions of their perceptions.

The researcher felt confident that a phenomenological research approach was appropriate for this qualitative study. First, this approach provided a live account of an experience that was shared with others having a similar experience. Secondly, through phenomenology, the target population was allowed to express personally independent experiences about the phenomenon.

Lastly, phenomenology allows the participants the opportunity to voice their opinions that have the potential to improve their situation and the lives of others.

Research Questions

The following research questions help guide the study by examining the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male:

1. What is unique about being an African American male high school dropout?

2. What are the consequences of being an African American male dropout?

3. What descriptors do African American males use to describe the choices they made to become high school dropouts?

4. What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

Theoretical Perspective

The researcher used the phenomenological approach to gather information based upon the life experiences of the participants. This approach allowed information to be collected based on interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The phenomenological approach allowed the voices of the African American students to be heard throughout the study. The researcher considered race as a theoretical lens for assessing social inequity as it relates to the education of the African American male student.

Critical Race Theory

The researcher reviewed the five tenets of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an essential component of the phenomenological approach in gathering information based on counter

storytelling, permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence, and critique liberalism. Critical Race Theory is an academic discipline focused upon the applications of critical theory and is a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law and power. CRT offers a theoretical and analytical framework designed to explain how education structures, practices, and opportunities are shaped by race, racism and power (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). By using CRT as a theoretical and analytical framework, education scholars are able to conduct anti-oppressive research that explores the contextual history of race and racism. CRT also recognizes the cross sections of racism, sexism, and poverty (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

The first CRT tenet, counter-storytelling is used to legitimize the racial and subordinate marginalized groups. Counter-stories can be used to analyze personal, composite stories or narratives from the individual students. The second tenet, permanence of racism exist as being racial discrimination that controls the political, social and economic realms of U.S. society. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) stated that racism is an inherent part of American civilization, Privileging Caucasians (Whites) over people of color. This premise would reflect how different it would be for an African American student to progress in a well-established institution. (Pyke, 2010) documented the theoretical element of internalized racism and internalized racial oppression. The victims of racism begin to believe the ideology that they are inferior and that whites and white culture are superior. The third tenet is whiteness as property. This theory would promote that Whites only can possess the right of possession, right to use and enjoy, the right to disposition and the right of exclusion. With the whiteness as property, it means that the curriculum is controlled and developed by Whites which has the tendency to exclude certain ethnic groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The fourth tenet, interest convergence, acknowledges that Whites are the primary liberalism, promotes the neutrality law where everyone has equal

opportunities.

In this study, the researcher used one of the CRT tenets as part of this approach. The counter-storytelling was used to gather and to correlate live personal experiences from the students.

As an African American male and an educator, the researcher assessed and called upon his personal experiences as he reviewed and interpreted the collected data. The researcher has worked in two different districts as a teacher, a principal and as a central office administrator. He has a Bachelor Degree in Special Education and Elementary Education, a Master in Special Education and certification in Educational Leadership. He taught special education for 4 years and 6th grade for 4 years in the district from which the participants in the study attended as students. As an educator for forty-one years, the researcher wanted to identify reasons why high school African American males dropped out of school. In an effort to better understand and to identify situations that keep African American male students educationally engaged, the researcher decided to coordinate a qualitative study incorporating the aforementioned phenomenological method and the use of constructivism as a theoretical lens to construct meaning from the participants' recounting of their experiences. By using the framework of social constructivism and the phenomenological method, the researcher focused on how meanings and understandings develop from social interactions with others and the gathering of information based upon the life experiences of the participants. The researcher used the framework of social constructivism and the phenomenological methods to guide the development of the interview questions, the data collection process and the analysis of the data. As Patton (1990) shared, the researcher believes his "task" is to provide the framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking" (p. 24).

Research Sample

The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling to select participants from a city in the Northwest quadrant of Arkansas.   A purposeful sampling provided a deliberate opportunity to select the location, participants and activities for the study (Maxwell, 205). This strategy allowed the researcher to retrieve information that is unavailable through other venues because it involved those participants who were actual dropouts from the local high school. As supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), purposeful sampling was utilized to select local participants who provided relevant information thus, yielding an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from their perspectives.

In this phenomenological approach, a purposeful sampling of 7 participants who were African American male high school dropouts were selected to be in the study. The selection of these participants was based upon the fact that they were high school dropouts who overtly demonstrated a willingness to participate in the study. Participation in this study was based on a non-coercive, voluntary basis highlighting a willingness to participate in a lengthy interview. The participants had to meet the criteria of being African American male between the ages of 16 and 37. This age group provided a wide range of participants from which to select. This range in age also allowed for the selection of participants who were in school during the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that was ratified by Congress in a reported effort to close the achievement gap.

The purposeful sampling identified participants who were representatives of a selected ethnicity group, from a particular setting, and an activity related to the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 2005). This purposeful sampling method allowed the researcher to select

representatives meeting the following criteria: (1) African American, (2) male, (3) within the selected age range, and (4) high school dropout.

Description of the Location

The researcher selected participants from a city in the Northwest quadrant of Arkansas. The city is the third-largest city in Arkansas and county seat of Washington County. The city is centrally located within the county and has been home of the University of Arkansas since the institution's founding in 1871. The city had a population of 73,580 according to the 2010 census. When classes are in session, thousands of students on campus dramatically change the city's demographics. Forbes ranked the city as the 18th-best city for Business and Careers in 1997. U.S. News ranked the city as the ninth best Southern city to live and one of the best places in the region to retire. The city's economy is dominated by the largest retail store in the country. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), the city has a total area of 55.2 square miles, of which, 53.8 square miles of it is land and 1.4 square miles of it is water. The racial makeup of the city was 89.8% White, 4.0% African American, 0.8% Native American, 1.1% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander, 2.8% from other races, and 3.1% from two or more races, 6.4% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race. The median income for a household was $31,393, and the median income for a family was $62,258. Males had median income of $46,004 versus $31,373 for females, indicating a huge income disparity. The per capita income for the city was $26,268. 37.7% of the population and 19.9% of families were below the poverty line. Out of the total population, 16.0% of those under the age of 18 and 5.3% of those 65 and older were living below the poverty line. The city also derives a cultural identify from the University of Arkansas, exhibiting many trademarks of a college town such as a prominent arts and music scene, emphasis on local businesses, college-oriented bar/restaurant entertainment

district, progressive residents and a focus on environmental sustainability. The Public School System is the 6 largest district in Arkansas. There are 8 elementary schools (K-4); 1 elementary/middle Pre-K – 6 school; 2 middle schools (5-6); 2 junior high schools (7-8); one traditional high school (9-12); one Alternative high school (9-12); and one Virtual Academy School (4-8). The participants attended a high school with an enrollment of 2,001. According to the 2015 Arkansas Department of Education Report Card, the high school had an average class size of 17 and an average teaching experience of 13 years. The following was the student demographics: .5% American Indian, 3.1% Asian, 10.7% Black/African American, .3% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 10.3% Hispanic/Latino, 72.5% White, and 2.5% two or more Races. Other demographics: Limited English proficiency was 6%, low-income was 34%, and the special education population was 12%. The attendance rate for the high school demographics: African American was 89.5%, Hispanic was 90.1%, and Caucasian was 88.6%. The graduation rates were 75% for African American, 72.7% for Hispanic, and 81.7% for Caucasian. The district has a millage of 45.7, the expenditure per student was $10,452 and the average teacher salary was $60,205. The selected high school is widely recognized as one of the top high schools in the state and region due to the outstanding performances by the students and staff. The high school has a wide variety of academic, artistic, technological, and athletic offerings have something for every student. The students annually lead the students in performance on Advanced Placement exams, with 69% of the students receiving a score of 3 or better, which qualifies them for college credit at many institutions. The beautiful state-of-the-art campus was completely transformed and now has over 500,000 square feet of space to serve grades 9-12.

Limitation of the Study

Since the study was conducted in an area where there was a small African American male population, the number of participants will create a limitation to the sampling (Census Data Center, 2010). Another limitation was that the study included only one high school and it will not provide data relative to the meaning of high school dropouts from African American females and other ethnicities. It will not provide data about African American males from smaller and rural towns in eastern Arkansas. Not knowing if white students would drop out of school for similar reasons as African American students could also be a limitation to the study.

Research Design

A research design was developed with the components of this specific design working harmoniously to promote an efficient and functional research process (Maxwell, 2005). Joseph Maxwell's design was used to foster a flowchart illustrating the point of onset to the completion of the research. Maxwell (2005) stated, "Design in qualitative research is an ongoing process that involves "tacking" back and forth between the different components (p. 3). The exploration used the following interactive model of research design with the following components: Research Questions, Goals, Conceptual Framework, Validity, and Methods. Figure 1.1 represents an adaptive version of Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Des
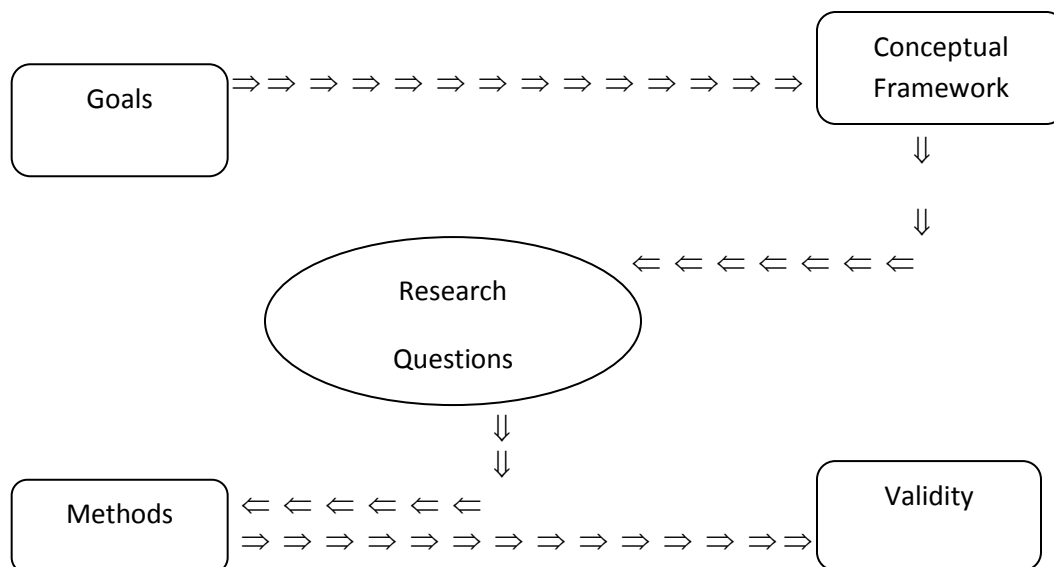
Figure 1.1. The Maxwell's research design is an interactive model that utilizes a flowchart to illustrate the point of onset to the completion of the research.

Data Collection Methods

The following is the outline the researcher utilized to complete the data collection. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Arkansas Institution Review Board. All participants received an informed consent statement that details the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the data from the study, the risks and the benefits for the participants and contact information for the researcher. Participants were told of their confidentiality throughout the study through the use of pseudonyms for the system and the participants.

In this phenomenological study, a purposeful sampling of 7 participants between the ages of 16 to 37 who were African American male high school dropouts were selected. This purposeful sampling method allowed the researcher to select representatives meeting the following criteria: (1) African American, (2) male, (3) within the selected age range, and (4) high school dropout.

Once identified, each research participant took part in an intensive open-ended interview with the researcher. As reflected by different studies, an intensive interview is a very useful data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews were held in their natural settings, i.e. their home and neighborhood. The interviews were semi-structured as the researcher led each participant to answer the open-ended questions. The researcher used both notes and verbatim transcriptions to document the interviews.

Materials

The researcher developed a list of questions for the interview process that was used with each participant (see Appendix B). An audio-recorder was available to ensure that the data was properly collected. Additional writing paper and pencils were also made available to capture the responses from the students. Pre-made matrices were used to record and categorize the data. Table 1.1 is an illustration of a pre-made matrix that was used to collect and record the responses from the participants.

Table 1.1

Research questions/interview questions matrix

	Subject #1	Subject #2	Subject #3	Subject #4	Subject #5	Subject #6	Subject #7
Can you tell me about yourself and your experience in school?							
What internal barriers to education and attitudes toward learning contributed to you not finishing high school?							
What outside forces contributed to you not finishing high school?							
What are your feelings about the subjects or materials you studied in school?							
What changes do you feel could be made to school to make it more desirable for yourself and others like you?							

Pertinent to my qualitative study, I included the following types of information to answer the research questions: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). Table 1.2 illustrates the type of information and method the researcher used to gather data about each participant in the study. The researcher chose to use a phenomenological approach that allowed information to be collected based upon the life-experiences of the participants. The use of this phenomenological method allowed the researcher to describe the

meaning of several individuals and their lived experiences in terms of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

First, the contextual information is the collection of data in reference to where the participants lived and a composite of their educational background. This information provided facts about the educational community both biographical and sociological, as well as, the cultural and environmental settings of the participants. This information allowed the researcher to collect information about the age, employment status, and familial standing of the participants.

Secondly, perceptual information provided an accounting of the participants' perceptions of their experiences in school. Perceptual data was derived from the participants' description of their experiences as they related to the phenomenon. The perceptual information was primarily captured through open-ended interviews. Since interviews were the primary method of data collection, perceptual information was most critical for the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Thirdly, the demographic information was a description of each participant in the study. The researcher gathered the following information about the participants: age, their residency, employment status, and if they had subsequently received their GED. This information was very valuable in providing the researcher an insight into the scope of the participatory subjects. This particular data was needed to explain the underlying meaning of the individuals' perceived experiences, as well as to extract the similarities and differences in perceptions among the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Lastly, theoretical information included data that has been researched and collected from the literature review. The data from the research allowed the researcher to have an understanding of what is known about the topic of inquiry. The research data also provided evidence to support the researcher's methodological approach. The data collected extended the current literature, by

contributing key factors, regarding best educational practices that a school could employ to keep the African American male student from dropping out of high school.

Table 1.2

Overview of information needed

Type of Information	What the Researcher Requires	Method
Contextual	Organizational background, history, structure; mission; vision; values; products; services; culture; leadership; staff and site description	Document Review Observations
Demographic	Descriptive information regarding participants, such as age, gender, ethnicity, discipline, et.	Survey
Perceptual	Participants' descriptions and explanations of their experiences as this relates to the phenomenon under study	Information shared by the participants during the interviews
Theoretical	Data that have been researched and collected	Literature Review

By using this approach, the researcher could use the following methods to collect empirical data: interviews, questionnaires, and observations. Initially, potential research participants whose information was secured from the local school, telephone directories, and social media were contacted by telephone. Those agreeing to participate in the study agreed to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaires were used to collect demographic as well as perceptual data. Based upon research, questionnaires are good sources to collect demographic, contextual and perceptual information for this study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008).

Once identified, each research participant took part in an intensive open-ended interview with the researcher. Charmaz (2006) stated that an intensive interview is a very useful data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research. By conducting the intensive open-ended interview, the researcher was able to perform an in-depth investigation of the research topic through the experiences of African American male high school dropouts. These semi-structured intensive open-ended interviews were held in a natural setting that was interactive for the participants. To document these interviews, the research used both notes and verbatim transcriptions.

The researcher also completed observations that entailed viewing, examining and recording the behavior of the participant during the interview. This information was collected in the natural setting by field notes.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The researcher used the analytic procedures outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). These fell essentially into the following sequential phases: organizing the data, coding the data, generating categories, identifying patterns and themes.

As stated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), the first step in the analytic process was the identification of the "big ideas" or themes. A process known as "winnowing" was used to reduce all of the data that has been collected into a manageable database. After which, the data was organized into useful groups. During the second step, the researcher was able to dissect and classify the data and place sections of material into categories. The researcher developed an excel file to classify, sort, store, retrieve, and compare data. With this program, the researcher created shorthand versions of themes and categories. With this method, the researcher was able observe the emotional tone which is critical to understanding the findings. Therefore, the

researcher relied upon a coding method to analyze the data. The researcher asked questions pertaining to the data to begin the initial coding as recommended by Charmaz (2006).

As the researcher asked each question and gained initial information from the data collected, the following coding techniques were utilized: in vivo coding, focused coding, and axial coding. With these coding techniques, the researcher was able to gather direct quotes from the participants that helped to determine whether true facts had been gathered from the large amounts of data. To begin this process, the researcher compared data to data to develop the focused code. Once these focused codes were developed, the data was compared to the codes. Axial coding was used to sort, synthesize, and organize the data in new ways. This process was to link categories with subcategories in an effort to find a relationship. Once these codes were identified, the researcher reexamined the data for accuracy by involving and collaborating with the participants. The codes were recorded in a codebook while working simultaneously with each participant. The codebook houses each newly developed code with definitions, examples, and usage guidelines.

The coding process consisted of two major cycles. During the first coding cycle, the researcher used the descriptive method to ask basic questions designed to address the topic and the phenomenon. Once the first coding cycle was completed, the researcher moved into the second coding cycle to continue the analysis as he transcribed the interviews and assigned identification codes to each transcript through the use of an editing approach. The method of coding was applied to all interview transcripts, field notes, and other documentation generated from artifacts to ensure a complete description of the phenomenological study. The data was organized and coded into categories that were eventually synthesized into major themes, concepts, and/or theories.

The researcher read, sorted and coded the data to formulate data summary charts and write memos or journaling as outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). The summary charts provided evidence to support what the researcher found while journaling. It also allowed the researcher to record and write notes about certain occurrences or sentences to form a basis to support the findings, interpretations, and conclusions in the study. Figure 1.2 includes the steps the researcher followed in the analytic process.

```
 ┌─────────┐        ┌────────────────────────────┐
 │ Step 1  │───▶    │   Review and Explore Data   │
 └─────────┘        │    Identify 'Big Ideas'     │
                    └────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
 ┌─────────┐        ┌────────────────────────────┐
 │ Step 2  │───▶    │  Re-Read and Examine Data   │
 └─────────┘        │         Code Data           │
                    │ Place Coded Data in Categories │
                    └────────────────────────────┘
              ┌───────────┬───────────┬───────────┐
              ▼           ▼           ▼
       ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
       │  Memos   │ │   Data   │ │ Journal  │
       │          │ │ Summary  │ │          │
       │          │ │  Table   │ │          │
       └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
              │           │           │
              ▼           ▼           ▼
          ┌────────────────────────────────┐
          │     Revise Coding Scheme        │
          │       Codes Are Added           │
          │   Eliminated, and/or Collapsed  │
          └────────────────────────────────┘
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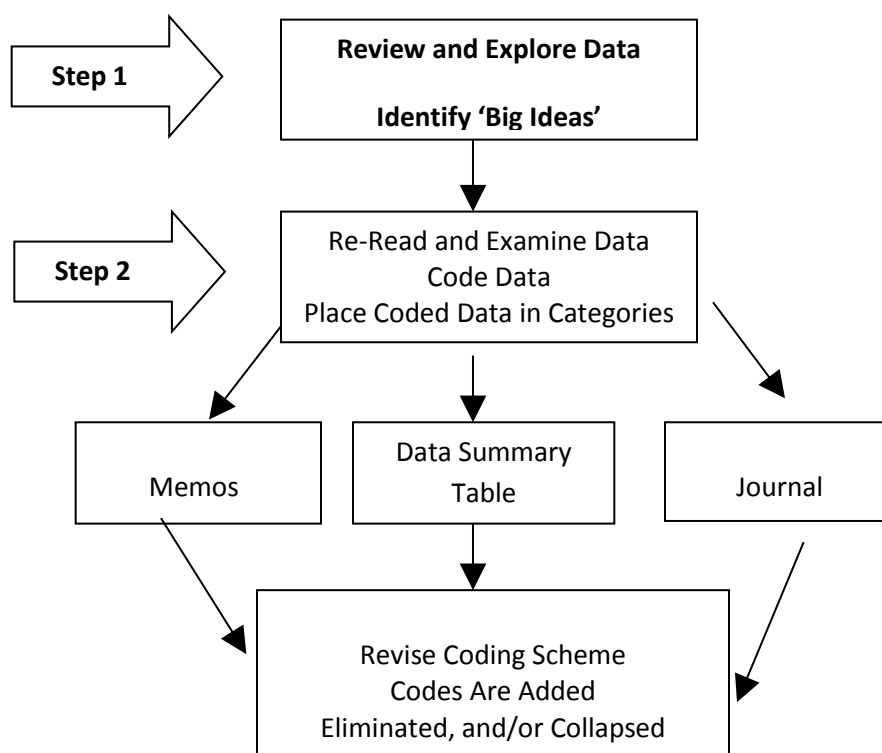
Figure *1.2.* The roadmap includes the steps the researcher will follow in the analytic process.

Ethical Considerations

In this qualitative study, the researcher considered and addressed the following ethical considerations: confidentiality, deception, relationships, respectfulness, and informed consent procedures. To ensure safeguards for the participants in this study, the following guidelines from the institutional review board at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville was followed. Under

these guidelines, evidence was provided to the board stating that the privacy and rights for each voluntary participant will be maintained and respected. The researcher informed each participant of his privacy and rights and noted that any illegal activities that would be considered harmful to others and if necessary report them to the authorities (Creswell, 2007). As an educator, the researcher is still bound by the law to report any activity that is in violation of the law. It was understood that there was a possibility that some of my participants might have criminal backgrounds. Therefore, it was important that the researcher be transparent with them upfront in letting them know that he was bound by law to report any illegal activity that might be discovered during the interview process of gathering information about their life experiences in high school.

Informed consent was secured to ensure that the participants understand the process and how their confidentiality will be maintained (see Appendix A). As suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), verbal consent was secured to ensure that all human subjects retain autonomy and to have the ability to judge for themselves what risks are worth taking for this study.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. Since a great deal of personal information will be collected, the researcher fully protected the participants' identities and facts of their private lives. To ensure privacy, the names of the participants were known only to the researcher. While transcribing and translating the information, the exact words were recorded as a true representation of the participants' dialogues and the researcher was mindful of not revealing more information than what the participants care to reveal in the report.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), ethical issues that arose in observation and participant-observation studies center on the principle of respect for the persons. The researcher

assured that each participant knew the purpose of the study and that he was willing to participate in the study to avoid deception (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Marshall & Rossman also stated that a researcher must be aware of the relationship issues that may develop between the researcher and the participants. The researcher had to ensure that the relationship was non-manipulative to avoid any type of ethical issues. This prevented any type of backlash that could occur toward current employees who might have been instructors of the participants.

The researcher acknowledged and conveyed to the participants the steps that were taken to protect their human rights. The research process involved enlisting voluntary cooperation and informing the participants about the purpose of the study. To ensure the protection and rights of participants, the researcher employed the following steps: First, the researcher gained informed consent from each participant (see Appendix A). Second, the participants' rights and interests were protected when choices were made regarding the reporting and dissemination of the data. Finally, the researcher committed to keeping the names of the participants confidential. Precautionary measures were taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data.

Issues of Trustworthiness and Validity

The trustworthiness and validity of the research was of high importance for the researcher. To ensure the accuracy and validity of the data, the researcher utilized the following procedures and methods of data collection through triangulation by the following four guiding principles: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. As stated by Maxwell (2005), "This strategy reduces the chance associations and the systematic biases due to a specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops" (p. 112). First, credibility was established by portraying the actual accounts of the participants' views through the analysis of the data by the researcher. The researcher's credibility was

checked through the transcribed interviews or summaries of the researcher's conclusions to the participants for their review (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Second, dependability was established through journaling as well as the recording of memos and detailed accounts of how all the data was analyzed and interpreted. Third, conformability of the work by the researcher will be evident through the development of an audit trail that describes the steps taken throughout the research from the beginning to the end of the study. The purpose of the audit trail was to establish transparency by keeping a record of daily notes and reflections regarding the data, methodology, analysis, process, observations, and participant contacts. Finally, transferability was assessed by how well the researcher provided a rich and thick description of the participants' previous experiences. Thus the researcher revealed how the content is relevant to other similar experiences as judged by the reader.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation was that the study included only one high school and it did not provide data relative to the meaning of high school dropouts from African American females or other ethnicities. It will not provide data about African American males from smaller and rural towns in eastern Arkansas. However, the greatest risk was the possibility of the lack of a full-fledged effort on the part of the interviewee. Participants could have censored their thoughts or in other ways regulate themselves as to not give lengthy and detailed information during the interviews. An interviewee who felt more comfortable in giving "yes" or "no" answers, rather than, engaging himself to fully answer the more open-ended questions could have reflected this. Even though there were risks involved in this study, it was the hope of the researcher that the benefits will produce a positive force of delivering results that will be useful in reducing the high percentage of African American male dropouts.

Researcher Bias

The researcher has taught elementary school in the past, served as an elementary principal for 24 years, served as the Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education for 9 years, and presently is the Associate Superintendent for Support Services. The researcher had schoolmates who did not complete high school and he knows African American students in Northwest Arkansas who are high school dropouts. As an African American Educator who has seen this problem first-hand, it causes me to question the effectiveness of a particular school in the school district as it relates to minority male students. With this awareness, the researcher made every effort to promote objectivity. Because reliability ultimately rests with the researcher, careful thought was given to avoid researcher bias (Bloomberg, 2012).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the rationale and description of this study's research methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research study was employed to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male who did not complete high school. The participant was part of a purposeful sampling of seven African American male high school dropouts. Three data-collection methods were used, including interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The researcher used an analytic procedure that included: organizing the data, generating categories, identifying patterns and themes, and coding the data. Lastly, the study also described ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and limitations to the study.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This study was conducted to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspective and experiences of the African American males. This study focused on African American males by engaging them in an in-depth assessment of the issues that influenced them to leave high school and sought to answer four research questions:

1. What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

2. What are the perceived consequences of being an African American male dropout?

3. What descriptors do African American males use to describe the choices they made to become high school dropouts?

4. What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The first section of this chapter provides a description of the researcher's background and interest in this study. Creswell (2007) recommends that researchers include information about their own experiences in qualitative studies.

The second section of this chapter provides a description of each of the seven participants. These descriptions will enable the reader to better understand the "contexts and settings that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Crewell, 2007, p. 61).

The third section of this chapter describes the findings from this study as identified by the researcher. The data were reduced through two cycles of coding. The reduced data were then further analyzed resulting of five findings.

Description of Researcher's Background

For eight years, the researcher served as an elementary classroom teacher. This time period exposed the researcher to a diverse background of students from all socioeconomic levels. The researcher's exposure to the diverse group enabled him to engage the students in various activities to spark their interest in learning. It was promptly evident that each student had developed their own learning style, which challenged the researcher to meet those various unique needs.

Working with fifth and sixth graders, taught the researcher the importance of developing trust and loyalty to further his ability to develop the students into independent thinkers and workers. His determination was fueled to ensure that each student would be successful in the classroom not only as a learner, but also as a productive contributor to the learning environment.

Having to develop an educational model that incorporated reading levels ranging from first through eighth grade, compelled the researcher to create a multi-age grade level room to ensure that each student was reached at his/her reading ability. The researcher also created flexible groups for reading and math to allow students the opportunity to progress at their individual ability levels. Creating a learning model for science and social studies involved teaching through the utilization of unit studies that incorporated research projects, peer-group activity work, cooperative learning, and hands on experiences

The researcher found out early in his professional career that a successful teacher had to be a magician with a bag of tricks. That bag of tricks was filled with different learning strategies that allowed a successsful teacher to be creative and innovate in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom of learners.

After eight years of teaching, I became an elementary principal at a predominately African American School in the second-largest city in Arkansas with a population of 273,170 in

1984. I inherited a school that emphasized high expectation for learning and a well disciplined student body. Students were taught to be respectful toward their fellow classmates as well as the adults. The archetype exemplified at this school taught the researcher that students were eager for established and consistent classroom and school wide rules. Since the teachers were not engrossed in addressing the behavioral problems of students, they were able to deliver instructions with minimum disruptions, aiding in the retention of knowledge for the students. The school also boasted an attendance percentile of ninety-five and saw a tremendous growth in academic gains. This made the researcher a strong believer in the benefits of high expectations for students as well as teachers.

Utilizing the lessons learned, the researcher implemented a set of structures and expectations at the next two elementary schools where he served as principal in a college town with a population of 42,099 in 1987. The researcher's first school in this Northwest Arkansas town was a predominately white student body with an African American demographic of 2%. Seventy-nine percent of the students were on free and reduced lunches. Even though the students came from a low socioeconomic level, they strived to reach their highest potential because of the high expectations that were expected of them on every level at the school. By incorporating similar rules and expectations, the researcher felt that they had created a positive learning environment for the students and teachers. From there, the researcher was given the honor to open an elementary school in this Northwest Arkansas town on the west side. Here, the student body free and reduced lunch percentage was 38%. The researcher was determined to create a school with high expectations and with a strong discipline program to promote respect toward adults and students. The researcher and his leadership team created a philosophy where everyone believed in a chain with three strong links – school-students-parents. They were very successful in establishing a positive learning environment for all students. It was a school where teacher turnover was low, high attendance rates for students and strong parent support. After

twenty-one years as a principal, I was promoted to the Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education about finding ways to keep high school students in school. This has lead him to his study on examining the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African American Male.

Participant Descriptions

Seven African Americans males who dropped out of high school were chosen through purposeful sampling. This purposeful sampling method allowed the researcher to select representatives meeting the following criteria: (1) African American, (2) male, (3) within the selected age range of 16 to 37, and (4) high school dropout.

Of the seven participants, three were nineteen, one was twenty, one was twenty-one, one was twenty-seven and one was thirty-seven. Four of the participants were from the identified Northwest Arkansas city originally. Five of the participants left the traditional high school and went to an alternative high school before dropping out. Table 1.3 reflects the number of participants in each age group.

Table 1.3

Number of Participants

Ages of the participants	Number of participants in each age group
19	3
20	1
21	1
27	1
37	1

Of the seven participants, three received their GED. Three would like to return and receive their high school diploma at the identified Northwest Arkansas high school. One of the participants dropped out of high school because he had to support the family by being the breadwinner. He did not want his younger brother to go without the necessities of life. Two of the participants went to two traditional high schools before returning to an alternative high school. Of the seven participants, three dropped out as juniors, and four dropped out as seniors.

Table 1.4

Descriptors of the participants

Descriptors	Number of participants
Number receiving a GED	3
Dropping out of high school to support the Family	1
Number who went to an alternative high School	2
Number of students having a job	7
Number of junior high students dropping out	3
Number of senior high students dropping out	4

The descriptions of the participants below provide a detailed portrayal of each individual. Pseudonyms were used for all participants, school and city names.

Jones, participant #1000

Jones is 27 years old and was born and raised in Fresno, AR. Jones was raised in a single-family home by his mom and is the oldest of 3 siblings. His dad was in and out of his life. He went to Grace Elementary School from kindergarten to fifth grade. He attended sixth grade at James Madison Elementary School and middle school at Helena Middle School. He spent his junior high days at Richmond Junior High School and went to Fresno High School. Jones enjoyed attending elementary school; he especially loved his kindergarten and first grade teachers. He enjoyed having the same friends from elementary through twelfth grade. He considers himself as being a good student but did not like speaking before a crowd, of which he

contributed to being shy. Since he would not present his reports before the class, his teachers would give him incompletes. Receiving incompletes changed his attitude about school so that he didn't care any more. He also lost faith in the adults around him and formed an attitude that no one could tell him what to do except for his mother and grandmother. He was well disciplined growing up, but during his middle school days, he did not get along very well with the principal. His middle school days were not solely marred by relationship with his principal; he was encouraged by two great teachers who did not give up on him. They would go out of their way to help him with his academics and would not take no for an answer. He would behave appropriately because he valued the opinion of the two teachers and felt as though their disappointed in him was analogous with disappointing his mother and grandmother. He felt that the fondness with these two teachers was not well received by the principal, for unknown reasons. His experience with this administrator and other adults became one of disrespectful and lack of trust, mainly because he felt that he wasn't being treated fairly. He was eventually suspended from school by the middle school principal. His perspective after his middle school experience, foster an attitude of anger toward adults. This anger was abated while attending junior high school because his teachers showed compassion and understanding toward him. His favorite subject was history. His least favorite subject was math. He felt that he did not finish high school because he didn't do well in math. He felt that the school district changed the math program every year. Another factor that caused him to drop out of school was his inability to continue to play football after he was injured. His attitude changed about school once he learned that he was unable to play football. He eventually dropped out of high school. However, he did go back and received his GED and worked at Bath and Beyond.

Smith, participant #1001

Smith is 19 years old and is originally from an Eastern Arkansas city in the Delta. He is the youngest of seven siblings. His first exposure to the education system in Fresno, Arkansas was when he went to Bethany Elementary School in fourth and fifth grades. After Bethany, he attended Helena Middle School and then Richmond Junior High School. From Richmond, he went to Fresno High School and Fresno Alternative School. He was held back in third grade at Bethany Elementary School. He liked his elementary teachers but became very disruptive in middle and junior high school. He built a hatred for teachers after sixth grade. Unlike his elementary teachers, the middle and junior high school teachers did not take the time to make sure the children learned the information. He had a reputation in junior high school. He got in trouble and did not care anymore. During high school, he made bad choices and wanted to be with his friends who were mostly in jail. He would go to school and then he and his friends would leave because they felt that school was boring. He finished tenth grade at Fresno High and then transferred to Fresno Alternative School. He liked Fresno Alternative School until the teachers started nagging him about his sagging. He wanted to sag and go to school but the teachers and principal pestered him until he no longer felt as though he wanted to put up with the treatment. His disinterest in subjects such as math because it just wouldn't click for him. He would miss math class so people would not know that he could not do math. He would have rather be in classes with friends and did not appreciate the presence of the police in the school. He felt that the officers needed to be in other places that really needed policemen. The presence of the police force was a distraction to him at school. He dropped out of high school because of not doing well in math, not being able to sag and not being able to be around his friends. He did not get his GED but he is employed at a fast food restaurant.

Wright, participant #1002

Wright is 20 years old and is originally from Fresno, AR. Wright was raised by his mom in a single-family home. He has three siblings and he is the second child.   He and his family moved a lot throughout Northwest Arkansas and even to Texas. He did not make any connections not even with his principal at Grace Elementary School in Fresno. Because of his family moving on a regular basis, he attended several schools including Tillman Elementary, Helena Middle School, Richmond Jr. High, Roman High School, Fresno High School and Fresno Alternative School. When he was given a chance by his coaches, he was successful in sports. During his senior year, he west to Fresno Alternative School. He wanted to go to Fresno High School but his grades were not good and his age would not allow him to play football. He became very frustrated because he could not participate in sports. Because things were not happening fast enough, he decided to drop out of school and got a job at a fast food restaurant. He has not gone back to get his GED, however, he would like to go to college to become a kindergarten teacher and become a coach or a professional football player.

Williams, participant #1003

Williams is 19 years old and is originally from Fresno, AR. Williams was raised by his mom in a single-family home. He has four siblings and he is the second child. His family has not moved around that much. He went to Blackwell Elementary School, Branch Elementary, Malcomb Middle School, and a private high school, Graceland Junior High School, Fresno High School, and Fresno Alternative High School.

He felt that he got into trouble over little things and he did not want to listen to teachers. His art teacher took him under her wings because she liked him. He was labeled as a behavior child because he did not do well in any of his schools. He lost interest in eighth grade because

he was held back. He went to jail because of an incident at a local church. With so much happening and losing interest in school, he decided to drop out during his senior year. He would like to get his GED one day.

Washington, participant #1004

Washington is 19 years old and is originally from Fresno, AR. Washington was raised by his mom in a single-family home. He has three siblings and he is the youngest child in the family. He has lived between Houston, TX, Conway, AR and Fresno, AR. He attended the following schools in Fresno, AR: Blackwell and Grace Elementary Schools, Graceland Junior High School, Fresno High School and Fresno Alternative High School. His favorite subject was reading and his least favorite was math. He had a problem with marijuana. He felt that marijuana slowed him down and caused him to drop out of sports. He wanted to be a rapper and did not like school because he could not be around his friends. He did not like for teachers to call him out in class, which was a factor that lead him to dropping out of school as an eleventh grader. He did go back to adult education and got his GED.

Mitchell, participant #1005

Mr. Mitchell is 37 years old and is originally from Grand Rapid, Michigan. Mitchell was the only child and was raised by his mom in a single-family home. He moved from Grand Rapid, Michigan when he was six years old to Fresno, AR. He attended the following schools in Fresno, AR: John Adams and John Madison Elementary Schools, Richmond Junior High School, Fresno High School and Fresno Alternative High School. According to Mitchell, he only went to Graceland for one hour before he was expelled for looking at the white female students. His mom had to enroll him in a private school in Fresno, AR. After attending the private school, Mitchell went back to Richmond Jr. High School and played on the basketball team. He was

kicked off the team because he had words with the principal's son. He was placed in ISS and noticed that only Black students were in ISS. In ISS, he felt as though someone cared for them because of the African American teacher who helped them. He felt that the Black Students were not treated fairly in Junior high school. In high school, he felt that it was a time for creativity and it was a melting pot because of the diversity in the student body. His favorite subjects were science and math because they were concrete and man could not change the subject matter unlike social studies. He dropped out of school in the eleventh grade because he felt that the teachers were failing him in all of his classes. He did go back and received his GED and enrolled in Westark College in Ft. Smith.

Easter, participant #1006

Easter is 21 years old and is originally from Fresno, AR. Easter was raised by his mom in a single-family home. He has two siblings and he is the oldest child in the family. He has lived between Tulsa, OK and Fresno, AR. He attended the following schools in Fresno, AR: Blackwell and Grace Elementary Schools, Graceland Junior High School, Fresno High School and Fresno Alternative High School. He favorite subject was reading and his least favorite was math. He dropped out of school to take care of his family. He would like to go back to get his GED, but right now, his priority is taking care of his mom and siblings.

<div align="center">

Analysis of Data

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Each interview was conducted individually and audio-recorded. Following the completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the data using the analytic procedures outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). These fell essentially into the following sequential phases: organizing the data, coding the data, generating categories, identifying patterns and themes. As stated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), the first step in the analytic process was the identification of the "big ideas" or themes. A process known as "winnowing"

was used to reduce the data that has been collected into a manageable database. After which, the data was organized into useful groups. During the second step, the researcher dissected and classified the data and place sections of material into categories. The researcher relied upon a coding method to analyze the data. The researcher asked questions pertaining to the data to begin the initial coding as recommended by Charmaz (2006). With these coding techniques, the researcher gathered direct quotes from the participants who helped to determine whether true facts were gathered from the large amounts of data.

To begin this process, the researcher compared data to data to develop the focused code. Once these focused codes were developed, the data was compared to the codes. Axial coding was used to sort, synthesize, and organize the data in new ways. This process was to link categories with subcategories in an effort to find a relationship. Once these codes were identified, the researcher reexamined the data for accuracy by involving and collaborating with the participants. The codes were recorded in a codebook while working simultaneously with each participant. The codebook houses each newly developed code with definitions, examples, and usage guidelines. The interview questions were:

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your experience in school?

2. What internal barriers to education and attitudes toward learning contributed to you not finishing high school?

3. What outside forces contributed to you not finishing high school?

4. What are your feelings about the subjects or materials you studied in school?

5. What changes do you feel could be made to school to make it more desirable for yourself and others like you?

Table 1.5 illustrates the codes that emerged within each theme. The researcher utilized a concept of coding based upon Saldana (2009) extensive work as it relates to qualitative research. Saldana (2009) defines a code in qualitative inquiry as a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual art data. The researcher utilized the in vivo coding process to create themes derived from words and short phrases from the interviews. The following steps were used to find the assigned codes and themes in Table 1.5:

Step 1: The researcher assigned labels known as anchor codes to the research questions.

Step 2: The researcher used in vivo coding as the specific coding method.

Step 3: The researcher used the words and phrases in the manuscript to compile a list of initial codes and arrange them alphabetically.

Step 4: The researcher grouped the codes into their respective anchor codes.

Step 5: The researcher used the grouped codes and tally frequency.

Step 6: The researcher used the results from the tally of the grouped codes to generate themes to address the research questions.

Findings from analyses of the data yielded seventeen codes as reflected in Table 1.5. The following four themes and their meanings were identified: Disappointment refers to the feeling of dissatisfaction that follows the failure of expectations or hopes. Support refers to receiving assistance, protection, and backing to enable one to function or act in a certain way to achieve certain goals and skills. Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone. It means valuing each other points of views, being open to being wrong, accepting people as they are, being polite and kind always, because being kind to people is not negotiable. Friend is a person whom one knows, like and enjoy being with in different situations.

Table 1.5

Codes and Themes

Themes	Codes
Disappointment is the feeling of dissatisfaction that follows the failure of expectations or hopes	Not being able to participate Not being included
Support refers to receiving assistance, protection, and backing. Lack of support is defined as limited or the absence of encouragement or resources from faculty and staff	Lack of one-on-one support Lack of having teachers who cared Lack of student-teacher relationships Limited and no Interaction Lack of support
Friend is a person who you like and enjoy being with. A person whom one knows, likes, and trusts	Not being with your friends Being separated from your friends Having the same friends throughout the years
Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone. It means valuing each other points of views, being open to being wrong, accepting people as they are, things being polite and kind always, because being kind to people is not negotiable	Being talked down to Lack of respect from the adults Adults were tripping over little Being unfairly treated Teachers talking to the class about them Did not get along with the teachers Teachers criticizing and labeling them

Findings

The study focused on the African American males' perspectives and their educational experiences during high school and how these experiences influenced their decisions to drop out of high school. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the reasons why

African American males decided to drop out of high school. The researcher engaged subjects in an in-depth assessment of the issues that influenced their decisions to leave high school.   This task was accomplished by gathering data from individual interviews, observations, and analysis of the information that was gathered. The analysis of the data led to five major findings:

1. All seven participants showed disappointment with themselves for not being able to participate in sports.

2. All seven participants felt that they did not receive support from the majority of their teachers in high school.

3. All seven participants felt that they should be allowed to be in the same classroom with their friends.

4. All seven participants felt that they did not receive respect from the adults.

5. All seven participants felt the need to go back and get their diploma or GED in order to reach their goals in life.

The first finding answers the first and fourth research questions:

- What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

- What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The second finding answers the first and fourth research questions.

- What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

- What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The third finding provides an answer to each of the research questions.

- What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

- What are the perceived consequences of being an African American male dropout?

- What descriptors do African American males use to describe the choices they made to become high school dropouts?

- What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The fourth finding answers the fourth research question.

- What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The fifth finding answers the third research question.

- What factors did the participants in the study identify that might have kept them in school?

The findings are discussed below. The participants' thoughts are used throughout the remainder of this chapter to support the five major findings.

All seven participants showed disappointment with themselves for not being able to participate in sports.

The participants all had an interest in wanting to participate in a sport while in high school. They felt that they had the skills to compete and would contribute to the team. Without stimulation, such as sports, the participants started losing interest in attending high school. Jones stated that sports were a big thing for him while in high school. However, after getting hurt, Jones's attitude toward school changed because he was upset and couldn't play football. He was

very angry toward everyone because he was not allowed to play football anymore. He stated that this was one of the reasons why he dropped out of school. Wright went from one school district to the next trying to play on a football team. He also felt that he was good for the team. Joe began to lose interest in school when he wasn't allowed to play football. He left Fresno High School and went to Texas to play football. Joe, eventually, went back to Fresno, Arkansas but couldn't go to Fresno High School because he did not have the grades. Even though he went to Fresno Alternative High School, he became very frustrated because he felt that his passion and love could contribute to the football team. Since he could not play football, Wright decided to drop out of school and get a job. Washington looked forward to being a football player in high school. He caught the eye of the coach during the workouts and even started playing until he missed one practice. The coach wouldn't let him play. Washington said that it wasn't worth it, so he lost interest in the game. He turned his attention of becoming a rapper. He decided that he didn't want to go to school and would rather become a rapper. The other participants dropped sports because they were expelled from school or did not have any support from home. They also lost interest in school and decided to drop out. Each of these participants felt that they would have stayed in school if they were allowed to play sports.

All seven participants felt that they did not receive support from the majority of their teachers in high school.

Jones, participant #1, stated that it was hard for teachers to teach the students because there were too many students in the classroom. It became very difficult for him to ask for assistance from the teachers. He compared his experience to his cousin who was in a private school where she received help in a smaller classroom setting. Jones was very adamant in saying that they should be in smaller classrooms in order for their needs to be met. He felt that a lot of this

happened because of the victims moving there because of Hurricane Katrina. Smith, participant #2, stated that his teacher would explain a lesson and then engage in computer work, leaving the students without someone to explain and clarify the process they needed to use to solve the problem. Michael also felt that he would have done better if he had more one-on-one assistance from his teachers. Wright, participant #3, wanted his teachers to walk around the room instead of sitting at the desk. He stated that only 30% of the teachers would walk around to assist the students. Wright had to do all the work by himself without assistance from the teachers after they presented the lesson. He even stated that the teachers were expecting them to know what they were talking about during their discussions without clear explanation. Williams, participant #4, felt that his teachers did not care about him. The alternative teachers did not follow the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) so that he could receive assistance. Some classes were too easy because the teachers rarely challenged them besides just presenting the information through classroom lectures. Washington, participant #5, felt that teachers were always bashing him instead of helping him to learn the materials in the classroom. He gave up and dropped out of school at the age of sixteenth.   Mitchell, participant #6, stated that his teachers did not want the African American students in their classrooms. They just kept passing them on and not teaching them the content. He felt that instead of teaching the African American students, they were assigned to detention or In School Suspension (ISS). Mitchell was very critical of his teachers because he felt that they did not want to teach them. He dropped out of school because he thought the teachers were not going to promote them anyway. Easter, participants #7, expressed that the problem was that he did not get along with the teachers. He felt that the teachers were not compassionate and did not provide him with assistance. He went to Fresno High School for only a week and then left the state and came back to attend Fresno Alternative High School.

All seven participants felt that they should be allowed to be in the same classroom with their friends.

The participants were all concerned that they were not allowed to be in the same classroom with their best friends. They all thought that friends should be allowed to remain together throughout their high school experience. According to the participants, school was more fun and enjoyable when they had the opportunity to be in the classroom with their friends. It was very apparent from the students' comments and observations that the schools wanted to disburse the African American students throughout the different classrooms. The students expressed their disappointment with the decision of the school separating the African American students in the different classrooms. The participants felt the need to be with their friends because it provided an opportunity for them to have a support to rely upon.

All seven participants felt that they did not receive respect from the adults.

Jones, participant #1, felt that he did not have to respect the teachers because they did not show respect to him. He did not respect certain teachers because he felt that he was treated unfairly and people would not say that they were sorry. Smith, participant #2, felt that he was being disrespected because the teachers were always nagging him and they would talk about his personal life with other students in the classroom. The adults would not listen to him and the other African American students. Wright, participant #3, felt that teachers should interact more with the students on a more professional level. He also felt that teachers should be more encouraging and show students that they enjoyed school. Williams, participant #4, stated that the teachers were like something "else." The teachers were always criticizing and labeling him. He felt that the teachers did not like him and they would not listen to him. Washington, participant #5 stated that his teachers disrespected him because the teacher would talk about him

to the entire classroom. This made Washington very upset and he dropped out of school at the age of sixteen. Mitchell, participant #6, felt that he was being disrespectful because the teachers were prejudice and did not like them and they had little respect for their job. They also showed disrespect toward the African American students by putting them in ISS, especially when white students were not placed in ISS. The teachers made him feel as though he was not going to make anything of himself. Easter, participant #7, wanted his teachers to show more respect toward them by being more compassionate and understanding.

All seven participants felt the need to go back and get their diploma or general educational development (GED) in order to reach their goals in life.

Each participant expressed their desire of going back to school to get their GED. The participants felt that they were being cheated because of not being able to achieve their graduation goals. They recognized that they needed their GED to continue their post education. The participants were also told that they could go to college once they had attained their GED. Jones, participant #1, stated that he wanted to acquire his GED because he knew that he could get it done quickly and it would allow him to go to a junior college. Wright, participant #3, wanted to get his GED in order to go to college and become a kindergarten teacher and a coach. Washington, participant #4 stated he was told that he could go to Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) once he attained his GED. After getting his GED, he had another problem going to NWACC because he did not have a car. He found out quickly that he had to secure a job to acquire a car to drive to NWACC. Mitchell, participant #6, stated that he had no other choice but to go back and get his GED so that he could go to Westark Community College. Easter, participant #7, will go back and get his GED once he has enough money to support his family. Currently, his family is his top priority because he is acting as the man of the

house. He wants to make sure that his mother and brothers will not go without the basic necessities. Easter dropped out of school mainly to support his family.

Summary

The overall purpose of the study is to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspective and experiences of the African American males. Findings from this study answered the research questions by providing information that revealed that the participants felt that they did not receive the support they needed at the high school. They also felt that extra activities, like football, were an important factor that would have kept them from dropping out of high school. They felt strongly that some teachers and adults at the school did not show them respect and they wanted to attend classes with their friends and not be separated from them by being placed in different classes. Findings from the study also revealed that the students wanted and felt the need to obtain their GED. They felt that it was important in helping them to further their post education as well as improve their success in advancing in their jobs.

The next chapter provides the discussion of these five findings. Included are the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspective and experiences of the African American males. Although many have discussed and written about African American male dropouts in education forums, essays, short stories and even in movies, few have captured the experiences of the African American males in qualitative research, allowing them to have a voice. As an African American and an educator, the researcher wanted to find the reasons why African American males dropped out of high school. I wanted to talk with young African American males who actually dropped out of high school to hear their stories and learn about their reasons to why they left high school.

Critical Race Theory

This study utilized the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspective and experiences of African American males. CRT provides a framework to identify and implement protective and nurturing strategies to enable African American youth to experience school and society in a manner similar to that of their non-Black peers.

Counter-storytelling was used to provide additional accounts of the barriers that caused African American students to drop out of high school. "Counter-stories are both a method to tell stories of often-untold experiences and also a tool for analyzing and challenging the dominant discourse and the stories of those in power" (Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002). In order to establish participant counter-storytelling within this study, 7 African American male students were interviewed about the perceived impact of how race attributed to the cause of why these students dropped out of high school. By engaging in counter-storytelling, the researcher analyzed

African American male students' lived experiences as students who attended the identified high school and later becoming a high school dropout. Specifically, their counter-narratives gave them the opportunity to voice and reflect on their experiences. Furthermore, by telling their stories in their own words, their counter-narratives allowed the young men to share their life experiences as it related to racial issues while attending high school. Through participants' counter-storytelling, the researcher was able to demonstrate how the participants felt about racial issues and if they had experienced any specific incidents. The counter-storytelling only revealed that two out of the seven participants felt that their race was an issue.

In this study, I wanted to select African American males who dropped out of high school to allow them to become the experts on the topic of why they decided to leave high school before receiving their diplomas. Seven individuals, all identified from Northwest Arkansas, were included in the study; all were over 21 years old and were males who dropped out before finishing high school. The subjects were interviewed over a period of two months beginning the first of 2017. The interviews were conducted in the setting of the subjects choosing, recorded, and transcribed. A journal was maintained with entries during the interview process to record observations of behavior and integrity.

The findings of this study will be useful to educators, school administrators, and adult education providers and college leadership. These findings will help each of these groups to have a better understanding of why African American males drop out of school from their perspectives. With this knowledge from those who dropped out, organizations are better positioned to construct better educational programs to be more effective and appealing while preventing high school students from dropping out.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the unique causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school?

Each adult male shared the different factors that influenced and caused them to drop out of high school. The participants identified the following factors they thought had a significant impact on their decision to drop out of high school. Seven of the participants stated that they decided to drop out of school because they were not able or allowed to play sports in high school. Several stated that they lost interest in school because the most important thing they wanted to do was gone. From the data that was collected and analyzed, it was apparent that the students valued the thought of wanting to play sports. One participant stated that he was very upset and there was nothing that could take the place of football. This same participant also stated that he made the decision to drop out because the school wanted to hold him back and have him attend summer school against his wishes to earn the rest of his credits. The participant was not shy and wanted the researcher to know that he wasn't going to summer school and that he was angry about not being able to play football. Several of the participants stated that math was a hard subject and they could not understand the concepts. They never could pass math in school. These three factors lead them to drop out of school. Table 1.6 reflects the causes that influence African American males to drop of out of high that was shared by the participants in the study.

Table 1.6

Causes that influence African American males to drop out of high school

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Causes

Lost interest in going to school

Not being able or allowed to play sports in high school

The school wanted to hold him back

The school requiring him to attend summer school

They could never pass math to receive credit

Research Question 2: What are the perceived consequences of being an African American male dropout?

The participants identified several consequences for not finishing high school. One participant stated that he was being held back at his job because he did not have a high school diploma or GED. He decided that he was going to go back and get his GED in order to advance within his company. Several of the participants saw themselves working only at a fast food restaurant without a high school diploma. They all indicated that they were going to go back and get their GED, hoping to improve their way of life. The participants also felt that they could not go to college without getting a high school diploma or GED. During my search for participants, I found that 20% of the African American males who dropped out of high school were incarcerated. This finding is in line with the research done by Eckholm (2006). Table 1.7 reflects the consequences of being an African American male dropout from the perspectives of the seven participants in the study.

Table 1.7

Consequences of being an African American male dropout

Perceived consequences of being an African American male dropout

---

Being held back at his job

Working only at Fast Food Restaurants

Not being able to go to college with a diploma or GED

Being incarcerated

Research Question #3: What descriptors do African American males use to describe the choices they made to become high school dropouts?

The participants often stated that they made their decision to drop out of school based on factors that ran from feeling inadequate for not doing well in math, becoming upset with teachers for communicating their personal situations with their classmates during class discussions, becoming indignant and refusing to go to summer school, being in disbelief that they did not have enough credits to graduate, becoming discouraged and giving up because they could not participate in sports, and questioning why there were not enough teachers available to provide them the one-on-one assistance they needed in order to be successful in their classes. Because of these factors, the participants felt embarrassed as well as being angry. They felt embarrassed because they did not want anyone to know that they couldn't do and understand the math. That embarrassment caused them not to ask for assistance from the teachers in the classroom. They would either just sit and pretend that they were doing the work or become the clown in the class by acting act and disturbing the class. These factors and consequences caused them to lose

interest in staying in school. It became so unbearable until they eventually dropped out of

school. Table 1.8 refers to the descriptors used to describe African American male dropouts.

Table 1.8

Descriptors used to describe African American male dropouts

Descriptors
Feeling inadequate doing math
Becoming upset with teachers who communicated their situations with classmates
Becoming indignant and refusing to go to summer school
Disbelief in not having enough credits to graduate
Becoming discouraged and giving up because they could not participate in sports
Questioning why there were not enough teachers available to provide them the one-on-one assistance
Felt embarrassed as well as being angry

Research question #4: What factors did the participants in the study identify that might

have kept them in school?

The participants felt that they would have stayed in school if their teachers had shown

that they cared for them. Several of the participants stated that they would have stayed in school

if they were able to play sports. One student felt that he would have stayed in school if his

teacher would not have nagged and call him out in class. Another resonating factor was the lack

of not having enough one-on-one assistance and smaller class sizes. Several of the students

would have considered staying in school if they had more organized activities. The students

wanted the school to be more of a community where they would be included and receive help in

their classes. These findings are in line with the following variables identified by Arroyo,

Rhoad, and Drew (1999) in Table 1.9.

Table 1.9

Nine variables associated with underachievement

Variables associated with underachievement
Teachers' demonstrations of caring, respect, and interest
Teacher expectations for children's achievement, curriculum relevance
Class size
Disengagement from school related activities
Students' own confidence in their abilities to achieve
High mobility in school attendance
Parental expectations and involvement
Level of parents' education
Poverty or low income

Findings

The study revealed several factors contributing to the participants dropping out of high

school. The participants' decisions to drop out of school included personal reasons, academic

reasons, family reasons, and student teacher relationships. There were more internal reasons as

compared to external reasons. The internal reasons related more to the academic sittings, extra

curricula activities, and financial reasons. From their perspective, a majority of them who

dropped out were stereotyped and mistreated, which eventually led to the end of their traditional

schooling The external reason was limited to one participant who felt that one of the reasons he dropped out of high school was because he was exposed to drugs. Even though, the internal and external factors existed, the research showed that each participant had the desire to secure a high school diploma and because of this strong interest, six of the participants enrolled in an alternative school and eventually secured their GED.

While conducting the interviews, the researcher reflected and recalled the different range of learning experiences he encountered during his teaching and principal years. In each group, there were different type of learners in a single classroom; including visual learners, auditory learners, and tactile learners. In a way, the subjects in this study expressed the same sentiments by asking why did they not have one-on-one assistance so that their educational needs could be met according to their style of learning. They wanted smaller room sizes and more individual attention from their classroom teachers.   From the interactions with the participants, the researcher was able to identify the following five key elements:

1. The participants showed a high desire of wanting to participate in an organized sport. This was evident when several of the students indicated that there wasn't anything to replace their favorite activity in high school. Jones, participant #1000, said, "when I couldn't play football, I said what ever and who cares." Once these participants figured out that they were not going to participate in an organized sport, they lost all interest in school. This lack of opportunity to allow students to participate in a sport was a direct cause of these young African American males dropping out of high school.

2. The participant's perception was that they did not receive adequate one-on-one quality

time from the teachers. Williams, participants #1003, said, "There was not enough one-on-one help for me and the other students. I would have stayed in school if there was more help." The participants felt that there were too many students in the classrooms that prevented the teachers from providing the one-on-one attention. Some participants felt that their teachers just didn't care about them and felt there was not enough time for direct instruction. Instead of providing follow-up instruction, the teachers spent time on their computers while the students struggle through the class.

3. Another factor that was major to the participants was the fact that they all wanted to be in the same classroom with their friends. Washington, participant #1004, exclaimed, "If I had my friends in every class and had cool teachers I would have stayed in school." They felt that friendship was important and was a great source of support and encouragement while attending school. The participants felt a big void in their education setting and it was contributed to the fact that they were denied the opportunity to spend quality time with their friends during the school day.

4. You have to give respect to receive respect. Apparently, this old saying resonated with the participants because they all felt that most of the high school teachers did not show them respect. The participants concluded that the attitudes of the teachers were neither respectful nor professional. The nagging, not being good listeners, criticizing, and labeling all contributed to the perception that teachers did not respect the students. Smith, participant #1001, said, " I just wanted them to leave me alone and let me sag because it wasn't hurting anything. I sagged more when they told me not to." Only one student mentioned the race as the reason why the teacher did not respect him.

5. The participants felt and acknowledged that it was important for them to receive either a high school diploma or GED. Not receiving the diploma left them feeling incomplete. Wright, participants #1002, said, "with a GED, I have more possibilities of what I can and want to do." It was evident that these young people had learned from their mistakes and wanted to rectify that error by going back to receive their GED.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research

1. The purposeful sample that provided the data for this study was from a list of students from the same high school. It would be beneficial to include other African American students from other schools throughout the state to see if their feelings for high school contained similar findings.

2. Further research needs to be conducted to better understand the correlation of the subjects being taught at the traditional high school in comparison to the alternative education program.

3. There needs to be a better understanding of when a student could be able to participate in sports base on their ability without being judge negatively. Giving every student the opportunity to remain on a team based on their interest and commitment over ability only.

4. Further research should be conducted to understand if there are educational modules to   pair students and teachers with similar interest to ascertain whether the results will cause students to remain in school.

5. Further research should be conducted to see if there is a correlation between having friends in the same classroom throughout the day as compared to separating friends by placing them in different classroom.

Recommendations for practice

1. Schools should implement a system where students are allowed to participate in extra curricula activities based upon commitment and interest in lieu of only looking at the student's ability.

2. Schools should examine their approach towards the delivering of instruction to their at risk students. The schools should become more atone to the individual needs of their at-risk students.

3. Schools should incorporate a learning support system for all students.   The schools should consolidate and coordinate student and learning supports including counseling services, school prevention and intervention programs, and community resources.

4. Schools should do a true self evaluation of their educational program to include the following variables base on Arroyo, Rhoad, and Drew (1999) study: teachers' ability to demonstrate caring, respect, and interest; teacher expectations of all children's achievement, curriculum relevance; class size; disengagement from school related activities; students' own confidence in their abilities to achieve, parental expectations and involvement.

Conclusions

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspective and experiences of the African American males. It was the goal of the researcher to interview African American males who had dropped out of high school to hear and record their life experiences that lead them to end their traditional education. This task was accomplished through a qualitative study that used the data gathered from individual interviews, observations, and analysis of relevant texts.

As the researcher set out to identify the individuals for the study, at first he became very discourage because the first set of potential participants were all in jail. The researcher immediately started to reflect on the literature review where Eckholm (2006) found that 60% of the African American men who dropped out of high school were incarcerated. It was amazing how real these findings were as they pertain to how the researcher was going to identify participants for the study. With additional assistance from a principal, the researcher was able to secure seven African American males who had dropped out of school and were willing to share their stories with the researcher. Since they all volunteered to talk to the researcher, it was very easy for the researcher to make them feel comfortable and relax in sharing their stories. Each participant was willing to share their individual story to describe their journey through the educational system. The researcher became an attentive listener in order for the participants to have the opportunity to speak and be honest in reflecting upon their past history as a former student. Immediately, the researcher began to hear similarities in the stories. These young people wanted someone to hear their stories and expressed that they did not want another student to experience a similar fate as they did as it relates to the reasons why they dropped out of school.

The analysis of data confirmed five major findings. These five findings revealed that the participants all were disappointed with themselves for not being able to participate in a sport that they felt was very essential to their success in school, revealed that they felt they were not receiving support from the majority of their teachers in high school which fostered the concept of no one caring for them, revealed that students had a strong feeling about their friends and they wanted to be in the same educational setting with their friends while at school, revealed that being respected was a strong basic need for them, and they had a strong desire of wanting to finish high school in order to receive a diploma or GED.

According to the participants, each of these factors attributed to them making the decision to drop out of school. We as educators must examine each of these factors to see how we can provide additional support to future students like the seven participants in this study to ensure the decrease in the number of African American males who are dropping out of high school. As stated in the study, the results will help the students as well as the district as a whole. By keeping students in school the district's dropout rate will decrease which will have a financial impact on the district. The number of young African Americans gaining employment, according to Schreiber (1967), will increase and the young men will return to society as productive citizens. Therefore, it behooves each of us to do our part in making sure that every student will be successful in reaching their goals as a graduate of their local high school. As Ferguson (2003) discovered, educators must examine their deliverance of lessons to incorporate methods like collaborative engagement practices to motivate and challenge African American students as well as other students. As stated by Ferguson (2003), teachers should set high expectations and goals for their students because both of these factors will directly and indirectly affect student achievement.

The researcher, as supported by Hawkins (1999), recommends that schools implement the following concepts to ensure that African American students succeed and remain in school:

1. An environment that fosters the belief that success is feasible for all students.

2. An environment that provides lessons that are relevant to all students' lives.

3. An environment that provides class time that is enjoyable.

4. An environment where teachers and parents are encouraging and students are held to high standards.

5. An environment where peers behave in ways that foster a positive and focused classroom climate.

6. An environment where students are allowed to participate in community activities, special academic programs and in athletics.

7. An environment that foster honest dialogue about racism.

8. An environment where radical plans are in place to address the needs of those who need help the most.

In addition to these factors, educational institutions must identify early on which students are likely to drop out of high school. If we can reach these students before they drop out and intervene to keep them in school, we can improve the future of both individual students and the nation as a whole. To ensure that educators are equipped with skills to address these issues, the researcher recommends that professional development be offered to all staff members throughout the year that will focus on the following strategies as sited by Reynolds (2016):

1. Helping all teachers develop, communicate and implement classroom motivation and management plans.

2. Helping all teachers to develop instructional plan that facilitate bell-to-bell teaching to help to reach the needs of all students.

3. Helping all teachers to create classroom organization and arrangement that spurs productivity and interest for the students.

4. Helping all teachers to establish high expectations strategies for all students.

5. Helping all teachers to learn how to communicate expectations to student and parents.

6. Helping all teachers to implement instructional activities that actively engage students.

7. Helping all teachers to develop strategies that will keep all students on target.

8. Helping all teachers to develop and implement strategies that encourage frequent and relevant feedback that works for all students.

9. Helping all teachers to learning how to establish grading practices that communicate high expectations and decrease frustration.

10. Helping all teachers learn how to build and maintain close positive relationships with all students.

According to Reynolds (2016), by providing positive and rich professional development, teachers will be equipped with skills that foster motivation, instructional planning, parent engagement, teacher efficacy and consistency of high expectations. In turn, all of our students will be exposed to a climate that fosters and values respect, decency and success for every student.

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Appendix A

Examining the phenomenon of dropping out of high school
through the perspectives and experiences of the African American male

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Principal Researcher: John L Colbert
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Carleton Holt

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE
You are invited to participate in a research study about the life experiences of African American male dropouts as they pertain to school years. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an African American male who did not finish high school.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXX78@gmail.com

Who is the Dissertation Chair?
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Curriculum and Instruction
University of Arkansas
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is to examine the life experiences of African American male dropouts as these experiences pertain to active school participation and facilitating the identification of educational practices that the students thought were successful in meeting their educational needs.

Who will participate in this study?
A purposeful sampling of six to ten participants between the ages of 16 and 30 who are African American male high school dropouts will be selected to participate.
What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following:

Once identified, each research participant will take part in an intensive open-ended interview with the researcher.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are minimal risks to the participant in that there are confidentiality measures in place to protect the participants.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

The participants will benefit from the in depth reflection about their current situations.

How long will the study last?

Each participant will be required to participate in one (1) two-hour interview and a one (1) one-hour follow-up meeting.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

Each participant will receive a small token of appreciation for participating in the study.

Will I have to pay for anything?

No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your relationship with the school system will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. To ensure privacy, the names of the participants will be known only to the researcher. All cautionary measurements and restrictions will be upheld to securely store all research records to prevent any ethical violations. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will be locked in files and in password-protected computers.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the Dissertation Chair, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Dissertation Chair as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

_____

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Examining the Phenomenon of Dropping Out of High School Through the Perspectives and
Experiences of the African American Male

University of Arkansas
Interview Guide

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Interviewee Code: _____

    Approximate Date left school: _____

Script:

**Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study about examining the phenomenon of
dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of the African
American male.**

**I am providing you with an informed consent form for you to review and sign, if you agree.
As noted, your identity will be held in strictest confidence and your identity will not be
linked directly or indirectly with the study findings.**

**The interview will be recorded for audio but this is only for the purpose of transposing
information to assure accuracy of the material generated from the conversations. Notes
will be taken on this interview guide during the interview.**

**Your participation is entirely voluntary and you maintain the right to withdraw at any
time.**

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Do I have your permission to begin?

**You should have the interviewer's (Me) contact information should you have any questions
or comments. Should you have questions or concerns that I cannot answer you may
contact my advisor, XXXXXXXXXX, University of Arkansas XXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXX**

Interview Questions

SECTION 1: PAST EXPERIENCES IN FORMAL EDUCATION

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your experiences in school?

   Other elements to consider:

   - How would you describe yourself?

   -How would you describe your high school experience?

   -What were the dominating factors that led you to leave high school?

2. Life barriers to education

   -What outside forces contributed to you not finishing high school?

   -Are there things that could have happened that would have helped you finish high school?

3. Internal barriers to education and attitude toward learning

   -What were the good things about school?

   -What didn't you like about school?

   -What were your greatest challenges as a high school student?

4. Subject matter

   -What are your feelings about the subjects or materials you studied in school?

5. Scholastic design

   -What changes do you feel could be made to school to make it more desirable for yourself and others like you?

Thank you for your time and contribution to this effort. You may reach the interviewer by phone or e-mail as listed below for questions regarding the second interview or to answer any questions.

XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX

SECTION 2: SECOND INTERVIEW

The second interview gives the respondents the opportunity to revise and correct their responses to the same questions after given the time to reflect on the first interview experience. The researcher will explain the purpose of the second interview at the beginning of the interview. This second interview will enable the respondents to take the needed time to recall and reflect on past experiences and make sure that the information collected best represents their beliefs about their perception.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

January 11, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO:	John Colbert Carleton Holt
FROM:	Ro Windwalker IRB Coordinator
RE:	New Protocol Approval
IRB Protocol #:	16-12-346
Protocol Title:	*Examining the Phenomenon of Dropping Out of High School Through the Perspectives and Experiences of the African American Male*
Review Type:	☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 01/10/2017 Expiration Date: 01/09/2018

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 10 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.