You Can’t Teach Whom You Don’t Know: Black Males’ Narratives on Educators in K-12 Schools

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2017

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Abstract

This study is a story about the relationships between nine Black men and some of the White educators in the K-12 schools and correctional education settings these men attended. I developed this story from face-to-face individual and group interviews with these men while they were inmates at Springdale Correction Center (a pseudonym), a community based correctional facility located in the Appalachian region of Ohio. I also interviewed the three teachers (each of whom was White) in the education department at SCC for their perceptions of educating Black males. My goal was to examine the school experiences of Black males to better understand education. However, I did not anticipate the degree to which participants’ stories would highlight that issues of race and racism in education are pervasive, persistent, and harmful to Black male students.

In many respects, the Black male inmates interviewed for this study are new voices in the field of education. No scholars previously analyzed these men’s narratives to better understand the cultural relevance of their educators, or their relationships with their educators. On the other hand, this study’s participants’ voices illustrate what scholars have long been saying—namely, that schools and educators fail to nurture, support, or protect Black male students (Du Bois, 1903; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014; Woodson, 1933).

This study highlights the importance of relationships between educators and students of color. White educators who have a developing awareness about the social and cultural realities of people who are Black from having relationships with these people are
more likely to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students. A pedagogical relationship is a relationship between an educator and individual or groups of students in which the educator gets to know students, imagine what may help them achieve some educational success, and actually do what they imagined would help these students (McDermott, 1974; van Manen, 2008).
Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the God of Heaven and Jesus, his son. They opened the door to the path I am making and graciously placed people along it to help me traverse the hills and valleys.

One of these people is Rebecca Kantor. Rebecca recognized my potential, and because she knew the faculty and staff could cultivate that potential, she accepted me into the Department of Teaching and Learning doctoral program. During the coursework of my program, Cynthia Dillard, Barbara Seidl, and Scot Danforth, members of my candidacy committee, helped me to see and think differently.

Another important person along my path is Brian Edmiston. Brian agreed to serve as my dissertation advisor after Rebecca accepted a position at another university. For six years, Brian invested much time and energy to help me develop into an interpretivist scholar. His insightful dialogue and thought-provoking questions enabled me to transform my raw data into an informative story about the experiences of the men I interviewed. In addition, I am thankful for the insight, encouragement, and detailed criticism of my dissertation committee: Pat Enciso and Dean Cristol.

I want to thank the nine men and three correctional educators who shared their stories with me. Their insider perspectives and thoughtful analysis illustrate that some schools and educators too often fail to meet the academic and social needs of Black male students.
Lastly, I must thank my family for helping me along this path. My sons, Ensign, Porter, Samuel, and Foster continually made sacrifices so I would have time to write. My best friend and wife, Mary, is the person who most helped me complete my doctoral program. For 11 years, Mary managed our household and parented our four young sons while I developed into a scholar. During that time, Mary also listened to my oft-expressed frustrations. Though she gracefully empathized with me, she never failed to push me to persevere.
Vita

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For more than 100 years, scholars have been highlighting the failure of schools and educators to educate Black males (cf. Du Bois, 1903/2006; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noguera, 2003; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014, Woodson, 1933/2006). Some of these scholars, for example, illustrate the failure of stakeholders in education (e.g., administrators, teacher educators, teachers, policy makers, and curriculum developers) to reform schools to meet the academic and social needs of Black males. I believe that Black male students have a right to an education that is equal to their White counterparts. I think that solutions to that failure may continue to elude stakeholders until they have a better understanding of the experiences of Black males in schools and classrooms. For example, Howard (2013) highlights a gap in the literature on the education of Black males, stating, “There is a need to investigate the relationships that Black males have with school personnel to determine how they [those relationships] are formed, sustained, and how they contribute to school success” (p. 78).

I designed this study to better understand the relationships between educators and Black males by interviewing some members of two groups who had been absent from the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy, namely, male inmates who are Black and educators who are White. My goal was to better understand the cultural relevance of participants’ educators as well as their relationships with those educators.
This study is a story about the Black male participants’ experiences in schools and correctional education settings, and their relationships with some of the White educators in those settings. I interviewed these participants during their incarceration at Springdale Correction Center (SCC) (a pseudonym), a community-based correction facility located in the Appalachia region of Ohio.

On the one hand, the Black men I spoke with were individuals whose experiences in schools were different. My goal is to represent the uniqueness of each man and his experiences. On the other hand, the stories these men told were similar. For instance, all nine participants implied that throughout their education they had support from only one or two educators. Similarly, eight participants highlighted that many educators had acted with prejudice and/or discriminated against Black males.

This study changed me. I thought participants’ school experiences would differ from my own, but I was caught off-guard when I realized how different their experiences were in comparison to my own experiences in school. After hearing the stories of educators ignoring participants, suspending them for minor misbehaviors, and falsely accusing them of misbehaviors, I realized the persistent and pervasive race and racism in participants’ schools and classroom. I realized that no students should experience such treatment in schools. Thus, participants’ stories enhanced my desire to work with stakeholders in education to develop solutions to the racial disparities in education and better prepare preservice teachers to provide an equal education to Black males.
During my doctoral program, I acquired two lenses that helped me see the inequitable educational experiences of Black males. The first lens is from the literature on critical race theory (CRT). CRT helped me understand that race and racism are endemic, pervasive, and permanent in society, including schools and the institution of education (Yosso, 2005). This lens helped me see that my own experiences were not an appropriate standard against which to judge the experiences of Black male. CRT also helped me realize that some K-12 educators merely had to see that participants were Black to decide that these students were not worthy of education. In summary, a CRT lens helped me see that the cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of Black students differ from their White counterparts, and to see that many schools and educators fail to support these students. Critical theorists emphasize that if schools and educators would do something different when educating students of color, they may help those students achieve some educational success (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006). Ladson-Billings uses the term culturally relevant pedagogy to denote a different way to educate students of color.

CRT is a lens can that can help make the racial disparities in education visible. Nevertheless, some educators may need a second lens to help them differently educate Black males. In this study, I focus on a lens known as culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). CRP denotes a framework of pedagogical practices for helping students of color achieve some educational success (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006). Educators working within a framework of CRP develop relationships with students of color to learn their
cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. These educators adapt their teaching based upon what they know about these students of color. For example, teachers who know that individual or groups of students listen to a certain genre of music can use that genre as a topic of study, or as a means to help students learn about an academic subject.

One goal of this study is to help readers acquire these two lenses. I believe that a CRT lens might help them see that schools and educators treat students of color differently than they treat White students. A CRT lens may help educators realize that participants’ stories illustrate the pervasiveness and persistence of racism in schools and classrooms populated by students of color. The CRT lens may also help readers see that students of color fail in schools because of that racism in schools, and not because those students are deficient. Moreover, CRT may encourage educators to join the struggle to end racial disparities in schools and education.

Another goal of this study to help educators acquire a CRP lens. CRP may help educators see the cultural relevance of this approach in local schools and classrooms. CRP can help educators recognize that developing relationships with Black male students to better understand their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences and adapt their teaching to what they know about these students, rather than expecting these students adapt to the cultures of schools and educators.

In Chapter 1, I introduce myself and describe what motivated me to better understand the educational experiences of Black males. I also briefly introduce the
analytical and methodological frameworks that guided this study. In Chapter 2, I review some of the relevant literature on the education of Black males, including effective pedagogical approaches (e.g., culturally relevant pedagogy) to improve the education of these males. I also present some of the literature on pedagogical relationships between students and educators. In Chapter 3, I introduce the methodological framework I used from the literature on critical race theory, and describe how I used it to guide my examination of the educational experiences of Black males. In Chapter 4, I present my data and its analysis using a framework from the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006). This framework helped me better understand that many of participants’ educators were not very culturally relevant.

In Chapter 5, I present part two of my data analysis. In this analysis, I used a framework from the literature on social relations between educators and students (McDermott, 1974, 1977; van Manen 1982, 1994a, 1994b, 2002, 2008, & 2016), which helped me better understand the relationships between participants and their White educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings. Based on this framework, I came to understand that a majority of participants’ educators lacked a cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black. From participants’ narratives, I came to understand that educators who did not have cultural awareness of people who are Black were more likely to act with prejudice toward and/or discriminate against Black male students than to help them achieve some educational success.
Because I inferred from participants that educators who did not know them did not help them achieve some educational success, I titled this study, *You Can’t Teach Whom You Don’t Know: Black Males’ Narratives on Educators in K-12 Schools* (with apologies to Howard’s (2006) *We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*). Howard argues that educators who do not know what they are teaching about topics such as racial dominance, White privilege, and race and racism in education, are less likely to help students from diverse backgrounds overcome the negative repercussions of past and present racial dominance.

In contrast, participants in this project emphasize that if educators do not know who they are teaching, such as their Black male students, then they may be less likely to help these students achieve educational success. In Chapter 6, I present a discussion of the findings and the implications of this study, including its limitations and suggestions for further research.

**Transformative Events**

I am a White, Christian, middle class, heterosexual, and educated male who resides in the U.S. I have served time in a community-based correctional facility, but I also differ from the participants in this study. Society deems me White, so it affords me power and privilege, but society deems the participants in this study as non-White, and denies the power and privilege I have to them. Prior to the coursework of my doctoral program, I was unaware of the power and privilege afforded to me and other Whites.
Nevertheless, during my coursework, I experienced some transformations that helped me recognize this privilege and realize that race and racism are endemic, pervasive, and permanent in society, including social institutions such as education. These transformations also helped me realize that I can use the power and privilege afforded to me to join others in the struggle against the oppression and marginalization of Black males in education.

**Becoming an Interpretivist**

One transformation that helped me think differently was become an interpretivist researcher. I began my doctoral studies as a positivist social scientist (cf. Maiorano & Futris, 2005). Positivists assume that a fixed and measurable reality exists external to people (e.g., Glesne, 1999) and seek to better understand that reality by using “primarily quantitative methods with careful sampling strategies and experimental designs that help them produce generalizable results” (Glesne, 1999, p. 4). Positivists are objectivist. They believe quantitative methods enable them to make accurate, objective, or positive universal claims about that which they examined.

Nevertheless, during a three-class series entitled “Complementary Methods in Educational Research.” The professors, Dr. Laurie Katz, Dr. Mari Hamada, Dr. Ian Wilkinson, and Dr. Scot Danforth introduced me to interpretivist research, which focuses on the overriding importance of meaning making and context in human experience (Lather, 1992). Interpretivists are subjectivist—they believe the social world is essentially
relativistic or understandable only from the point of view of the actors involved. Interpretivists employ idiographic methodologies, such as emergent protocols, non-standardized instruments, and qualitative analysis to understand the ways individuals create and interpret their understanding of the social world. Interpretivists understand that individuals are likely to have different experiences in the same social setting. Thus, in order to describe human experience, interpretivist researchers interact and talk with people about their perceptions of the social setting.

**Understanding Racism**

Not long after learning about interpretivist research, I experienced another transformation. For many years, I did not understand how different people could have different experiences in similar social settings. Then, I attended “Critical Race Theory in Education,” a course taught by Dr. Adrienne Dixson. During that course, Dr. Dixson introduced me to a number of critical scholars, who, in turn, introduced me to a number of concepts that helped me see things differently. For example, one concept I saw differently was racism. Prior to taking this class, I thought the term racism denoted individuals or groups of persons who committed blatant acts of violence against people who are Black. Max (2005), author of “Anticolonial Research: Working as an Ally with Aboriginal Peoples” presents a new definition of racism that encompasses individual, institutional, and cultural racism as they relate to self-determination for aboriginal peoples. This definition helped me develop a more nuanced understanding of racism:
Racism is any communication, action, or course of conduct, whether intentional or unintentional, which denies recognition, benefits, rights of access or otherwise abrogates or derogates from the constitutionally recognized rights and freedoms of any person or community on the basis of their membership or perceived membership in any racial, ethnic or cultural community. The fostering and promotion of uniform standards, common rules, and same treatment of people who are not the same constitute racism where the specificity of the individual or community is not taken into consideration. The public dissemination of any communication or statement which insults a racial, ethnic, or cultural community or which exposes them to hatred, contempt or ridicule also constitutes racism. (p. 80)

Max (2005) helped me realize that the term racism denotes unintentional behaviors that harm people of color, not just blatant acts of violence against them. She also helped me understand that racism may not come directly from people, but from policies and practices in institutions. I realized that my behaviors were racist—though I neither made blatant remarks about people of color nor acted violently against them, but I did think that Blacks were somehow inferior to Whites. Similarly, King (1991) helped me understand that I held a form of racism, which she refers to as dysconscious racism:

Dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts White norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness (that is, not unconsciousness) but
an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. (p. 135)

King (1991) declares that when people who are dysconscious become conscious of the individual and institutional inequities in education, they are more likely to fight against inequities in schools and education.

Moreover, the views of critical scholars, such as Cornell West, Patricia Hill Collins, George Dei, Garrett Duncan, Cynthia Dillard, and Patti Lather nurtured my development to think differently about people of color, as well as the society in which we live. This lens helped me realize that issues of racism in education are one reason why people of color may have different experiences compared to their White counterparts.

**Racial privilege**

Racial privilege is another concept that helped transform my thinking about issues of race and racism, and people of color. Leonardo (2004) helped me understand racial privilege:

Racial privilege is the notion that White subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as Whites. Usually, this occurs through the valuation of White skin color, although this is not the only criterion for racial distinction…. Privilege is granted even without a subject’s (re)cognition that life is made a bit easier for her. (p. 137)
Leonardo’s perspective helped me understand that the U.S. society deems Whites superior and affords these people with power and privilege. This same society deems non-White inferior, so it denies power and privilege to them. Leonardo’s perspective also helped me realize that society afforded me power and privilege. I was ignorant of that power and privilege. I simply supposed that I was somehow better equipped to succeed in society. I did not see that society made it easier for me to succeed and more difficult for people of color to succeed. Leonardo argues that social categories are not the problem. In other words, being White or Black is not a problem. Rather, it is a problem when Whites use the power and privilege that society affords them to benefit themselves at the expense of people of color.

On the one hand, scholars such as Leonardo insist that Whites consciously turn from the power and privilege that society affords them. On the other hand, antiracist researcher, Dei (2005) encourages Whites to use their power and privilege in the struggle for a just and equitable system of education. Moreover, Gay and Howard (2006) insist that European Americans—a group that makes up nearly 86% of all teachers—should be at the forefront in the struggle for an equitable and inclusive education for all. As a White male with CRT and CRP lenses, my goal is to use the power and privilege society affords me to gain entry with stakeholders to help them see the racial disparities in education and encourage their commitment to developing interventions to address and eliminate those disparities.
Institutionalized racism

Institutional inequity is another concept that helped transform my understanding of racism. In their 1975 article, “Racism without Racists: Institutional Racism in Urban Schools”, Massey, Scott, and Dornbusch use the term institutional racism to denote educators’ more subtle, covert forms of racism toward minority students such as not giving academically challenging work to students of color. The authors emphasize that institutionalized racism, though subtle, is no less harmful than overt forms of racism toward those students—it keeps Black students “from acquiring a productive and meaningful education” (p. 11). Similarly, Tatum (2003) clarifies that institutional racism is not only a personal, ideology-based racial prejudice, but it also is a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices that harm minoritized individuals and groups. In other words, even if there are no racists in schools, there are racist policies and practices embedded in the institution of education that can harm students of color. For example, educators punish Black children more harshly than they punish White children who commit similar misbehaviors (Noguera, 2016). Banks (2010) illustrates how institutionalized racism affects the academic achievement of low-income minoritized students:

[Cultural difference theorists] contend that [low-income] students are not having academic success because they experience serious cultural conflicts in school. The students have rich cultures and values, but the culture of schools seriously
conflicts with the cultures of students from low-income and ethnic minority groups. (p. 30)

Cultural conflicts and racial disparities arise when educators of the dominant group demand that ethnically diverse students of color adapt to the culture of the school instead of those educators adapting to the cultural background of students. That may undermine those students’ abilities to achieve academic success.

New Lenses to Understand the Education of Black Males

In Lorraine Hansberry’s play, *Raisin in the Sun*, one of the characters, Lena, offers her daughter advice on assessing a person’s character: “When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is” (3.1.113). Lena’s advice helped me see that participants’ stories—their lives—highlighted the hills they traversed before arriving at SCC. Hansberry’s perspective encouraged me to turn my gaze from where participants were (at SCC) to examine the challenges that these men had gone through on their way to that correction center. If I am to understand the lived experiences of Black male participants, I must listen to their stories about the hills and valleys that they came through on their way to SCC.

Critical Race Theory. The methodological framework I used to guide this study is from the literature on critical race theory (CRT). CRT in education seeks to give much needed attention to the role of race and racism in educational research, scholarship, and
practice (Carter et al., 2017; Dixson & Rousseau 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Howard (2008) clarifies that a critical examination of the role that race plays in the pursuit of equitable education may help provide a richer, more comprehensive explanation of the challenges in education facing Black males. Milner (2007) is a critical scholar whose perspective helped me develop a different lens for looking at the education of students who are Black. Based on his research, Milner insists that schools’ fail to educate Black students, rather than these students fail to succeed in school:

It is not students of Color who are falling behind or failing. Our schools and teachers are falling behind and failing our students. Teachers and schools, in large measure, appear to be falling behind in their thinking, pedagogy, and curriculum decision making, particularly where students of Color are concerned. In short, many teachers do not know how to think about their culturally diverse learners; they do not have a repertoire of knowledge necessary to teach effectively their culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse students’ they do not know how to make curricular and pedagogical decisions that are relevant to (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and responsive to (Gay, 2000) their students. (pp. 79-80)

CRT is a lens to see the inequitable experiences of students of color. Moreover, Milner informs that educators must know how to think about and implement pedagogies
that can help students of color achieve some educational success. One such pedagogy is culturally relevant pedagogy.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.** Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is an effective reform-oriented teaching method that educators can use to improve the educational excellence of students from diverse backgrounds (Au, 2007; Banks & Banks, 1995; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Palmer et al., 2014; Paris, 2012; Shade et al., 1997). Culturally relevant educators adapt their teaching practices based on what they know about ethnically diverse students’ cultural backgrounds or lived experiences to help these students achieve educational success. Paris (2012) emphasizes that the conceptual value of the terms and approaches associated with culturally relevant or responsive teaching enable it to become “ubiquitous in educational research circles and in teacher education programs” (p. 94). In other words, teacher education helps preservice educators learn about CRP. Nevertheless, based on their research, Gay and Howard (2006) doubt that existing preservice programs are adequately preparing teachers to educate ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students. Similarly, Milner (2010) insists that some faculty members in teacher education programs lack the knowledge, experience, expertise, commitment, and understanding to prepare teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds.
This Study

My goal for this study was to better understand the cultural relevance of educators and the relationships between educators and Black male students. According to the existing literature, some schools and educators fail to nurture, support, and protect Black males (cf. Du Bois, 1903/2006; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noguera, 2003; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014, Woodson, 1933/2009). Thus, I proposed to interview Black males about their experiences in K-12 schools and correctional education setting. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) emphasize that stories by people of color can “catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar [oppressors’] dysconscious racism” (p. 58). In other words, the stories of the Black males who participated in this study might help educators better understand their own role in the inequitable education experienced by these Black males. I believe that my being a White male might help share participants’ stories with these stakeholders and help them develop solutions to end the racial disparities in schools and classrooms.

Me, a White Male Researcher

I am a White male researcher who examined the education experiences of nine Black males. On the one hand, some critical scholars argue that a researcher from the dominant group should not exam the experiences of minoritized individuals and groups. Lather (1992), for example, insists that differences between the researcher and the researched will only result in socially biased findings. Similarly, Max (2005) stresses that
it is not appropriate for people from dominant groups to research people from minoritized groups. Nevertheless, Max also highlights that researchers and the researched can work to become allies in collaborative research projects. Her work encourages researchers from the dominant group to reflect critically on their own positions of privilege. This may help researchers to turn their attention from the researched to themselves to recognize and eliminate any biases.

On the other hand, Hughes (2005) claims it does not matter who studies whom, yet he cautions that antiracist researchers avoid further reinforcing negative ideas and stereotypes of minoritized groups. Hughes stresses that White researchers carefully consider a number of questions before researching minoritized groups. Answers to these questions, argues Dei (2005), can help researchers overcome the “shark phenomenon” (p. 5)—positioning the researched as objects from whom researchers merely extract data.

The question that I focused on as I developed this study was who is likely to benefit from the research? I had two answers to this question. First, my research can benefit stakeholders in education by helping them recognize the racial inequities, and encourage them to develop solutions to those disparities. Also, if my research can help those stakeholders develop solutions to racial inequities, then Black males may also benefit.

As a scholar, I wanted to study inequities in education, so I interviewed Black males, a population I believed may have experienced inequitable treatment in schools. As a White scholar, I intentionally worked to build relationships and trust with participants.
Barbara Seidl offered me suggestions for forming authentic relationships with participants: “Be present. Share the human spirit without promising things or trying to assuage them. Give and not just take” (personal communication, December 7, 2009). I also wanted to position participants as the knowers, whose insider knowledge was important to me. I introduced myself and my study to individual Black males in SCC, then I invited them to participate in this study. I wanted them to feel free to refuse to participate without retribution. I positioned those men as knowers—I told them I thought that educators treated students differently based on their skin color, but that I did not know much about that and I supposed that they did. As White scholar, I also wanted to use my power and privilege to share participants’ stories with stakeholders in education and to encourage these stakeholders to develop solutions to the racial disparities in education.

I highlight that this study is not based on research on Black males, but rather research with Black males (cf. Dei, 2005). In other words, participants are not objects for me to study, but subjects whose insider perspectives can add to the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the education of Black males.

**The Voices of Black Males**

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) emphasize that if scholars want to understand education in communities of color, they must include the voices of the people of color in those communities. Without these voices, we would know very little about education in those communities. Similarly, Howard (2013) highlights the absence of one group in the
literature, stating, “New voices must be centered in the analysis, voices that are often overlooked, ignored, or outright dismissed—and that is the voices of Black males themselves” (p. 64). The perspectives of Howard, as well as Ladson-Billings and Tate, encouraged me to learn about the education of Black males by interviewing these men about their experiences in schools and correctional education settings. I searched the literature for Black male inmates’ perspective of their K-12 education and found several studies that included interviews with these participants (Casella, 2003; Hatt, 2011; Ingalls, Hammond, & Trussell, 2011; Kirkland, 2016; Psycher & Lozenski, 2016). Nevertheless, I found no articles that analyzed participants’ stories to better understand the cultural relevance of participants’ educators, or the relationships between these men and their White educators. For this study, I proposed to interview Black male inmates to better understand the cultural relevance of educators in participants’ schools and correctional education settings. The Ohio State University Internal Review Board accepted my proposal (see Appendix B), and the program administrator at SCC Correction Center supported my proposal to invite Black males to interview with me (see Appendix A).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a method that critical scholars use to document the feelings, beliefs, events, and practices of people historically marginalized by academic discourses.
Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

Narrative researchers listen to the stories of participants to better understand their experiences in education. One method of data collection for scholars conducting narrative inquiry is unstructured in-depth interviews. According to Corbin and Morse (2003), “Unstructured interactive interviews are shared experiences in which researchers and interviewees come together to create a context of conversational intimacy in which the participants feel comfortable telling their story” (p. 338). In this study, I invited Black men to participate in face-to-face individual and group interviews with me. I asked each
participant a number of open-ended questions as well as a number of unplanned follow-up questions to elicit stories about their experiences in schools and classrooms (see Appendix C).

My goal was to analyze participants’ narratives to understand more about the cultural relevance of their teachers’ pedagogy and the relationships between participants and their educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings. My goal was to analyze participants’ narratives to answer the two research questions that guide this study: (1) What do participants’ narratives add to the literature on the education of Black males, and (2) How do participants’ narratives extend what it means for pedagogy to be culturally relevant? I theorized that answers to these questions could further the dialogue and research needed to improve the education of Black males.

This study is unique in a number of ways. First, I listened to the voices of two groups, hitherto, absent from the literature, namely Black male inmates who had attended K-12 schools, and White educators in a correctional facility. Second, I added to the literature Black males’ perceptions and interpretations of their K-12 educators’ and correctional educators’ culturally relevance. Third, I added to the literature White correctional educators’ perceptions about educating Black males. Fourth, I helped to fill the gap that Howard (2013) emphasized, namely, the need to better understand how relationships between educators and Black male students are formed, sustained, and how these relationships inform educational success of these students.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I summarize the relevant literature informing this study. I begin with the literature on the education of Black males. Then, I summarize the literature on multicultural education including CRP, one component of multicultural education. Next, I summarize the literature on the pedagogical relationship and end this chapter with a rationale for my study.

The Education of Black Males

Scholars have long noted that schools and educators’ fail to nurture, support, and protect Black males (cf. Du Bois, 1903/2006; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noguera, 2003; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014, Woodson, 1933/2009). For example, in his sociological treatise of Blacks in the U.S., The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois (1903/2006) wrote that at the beginning of the twentieth century, Whites in the South believed that educated Blacks would be dangerous. Therefore, Whites limited the education to preparing Blacks for labor. Despite that limitation, Du Bois retained a more expansive vision of education for people who are Black:

Teach the workers to work and the thinkers to think; make carpenters of carpenters, and philosophers of philosophers, and fops of fools. Nor can we pause here. We are training not isolated men but a living group of men,—nay, a group within a group. And the final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man. (p. 66)
Du Bois believed education should do more than merely prepare Blacks for work. It should help them live full lives. Du Bois emphasized, “Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that Black boys need education as well as White boys” (p. 44). Du Bois encouraged Blacks to strive for a better life, including an equal education for Black males, rather than simply accepting the education that Whites handed them. Similarly, Woodson (1933/2009), author of *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, illustrates the failure of education to meet the needs of Blacks:

> The so-called modern education, with all its defects, however, does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples. For example, the philosophy and ethics resulting from our educational system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching. The oppressor has the right to exploit, to handicap, and to kill the oppressed. Negroes daily educated in the tenets of such a religion of the strong have accepted the status of the weak as divinely ordained, and during the last three generations of their nominal freedom, they have done practically nothing to change it. (p. 4)

Woodson cautions Blacks that as long as modern education justifies the enslavement and oppression of Blacks, that education will benefit Whites more than Blacks. Furthermore, he tries to encourage Blacks to settle for nothing less than a quality
education, stating, “Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better” (p. 17). Woodson, as Du Bois, believed that education should prepare Blacks to live full lives and to improve that life, when necessary. Woodson called for a better education of Blacks, not a separate education, writing:

It is merely a matter of exercising common sense in approaching people through their environment in order to deal with conditions as they are rather than as you would like to see them or imagine that they are. There may be a difference in method of attack, but the principle remains the same. (p. 4)

The goal is a quality education for all students, Blacks and Whites—one that does not change regardless of the students. Nevertheless, teaching practices may have to change in order to adapt to the lived experiences of the students.

Writing in 1994, more than 90 years after Du Bois, Ladson-Billings (1994) describes the education of Blacks at the close of the twentieth century:

Today, African Americans find themselves in a downward spiral. African American students lag far behind their White counterparts on standard academic achievement measures. Almost forty years after a Supreme Court decision declaring separate but equal schools illegal, most African American students still attend schools that are in reality segregated and unequal. (p. x)
Ladson-Billings illustrates that education continues not to meet the needs of Black students. The educational experiences of Blacks keep them lagging behind their White counterparts. In other words, Ladson-Billings illustrates that the education of Blacks has changed very little since the time when Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk.*

Similarly, Howard, Flennaugh and Terry (2012) illustrate the severe and persistent academic and social challenges that African-American males face in K-12 schools:

In many states across the country, the numbers are mind-numbing. A majority of African-American males in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades do not reach grade-level proficiency in reading, mathematics, history, and science (NCES, 2007, 2009). Fewer than 10% of African-American males were at or above grade level in these same subject matter areas. Equally as disturbing is the fact that fewer than 3% performed at advanced levels in these areas (NCES, 2007, 2009). Young Black males are more likely to be suspended or expelled from schools at a rate higher than any other group (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Skiba et al., 2007). African-American males currently make up approximately 8.1% of the nation’s student population, yet they make up a disproportionate number of students receiving special education and remedial services. African-American males comprise approximately 26% of students, nationwide, identified as “educable mentally-retarded,” 34% of students diagnosed with serious emotional disorders, and 33%
of students identified as “trainable mentally-retarded,” or developmentally-
delayed. (p. 87)

Howard et al. (2012) highlight that schools continue, well into the twenty-first century, to marginalize Black male students. That marginalization can result in Black males being under educated as well as disproportionately represented in negative educational categories, such as suspensions and special education placements. Disproportionality is a term for the overrepresentation and underrepresentation of a particular population or demographic group in special or gifted education programs relative the presence of this group in the student population. Nevertheless, Gay (2002) makes clear that teachers who use CRP are less likely to marginalize Black male students:

If teachers become more culturally conscious and competent then fewer African-, Asian-, Latino- and Native American students will be misplaced in special education, their disproportionate representation will diminish, and those who are appropriately assigned to special education will have a better chance of receiving the quality of education they rightfully deserve. This we must achieve in order to act in accordance with our commitment to educational equity and social justice for all students. (Gay 2002, p. 627)
Teachers who use CRP are more likely to provide all students with an appropriate education, rather than seeing students of color as problems. Teachers who use CRP also provide these students with an equitable and just education.

Unfortunately, schools and educators too often fail to meet the academic and social needs Black students, in general, and Black male students, in particular. Scholars are emphatic that education must do more than simply prepare Blacks for vocations. It must inspire them to live abundant lives and to work for change. Despite the call of some for separate schools as a means to improve the education of Blacks, many scholars, including myself, call for culturally relevant educators in schools populated by students from diverse background—educators who have the knowledge and skills to effectively meet the social and academic needs of Black males as well as other students of color.

**Multicultural Education**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of education reform movements arose to help improve the education of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups (Banks & Banks, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Suzuki, 1984). Multicultural education, one group of such reform initiatives, sought to restructure schools, colleges, and universities, so people from various backgrounds, such as African American males from high poverty urban communities, could have equal opportunities to learn compared to their White middle class male counterparts. Multicultural education has a number of
approaches to accomplish that goal. Each approach has a specific theoretical perspective about people of color.

**Intervention Approaches**

One approach of multicultural education reform uses interventions. The theoretical perspective of intervention approaches is deprivation or deficit perspective of people of color. Stakeholders with a deprivation perspective believe that the cultures of people of color are deprived or deficient compared to the cultures of people from the dominant or mainstream culture (Banks, 2010; Baratz & Baratz, 1970; Darling-Hammond, 1995). Deprivation theorists believe that parents from minoritized groups are unable to socialize their children in the ways of dominant culture, so those children cannot succeed in school. Deprivation theorists recommend that schools use intervention strategies such as compensatory education to re-socialize children in the cultural ways of the dominant cultures, so they can succeed in school. Head Start is an example of a compensatory education program.

Some researchers criticized these intervention approaches. La Belle (1971), for example, criticized those approaches for putting emphasis on changing children’s behavior:

Compensatory education programs, especially at the pre-primary level, pile on knowledge and skills in short periods of time. The intent is to assure success when the child enters school. The emphasis is placed on changing the child's behavior
so that the institution will accept him. The emphasis is not placed on changing the institution to meet the child where he is. (p. 16)

La Belle (1971) is critical of approaches to re-socialize children from diverse backgrounds to fit into schools. He recommends that schools take on the burden of change and that schools adjust to meet the needs of these children, rather than demanding that children change to meet the needs of schools.

**Reform Approaches**

Criticisms of the deprivation perspective led to the development of cultural difference theories (Banks, 2010; Baratz & Baratz, 1970; Cazden & Leggett, 1972; La Belle, 1971; Ladson-Billings, 1994). On the one hand, cultural difference theorists are similar to deprivation theorists. They understand that the behaviors of minoritized children stem from the socialization these children receive from their families and communities. On the other hand, difference theorists refer to the behaviors of those children as different not deficient. Difference theorists believe that students from different cultural groups may have different approaches to problem solving compared to students from the dominant culture. As such, difference theorists recommend that schools reform to improve the education of those students. Educators are responsible for reforming schools to make them more meaningful to those students instead of demanding that these students adapt to the culture of their schools.
In summary, reform approaches based on cultural difference theories marked a shift in multicultural education. Reformists viewed culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse students not as different, but as deficient and they recommend the schools adapt to the social and academic needs of those students, rather than demand that those students adapt to the culture of their schools.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

A number of scholars use the term culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) when referring to teachers adapting their teaching practices to students’ cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and cognitive styles (cf. Aronson & Laughter, 2017; Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Gay, 2010, 2013; Howard, 2001; La Belle, 1971; Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2014; Milner, 2011; Paris, 2012; Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Scholarship referencing CRP grew in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Though many scholars have written about CRP, the literature recognizes Ladson-Billings, whose work is the most often cited, as the originator of the term. Similarly, Gay’s book (2010), Culturally Responsive Teaching, offers pedagogical approaches for reversing the underachievement of students of Color who currently are not performing well in school. Gay makes it clear that culturally responsive teaching (her term of choice) uses “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective” (p. 31). Gay clarifies, “when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of
reference of students, they [that knowledge and those skills] are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (p. 106). Nevertheless, Gay (2002) clarifies that educators must know their students:

For the most part, cultural responsive pedagogy can be operationalized by matching teaching styles to the learning styles of different ethnic groups. Learning styles derive directly from cultural values, characteristics, and socialization. Teachers can match their instruction to students’ learning styles only to the extent that they understand, and then craft, their teaching to respond directly to the cultural characteristic s and orientations of their students of color. (p. 625)

If teachers do not have an understanding of their students’ cultural backgrounds and characteristics, they will be unable to use CRP. The term CRP denotes a pedagogy “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using [students’] cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 18). Gay outlines that culturally responsive teaching connects learning to students’ lived experiences outside of school and Ladson-Billings highlights that culturally relevant pedagogy denotes teachers adapting their teaching practices based on what they know about students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. When I use the term culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), I mean both culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. I use the terms interchangeably.
On the one hand, the extant literature includes many classic studies of culturally relevant pedagogy. On the other hand, much recent literature also exists on this topic. For example, I searched “culturally relevant pedagogy” on Google Scholar. I limited my search to articles published since 2017, excluding citations and patents. This search resulted in more than 4,000 results. After conducting another search in which I limited my search to 2016-2017, Scholar found more than 26,000 results. In a more recent article on culturally relevant pedagogy, Johnson (2014) presents a qualitative meta-synthesis of the culturally responsive literature. In this synthesis, she notes that some scholars in the recent literature embrace a more dynamic view of culture. Those scholars have extended culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally responsive instruction to include culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), culturally revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014), and community responsive pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales, Kohli, Sacramento, Henning, Agarwal-Rangnath, & Sleeter, 2014). Johnson summarizes those scholars’ new perspectives:

Paris (2012) argues that culturally sustaining pedagogy “seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling.” (p. 95). In his view instruction should do more than relate to a student’s culture; it should “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). McCarty
and Lee's (2014) vision of critical culturally revitalizing pedagogy sustains linguistic and cultural continuity for Native students and employs an “inward gaze” that counters colonization within and outside the school setting and deconstructs cultural essentialisms. Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2014) use the term community responsive pedagogy in their discussion of effective teachers of ethnic studies programs. They describe these practices as developing critical consciousness, developing agency through direct community experience, and growing transformative leaders. (pp. 147-148)

Moreover, Johnson (2014) informs that some recent scholars also have used a culturally responsive framework in relation to school leadership. She describes culturally responsive leadership,

Culturally responsive leadership, derived from the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy, involves those leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. (p. 148)

Culturally responsive leaders hold high expectations for student achievement. They incorporate the history, values, and cultural knowledge into students’ home communities into the school curriculum. They work to develop a critical consciousness among students and faculty, and create organizational structures at the school and district level to empower students and parents.
Nevertheless, some scholars differ on their assessment of the cultural relevance that they observe in schools and classrooms. For example, on the one hand, in a synthesis of research on culturally relevant education across content areas, Aronson and Laughter (2017) found that culturally relevant education “most often looked like the engagement of critical reflection and cultural competence, the second and third markers of CRE [culturally relevant education]” (p. 197). In other words, these educators created spaces where students learned to critique official knowledge and to engage in critical dialogue, and students made connections to academic cultures and gained pride in their home cultures, while developing connections between the two (p. 198). On the other hand, Ladson-Billings (2014) acknowledges that in the nearly 25 years since she developed the term culturally relevant, very few educators are implementing CRP or any culturally informed pedagogy:

As I continued to visit classrooms, I could see teachers who had good intentions toward the students and wanted to embrace culturally relevant pedagogy. They expressed strong beliefs in the academic efficacy of their students. They searched for cultural examples and analogues as they taught prescribed curricula. However, they rarely pushed students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have direct impact on their lives and communities. There was no discussion of issues such as school choice, school closings, rising incarceration
rates, gun laws, or even everyday school climate questions like whether students should wear uniforms (which typically sparks spirited debate). (pp. 77-78).

Ladson-Billings argues that the CRP she observes in classrooms is different from what she originally studied. Teachers are not helping students develop a critical consciousness of inequities in society.

**Academic Achievement**

Ladson-Billings (1995) highlights that CRP rests on three criteria or propositions, “(a) students must achieve academic achievement; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which the challenge the status quo of the social order” (p. 160).

Ladson-Billings (2006) describes the concept of academic achievement:

[The term academic achievement] has nothing to do with the oppressive atmosphere of standardized tests; the wholesale retention of groups of students; scripted curricula; and the intimidation of students, teachers, and parents. Rather, what I envisioned is more accurately described as “student learning”—what it is that students actually know and are able to do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers. (p. 34)

Each of the teachers in Ladson-Billings’s (1995) study believed that helping the students become academically successful was one of their primary responsibilities. Those teachers are interested in “the cultivation of students’ minds and supporting their
intellectual development” (p. 34). Culturally relevant teachers understand that children are capable of learning, but those teachers also know they must use pedagogical tools to interest children in learning. The eight culturally relevant teachers in Ladson-Billings (1994) had knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds, and those teachers used that knowledge to adapt their practices to engage those students in learning.

**Cultural Competence**

Some African American students perceive school as a place where they cannot be themselves and still learn. Ladson-Billings (1995) believed that some Black students might have achieved academic success “at the expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being” (p. 475). Thus, “culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (p. 476). A culturally relevant teacher’s goal is to help those students negotiate the academic demands of school without losing their desire and ability to maintain their cultural integrity or thrive in their natal culture. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), teachers have an important role in this process:

Helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead. (p. 36)
Culturally relevant teachers use students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences as a vehicle for learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). For instance, one of the teachers in Ladson-Billings study drew from the rap music her students listened to in order to teach those students a lesson on poetry. This teacher used students’ cultural experiences as a “bridge” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161) to school learning. A more current version of a similar CRP known as Hip Hop Based Education (cf. Hill, 2009) encourages educators to not only use students’ cultural referents, e.g. music, as a bridge to learning, but also as medium for learning, and as sources of relevant topics in both student’ lives and cultures, and as topics of academic exploration. In other words, rap music also could be used a teaching topic as well as a means to teach poetry.

Culturally relevant educators must help African American students learn skills and knowledge to succeed their own culture, as well as the dominant culture that may oppress them. With those skills, African American students could also engage in that culture to effect meaningful change (Ladson-Billings, 2006). For example, students in one classroom wrote to a local newspaper about the outdated textbooks they were using in their school.

**Critical Consciousness**

Critical consciousness is the third and final student outcome that Ladson-Billings (1995) uses as a criterion for assessing an educator’s CRP. Culturally relevant educators are not satisfied with students who are only academic achievers and culturally competent.
Educators must help students “recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). These educators strive to help their students develop a consciousness that allows them to “critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 37). The goal of critical consciousness is that students can critically examine the society in which they live and work in order to effect social change. In order to help students develop a critical consciousness, educators must have a critical consciousness or an awareness that a person’s worldview is not universal but is profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and social class (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). To develop critical consciousness teachers must understand inequities in society, and the role that schools play in both perpetuating and challenging those inequities. Teachers also must build bridges between students’ cultures and the school culture to help students develop critical conceptions of themselves, others, their classrooms, schools, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2006) maintains that students who can think critically about society are best prepared to participate actively in a democracy. Ladson-Billings stresses that critical consciousness is the most difficult concept for teachers to understand if they have not developed a critical consciousness of their own. Teachers who do not recognize
and understand social inequities in their schools and society may be unable to help students understand, recognize, question, and struggle against inequities.

I inferred from participants’ narratives that one of the teachers in this study, Cindy, was an exception to Ladson-Billings’s rule. Cindy did not seem to recognize social inequities, yet she was engaged in developing relationships with Black male students and helping them achieve some educational success. During my first interview with the educators at SCC, Cindy inferred that she did not believe that Black males would say that schools had treated them differently than they treated Whites. Cindy asked, “You think [they got treated differently]? Even locally? And they [Black male participants] said [that] … they felt treated differently than White students?” I think that Cindy is a dysconscious racist (King, 1991)—she is not conscious of the cultural, social, economic, historical, and contemporary role that race plays in the lives of people who are Black. Nevertheless, Dan and another Black male described how Cindy was always there for them, in the classroom. One Black student told a story about Cindy that illustrates her availability to all students:

I could be sitting there working on a problem, and I’d be stuck on a problem—it’s like their [teachers at SCC] head is never down, so if they see something, they know your body language. For instance, I was in there [the classroom], and I just let out a deep breath, and Miss Cindy came over and asked, “What’s wrong?” I told her I couldn’t do the [math] problem. And, she showed me the way to do it
[the method to solve the problem]. So, even if it were Bill or Jack—same thing—they’re [those teachers are] always walking around from student to student making sure they doing OK. They give you encouragement to keep going, keep trying. Yeah, and that’s what gives me that great feeling.

This man illustrated Cindy was aware of all the students in the classroom, and that she would engage with them to help them with learning.

In summary, scholars report that CRP is an effective approach to improve the schooling of African Americans (Aronson & Laughter, 2017; Au, 2007; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2014; Milner, 2011). Culturally relevant teachers of African American students see those students as cultural beings and adapt their teaching practices based upon those students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences to help those students achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.
Rationale and Design of this Study

After developing a CRT and CRP perspective, I could see that some schools and educators fail in their efforts to meet the academic and social needs of Black males, even though those educators could use resource pedagogies, such as CRP to improve the education of these students. I believed that schools should be providing Black males with the same quality education they provide to students who are White. I thought that adding to the literature a better understanding of educators’ CRP in schools populated by Black males may help to further the dialogue and research necessary to improve the education of Black males. I returned to the literature for help in designing a study to examine the CRP in these schools.

Black Male Participants

Initially, I did not know with whom I should speak to learn about the education of Black males, the teachers in schools populated by Black males or Black males, themselves. The literature is inconclusive on this topic. Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) recommends that the best way to learn about the practices of teachers in schools populated by African American students is to examine those teachers:

I suggest that this kind of study must be replicated again and again. We need to know much more about the practice of successful teachers for African American and other students who have been poorly served by our schools…. For practitioners, this research reinforces the fact that the place to find out about
classroom practices is the naturalistic setting of the classroom and from the lived experiences of teachers [emphasis added]. (p. 163)

On the other hand, Dixson and Rousseau (2006) contend that a central tenet of critical race theory demands the “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (p. 34). In other words, CRT understands that researchers should listen to students of color bear witness to their education. Moreover, CRT provides a lens to see race and racism in education based on participants’ experiences.

Similarly, Howard (2012) emphasizes, “while a growing number of scholars are seeking to capture the experiences of students in today’s schools, the amount of scholarship that has focused on accessing information from Black males specifically is even smaller” (p. 97). Howard also recommends that researchers learn more about the experiences of Black male in schools by listening to Black males’ stories.

Critical scholars’ emphasis on listening to students’ voices encouraged me to interview Black males students to learn about their experiences in education. Those scholars helped me realize that Black males are likely to tell different stories about their education compared to White educators’ stories about educating Black male students.

As an educator for Ohio State University Extension, I previously taught and conducted research in a correctional facility, so I thought that Black male inmates might be a convenient and purposeful sample to interview. I wondered about the presence of Black male inmates in the education literature. I found a small number of studies in
which the researchers interviewed Black inmates about their education (Casella, 2003; Hatt, 2011; Ingalls, Hammond, & Trussell, 2011; Kirkland, Ortlieb & Majors, 2016; Psycher & Lozenski, 2016). Psycher and Lozenski (2016) interviewed a female, eighth grade student with a history of domestic violence charges to understand how youth navigate the school-to-prison pipeline. Kirkland et al. (2016) interviewed Rolando, a sophomore in high school, who had been suspended five times from school for offenses ranging from not taking off his hat when asked by a teacher to missing too many days of school. Kirkland et al. examined the connection between mass incarceration and literacy. Casella (2003) interviewed 21 inmates at a medium-security prison in Connecticut about violence, schools, and the criminal justice system. Casella compared the school experiences of inmates with the school experiences of high school students to understand if the use of preventive detention creates a counterproductive institutional link between schools and prisons. Preventive detention is a practice in which disciplinarians respond harshly to students' minor misbehavior, believing that response will prevent those students from committing more serious offenses.

Hatt (2011) interviewed 18 to 24 year-old offenders about their educational experiences inside and outside of prison. Hatt focused attention on the participants who admitted to selling drugs at school. Hatt found that drug dealing offered participants an alternate route to masculinity, wealth, and profit-making that their inequitable schools may have denied them. Ingalls et al. (2011) interviewed young adult inmates with
educational disabilities about their school experiences, student characteristics, placement histories, and the interventions and services schools had provided those men. Although Ingalls interviewed inmates, he did not include participants’ narratives. Instead he analyzed participants’ narratives to create numerical data, which he used to confirm participants’ special education records.

In these studies, none of the researchers, neither Casella, Hatt, or Ingalls, disaggregated their findings based on participants’ race, and the data on the school experiences of Black participants were unspecified. If scholars do not disaggregate data on the school experiences of Blacks and Whites, then those scholars risk developing a less than complex conceptualization of K-12 school experiences of Black males (Howard, 2013; Palmer et al., 2014).

In summary, I found only a few studies in which researchers specifically spoke with Black male inmates about their education. Nevertheless, I found no studies in which scholars analyzed Black males’ stories to better understand cultural relevance of participants’ educators in K-12 schools and correctional educational settings. Thus, I proposed to conduct face-to-face interviews with incarcerated Black males at SCC. The program administrator at SCC gave me a letter of support to interview Black males in that facility (see Appendix A), and The Ohio State University Internal Review Board accepted my proposal (see Appendix B).
The Black men invited for this study were insiders—they had experiences in K-12 schools populated by Black males. I positioned myself as one who wanted to learn from them. I told the men I spoke with that I thought schools treated students differently based on the students’ skin color. I told them I did not know much about this treatment, but I expected that they did. I asked them if I could interview them about their experiences in schools.

I realized that the nine men who graciously accepted my invitation and gave of their time to speak with me were more than insiders—they were knowledgeable, insightful, and hopeful. As knowers, these men had insider knowledge of what it meant to be a Black male in schools and classrooms, what it meant to be seen as Black and subsequently ignored, prejudged, and/or punished harshly. Each of the nine participants told stories in which only one or two educators had supported them. Eight of the study participants told stories about educators acting with prejudice toward and/or discriminating against Black male students. I inferred from these eight men that they understood the influence of race and racism on their experiences in schools and their relationships with educators. The men helped me realize that the experiences of Black males are not merely different from the experiences of their White counterparts, but those experiences occurred in oppressive and marginalizing contexts with educators who neither liked nor trusted Black males.
These participants’ stories of their school experiences helped me understand the inequitable treatment of Black males in schools. For example, participants’ stories described educators acting with prejudice toward and/or discriminating against them. Moreover, participants’ stories helped me understand my own whiteness. The term, whiteness, denotes the many forms of racial advantage such as privilege that Whites enjoy in their daily lives (Leonardo, 2004). My whiteness had kept me from seeing the inequitable treatment of Black males in schools and classroom. Nevertheless, a CRT lens enabled me to listen to participants’ stories and realize that schools and educators had educated these men differently than they educated White students.

Participant’ stories also illuminated for me the pervasive inequities and racial disparities in schools and classrooms. For example, one of the males, Dan, said that the principal of his elementary school was the only educator who supported him during his K-12 schooling. Similarly, Marcus liked school and wanted to learn, but teachers ignored him. They knew his past problems with the law, so they thought he was going to sell drugs in their classrooms and/or disrupt their classes. Moreover, I realized that participants’ experiences in schools and classroom, which surprised me, did not surprise them. In other words, to participants, their experiences were not extraordinary. Jackson illustrates this point. He told me, “Everyone [every Black student] was treated differently. That was just something we live with—it wasn’t like we didn’t expect it.” Nevertheless, I thought those stories were extraordinary.
The education literature, as well as society, seems to ignore these men, but I hope that by telling their stories that stakeholders in education can realize that schools and educators not only fail to meet the needs of Black male students but also oppress and marginalizes these students. Nevertheless, not one participant expressed anger at their treatment. Nor did any participant use the phrase, “White educators” when referring to educators in their schools. In fact, unless I asked about an educator’s race, participants never referred to it, nor did they blame teachers for their experiences in schools. Based on the stories participants told, I was surprised that no one expressed anger about their experiences in education.

On the one hand, I inferred from participants’ narratives that they were resigned to being treated differently. Jackson, for example, said there was no one in school he could complain to about that treatment, and even if there were, it would not have made any difference. On the other hand, Dominic, Marcus, and Jackson said it felt good that I listened to their stories. I inferred from participants that they were hopeful that schools could improve the education of Black male students. During the group interview, Jackson said, “Hopefully this [study] does something for Blacks.” Dominic, Marcus, and Charles simultaneously responded, “Yes.”

**Narrative Inquiry**

Critical scholars use narrative inquiry to understand the experiences or vantage point of the oppressed (Collins, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 2003; and Leonardo, 2004).
Narrative researchers use unstructured in-depth interviewing as a data collection method to document the feelings, beliefs, events, and practices of people historically marginalized by academic discourses. Corbin and Morse (2003) clarify that unstructured interviews “are shared experiences in which researchers and interviewees come together to create a context of conversational intimacy in which the participants feel comfortable telling their story” (p. 338).

For this study, I invited Black males to interview with me for two one-hour face-to-face individual interviews, and one two-hour group interview. Nine of these men accepted my invitation. For the individual interviews, I asked each participant questions from a list of pre-planned open-ended questions and unplanned probing or clarification questions, as needed. My goal was to elicit participants’ stories about educators who may have adapted their teaching practices to help Black males achieve academic success, cultural competence, and/or critical consciousness. During the group interview, I asked questions that I developed from themes that emerged during analysis of the individual interviews. For example, I informed participants that some of them had told me that educators treated Black male athletes better than they treated Black males who did not play sports. Then I asked if something similar might have happened to them. During the interviews, four participants told me their stories about educators in correctional settings who supported them. I also interviewed the teachers at SCC (each of whom was White). I asked those educators questions to elicit stories about their perceptions of educating
Black male students. I theorized that those stories could help me understand the cultural relevance of those educators.

**Race-Based Research**

Howard (2013), and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recommend that scholars examine the various and persistent race-based factors that contribute to the educational disenfranchisement of Black males. Howard clarifies that scholarly inquiries into the role of race and culture in the education of Black male students can allow for a more comprehensive understanding of education. In this study, I proposed to better understand race and racism in participants’ education by asking participants how being Black may have influenced interactions with principals, teachers, or other school staff. For example, I asked participants, “I am interested in who welcomed your Black culture in school. Can you tell me a story about a teacher, principal, or staff member who welcomed you and your ways of doing things?”

Howard (2013) also encourages scholars to avoid the narrow construction of Black male experiences historically portrayed in social science literature. For instance, the literature describes a negative construction of Black males as brutes and criminals. Howard suggests that scholars differently describe and conceptualize Black males. He is emphatic that it is not enough for researchers simply to add the voices of Black males to the literature—scholars must envision Black males as knowers whose insider experiences can add to the literature a more comprehensive understanding of education. In this
project, I positioned Black males as the experts on the education of Black males. For example, as I introduced myself to individual Black males in the correction center, I would say that I thought that school personnel might treat students differently based on students’ skin color. I also told them I thought that they would know more about that than me, and that I wanted to interview them to learn about their school experiences.

Analytical Framework from Literature on CRP

Ladson-Billings (1995) clarifies, “I predicated the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective on the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students along with the continued academic failure of African-American, Native American and Latino students” (p. 483). As such, I thought that Ladson-Billings’s theoretical perspective might give me a framework to analyze participants’ narratives to understand the cultural relevance of participants’ educators. In this study, I used an analytical framework from Ladson-Billings (1994, 2006) to help me understand the degree to which participants’ educators had adapted their teaching practices to participants’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences in order to help them to achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. In order to elicit stories about educators’ practices, I asked participants three fundamental questions: (a): “Can you tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member in your school who went out of his or her way to make sure you understood something—to help you be a successful student?”, (b) “Can you tell me a story about a teacher, principal, or staff
member welcomed your Black culture into your school or classroom?”, and (e) “Can you
tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member who would talk to you about racialized
events in school or your community?”

Based on Ladson-Billings’s (1995) theory of CRP, effective teachers have good
relationships with students. I understood that the majority of educators in participants’
schools were not very culturally relevant. Participants implied that many of their teachers
did not have good relationships with Black males. Eight of the nine participants told me
stories about K-12 educators who neither adapted their practices to participants’ cultural
backgrounds nor helped them to achieve academic success, cultural competence, or
critical consciousness. Some of the participants told stories about educators who
stereotyped, prejudged, and/or discriminated against them. The framework I used helped
me understand educators’ CRP did not help me to understand why K-12 educators may
have failed to educate Black males students.

Grounded Theory

After completing that initial analysis, I turned to grounded theory (Glaser, 1978;
grounded theory during a field observation study of hospital staffs’ handling of dying
patients. Glaser and Strauss termed the approach grounded theory because its emphasis
was on the generation of theory and the data on which it was grounded. Analysis based
on grounded theory focuses on the “generation and emergence of concepts, problems and
theoretical codes” (Glaser & Holton, 2006, p. 49). Analysts using grounded theory do not merely describe what participants said; instead, they develop conceptual categories from participants’ narratives. Glaser (1978) makes clear that “the goal of grounded theory is to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (p. 93).

In order for researchers to move past description to conceptualizing the data, they need to consider: (a) How do these data inform the study? (b) What category does this incident indicate? (c) What is actually happening? and (d) What is the main concern being faced by the participants? These questions help the researcher focus on patterns among incidents that can be given codes, grouped and developed into interpretations of the data or descriptions of incidents.

Open coding. Open coding is the initial type of coding conducted during a grounded approach to qualitative analysis (Strauss, 1987). The goal of open coding is to “open up the inquiry” into concepts that fit the data. Grounded theory analysts examine interview transcripts or other documents very closely, line by line, or even, word by word looking for behaviors, actions, or events, observed or described in the words of interviewees. In this project, I conducted open coding by reading printed transcripts of interviews and looking for passages in which participants described experiences between them and educators. For example, one study participant named David described experiences with educators in a Catholic school he had attended:
I wish I would have stayed in Catholic school, because they took time to know you as a human being, not by your race or color, but as a human being, period. And then, Catholic schools are 10 times better, because they take the time with you—if you’re having problems with some subjects, they sit down and figure out why you’re having problems in those subjects and correct those errors.

In that passage Dan’s description of the care and support he perceived from all the educators in that Catholic school he attended, not just an individual educator, I conceptualized that passage as “a school culture of care and support.” Similarly, Dan described an entire staff of teachers, who cared about and supported him:

These [teachers at SCC] are like the most important teachers I ever have in my life. Like, they’re here for you—anytime you have a problem—they’re right there. They give you great advice, just, you know, support. They really push you. I like a person that try to help you, push you, and know that they’re pushing you, because all they want to do is see you do better—they want to see you succeed. They want to see you make something of yourself.

Fit refers to the emergence of conceptual codes and categories from the data instead of using preconceived codes or categories from extant theory (Holton, 2009). During data analysis, I examined participants narratives about their school experiences, instead of forcing what participants said into the three categories of CRP: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, as I had done during my initial
analyses. One example of fit comes from an interview with Dan in which he talked about the teachers in the schools he attended:

Teachers, they don’t understand, because most of them promote racism; the others, they just didn’t care, because they were Caucasian—you know they didn’t care—they’re not going through it. In our school, they didn’t care about us—they either hoped you went to jail, or they hoped you got kicked out of school. It was just another Black person gone, another one they didn’t have to deal with, another one they didn’t have to try to understand or didn’t want to understand.

In that passage, Dan gave a description of all the teachers he had had throughout his education who he felt did not care about him or other Black male students. Based on McDermott's’ (1977) analysis of the social relations, over time, between educators and students, I conceptualized that passage as “a school culture based on discrimination of Black male students.”

**Axial coding.** Glaser (1978) emphasizes that when coding an incident for a category, an analyst should “compare it with the previous incidents coded in the same category” (p. 439). Strauss (1987) uses the term axial coding for this process of comparing data relevant to the phenomena in a given category. These data, for example, may highlight conditions of the phenomena, consequences of the phenomena, strategies used, or interactions that occurred between the actors (Strauss, 1987).
For example, participants’ narratives, in which they talked about educators supporting Black male students, also talked about those educators having knowledge about Blacks or Black male students. For example, Jackson highlighted that a coach who supported him would always say that he had grown up in a Black community. I inferred that experience is how that coach may have developed a cultural awareness about Black male students.

**Constant comparison.** Another feature of grounded theory is the constant comparison of incidents looking for similarities and differences (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Constant comparison occurs continually through all technical operations, e.g. observing, interviewing, coding, analyzing, and writing, from the outset of the research project until its close (Strauss, 1987). As I read and analyzed my data, constant comparison helped me to recognize that other participants also talked about how knowledge of Blacks helped those educators support those students. Cindy, one of the teachers in SCC, knowing that Black males may take longer to trust her than it will take them to trust the male teacher, intentionally focused on establishing and building trust with her students.

**Analytical Framework from the Literature on Social Relations between Students and Educators**

As I examined the conceptual categories that emerged during my analysis, I realized that the relationships between participants and educators were both relevant and
problematic (Glaser, 1978). I returned to the literature and found that relationships between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds matter in the education of those students (Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Ferguson, 2000; Gay, 2002, 2010; Gay & Howard, 2006; Harper, 2012; Hooks, 1994; Howard, 2013; McDermott, 1974, 1977; Milner, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Noddings, 1991; Strayhorn, 2010; van Manen, 1982, 1994a, 1994b, 2002, 2008, & 2016). That literature informed the framework I used to re-analyze the data in order to understand the relationships between participants and educators. My goal was to analyze participants’ narratives to better understand their relationships with educators. Howard (2013) highlights a gap in the literature. He concludes that scholars need to investigate the relationships that Black males have with school personnel to determine how those relationships are formed, sustained, and how they contribute to Black males’ school success.

I developed this additional framework from the literature of McDermott (1974, 1977) and van Manen (1982, 1994a, 1994b, 2002, 2008, & 2016). McDermott is a sociologist who analyzes the ongoing social relations between teachers and students in schools and classrooms to understand the cultures in those settings. Based on McDermott’s findings, the schools and classrooms in which students and teachers have trusting relations are likely to be contexts in which students can learn.

Van Manen is a phenomenologist. Phenomenological research is a method of study of human phenomena. Phenomenologists are interested in describing the essential
nature of a phenomenon, rather than trying, for example, to determine if a phenomenon actually occurred, how often it may have occurred, or what factors may have contributed to its occurrence. Van Manen (1994b) also highlights that phenomenology is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness that he defines as “A heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life” (p. 12). Van Manen emphasizes, “In phenomenological research, the is always implies a possible ought” (p. 39). In other words, that which a researcher says is best for students is that which educators ought to be doing for students.

I inferred from participants that the relationships between Black male students and educators matter in the educational success of those students. All nine Black male participants implied that they wanted pedagogical relationships with K-12 educators, yet eight of those participants told stories in which many of those educators did not develop relationships with Black male students. Four of the nine Black male participants left school before graduating, but they participated in correctional educations, in either SCC or another correctional facility. I inferred from the stories of those men that every correctional educator engaged in pedagogical relationships with these students. Participants implied that those educators cared about them and helped them prepare for and/or pass the GED exam. The teachers at SCC told stories about intentionally forming pedagogical relationships with Black male students. The teachers’ stories corroborate the
Black males’ perceptions of the pedagogical relationships between them and correctional educators.

In the following sections, I introduce my analytical framework from McDermott and van Manen. I use that framework to reanalyze participants’ narratives to understand more about the relationships between Black male students and educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings. I also use that framework to analyze the teachers’ narratives to understand more about their perceptions of educating Black male students.

**Trusting relations.** McDermott analyzes the social relations, over time, between teachers and students in schools and classrooms to understand, “the importance of social relations between teachers and children in the development of learning environments” (p. 198). McDermott is interested in the development of trusting relations between teachers and students. He defines trusting relations, “I am talking about trust as a quality of the relations among people, as a product of the work they do to achieve a shared focus” (p. 199). In the classroom, “these issues translate into how the teacher and children can understand each other's behavior as directed to the best interests of what they are trying to do together” (p. 199). As students and teachers work together, they develop trust that each is committed the other. Trusting relationships are contexts in which students and teachers can work together and students can learn.

McDermott (1974) theorizes that a breakdown in communication between educators and minority students may result in their failure to form trusting relations.
McDermott uses the metaphor pariah-host to represent the negative relationship between White educators and minoritized students whom those educators have judged as low status:

Students and teachers in a pariah-host population mix usually produce communicative breakdowns by simply performing routine and practical everyday activities in ways their subcultures define as normal and appropriate. Because behavioral competence is differently defined by different social groups, many children, and teachers fail in their attempts to establish rational, trusting, and rewarding relationships across ethnic, racial or class boundaries in the classroom. As a result of this miscommunication, school learning is shunned by many minority children, and school failure becomes a peer group goal. (p. 173)

McDermott theorizes that when White host teachers use their own point of view to assess the behaviors of students of color. With that perspective, teachers may be more likely to judge those behaviors as inappropriate and subsequently reject interacting with those students to help them with learning. In turn, those students may reject teachers’ negative appraisal and develop patterns of inattention toward those teachers. McDermott (1974) describes how a progressively deteriorating relationship can develop between White host teachers and students of color:

If such misunderstandings take place very often in the early grades, the results can be disastrous. Once a host teacher treats a child as inadequate, the child will find
the teacher oppressive. Often, once a child finds a teacher oppressive, the child will start behaving inadequately. After such a point, relations between the child and the teacher regress—the objectionable behavior of each will feed back negatively into the objectionable behavior of the other. (p. 178)

The breakdown in the relationships between White host educators and students of color begins those teachers judging students’ behaviors from the teacher’s point of view. With that point of view, teachers may be more likely to assess students as low-status or pariah and subsequently those teachers reject developing relationships with those students. Because those students feel oppressed by teachers, they are more likely to react negatively to teachers’ assessment and reject developing relationships with those teachers. McDermott uses the metaphor, pariah-host, to represent the relationship between those educators and students. McDermott’s metaphor helped me analyze participants’ narratives to understand their relationships with White K-12 educators who rejected relationships with Black male students and did not form trusting relationships with them. Eight of the nine participants’ in this study implied that most of their K-12 educators formed pariah-host relations with Black male students.

Black male participants also told stories in which a few K-12 educators, but every correctional educator, had developed trusting relationships with Black male students. Participants implied that correctional educators cared about, supported, and motivated Black male students to achieve some educational success—pass a class, earn a high
school diploma, or prepare for and/or pass the GED exam. Three participants implied that these educators had prior relationships with people who were Black, and they better understood Black male students.

Based on a constructivist perspective of learning (cf. Wells, 2000), I infer that those educators’ prior relationships with Blacks served as contexts in which those educators could develop a cultural awareness about people who are Black. With that cultural awareness, those educators may have been more likely to develop relationships with Black male students and help them with learning. Based on McDermott’s analysis of relations between White educators and students of color, educators with a cultural awareness about Blacks were more likely to judge the behaviors of Black males from those students’ point of view, assess those behaviors as normal, and subsequently develop trusting relationships with them. I use the metaphor guest-host relations to represent the relationships between White host educators who had a developing cultural awareness about Blacks and the Black male students whom those educators judged as normal and subsequently interacted with to develop trusting relations. These educators treated Black male students as guests in schools and classrooms.

In summary, McDermott provided me with a theoretical framework for Chapter 5 to re-analyze participants’ narratives about their relationships with educators and the cultures in their K-12 schools and correctional education settings. Below are some of the key theoretical assumptions of McDermott used in my data analysis:
• Educators who develop relationships with students and get to know them are more likely to judge students’ behaviors from those students’ point of view, assess those behaviors as normal, and subsequently engage in developing trusting relationships with those students.

• The trusting relationships between educators and students provide a context in which successful learning can occur.

**Pedagogical relations.** Whereas McDermott emphasizes the importance of understanding the social relations that occur over time between teachers and students, van Manen (1994a) states, “In their daily living with children or young people, teachers tend to be mainly occupied with the moment-to-moment demands of acting in an appropriate manner” (p. 153). Van Manen observes the relationships between a teacher and students as those relationships occur in incidents that require teacher's immediate and appropriate action.

Van Manen (1994a) found that when students talk about their experiences with teachers, “their anecdotes reveal that classroom interactions are always relational; teachers and students cannot help but stand in certain relations to each other” (p. 135). Van Manen (1982) clarifies that some of those relations may be pedagogical. He defines pedagogical relations as a certain kind of encounter, a form of togetherness a relationship of practical actions between an adult and a young person who is on the way to adulthood. He also says that the pedagogical relationship has two components:
The first component is that those relations are contexts in which educators can develop pedagogical thoughtfulness, or an understanding, “how young people experience things, what they think about, how they look at the world, what they do, and, most importantly, how each child is a unique person” (van Manen, 1994a, and p. 139).

The second component of a pedagogical relation is it provides a context in which educators can act with pedagogical tact:

To act tactfully as an educator may mean in a particular situation to be able to see what goes on with children, to understand the child's experience, to sense the pedagogical significance of this situation, to know how and what to do, and to actually do something right. (van Manen, 1994b, p. 36)

Educators who act with pedagogical tact do that which they believe is best for those students learning. Van Manen (1994) characterizes the pedagogical relation between educators and students as an intentional relation: “The pedagogical relation is an intentional relation wherein the intent of the teacher is always determined in a double direction: by caring for a child as he or she is, and by caring for a child for what he or she may become” (p. 143). In other words, pedagogical relations are not an automatic response of teachers to students. The relations between educators and students can be contexts in which educators intentionally get to know those students, imagine what is best for their learning, and actually to do that which those educators believe is best for those
students’ learning. These concepts—pedagogical thoughtfulness and pedagogical tact—enabled me to analyze participants’ narratives about interactions with educators to understand more about the pedagogical relations between them. What follows are some of the key theoretical assumptions of van Manen that I use to analyze my data:

- Educators’ relationships with students in which they get to know those students, imagine what might be best for their learning, and actually do that which is best for students’ learning and development are pedagogical relationships.

- Educators who have a caring interest in students are more likely to develop pedagogical relationships with students.

I developed my analytical framework from the work of McDermott and van Manen. I used this framework to re-analyze participants’ narratives. McDermott and van Manen have complementary perspectives on social relations between students and educators. McDermott sociological perspective helps me to analyze participants’ narratives in which they talk about their interactions with educators, in general, over time. I analyzed those narratives to better understand more about the cultures in participants’ schools and classrooms. The phenomenological perspective of van Manen helped me to analyze participants’ narratives in which they describe specific interactions with individual educators. I analyzed those narratives to better understand educators’ pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact.
In summary, critical scholarship encouraged me to design a narrative inquiry to better understand the educational experiences and relationships between Black male students and educators in their K-12 schools and correctional education settings. In this study, I interviewed two groups of participants, hitherto, absent from the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy, namely, Black male inmates and correctional educators. The analytical framework I used from Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2006) helped me to understand the cultural relevance of participants’ educators. The analytical framework I used from McDermott (1974, 1977) and van Manen (1982, 1994a, 1994b, 2008) helped me understand the relationships between participants and educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings.

I theorized that understanding the cultural relevance of the educators in participants’ schools and the relationships between participants and educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings could help me develop answers to the two research questions that guided my study, (a) What do the narratives of participants—incarcerated Black men who previously had attended K-12 schools and correctional educators—add to the literature on the education of Black males?, and (b) What do the storied experiences of participants add to the conceptualization of CRP? In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological framework I used as a guide for this study. That framework is from the literature on critical race theory.
Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

In this chapter, I describe the methodological framework I used to guide my examination of the educational experiences of Black males. I begin with an introduction to the background of this study, as well as the research questions that guided my examination. Then, I discuss the methodological framework I used from the literature on critical theory. Finally, I introduce the research design, setting, and procedures of this study.

Background and Research Questions

This study grew out of my learning about critical race theory in education during the coursework of my doctoral program in the Department of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University. Critical race theory equipped me with a lens to look and think differently about education, in general, and the education of Black males, in particular. A passage from Milner (2007) is illustrative of critical theorists’ perspective of schools’ failure to educate Black males:

I argue that really it is not students of Color who are falling behind or failing. It is our schools and teachers who are falling behind and failing our students. Teachers and schools, in large measure, appear to be falling behind in their thinking, pedagogy, and curriculum decision making, particularly where students of Color are concerned. In short, many teachers do not know how to think about their culturally diverse learners; they do not have a repertoire of knowledge necessary
to teach effectively their culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse students; they
do not know how to make curricular and pedagogical decisions that are relevant
to (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and responsive to (Gay, 2010) their students. (pp. 79-80)

Milner’s critical perspective helped me understand that Black students fail to
achieve in school, not because of the supposed deficiencies of those students, but because
educators, (a) do not know how to think about those students, and (b) do not have
pedagogical strategies to teach students from diverse backgrounds and/or lived
experiences. Critical scholars also introduced me to resource pedagogies, such as CRP,
that can help improve the education of students of color (e.g., Au 2009; Banks, 2010;
Shade et al., 1997). Culturally relevant educators understand students as cultural beings,
and those educators adapt their teaching practices based upon what they know about their
students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences, rather than demanding that those
students adapt to the culture of their teachers. The goal of CRP is to help those students
achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

In summary, critical scholarship gave me a perspective to understand that Black
male students fail in school, because educators fail to meet the needs of those students,
not because of the supposed academic and social deficiencies of those students. I
designed this study to better understand the experiences of Black male students in schools
and classrooms, and the cultural relevance of their educators. The two research questions that guide this study are: (1) What do the narratives of participants—Black male inmates who previously attended K-12 schools and correctional educators—add to the conceptualization of CRP?, and (2) What do the storied experiences of participants add to the literature on the education of Black males? I theorized that answers to those questions could help further the dialogue and research needed to improve the education of Black males.

**Methodology: Critical Race Theory**

In this section, I discuss the methodological framework I use for this study. Lather (1992), a qualitative researcher, defines methodology as, “the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework that guides a particular research project” (p. 2). In this study, I use a methodological framework from the literature on critical theory. Critical theory accounts for how systems of inequity such as classism, racism, and sexism mediate our lives.

Critical theory is a social, political, and philosophical movement that originated at the Frankfurt School in Germany during the social devastation resulting from World War I, the European Depression, and labor strikes of the early 1900s (Bredo, 2006; Noblit, 2005). Critical theorists believed that traditional theories, such as positivism, were inadequate for understanding society, thus, they looked for alternative theories. Critical theory expanded during the 1960s and 1970s, a period in the social sciences when
emancipatory social movements, such as civil rights and feminism, developed in the West (Noblit, 2005). Nevertheless, critical legal scholars eventually felt that the civil rights movement was inadequate for understanding and/or challenging the more subtle varieties of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Those scholars developed critical race theory to better understand racism. Critical race theory (CRT) is based on the premise that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent, and fundamental in defining and explaining how U.S. society functions.

During the mid-1990s, CRT branched from the legal field to education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Critical scholars previously had used class-based and gender-based theories to understand differences in the school experience of Whites compared to students of color, but those scholars had not systematically employed a race-based analysis of those differences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT in education assumes that race and racism are key factors in schools’ failure to educate students of color.

In the field of education, Daniel Solórzano (as cited in Yosso, 2005) identifies five tenets of CRT that “should inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy (p. 171): (1) the intercentricity of race and racism, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches.

I designed this study using two of these tenets: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism, and (2) the centrality of experiential knowledge. The intercentricity of race and
racism starts from the premise that race and racism are “central, endemic, permanent, and fundamental in defining and explaining how U.S. society functions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). Moreover, CRT acknowledges that racialized subordination is form of subordination among many, such as those based on one’s gender, class, ability, immigration status, accent, gender, and/or ability. I understand that no form of subordination is more oppressive than another (Yosso, 2005), but in this study, I focused on one form of subordination: the racialized subordination that the Black male participants perceived experiencing in their schools and classrooms.

A second central tenet of CRT that I used to inform this study is the centrality of experiential knowledge—a recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color. This recognition is the theme of voice in CRT in legal studies (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). CRT scholars understand that importance of the personal experiences of people of color as sources of knowledge. The function of voice in CRT is to counteract the stories of the dominant group. The use of the term voice, in the singular, does not imply that one common voice exists for all people of color—the stories of individuals will differ. Citing Delgado, Dixson and Rousseau highlight that although there is not one common voice, there is a common experience of racism that structures the stories of people of color and allows for the use of the term “voice.”

Thus, a dialogue with insiders—those whose experiences include the topic under examination—is one way that critical researchers may better understand that topic (Guba
Moreover, critical theorists emphasize that stories by people of color can “catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar [oppressors’] dysconscious racism” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). In other words, insiders’ stories may help reluctant stakeholders in education to realize that educational policies differently affect individuals and groups of students (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

In summary, a critical race perspective helped me to understand that the education experience of Black male students is not a random outcome resulting from a fair and aracial system, but “a manifestation of the racial politics that are intrinsic even vital to the day-to-day functions of U.S. society and social institutions such as schools (Duncan, 2002, p. 131). Similarly, Howard (2008) asserts that scholarly inquiries into the role of race and racism in the education of Black male students can allow for a more comprehensive understanding of education as well as improve the educational outcomes of those students.

**Ideological Positions of CRT**

Lather (1992) helped me to understand critical race theory as a paradigm. Paradigms are the practices we invent to discover the truth about ourselves, and they help us develop a judgment about the nature of reality (Lather, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They include a set of beliefs and an accompanying method for taking hold of whatever can be known. The strength of a paradigm is its perspective on knowledge, which
includes three core components or philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Ontology and epistemology help researchers describe that which is thought about the world, and methodology helps researchers capture the knowledge necessary for such a description. In the sections below, I briefly examine these three ideological positions of critical theory.

**Ontology.** Ontology seeks to know what is real—the nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The ontological position of critical theory is historical realism:

> A reality is assumed to be apprehendable that was once plastic, but that was, over time, shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then crystallized (reified) into a series of structures that are now (inappropriately) taken as "real," that is, natural and immutable. (p. 110)

In other words, critical theorists believe that reality exists in the form of structure, but there are social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that give shape to those structures. For example, school is a reality—it has structures. To understand school, one must describe the structures, such as discipline policies, as well as the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that give shape to those structures.

**Epistemology.** Epistemology is the nature of knowledge—what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical theorists are subjectivists—they believe that the social world is essentially situated and partial or understandable only from the point of view of
the actors involved (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). That which is knowable about the social world is real, but not an absolute reality. Reality is that which a participant describes. For instance, if one seeks to understand the reality of schools, that reality is dependent upon the point of view of individuals or groups in school, such as students, educators, parents, or other stakeholders. Each participant’s point of view of schools is a real picture of schools, but none of those pictures is an absolute picture of schools. Subjectivists also believe that which can be known is “intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 110). In other words, researchers’ values, beliefs, and lived experiences influence his or her perception and understanding of a topic, and his or her interactions with the researched.

**Method.** Method is the means by which knowledge is acquired (Paul, Graffam, & Fowler, 2005; Skirtic, 1991). Critical theorists acquire knowledge through dialogue with participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). “Dialogue implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object. It is a humanizing speech, one that challenges and resists domination” (bell hooks, as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 260). Critical researchers facilitate dialogue by employing idiographic approaches, such as observation, interview, field work/notes, documents and artifacts, video recording, or photographs to understand an individual’s interpretation of his or her social world.

Critical race theorists emphasize that CRT requires the “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 34). Smyth
(2005) uses the term “voiced research” to denote speaking with people ignored by the literature. Smyth says:

The term “voiced research” is relatively new way of characterizing the inclusion of perspectives previously excluded, muted, or silenced by dominant structures and discourses. Voiced research starts out from the position that interesting things can be said and garnered from groups who do not necessarily occupy the high moral, theoretical, or epistemological grounds—they may actually be quite lowly and situated at some distance from the centers of power. Shackrok and Smyth (1997, p. 4) claim that, “in telling stories of life, previously unheard, or silenced, voices open up the possibility for new, even radically different narratives of life experiences.” (p. 74)

A number of critical scholars have made the call for greater inclusion of students’ viewpoints in the discussion on school reform. Based on her research, Sonia Nieto is emphatic that, “those who spend most of their time in schools and classrooms are often given the least opportunity to talk … students have important lessons to teach educators, and we need to begin to listen to them more carefully” (Nieto, 2009, p. 189). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) clarify that without speaking to people of color about education in their communities, it is impossible to say or know anything useful about that education. Howard (2013) emphasizes that the literature includes many voices talking
about ways to improve the education of Black males, but that the voices of Black males are nearly absent in that literature:

A multitude of voices have been part of the narrative on how to transform schools experiences for Black males. Scholar, practitioners, parents, policy makers, legislators, and community-based initiatives have all offered recommendations, best practices, special initiatives, and policies on how to disrupt the chronic expulsion and underperformance of Black males in US schools. *Glaringly absent in this discourse have been the voices of Black males themselves* [emphasis added]. (p. 88)

Critical scholars who seek to better understand education must include the voices of those who suffer wrongs in bearing witness of those wrongs (Duncan, 2002, p. 141). Scholars who seek remedies to those wrongs must include the voices of those victims in conceptualizing those remedies. The views of Howard (2013) and Duncan (2002) encouraged me to examine the life experiences of Black males to learn more about their experiences in education.

In her study of excellent teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (1994) spoke with the parents of Black students for their insights into good teaching. She referred to parents as “the consumers of education” (p. 27). In this study, I spoke with another group of consumers of education—Black male inmates about their experiences in
K-12 schools and correctional education settings. I wanted to better understand the cultural relevance of participants’ educators.

The methodological framework I used to guide this study is from the literature on CRT. CRT uses a race-based examination and analysis of stories told by insiders—persons whose lived experiences include the social experience under examination. I wanted to know about the experiences of Black males in schools and correctional education settings, so I interviewed some insiders previously absent from the literature on CRP: Black male inmates and correctional educators.

Research Design

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a method that critical scholars use to understand oppression from the experiences or vantage points of the oppressed (e.g., Collins, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 2003; and Leonardo, 2004). Narrative research is typically used to document the feelings, beliefs, events, and practices of people historically marginalized by academic discourses, which provide counterpoints to challenge the existing narratives that shape our understanding of the school experiences of students of color. Howard et al. (2012) underscore that narrative research provides scholars with critical insight into understanding how Black males understand and describe their educational realities.

Interviews. The unstructured in-depth interview is a data collection tool used in narrative inquiry. Okolie (2005) states that the in-depth interview as an essential tool in
the study of social phenomena, “researchers must conduct in-depth interviews to get beyond the usual answers regarding issues to which people have deep emotional attachment, e.g. racism/racial oppression” (p. 245).

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with Black males and correctional educators, using a set of interview protocols I developed for the study. I also asked participants a number of unplanned questions, when needed, to elicit additional information or clarification.

I enjoyed the time I had with participants. I typically met individual participants at the SCC housing desk. A correctional officer would escort participants and I to an empty classroom and unlock the door. The men and I would sit next to, or across from each other at a table. I began the first set of individual interviews by telling the study participants that I had done two short-term incarcerations for two driving-under-the influence (DUI) charges. I also shared that I had previously taught the Fit 2B Fathers class at SCC. Finally, I shared that I used to have racist beliefs about Blacks, but that classes at OSU helped me to think differently about Blacks. At that point, I began asking the participants about their school experiences. Okolie (2005) emphasizes that antiracist research begins with researchers telling their story to the researched. I feel that beginning my first interviews with each participant by sharing my personal background helped us to develop a relationship and to help them feel comfortable speaking with me. As we talked, I asked them follow-up and clarifying questions to help me better understand
these stories. I think that helped these men to begin to trust that I wanted to learn from them. Participants seemed to feel comfortable with me, and comfortable enough to answer my questions. Nevertheless, Dominic, near the end of his first interview asked me, “You’re not using any of this for any financial gain, are you?” I told him that my research was for my doctoral work. I am not sure, and I did not ask, but I think Dominic did not want me to make a profit from using his story.

**Stories.** Stories are powerful research tools that “provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems” (Noddings & Witherell, 1991, p. 280). Collins (2000) emphasizes that stories, as told by those who have lived through the experiences under examination, are more believable than stories told by those who have merely read and/or thought about such experiences. She emphasizes that stories told about an individual or group or by an individual who is not a member of that group may contain racialized omissions, distortions, and/or stereotypes. In the literature, those stories often fault minority students, their families, and community cultural traditions for those students’ outcomes in education.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) emphasize that when the oppressed author their own stories, they are more likely to heal from their oppression, as well as understand how others oppressed them. In this study, participants affirmed the healing benefit of storytelling. The extract below, from the group interview, illustrates of the healing benefit of telling their stories:
Marcus: It [participating in this study] made me really think about how my life as a Black African American male is really different from everybody else.

Jackson: It made me feel good to be able to talk to someone about it [educators’ discriminatory treatment], because it was something I always knew, you know, something we grew up with, and there was no one you could complain to about it.

And, hopefully this [study] does something for Blacks.

Dominic: I want to say, like, seeing somebody like you that’s interested and wants to change stuff, and I appreciate you—I’m saying it [this study] could have just been homework for you, but you drive out of your way, and you brought pizza for us for participating, you went above and beyond that, and that’s cool.

Marcus: That is [cool]. Like somebody doing this for like the government or something, and they would have come in here with a little tally sheet. They would have based it [what they learned about Black males] on that little survey—the whole country on that one survey. I mean, like you actually go like down deep into what we feel, and like, what we been through. You try to understand us. Like anyone can lie on a survey. I do all time.

Marcus, Jackson, and Dominic implied that they felt good about authoring their own stories. They also implied that storytelling was a better method than completing a survey to understand their experience in schools.
Research Setting

**Entry.** I conducted the research for this project at SCC, a community-based correctional facility located in the Appalachian region of Ohio. As a Family and Consumer Sciences educator for The Ohio State University Extension, I facilitated Fit 2B FATHERS (F2BF), a ten-session parenting education curriculum, more than 20 times between 1999 and 2012. As such, I had relationships with administrators and staff members at SCC. The program administrator with whom I worked most closely while delivering F2BF in SCC, approved my proposal to conduct research in SCC. She agreed to my request and submitted a letter of support to the OSU Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A).

**SCC.** SCC is a minimal security community based correctional facility serving six contiguous mostly-rural counties. Community based correctional facilities are residential facilities that typically offer comprehensive education and treatment to adult men convicted of non-violent felony offenses that do not require mandatory prison sentences. The most common offenses include possession of drugs, trafficking in drugs, burglary, sex offenses, and theft. The typical length of incarceration at SCC is 180 days.

The daily population is approximately 85 men. The SCC personnel refer to these men as residents, but during the day 25% of those men may be off-property participating in community service assignments, work release, on home visits, or going to school. The
majority of residents are between 17 and 49 years of age. During 2009, Black males comprised 10.6% of the resident population at SCC.

The focus of SCC is rehabilitation. Residents are required to attend and fulfill their treatment plan, which may include earning a GED or participating in a treatment program, such as cognitive behavior therapy. Residents wear street clothes, and they have much freedom of movement throughout the facility. The corrections officers and treatment staff wear collared sports shirts emblazoned with the SCC logo, and jeans or pants. All other personnel wear casual business attire. I do not recall ever seeing a staff member carry a firearm.

SCC has a number of policies and procedures regarding resident behavior. Consequences for rule violations vary depending upon the infraction. For minor offenses, such as being chronically late for classes, a resident may lose a privilege, such as a pass to visit home. For more serious violations, such as a physical confrontation with another inmate or a staff member, residents may get ‘rode out’ or transferred to a prison to complete their sentences, plus any additional time resulting from the rule violation.

SCC is a one-story cinder-block structure with a white stucco and brown trim exterior. The building sits on reclaimed strip mine land, and it is located approximately 300 yards off a state route. There is no barbed or razor wire on the property. Outdoor areas, where residents recreate, are fenced with twelve-foot chain link. Surveillance cameras are located around the exterior and throughout the interior of the building.
Fluorescent lighting illuminates the interior of SCC. The cinder-block walls are painted white, and the trim and doors are primary blue. The flooring is either white linoleum tiles with gray accent tiles or blue and gray commercial carpeting.

SCC is a clean and well-kept facility. Since 2003, SCC has maintained accreditation from the American Corrections Association (ACA). The ACA manual of accreditation policy and procedure (2012) notes, “Through accreditation, an agency is able to maintain a balance between protecting the public and providing an environment that safeguards the life, health, and safety of staff and offenders” (p. 7).

SCC has two entrances (see Appendix D). The front entrance leads to the administrative offices. The side entrance leads to the housing unit, kitchen, dining hall, and program staff offices. Staff, residents, and visitors enter the building at the side entrance. Inside this entrance is a 10′ x 8′ waiting room, enclosed with double-paned bulletproof windows. In this space are two chairs, a small table, and an automated teller machine (ATM). On the other side of the wall is central control, the security center of the facility. A corrections officer is typically on-duty in that room. Guests and visitors must sign a visitor log and receive a visitor badge from the officer in central control before entering the 10′ x 6′ sally port into the inmate area. Correction officers use this area, known as the sally port, to frisk men before allowing them to re-enter the facility.

After exiting the sally port, one is in the inmate area of the facility. Toward the left is the treatment wing, which includes the education department, and the case manager
offices. I conducted the interviews for this study in classrooms located in the treatment wing. The classrooms are 10’ x 14’ rooms with four 4’ x 18” windows facing outside and two 4’ x 5’ windows facing into the hallway. The rooms contain three 2’ x 6’ white laminate tables arranged side by side into a solid square. The chairs are unpadded, blue plastic chairs. The classrooms allowed the interviews to be semi-private—no one could hear our conversation, but people in the hallway could see us through the windows.

The remainder of the facility—housing unit, administration offices, kitchen, dining hall, and program staff offices—are located to the right of the sally port. The day room is the first space in the housing unit. The day room is a 50’ x 50’ space with a vaulted ceiling. In this area, men play cards or board games, talk, or do homework. There are three-foot square wooden tables with metal chairs with cushioned seats and backs throughout the day room. These chairs are heavy and make a loud distinctive sound as men move them. There is a large video screen for men to watch television programs or movies. In front of the screen are six rows of 10 theatre seats secured to the floor. Books, board games, and decks of cards clutter the shelves and windowsills throughout the day room. In one corner area is a change machine, a microwave oven, and three vending machines, containing snack food, sodas, coffee, or cigarettes. The machines are painted Black and have no lighting or advertising.

In the middle of the day room is a 12’ x 12’ area known as the housing desk. Around the perimeter is a two-foot wide counter 54” off the floor. Inside the enclosure
are desks, computers, phones, security monitors, office supplies, and an assortment of sports for outdoor use. A correction officer is usually on duty at the housing desk. The housing desk is a place where men can get information as well supplies, e.g. basketballs to take outside. Residents are not to loiter near the housing desk, but staff members and these men talk and even joke with each other in that area.

Two housing wings branch off the day room. The south wing is for men who are younger than 21 years of age; the north wing is for those 21 and older. Each wing contains ten cells. Inside each cell are two bunk beds, two lockers, and one closet. Each wing has a restroom with showers located near the housing desk.

A set of double doors lead from the day room to an outdoor recreation yard. This 100’ x 200’ space includes a grassy area, a cemented area with four picnic tables, and an asphalt basketball court. This area is enclosed by a 12-foot high chain-link fence.

Research Procedures

**Human subject’s approval.** In September of 2012, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board at OSU for my proposal to interview Black males at SCC (See Appendix B).

**Purposive sampling.** In this study, I used purposive sampling—a non-probability sampling technique for selecting individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions (Glaser, 1987). Patton (2005) describes the benefits of purposive sampling:
The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. (p. 169)

I wanted to examine the educational experiences of Black males, so I invited adult Black male inmates who previously attended K-12 schools to participate in the study. Four of the nine Black males also had participated in correctional education.

Miles and Huberman (1994) identify 16 strategies for purposive sampling. I focused on three of those strategies for use in my study.

Critical case sampling. Critical case sampling involves selecting participants based on their experience with the phenomenon of interest. In this study, I wanted to study the school experiences of Black males. I interviewed Black males who were, at the time, serving time at a correctional facility. These men were absent from the literature. I also interviewed correctional educators at SCC with experience teaching Black male students.

Convenience sampling. My decision to interview Black male inmates is an example of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a technique in which researchers select individuals or groups that happen to be available and may be willing to participate. In this study, I proposed to interview Black men at a community-based correctional facility. I thought that those men would be available and willing to speak with me about their experiences in K-12 schools. Black residents at SCC were a
convenience sample, because I previously had done some teaching and research in SCC, so I had relationships with administrators at that facility. Those relationships made it convenient for me to dialogue with administrators about my interest in interviewing Black residents at SCC.

I also had previously conducted some unpublished research in the education department at SCC, so I had relationships with the staff members in that department. The lead teacher of that department was excited to be interviewed about teaching students. As such, I consider those teachers a convenience sample.

Snowball sampling. The third sampling strategy used in this study was snowball sampling, also known as network sampling, involves the researcher asking participants to help recruit other participants for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I asked the Black men I spoke with if they could direct me to other Black men they thought might like to participate in the study.

Theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling also informed my decision to interview Black male inmates. Theoretical sampling describes an analyst’s selection of samples of populations, events, or activities based upon the analyst’s review of previous analyses, the analyst’s personal experience, or the literature (Glaser & Straus, 1967).

Previous analyses. In the literature, I found a few previous analyses of Black male inmate narratives about their experiences in K-12 schools and correctional education settings, but none of those studies analyzed narratives to better understand the
cultural relevance of participants’ educators. Ladson-Billings’s (1994; 1995) three-year study of nine teachers consisted of interviews and observations of those teachers in their classrooms. According to Ladson-Billings, the best way to learn about the practices of teachers in schools populated by African American students is to examine those teachers in their classrooms. Ladson-Billings study also included the voices of members of the community, as well as parents whom Ladson-Billings referred to as “consumers of education” (p. 27). Howard (2001) spoke with Black students in an elementary school about their perceptions of their culturally relevant teachers. However, I found few studies in the literature that analyzed the Black inmates’ narratives to better understand their experiences in K-12 schools and their relationships with White educators.

**Personal experiences.** In the present study, I based part of my proposal to interview Black male inmates on prior research I conducted with two men in the GED preparation program at SCC. During that research, I conducted in-depth interviews with two inmates, one Black and one White, about their experiences in K-12 schools and correctional education at SCC. Those participants’ positive responses to that research encouraged me to interview Black residents at SCC for this study.

**The literature.** Black males are the most knowledgeable persons to speak with about the education of Black males, yet the literature includes few studies in which Black males author their experiences in schools (Delpit, 1988; Howard, et al, 2012; Wiggan, 2007). I searched the literature for Black male inmates’ perspective of their K-12
education and found several studies that included interviews with these men (Casella, 2003; Hatt, 2011; Ingalls, Hammond, & Trussell, 2011; Kirkland, 2016; Psycher & Lozenski, 2016). Psycher and Lozenski interview a female, eighth grade student with a history of domestic violence charges to understand how youth navigate the school-to-prison pipeline. Kirkland (2016) interviewed Rolando. At the time Rolando was a sophomore in high school, he had already been suspended five times from school for offenses ranging from not taking off his hat when asked by a teacher to missing too many days of school. Kirkland was examining the connection between mass incarceration and literacy. Casella (2003) interviewed 21 inmates at a medium-security prison in Connecticut about violence, schools, and the criminal justice system. Casella compared the school experiences of inmates with the school experiences of high school students to examine if the use of preventive detention creates a counterproductive institutional link between schools and prisons. Preventive detention is a practice in which disciplinarians respond harshly to students’ minor misbehavior, believing that this type of response will deter students from committing more serious offenses in the future (Casella, 2003).

Hatt (2011) interviewed 18 to 24 year-old offenders about their educational experiences inside and outside of prison. Hatt focused attention on the participants who had admitted to selling drugs at school. Hatt found that drug dealing offered participants an alternate route to masculinity, wealth, and profit making that their inequitable schools had denied them.
Ingalls et al. (2011) interviewed young adult inmates with educational disabilities about their school experiences, student characteristics, placement histories, and the interventions and services schools had provided those youth. Although Ingalls et al. (2011) interviewed inmates, he did not include participants’ narratives in the text. Ingalls analyzed participants’ narratives to create numerical data, which he used to corroborate participants’ special education records.

Casella (2003), Hatt (2011), and Ingalls et al. (2011) each interviewed Black men. However, those scholars did not disaggregate their findings based on participants’ race. As such, the data on the school experiences of Black inmates was unspecified. If scholars do not disaggregate data on the school experiences of Blacks and Whites, then those scholars risk developing a less than complex conceptualization of K-12 school experiences of Black males (Howard, 2013; Palmer et al., 2014).

**Sample size.** In qualitative research, the term sample size refers to numbers of persons, but it also describes the number of interviews and observations, or numbers of events sampled (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, I conducted 31 hours of research at SCC: I had two hour-long face-to-face individual interviews with seven Black men; one hour-long face-to-face interview with two participants; one 90-minute group interview with five participants; two 90-minute group interviews with the teachers at SCC; and three three-hour field observations at SCC.
Recruitment

On October 9, 2012 at 11:00 a.m., I went to SCC to recruit participants. I took a scripted introduction to this recruitment, but because I wanted to develop relationships with the Black men, I did not use the script. I simply had conversations with them. Nevertheless, to ensure consistency of the information, I gave each potential interviewee a handout with a description of my project (see Appendix E). Below is a list of the key points that I wanted to convey:

- I thought that educators might treat student differently based upon those students’ race.
- I wanted to find out about the school experiences of Black males.
- I am a White male who does not know about the school experiences of Black males, but I wanted to learn about their experiences.

After gaining entry to SCC, I walked to the day room where about 35 men were gathered—some were talking at tables and others were watching TV or moving in and out of the yard. I placed my notebook and pen on the housing desk and I made small talk with a correction officer. As I looked around the room, nearly every man was looking at me—an unfamiliar face in the facility. A Black man came out of his room in the north wing and walked towards the housing desk. It was David, a recent graduate of Fit 2B Fathers. We shook hands, and he asked, “Here to start another program?” I told him, “No.” I explained why I was at SCC and invited him to participate. He accepted, but then
informed me that he would be released the following day. We scheduled an interview for that afternoon. As David walked toward the treatment wing, another Black male approached the housing desk. I introduced myself, told him about my project, and invited him to participate. He agreed, and we scheduled an interview for Saturday morning. The man’s name was Justus, and he stood about 6’6” tall.

I walked through the day room and introduced myself and my research project to other men whom I thought might self-report as Black or African American. A couple of men declined my invitation to participate. I thanked them for their time and asked if they knew other Black males I could invite to participate.

I walked over to a table where four men, two Black and two White, were playing cards and asked if I could sit with them. They told me I could, so I got a chair. When they finished playing cards, I introduced my project and myself. At that point, the White males left the table, and I the two men (Dan and Dominic) agreed to participate. I asked if they could recommend other Black men they thought might participate. Dominic pointed toward Larry, one of the men who had declined my invitation. Dominic told me, “He’s a thinker,” I approached Larry. I told Larry that Dominic recommended him and re-invited him. Larry accepted my invitation.

I scheduled interviews with ten men that day, but only nine of them actually participated in the interviews. Over the weekend, correction officers had charged Shane
with making hooch, or homemade fermented beverage in his cell. A judge ordered Shane to prison for that violation.

During the individual interviews with four of the Black male participants, those men told me positive things only about correctional educators. I sought approval from the OSU Internal Review Board to interview the three educators (each of whom was White) on staff at SCC for their perspectives on educating Black male students. Those educators accepted my invitation to participate, and we met for two 90-minute group interviews.

**Black Male Participants**

I proposed to interview Black male inmates for two reasons. First, Black males inmates were a theoretical sample (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I reviewed the extant literature on the education of Black males and found few narrative studies of Black male inmates talking about their experiences and relationships in school with White teachers. None of those studies analyzed participants’ narratives to better understand the cultural relevance of their educators. I also reviewed my personal experience with those men. As a doctoral student, I conducted unpublished qualitative research studies with residents in the GED preparation program at SCC. For one of those studies, I conducted in-depth interviews with one Black and one White student in the GED preparation program at SCC. These participants’ positive response to that research encouraged me to invite Black males at SCC to participate in this study.
The second reason, I proposed to interview Black male inmates is because I considered these men a convenience sample (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Prior to this study, I taught and conducted some unpublished research projects in SCC, so I had relationships with administrators, teachers, and staff members, as well as some of the inmates at that facility. Those relationships made it convenient for me to invite Black men in SCC to participate in my study.

The nine Black men who accepted my invitation to participate in this study were 21 to 47 years of age at the time of the research (see Table 1). At some point in their lives, a few participants had attended K-12 schools outside of the Appalachian region of the U.S., but their most recent attendance was at schools located in, or near, that region. The population of these cities range from 3,000 to 35,000, and the average percentage of Blacks in those cities was 6.8%, which is below the 12.2% average across in the state (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2015). Five of the nine participants were high school graduates, and the other four participants had left school before graduating. At the time of the research, two of those participants had passed the GED exam, one had earned a high school diploma, and one was a student in the GED preparation program at SCC.

Dan. During the research, Dan was 22 years old. He had blue eyes and his hair was in small twists. Dan, following his release, intends to return to his hometown in the panhandle region of West Virginia, population 30,000 including 5% African American.
Dan did not say whom he had lived with while he had attended school, but he told me that his mom, dad, and an aunt gave him support.

Dan described himself as very bright, very intelligent. “I was there [at school] to learn, and I was a fast learner—I was over-fast. I got skipped like two grades, because I was learning at such high-paced level.” Dan described himself as an outgoing student who got along with everyone in school.

**Marcus.** At the time of the interviews, Marcus was 22 years old. Marcus was soft-spoken and addressed me as “sir.” Nevertheless, during the group interview, Marcus behaved differently. With other participants in attendance, Marcus seemed more comfortable—he often was the first to respond to a question, and his responses included an element of surprise or humor. He also made many funny comments at which the other participants laughed. During a discussion about smoking marijuana, for example, Marcus admitted that he started smoking weed when he was in elementary school. As everyone laughed, Marcus added, “I’m serious, man. I was in the *sixth* grade.”

At age 13, Marcus had relocated from a city in the Midwest (population 600,000) to a much smaller city in Appalachia region of Ohio, population 4,000 where he lived with his grandfather. Marcus admitted that he would skip school frequently in that bigger city, but, “when I came down here, I went to school all the time. You know I did good there.” According to Marcus, there were more Black students in his elementary school, located in a large city, than in the entire county where he lived in Ohio. Marcus, who left
school before graduating, earned his GED during a previous incarceration at a youth detention facility.

**Dominic.** Dominic was 23 years old when he was interviewed for this study. Dominic was born in the western part of the U.S., but attended elementary and middle school in another state. Dominic describes his childhood:

Yeah, my childhood was amazing for me. My parents were wealthy. They worked on the oil pipeline in [names state]. We had millions of dollars, a three-story house. I had a his-and-her sink in my bathroom at age eight. I had a lot of things kids don’t get nowadays, and I took advantage of it. It’s gone now; [I] can’t go back.

Following his parents’ divorce, Dominic moved with his mother to a city in Ohio, population 35,000, including 10% African Americans. The high school he attended had nearly 50% Black students. After getting incarcerated during his senior year, Dominic left school before graduating. Educators at that correctional facility transported Dominic back and forth to his high school and helped him study, so he could earn his high school diploma.

Dominic talked about his behavior when he was in public school, “I was a bad kid growing up. My picture was in the dictionary for being bad. I didn’t listen to authority figures at all.” Dominic blames his parents and teachers for the problems he had:
My parents just loved me, but didn’t know what to do. My dad didn’t want to punish me, because he loved me. My mom didn’t want to punish me, because she loved me. I was so spoiled, and I was so bad. I think that’s where the problems in my life come from, I wasn’t punished. I feel that if I had more guidance in seventh, eighth grade, I wouldn’t have got in trouble as much. If teachers would have helped me more, [or told me], “Stay in school.”

Dominic’s dad was White and his mom was African American. He explains how he came to identify as African American:

I take after my dad a lot, you know. I’m very proper, I don’t sag [wear loose-fitting clothing that sags]—I wear a belt. But, I had to come to accept it [being Black]. I had to accept it in prison for real when somebody [a Black inmate] explained it to me, “You’re Black. You can’t change that. Your birth certificate says African American because you got the drop [Black ancestry], so that makes you all Black … you have to accept that, and if you’re never going to accept it, you’re never going to know who you really are.”

Dominic also told me his feelings about racism:

Until this day, I actually have a big problem with racism. The case I’m in here for is a felonious assault. I was at a party, and someone called me the N-word, and I almost beat him to death. Just, even in the county jail before coming here, someone called me the N-word, and I got into a fight. Like, I have a problem with
that—I feel it’s taking African Americans back *years*. Because, when people were called that back in the day, it meant they’re not educated, not smart, scum. And, when you say something like that, not only does it offend me, but it offends my mother, it offends my grandmother, *that* offends my whole family.

Dominic told he was serving time for assaulting a person who called him the N-word.

**Jackson.** Jackson attended school in a small Ohio city, population 5,000 (6% African American). When I interviewed Jackson, he was 47 years old. During the group interview, Marcus made jokes about Jackson’s age. For example, after Jackson told a story about teachers accusing him of something he did not do, Marcus asked, “Wasn’t that like 1945?”

Although Jackson accepted my invitation, he seemed reluctant to participate. During a field observations before we interviewed, I heard another man ask Jackson, “Who’s the White dude.” Jackson replied, “He’s here to find out about high school, or some shit. He must be tripping.” “Yeah!” says the other, and they both laughed.

Nevertheless, during the interviews, I thought that Jackson was happy to talk about his experiences in school. At the end of our first individual interview, I asked Jackson, “How are you feeling.” “Great! Couldn’t be better,” he replied. I felt good about Jackson being comfortable talking with me and sharing his experiences

**David.** When I invited David to participate in this study, we already knew each other. David had participated in my Fit 2B Fathers program. At the time of our
interviews, David was 33 years of age. David described himself as, “Black African American,” which he explained, “Really, what’s up is both of them, because that’s what color I am, and my ancestors are from Africa.”

David was born in another city in the Midwest, but when he was 8 years old, he moved with his mother and stepfather to a small city in Ohio, population 4,000, 9% African Americans. “We moved down here because I was starting to get into gangs and shit, and I pretty much did a 180—I was getting into farm work, responsibilities.”

David describes his behavior in school:

I am not going to lie. I wasn’t a perfect kid, but I wasn’t taking any shit either. I mean, shit, I was wild in school, I mean wild. I graduated with a 3.8 [GPA], but I didn’t care. Nobody could tell me anything.

David described how he handled students who called him the N-word:

It’s just the point, they [other students] shouldn’t be saying it [calling me the N-word], in the first place. Somebody needs to teach them something, because if somebody’s teaching them to say this shit, than they need to be broke of this habit. If they got their ass whooped a couple of times, maybe it would stop, which it did.

David highlighted that the students whom he fought for calling him the N-word would eventually get to know him and become his friends. At the time, one such friend from high school was serving time at SCC.
**Justus.** Justus was 25 years old when I interviewed him. Following his release from SCC, Justus plans to return to his hometown, population of 20,000, including 5% African American. During our first interview, Justus focused on his desire to change his life:

I’m just looking to change my life around. I had many opportunities in the past that would have never landed me in prison, or out here [SCC]. Like, basketball, but I just took the wrong route. Now, I’m focused on switching everything up and getting as far as I can, legally, and using my talents. Just basically going from selling drugs to getting into school, and then after that, being in school and working on my business management degree.

When Justus attended elementary school, he lived in the suburbs with his mom, older sister, and younger brother. Justus described his father as “in and out of prison,” but that his dad was always there for him. He spoke further about his parents:

My mother and father are like the best of both worlds. My father, he’s a hustler. In the streets, he made money, on top of money, on top of money…. And then, on the other side, my mother, she’s been working her whole life, so she makes money, on top of money, on top of money, but she’s got income tax, she’s got paystubs, and she knows what she’s got to do to take care of the family.

**Charles.** Charles was 33 years old at the time of our interview. Charles introduced himself by saying, “I’m a pretty quiet person, so I don’t talk a lot.” Charles
seemed engaged in our conversation, but he mainly provided brief responses to my
questions. Charles emphasized that he had no problems in school, “I’m just a nice person.
I like pretty much most of my teachers. I was good in school. I didn’t start getting in
trouble until I was in college.”

Randall. Randall attended schools in a small town in Ohio, population 10,000,
including 4% African Americans. Randall looked young, but his orange name badge,
which signals its wearer is younger than 21 years of age, confirmed my suspicion. At the
time, Randall was a student in the GED preparation program at SCC.

When Randall attended public schools, he lived with his mom. His mom helped
him with homework, but she would never go inside his schools. Throughout his
education, Randall got support from no teachers and only one principal:

Well, at first, me and the principal got off on a bad hand, but then, once he met
my mom, and they talked about me getting in trouble and stuff, then he called me
into the office and tried to find the least possible consequences for [my] actions,
and he would try to not suspend me, just so I could be in school and not miss
days. During the end of the year, me and him became pretty tight.

Randall had a good relationship with that one principal. Nevertheless, he left
school before graduating.

Larry. When I interviewed Larry, he was 43 years old. He lived in a small town
in northeastern Ohio, population 6,000, including less than 1% African Americans. That
is where he plans to live after his release from SCC. Larry is the only participant in this study who perceived that educators had treated him the same as they had treated the White students:

In [names town], we never experienced anything [racist] like that. I mean, it sometimes baffled people like, “How didn’t you [experience racism]? Where’s this place [you lived]?” But, as far as anything like that, we never experienced anything like that, never. There was never any clubs that said, “OK, we're going to burn crosses in front of all the Black people’s houses.” Where I’m from, it was competitive in academics. It was competitive in sports. It was just competitive in everything. If I did better than my buddy in math, [then] the next week, he’s trying to outdo me. If they had it in the back of their mind that that Black guy’s not going to get [outdo] them, it was never brought up that way. I never experienced anything like that as far as race goes, not in school, sports, or anything—I never had that.

Larry was the fifth man I interviewed. While I already had listened to a number of stories during the previous interviews, Larry’s was quite different. I wanted to better understand his experiences, so I asked him, “Who went out of their way, somebody in school, that made sure you were successful in school?” He replied,

Me. Where I grew up, they [educators] let you excel the way you wanted to excel. If you wanted to excel, you’d excel; if you didn’t want to excel, they’d just say,
“He doesn’t want to excel, he wants to be mediocre.” You had your options to excel, to be mediocre, or be average. I had the opportunity to be in the National Honor Society, and things like that, but they just weren’t for me. They didn’t really say, “Because you’re Black, you can’t do this,” or “It’s only for the White people,” because there’s other African Americans in my school that wanted to be part of clubs and things, and they excelled. They never put the brakes on anybody from excelling.

Although educators had not prejudged nor discriminated against Larry, he implied that they did not support him—they left him on his own to succeed. I feel that the educators in the schools Larry attended perpetuated institutionalized forms of racism. Moreover, Larry made a comment that I wondered about:

There’s some history there [his hometown], but most teenagers don’t really care about that. But, it’s a good place to bring up children and raise your family even with these certain things, but some people don’t understand that. And they shouldn’t, because I tell them, I lived there all my life since I was 5 years old. And, I tell them this is how it was for me.

I inferred from Larry’s narrative that a number of racist acts had occurred in the county where he lived, so I conducted an internet search in which I entered the name of the city and county where he lived, as well as the words Klu Klux Klan. One result was a local newspaper article entitled, “Fiery Crosses Blazed across 1920s Skies.” In that
article, Shaffer (1991) presents a historic account of the growth of the Klu Klux Klan in Northeastern Ohio. One of the counties highlighted in this article was the one in which Larry had grown up. I am not suggesting that the Klu Klux Klan is active in that county, but this article may relate to what Larry referred to during his interview. Furthermore, I wondered if more recent racist activity in that county might have influenced Larry’s narrative.

Larry behaved differently than other participants. For example, during our interview, Larry sat in a chair facing away from a window to the walkway between the day room to the treatment wing. As Larry talked, he twisted his body around (but not the chair), so he could face out of the window. To me, the way he sat looked uncomfortable. I am not sure, but I wonder if Larry felt surveilled by the White residents in the hallway. I wondered if Larry was trying to communicate to those residents that he did not align himself with my study or me. Larry’s behavior seemed so strange that I wondered if he had some type of mental illness. In a personal communication (October 11, 2012), the program administrator at SCC informed me that approximately 18% of the residents at SCC have a mental illness of some kind. Nevertheless, it may be that Larry and I did not develop a relationship in which he felt comfortable talking with me. When I asked Larry when he could attend a second interview, he informed me that he would be released in the next day or two, so Larry and I did not have a second interview. I use few quotations
from Larry in this study. In sum, Larry reminded me that individual participants have different experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>City population* (% Black)</th>
<th>Black peers**</th>
<th>Black educators**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
<td>30,000 (5)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus^EG</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3,000 (9)</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>33</td>
<td>35,000 (10)</td>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson^H</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4,000 (6)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David^H</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3,000 (9)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
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<td>U</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>21,000 (17)</td>
<td>A few</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
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<td>&lt;21</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Larry^H</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7,000 (0.6)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Black Males Demographics and Schools

**According to participants
^H HS Graduate
^E Early Leaver
^G GED/Diploma earned while incarcerated
^U Unspecified
Correctional Educators

Four of the nine participants left school before graduating. Each of them also attended correctional education at either SCC or some other correctional facility. During my interviews with these men, they said only positive things about correctional educators, which was very different from the stories they told about the educators in their public schools. I wanted to learn more about correctional educators’ perceptions of educating Black male students, so I invited the three teachers in the education department at SCC, each of whom was White, to two 90-minute face-to-face group interviews with me. They all agreed to participate.

Cindy. Cindy, a female in her late fifties, began teaching in 1978. At the time, she was a special education teaching in an elementary school. In 2006, SCC hired Cindy as a part-time Title 1 teacher. At the time of the interviews, Cindy was the director of education and lead teacher at SCC.

Jim. Jim, a male in his early fifties, worked as a volunteer teacher for 17 years at SCC. Jim had an MBA, and he worked a full-time career in another field. After graduating from college, Jim worked as a substitute teacher for one year. Students’ behaviors frustrated him, so he stopped being a substitute.

Jackie. Jackie was a female in her early thirties. Jackie had a degree in business administration, and she worked as a substitute teacher in K-12 schools before SCC hired her. At the time of our first interview, Jackie was a part-time Title I teacher at SCC.
Shortly after that interview, Jackie moved out of state and did not participate in the second interview.

**Schedule**

I scheduled one face-to-face individual interview with each resident who accepted my invitation to participate. Of the nine participants, seven completed two individual interviews, and two participants completed one individual interview. Five participants attended the 90-minute group interview. I held the first individual interview on October 9, 2012, and the final individual interview on October 30, 2012. I held the group interview from 7-9 p.m. on November 15, 2012. Marcus, Dominic, Jackson, Charles, and Randall attended the group interview. I interviewed the teachers at SCC on June 26, 2013 and May 11, 2015.

**Data Collection Process**

I produced three kinds of data in this project. First, I had word-processed verbatim accounts of the digitally recorded audio from each individual and group interview. I also created word-processed accounts of hand-written field notes and observation notes. Lastly, I made portable document formats (PDFs) of artefacts—the floor plan of SCC (see Appendix D) and Marcus’ handwritten recommendations for schools to improve the education of Black males (see Appendix F).

**Interview questions.** I began first interviews with the consent process. I read the IRB consent form to each participant. Then, I answered any questions they had. Finally,
I asked them to sign the form. After participants signed a consent form, I turned on the audio recorder. In order to learn about the cultural relevance of educators in the schools participants had attended, I asked them three general questions during the first individual interview: (1) Can you tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member in your school who went out of his or her way to make sure you understood something—to help you be a successful student? (2) Can you tell me a story about a teacher, principal, or staff member welcomed your Black culture into your school or classroom? and (3) Can you tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member who would talk to you about events in school or your community that involved racism? During second interviews, I asked a number of probing questions, which stemmed from the review of my notes and the transcripts. During the group interviews, I asked questions related to the themes that emerged during my analysis of the individual interviews.

During interviews with correctional educators, I asked two questions. The first question I asked was, “The Black males I spoke described correctional educators as helpful. Do you agree that you give care or support to Black male students?” The second question I asked was, “Can you tell me a story about supporting a Black male?”

**Transcription.** I recorded interviews on an Olympus digital recorder. I transcribed the digital recordings using an Olympus transcriber kit. I transcribed participants’ stories using two transcription conventions (Nespor, n.d.). I enclosed clarifying information in square brackets, e.g. Dan: As soon as they see us [Black male
students], all they think is “Trouble.” I also italicized words that participants uttered with added emphasis, e.g. Marcus: The truancy officer grabbed me and started patting me down, like he said he thought he seen a gun. I’m like, “Dude.”

After transcribing the individual interviews, I would give each participant a copy of his transcripts to review and to keep. I followed-up with each participant to see if he had any concerns or questions about his transcripts, but no one did.

Field notes. I recorded field notes during and after each interviews. In these, I would record a description of the interviewee. For example, after I interviewed Dominic the first time, I wrote, “He was very calm, focused. He sat and walked very erect, i.e., good posture. He sat with his hands folded on his lap most of the time.”

Field observations. During the research, I conducted three three-hour field observations at SCC. I spent most of that time in the day room, but I also had lunch in the dining hall on one occasion with two of the participants.

Some of my field notes included interactions I had with non-participants. What follows is an interaction I had with a White inmate:

It was about 12:30 pm. A White inmate (about 50 years old) approached me and said, “Can I talk to you before you leave?” I said I could talk. I introduced myself, and we shook hands. This man then proceeded to tell me how I was going hear nothing but whiny Blacks crying about the past, how life has been so unfair to them, and how they deserve to have it
better. As he spoke, he repeatedly used the term crutch, which he said meant that Blacks never want to do anything or be responsible. At one point he said, “I get so tired of it.” I told him I had a different opinion—that I believe schools treat Black males differently. He got up and walked away. I believe other White men in the correction center may feel the same way about Black males, but this man is the only one who made a comment directly to me.

**Artefacts.** I did not propose to collect written artefacts from participants during this research study, but at the end of his first interview, Marcus asked me if I could tell him the questions I would ask during the second interview. He wanted to write his answers to those questions before we met (see Appendix F). Marcus liked to write, and acknowledged that writing was one of the things he was good at in school. I also have a floor plan of SCC (see Appendix D).

**Data Analysis**

**Analytical Framework from Literature on CRP**

In this study, I used an analytical framework from the literature on CRP. Ladson-Billings (1995) concludes that if scholars want to better understand the experiences of students in schools, “I predicated the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective on the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students along with the continued academic failure of African-American,
Native American and Latino students” (p. 483). Culturally relevant educators see ethnically diverse students as cultural beings, and those teachers adapt their practices based upon those students’ cultural backgrounds, which help them to achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. I thought that such an analytical framework would help me understand the cultural relevance of the educators in participants’ schools and correctional education settings.

At first, I analyzed my data by reading interview transcripts looking for passages in which a participant had characterized an educator as helping him or other Black male students achieve academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. I would cut those passages and group according to the specific category: academic success, cultural competence, or critical consciousness. Each participant characterized one or two educators who had knowledge about Blacks or Black male students, and those educators adapted their teaching practices based upon that knowledge. For example, Jackson’s basketball coach grew up in a Black community, so that coach developed awareness about people who are Black. He could better relate to Jackson and his friends. That coach checked to see if Jackson completed his homework and was attending classes. On the one hand, based on Ladson-Billings’s (2006) theory of CRP, I understood that only a few of participants’ educators were culturally relevant. On the other hand, that theory did not help me understand why those educators may or may not have used CRP.

Grounded Theory
I continued to examine my data, using an analytical framework from the literature on the grounded theory approach (cf. Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Holton, 2007; Strauss, 1987). Glaser and Strauss termed this approach grounded theory because of its emphasis on the generation of theory and the data on which it is grounded. Holton (2009), who, during her master’s program, worked closely with Glaser, states that grounded theory originated in the mid-1960s with the work in medical sociology and resulted in the 1967 publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.

The goal of the grounded theory approach is not to present a more accurate description of what participants said. Rather, grounded theory helps analysts with, “generation and emergence of concepts, problems, and theoretical codes” (Glaser & Holton, 2007, p. 49). Those conceptual codes or categories help analysts account for the behaviors that are relevant and problematic for those involved. Grounded theory is a framework that helps me to develop conceptual categories from participants’ narratives, rather than simply describing what participants had told me. Glaser and Holton (2007) clarify that grounded theory is a conceptual theory-generating methodology. Grounded theorists can use any data, but qualitative data is a favorite. “All is data”—not just one specific data (Glaser and Holton, 2007, p. 57). Researchers using grounded theory must figure out what data they are getting. Analysis based on grounded theory focuses on the “generation and emergence of concepts, problems and theoretical codes” (Glaser & Holton, 2007, p. 49). It is not a mere description of what participants said. Instead it
examines what was said, and from that, develops conceptual categories. Glaser (1978) asserts, “The goal of grounded theory is to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved. The goal is not voluminous description, nor clever verification” (p. 93).

In order for researchers to move past description to conceptualizing the data, as they analyze, they must ask a set of questions, such as (a) What do these data represent? (b) What category does this incident indicate? (c) What is actually happening in the data? and (d) What is the main concern being faced by the participants? These questions help the researcher “focus on patterns among incidents that yield codes and to rise conceptually above detailed description of incidents (Glaser & Holton, 2007, p. 59).

Fit. Fit refers to the emergence of conceptual codes and categories from the data instead of using preconceived codes or categories from extant theory (Holton, 2009). As part of the data analysis, I examined participants narratives about their school experiences, instead of forcing what participants had said into the three categories of CRP: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, as I had done for my initial analyses. One example of fit comes from an interview with Dan in which he talked about the teachers in the schools he attended:

Teachers, they don’t understand, because most of them promote racism; the others, they just didn’t care, because they were Caucasian—you know they didn’t care—they’re not going through it. In our school, they didn’t care about us—they
either hoped you went to jail, or they hoped you got kicked out of school. It was just another Black person gone, another one they didn’t have to deal with, another one they didn’t have to try to understand or didn’t want to understand.

In that passage, Dan made a description of all his teachers who, overtime, did not care about Dan or other Black male students. Based on McDermott’s (1977) analysis of the social relations, over time, between educators and students, I conceptualized that passage as “a school culture based on discrimination of Black male students.”

**Open coding.** Open coding is the initial type of coding for a grounded approach to qualitative analysis (Strauss, 1987). The goal of open coding is to open up the inquiry into concepts that fit the data. Grounded theory analysts examine interview transcripts or other documents very closely, line by line, or even, word by word looking for behaviors, actions, or events, observed or described in the words of interviewees. In this project, I conducted open coding by reading printed transcripts of interviews looking for passages in which participants described experiences between them and educators. David, for example, described experiences with educators in a Catholic school he had attended:

I wish I would have stayed in Catholic school, because they took time to know you as a human being, not by your race or color, but as a human being, period. And then, Catholic schools are 10 times better, because they take the time with you—if you’re having problems with some subjects, they sit down and figure out why you’re having problems in those subjects and correct those errors.
Based on McDermott’s (1977) analysis of social relations, over time, between teachers and students, the correctional educators at SCC created a culture based on the support of Black male students.

Because David described care and support from all the educators in that Catholic school he attended, not just an individual educator, I conceptualized that passage as “a school culture of care and support.” Dan described the entire staff of teachers at SCC caring about and supporting him:

These [teachers at SCC] are like the most important teachers I ever have in my life. Like, they’re here for you—anytime you have a problem—they’re right there. They give you great advice, just, you know, support. They really push you. I like a person that try to help you, push you, and know that they’re pushing you, because all they want to do is see you do better—they want to see you succeed. They want to see you make something of yourself.

**Axial coding.** Glaser (1978) emphasizes that when coding an incident for a category, an analyst should “compare it with the previous incidents coded in the same category” (p. 439). Strauss (1987) uses the term axial coding for this process of comparing data relevant to the phenomena in a given category. This data, for example, may highlight conditions of the phenomena, consequences of the phenomena, strategies used, or interactions that occurred between the actors (Strauss, 1987). For example, educators who supported Black male students had prior experiences with Blacks or Black
male students that helped those educators to acquire knowledge or cultural awareness about Blacks or Black male students. A coach who supported him had grown up in a Black community. That coach had some awareness about people who are Black, and he better understood Black male students.

**Constant comparison.** Another feature of grounded theory is the constant comparison of incidents looking for similarities and differences (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Constant comparison occurs continually through all technical operations, e.g. observing, interviewing, coding, analyzing, and writing, from the outset of the research project until its close (Strauss, 1987).

As I read and analyzed my data, constant comparison helped me recognize that other participants also talked about how knowledge of Blacks helped those educators support those students. For example, Cindy did not grow up around Blacks, but she had learned about Black males from teaching those men in SCC. Based on her teaching of Black males, Cindy thought that Black males take longer to trust her than it takes them to trust Jim. Cindy intentionally chose to engage with Black male students and help them, so she could build trust with them.

**Analytical Framework from Literature on Social Relations between Students and Educators**

The literature emphasizes that the relationship between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds matter in the education of those students (Collins, 2000; Ladson-
Billings, 1994, 2006; Ferguson, 2000; Gay, 2002, 2010; Gay & Howard, 2006; Harper, 2012; Hooks, 1994; McDermott, 1974, 1977; van Manen, 1982, 1991, 1994, 2016a, 2016b Noguera, 2003; Noddings, 1991; Strayhorn, 2010). I needed a framework to analyze my data to understand the relationships between participants and educators. I turned to Ray McDermott and Max van Manen. McDermott is a sociologist who analyzes the ongoing social relations between teachers and students in schools and classrooms to understand the cultures in those settings. Classrooms in which students and teachers develop trusting relations between them can be contexts in which successful learning is more likely to occur.

Max van Manen is a phenomenologist. Phenomenological research is a method of study of human phenomena. Phenomenologists are interested in describing the essential nature of a phenomenon, rather than trying, for example, to determine if a phenomenon actually occurred, how often it may have occurred, or what factors may have contributed to its occurrence. Van Manen (1994) also highlights that phenomenology is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness: “A heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life” (p. 38). Van Manen emphasizes, “In phenomenological research, the is always implies a possible ought” (p. 39). In other words, that which a researcher says is best for students is that which educators ought to be doing for students.
Participants implied that the relationships with educators matter in the educational success of Black males. All nine Black male participants implied that they wanted pedagogical relationships with K-12 educators, yet eight of those participants told stories in which many of those educators did not form relationships Black male students. Four of the nine Black male participants left school before graduating, but they participated in correctional educations, in either Springfield, or another correctional facility. I inferred from the narratives of those men that every correctional educator engaged in pedagogical relationships with Black male students. They implied that those educators cared about those students and helped them prepare for and/or pass the GED exam. The teachers at SCC told stories about intentionally forming pedagogical relationships with Black male students. These teachers’ stories corroborate the Black males’ perceptions of the pedagogical relationships between them and correctional educators.

In the sections below, I introduce my analytical framework from McDermott and van Manen. I use that framework to reanalyze participants’ narratives to understand more about the relationships between Black male students and educators in K-12 schools and correctional education settings. I also use that framework to analyze the teachers’ narratives to understand more about their perceptions of educating Black male students.

**Trusting relations.** McDermott analyzes the social relations, over time, between teachers and students in schools and classrooms to understand, “the importance of social relations between teachers and children in the development of learning environments” (p.
McDermott is interested in the development of trusting relations between teachers and students. He defines trusting relations, “I am talking about trust as a quality of the relations among people, as a product of the work they do to achieve a shared focus” (p. 199). In the classroom, “these issues translate into how the teacher and children can understand each other's behavior as directed to the best interests of what they are trying to do together” (p. 199). As students and teachers work together the develop trust that each is committed the other. Trusting relationships are contexts in which learning is likely to occur.

McDermott (1974) theorizes that a breakdown in communication between educators and minority students may result in their failure to form trusting relations. McDermott uses the metaphor pariah-host to signify the negative relationship between White educators and minoritized students whom those educators have judged as low status:

Students and teachers in a pariah-host population mix usually produce communicative breakdowns by simply performing routine and practical everyday activities in ways their subcultures define as normal and appropriate. Because behavioral competence is differently defined by different social groups, many children, and teachers fail in their attempts to establish rational, trusting, and rewarding relationships across ethnic, racial or class boundaries in the classroom.
Because of this miscommunication, school learning is shunned by many minority children, and school failure becomes a peer group goal. (p. 173)

McDermott theorizes that when White host teachers use their own point of view to assess the behaviors of students of color, those teachers may be more likely to judge those behaviors as inappropriate and subsequently reject interacting with those students and do not help them with learning. In turn, those students may reject teachers’ negative appraisal and develop patterns of inattention toward those teachers. McDermott describes the progressively deteriorating relationship that can develop between White host teachers and students of color:

If such misunderstandings take place very often in the early grades, the results can be disastrous. Once a host teacher treats a child as inadequate, the child will find the teacher oppressive. Often, once a child finds a teacher oppressive, the child will start behaving inadequately. After such a point, relations between the child and the teacher regress—the objectionable behavior of each will feed back negatively into the objectionable behavior of the other. (p. 178)

The breakdown in the relationships between White host educators and students of color begins those teachers judging students’ behaviors from the teacher’s point of view. With that point of view, teachers may be more likely to assess students as low-status or pariah and subsequently those teachers reject interacting with those students and do not help them with learning. Because those students felt oppressed by teachers, they are more
likely to react negatively to teachers’ assessment and reject interacting with those teachers. McDermott uses the metaphor, pariah-host, to represent the relationship between those educators and students. That metaphor helped me analyze participants’ narratives and understand their relationships with White K-12 educators who rejected interactions with Black male students and did not form trusting relationships with them. Eight of the nine participants’ in this study implied that most of their K-12 educators formed pariah-host relations with Black male students.

Participants told stories in which a few K-12 educators, but every correctional educator, had developed trusting relationships with Black male students, in which participants implied that those educators cared about, supported, and motivated Black male students to achieve some educational success—pass a class, earn a high school diploma, or prepare for and/or pass the GED exam. Three participants highlighted that the educators who supported Black male students had prior relationships with people who were Black, and that those educators better understood Black male students. Based on a constructivist perspective of learning (cf. Wells, 2000), I infer that those educators’ prior relationships with Blacks served as contexts in which those educators could develop a cultural awareness about people who are Black. With that cultural awareness, those educators may have been more likely to interact with Black male students, help them with learning, and develop trusting relationships with them. Based on McDermott’s analysis of relations between White educators and students of color, educators with a
cultural awareness about Blacks were more likely to judge the behaviors of Black male from those students’ point of view, assess those behaviors as normal, and subsequently interact with those students, help them with learning, and develop trusting relationships with them. I use the metaphor guest-host relations to represent the relationships between White host educators who had a developing cultural awareness about Blacks and the Black male students whom those educators judged as normal and subsequently interacted with to develop trusting relations.

In summary, McDermott provided me with a theoretical framework to re-analyze participants’ narratives about their relationships with educators and the cultures in their K-12 schools and correctional education settings. Below are some of the key theoretical assumptions of McDermott that I used to analyze the data:

- Educators whose prior experiences with people who are Black can judge students’ behaviors from those students’ point of view. These educators are more likely to assess those behaviors as normal, and subsequently engage in forming trusting relationships with those students.
- The trusting relationships develop between educators and students who can work together on learning. These relationships are contexts in which successful learning can occur.

**Pedagogical Relations.** Whereas McDermott emphasizes the importance of understanding the social relations that occur over time between teachers and students, van
Manen (1994a) observes teachers, “In their daily living with children or young people, teachers tend to be mainly occupied with the moment-to-moment demands of acting in an appropriate manner” (p. 153). Van Manen observes the relationships between a teacher and students as those relationships occur in incidents that require teacher's immediate and appropriate action.

Van Manen found that when students talk about their experiences with teachers, “their anecdotes reveal that classroom interactions are always relational; teachers and students cannot help but stand in certain relations to each other” (p. 135). Van Manen (1982) clarifies that some of those relations may be pedagogical. He defines pedagogical relations:

A certain kind of encounter, a form of togetherness between … teacher and pupil … a relationship of practical actions between an adult and a young person who is on the way to adulthood. (p. 284)

The pedagogical relation between an adult and a child has two components. The first component is that those relations are contexts in which educators can develop pedagogical thoughtfulness, or an understanding, “how young people experience things, what they think about, how they look at the world, what they do, and, most importantly, how each child is a unique person” (p. 139). The second component of a pedagogical relation is that it provides a context in which educators can act with pedagogical tact:
To act tactfully as an educator may mean in a particular situation to be able to see what goes on with children, to understand the child's experience, to sense the pedagogical significance of this situation, to know how and what to do, and to actually do something right. (p. 15)

Educators who act with pedagogical tact do that which they imagine is best for those students learning. Van Manen (1994a) characterizes the pedagogical relation between educators and students as an intentional relation: “The pedagogical relation is an intentional relation wherein the intent of the teacher is always determined in a double direction: by caring for a child as he or she is, and by caring for a child for what he or she may become” (p. 143). In other words, pedagogical relations are not an automatic response of teachers to students. The relations between educators and students can be contexts in which educators intentionally get to know those students, imagine what is best for their learning, and actually to do that which those educators imagine is best for those students’ learning.

These concepts, known as pedagogical thoughtfulness and pedagogical tact (van Manen, 1994), enable me to analyze participants’ narratives about interactions with educators to understand more about the pedagogical relations between them. What follows are some of the key theoretical assumptions of Van Manen that I used to analyze my data:
Educators develop pedagogical relationships with students when they use those relationships to develop knowledge about those students, imagine what might be best for their learning, and actually do that which is best for students’ learning and development.

Educators who develop pedagogical relationships with students are likely to have a caring interest in those students.

I developed my analytical framework from the work of McDermott and van Manen. This framework helped me to re-analyze participants’ narratives. McDermott and van Manen have complementary perspectives on social relations between students and educators. McDermott’s sociological perspective helped me to analyze participants’ narratives in which they talk about their interactions with educators, in general, over time. I analyzed those narratives to understand more about the cultures in participants’ schools and classrooms. The phenomenological perspective of van Manen helped me to analyze participants’ narratives in which they describe specific interactions with individual educators. I analyzed those narratives to understand more about the pedagogical tact of participants’ educators. Howard (2013) encouraged me to analyze participants’ narratives to understand more about how educators may have formed and sustained relationships with Black male students, and how those relationships may have contributed to participants’ educational success.
My goal is to add to the literature a better understanding about the pedagogical relationship between educators Black male students, and how those relationships contribute to the educational successes of those students. I did not interview any of the K-12 educators whom participants mentioned during their interviews, but my analysis enabled me to infer the relationships between those educators and participants.

In the next chapter, I present my data and its analysis. The analytical framework I used to analyze that data is from the literature on culturally relevant or responsive pedagogy. My goal is to better understand the cultural relevance of educators in the schools and correctional education settings the Black male participants had attended.
Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis, Part I

After reading select portions of the literature, I realized that some schools and educators often fail to meet the social and academic needs of Black male students, even though those educators could use CRP to improve the education of those students. I wondered why educators in schools populated by Black male would not use CRP. I designed this study to better understand the cultural relevance of educators’ in school populated by Black males. CRP is an effective pedagogical approach that educators can use to improve the education of students of Color (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002, 2007). Culturally relevant teachers help their students achieve educational success by adapting their teaching practices based on what they know about their students’ cultural backgrounds and/or lived experiences.

As a critical scholar, I wanted to better understand the cultural relevance of educators in schools populated by Black males by speaking with Black males. I interviewed a group of Black males who are absent from the literature, namely Black male inmates. During face-to-face individual and group interviews with nine of these participants, I asked them questions to elicit stories about their experiences in K-12 schools and correctional education settings. I theorized that a better understanding about the cultural relevance of teachers in schools populated by Black male students could help me better understand why teachers may choose not to use that pedagogy to improve the education of Black male students. I developed a framework from the literature on CRP. I
used that framework to analyzed participants’ narratives to understand the cultural relevance of their educators. In the following, I present selected portions of participants’ narratives and my analysis of these narratives to convey the cultural relevance of educators in the schools and correctional education settings that participants had attended.

**Culturally Relevant Educators**

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: educators need to (a) help students achieve academic success, (b) develop and/or maintain a cultural competence, and (c) develop and/or maintain a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). I interpret Ladson-Billings’s criteria as all-or-nothing—culturally relevant teachers help students meet all three criteria, or those teachers are not culturally relevant. Nevertheless, in this study, I analyzed the cultural relevance of educators based on two criteria: (1) educators have some cultural awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of people or students who are Black and (2) educators are engaged in developing pedagogical relationships with those students. In essence, I based my criteria for cultural relevance on the extent to which an educator has some knowledge about the cultural backgrounds and/or lived experiences of people and/or students of color; and the extent to which an educator engages in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students.

**CRP in K-12 Schools**
Six of the men told stories about White educators in K-12 schools who worked within a CRP framework. These educators had some awareness about the lived experiences of people or students who are Black, and engaged in developing pedagogical relationships with them. A passage from Jackson is illustrative of such an educator:

I think they [coaches] got a better understanding of Blacks, because they’ve dealt with them more personally, as whole, not just in a classroom—they grew up playing basketball together. When you’re on a team, you get to know each other more personally. My favorite coach was a basketball coach. He always made it known that he grew up around Black guys, so he understood us more, he was more able to relate to us. He actually tried to keep me on the right path. I was a little rebellious in school, and he tried to help me as much as possible—he made sure I was doing my schoolwork, and he made sure I was making my classes. Where they [teachers] didn’t understand what we were doing or how we were doing things. Most of our teachers thought most of the things we were doing was always trying to do something negative, when it wasn’t.

Jackson was 47 years old when he told me his story. He would have been in school during the early 1980s. Jackson said he still considers that coach a friend. Jackson’s basketball coach grew up around Blacks. I infer that in his relationships with Blacks, that coach developed awareness about these people. Jackson implied that awareness helped his coach to better understand and relate to Jackson and his friends.
Based on a Ladson-Billings perspective, I assess Jackson’s coach as worked within a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. His coach had some awareness about people who are Black, and he helped Jackson achieve some educational success—attending class and competing homework assignments. Jackson’s coach illustrates a finding by Duncan-Andrade (as cited in Howard, 2013) that coaches have a level of awareness and concern about the social and cultural realities of Black male students that enables them to develop an understanding of Black male students.

In the passage above, Jackson implies that his classroom teachers lacked a cultural awareness about Black males. Jackson implied that what those teachers did know about Black males came from media portrayals or gossip about them. Based on my criteria of cultural relevance, Jackson’s classroom teachers did not work within a framework of cultural relevance. Based on a critical race perspective, Jackson’s classroom teachers acted with prejudice toward him—they did not know him but presumed his behaviors were negative.

Dan is another participant who implied that one of his educators, a principal, worked within a framework of CRP:

No, I wasn’t a perfect student. I got into trouble [for] cutting in line, horseplay, you know, kid stuff. But, me and my cousins got the worst of it—we got the worst of everything. Instead of just correcting us and telling us what we did wrong, they [teachers] would go as far as suspending us. Never had one of them where we
[would] sit down and talk, or [they said,] “I want to see you do good.” …

Elementary school, I had my principal behind my back. Our principal taught my mother when she was in school, so he ended up being my principal, when I was in elementary school. If anything ever happened, he always tried to give me the lesser time. He used to always say [to teachers], “Look their [Black male students’] actions are a little rash, but I know he’s [Dan’s] not a bad kid.” And, he would help me out, like, all the time. That principal was the only person in my whole schooling who acted like that.

Dan highlighted that his principal had been one of his mother’s classroom teachers when she attended school. I inferred that principal might have developed some awareness about people who are Black by having a relationship with Dan’s mom. Dan implied that his principal’s cultural awareness of Blacks might have helped him to advocate with Dan’s teachers. Based on a CRP framework, Dan’s principal worked within a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. Dan implied, as Jackson had, that his teachers never had gotten to know him. I inferred from Dan that his teachers did not talk with him, they did not get to know him. Without knowing Dan, or other people who are Black, I think those teachers may have responded to Dan based on a stereotype of Black males that is portrayed in the media (Duncan, 2002). Dan’s teachers did not work within a framework of cultural relevance. I argue that teachers’ lack of knowledge about Dan prevented those teachers from working within that framework. Based on a critical
perspective, Dan’s teachers discriminated against Dan and his cousins—those teachers punished those boys harshly for trivial misbehaviors. It may have been that Dan’s teachers were unable to realize that they treated Dan more harshly than they treated his White counterparts or that those teachers simply resisted getting to know Dan, or even that they were afraid of Dan, because he was a Black male.

Dominic and Marcus each told a story about a teacher who would come to their house when they misbehaved. They perceived that those teachers were trying to help them, not get them in trouble. For example, Marcus described the teacher who would go to his house:

I got in trouble a couple of times in school and she [my sixth grade teacher] would go to my house and speak to my parents about it. It wasn’t like she was trying to punish me or something. She was actually seeing where I was coming from, like, why I was acting like that, or why I wasn’t doing my work. I thought that was pretty cool.

Marcus’s teacher illustrates Gonzáles, Moll, and Amanti (2005) who encourage teachers to visit their students’ households and engage with their families’ cultural environments to develop funds of knowledge of their students’ lived experiences and/or cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Monroe (2005) emphasizes that educators should familiarize themselves with culturally specific behavior management strategies and incorporates those strategies into their teaching. I inferred from Dominic and Marcus’s
narratives that their teachers were trying to learn about him and his family—trying to develop a cultural awareness about those boys and their families. Those teachers illustrate Howard’s (2001) description of how teachers can learn about their students’ lives:

Teachers must have the will and the courage to learn about the culture, life, and history of African-American people. The acquisition of this knowledge requires more than reading various literature about the African-American experience. It entails talking to parents, students, and community members and immersing oneself in various facets of the day-to-day environment that students experience.

(p. 147)

CRP in Correctional Education Settings

Four of the nine Black male participants left public education before graduating, but each of those men also participated in correctional education during a subsequent incarceration, in either Springfield, or some other facility. Each of those participants implied that correctional educators helped them achieve some educational success such as preparing for and/or passing the GED exam. Marcus, for example, said those educators encouraged him. Dominic said his educators helped him study for his OGTs (Ohio Graduation Test) and drove him to his high school, where he would to take the test. Dan, who passed his GED exam just two weeks prior to our interview, highlights the significance of the support the educators at SCC offered him:
I know my teachers care. Like, when I got here [SCC], I’m looking, and I’m thinking, “Wow man, they’re really riding my back about this [preparing for the GED exam].” If I wasn’t in class on time, they would call me to the front desk—I couldn’t even go out and smoke a cigarette, and they’d call. These are like the most important teachers I ever have in my life. Like, they’re here for you—anytime you have a problem—they’re right there. They give you great advice, you know, support. They really push you. They want to see you succeed. In the end, I got my GED, and it was because I had that support—I had support from my teachers and they pushed me. Just to have that support is one of the biggest things you can get from anybody, in or outside of school, and you didn’t get that in school. And how I felt in school, “I shouldn’t even be here, they don’t care, so why should I care?” I tell them [the teachers] that all the time, I’m like, “Man, I wish my teachers in school [pushed me] like you, then I probably would have made it somewhere.”

Dan reduced all the helpful practices of the teachers at SCC—their teaching, advising, caring, motivation, encouragement, and prodding—to one word: support. He implied that his teachers’ support helped him achieve educational success. He was a Black male student, yet these educators helped him achieve some educational success—he prepared for and passed the GED exam. The teachers engaged in developing pedagogical relationships with Dan as soon as he started the GED preparation program,
and they supported him throughout that program. Dan regarded these teachers as his most important teachers. He implies that he worked hard because of their support. The positive experience Dan had in SCC illustrates Ladson-Billings’s (1994) finding that students who have good relationships with educators are more committed to learning. Dan’s experiences also affirm Noguera’s argument for more supportive teaching: “if schools were to become more nurturing and supportive, students would be more likely to perceive schools as a source of help and opportunity rather than an inhospitable place that one should seek to escape and actively avoid” (p. 455).

**Correctional Educators’ Perspectives on Educating Black Males**

I also interviewed the three teachers in the Education Department at SCC. These educators told me stories about how they had developed some cultural awareness about the social and cultural realities of people and/or students who are Black. Cindy admitted that when she first started teaching, she thought everyone’s life was just like hers. I infer from Cindy that before she began teaching, she had little, if any, cultural awareness about the lived experiences about people who are Black. Nevertheless, Cindy told me a story about what she had learned about the Black males at SCC:

I find the guys will warm up with Jim, way before they will warm up to trust me. The first weeks [names Black male] was in class, I noticed he would gravitate to Jim, and not me, so I would push my way in. If Jim was here, I wouldn’t let him go to Jim. I never forced him, but I would go sit next to him and say, “Are you
doing alright? Can I help you with something?” At first, he would answer, “No, I’m OK.” I consciously approached him, and I suppose I would make sure that his work got graded in a timely manner, so he would know that I got his back and that I am here for him. It took him a few weeks, but now, I think he goes to whichever of us is available.

Cindy implied that over time she developed some awareness Black males in the GED program. She said that she had learned that that those men would take longer to trust her, compared to the time they took to trust Jim. Cindy adapted her teaching to what she knew about specific students. With these men, she intentionally engages in developing pedagogical relationships with those students to build trust with them. This finding illustrates Ogbu’s (1987) work. Ogbu suggests that educators can learn about students by observing their behavior at school, asking them about their cultural practices, speaking with students’ parents, and researching students’ ethnic groups. With her awareness about Black male students, Cindy intentionally chose to engage in relationships with those students to help them trust her. Based on Ladson-Billings’s viewpoint, Cindy was culturally relevant. She sensed that Black males did not easily trust her, so she adapted her teaching to earn their trust. She stays close to them, she offers her help, and she grades their work in a timely manner.
Cindy had not developed a cultural awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of Black males prior to teaching at SCC. However, another teacher, Jim had a different experience:

When you [Maiorano] sent me the [interview] questions about a month ago, I took them home and looked at them. I don’t like to admit, but there’s a difference, between Black and White cultures in America, there is a difference. One’s not better than the other, but there’s a difference. I think through life experience, I came to recognize that and to be adaptable to it. The activities and jobs in my life have led me to where I have been around everybody. I grew up in [names city] where you have a significant Black population. I played basketball, even into my adult life, and met a lot of Black friends that way. Enlisted army is all kinds people who came from money, or not. I worked for three years in human services; [and] I worked in the kitchen at [names hospital] during high school. I had the wonderful opportunity to work for two Black females, they were my supervisors. If you don’t adapt to different people you’re working with, you’re going to have a very difficult time getting anything across, a difficult time. Now public school teachers, God bless them, but you [those teachers] have to accept the fact that cultures are different, and you have to be flexible. You can’t expect everyone [students] to bend to your way of thinking. Being a stubborn Irishman, that took a lot for me to do. Because, at first it was, “Yep, [bangs on the table], this is this
way.” But it’s not, and that [thinking] doesn’t get you anywhere in this life, or in teaching, or in tutoring. You can’t do it. You have to be flexible with your audience. In the 17 years here, I have learned to be flexible. I try to be as flexible as I can.

Jim began, at a young age, to develop cultural awareness about the social and cultural realities of people who are Black. Based on constructivist theory of learning (Wells, 2000), Jim’s prior relationships with people who are Black served as contexts in which he developed some cultural awareness about their social and cultural realities. One thing Jim became aware of is that there are differences between Black culture and White culture. Jim adapted his teaching based on his understanding of those differences. When I asked Jim if he could tell me how he adapts his teaching, he replied:

Here’s what I do. Young Black men in our society, I make an effort to sit down and talk specifically [with them]. I go out of my way, because I don’t want that young man to feel like he was in school—like put him in the C-D class and just get him through. I want them to understand that they’re just as important as the next guy. I think young Black males need that. I want to build confidence. You [a man] can say what he wants, and I will listen to it, it seems like the young Black males need that. I am just natural. I am not very rigid. In the 17 years here, I have learned to be flexible. I talk about [local city] being “9 mm Alley,” and that
breaks the ice and we can get on to something else. I’m a middle-aged White guy, but I understand what the world is, and that tends to break the ice.

Jim’s practice illustrates a teacher acting within a framework of CRP. Jim implies that he understood the racism that is pervasive in education—he supposed that schools treated Black male students unequally. He chooses to speak with Black males to help them know that they are going to have a different experience at SCC, compared to what he supposed their experiences were in public school. Jim’s narrative also illustrates Gay’s (2002) assertion that educators, who are conscious of their own cultural socialization, are able to recognize how students’ experiences may differ from their own, and then engage differently with those students. Jim’s narrative illustrates Ladson-Billings’s (1994) assertion that educators, whose lived experiences include people who differ from them, can more easily build cultural relationships with diverse students, thereby maximizing those students’ effort and performance.

Jim and Cindy had a developing cultural awareness about the lived experiences of people who are Black and/or Black male students. With that awareness, those teachers were able to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with these students. Based on my criteria, Jim and Cindy are operating within a culturally relevant framework—they adapted their teaching based on their developing cultural awareness about the lived experiences of Black males to help them achieve some agreed upon level of educational success, such as graduation or passing the GED exam.
In this section, I used selected passages to illustrate the few educators whom participants characterized as culturally relevant. Those educators had some prior relationships with people and/or students who are Black, in which those educators developed some cultural awareness about the lived experiences of people who are Black. Those educators used that understanding to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with those students.

**Educators Who Lacked a Cultural Awareness about Blacks**

The analytical framework I used from CRP helped me to understand that a few of participants’ educators had operated within a framework of cultural relevance. On the one hand, seven participants characterized one or two educators as operating within that framework. On the other hand, eight participants characterized educators avoiding or rejecting relationships with Black males. Participants implied that these educators had some awareness about people and/or students who are Black, an awareness that they developed from media images of Blacks or gossip with other teachers about students who were Black. I inferred from participants’ narratives that those teachers had not worked within a framework of cultural relevance. Participants’ teachers who lacked knowledge of the cultural backgrounds or lived experiences of Blacks and/or Black male students were more likely to act with prejudice towards or discriminate against these students.
Prejudice

I turned to grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, Glaser & Holton, 2007; Strauss, 1987) to better understand participants’ narratives about teachers who did not work within a framework of cultural relevance. Glaser encourages analysts to look at the data and ask questions, such as: What is this data a study of? What category does this incident indicate? What is actually happening in the data? What is the main concern being faced by the participants?

In the sections below, I present selected texts from eight of the nine Black male participants to illustrate the three conceptual categories that emerged from my grounded analysis of the data: prejudice, discrimination, and institutional inequities. From a critical race perspective, teachers who did not work within a framework of cultural relevance were more likely to act with prejudice toward and discriminate against Black male students.

Prejudice is one of three conceptual categories that emerged from the grounded analysis of my data. Eight of the nine Black male participants implied that their educators prejudged Black male students (see Table 2).

In the literature, Tatum (2003) defines prejudice as a preconceived judgment or opinion usually based on limited or inaccurate information. A quotation from Charles illustrates educators’ prejudice: “I hadn’t even been in trouble, and they [school
personnel] considered me a troublemaker.” Charles implies that teachers merely had to look at him to know he was a troublemaker.

Based on a CRT framework, I understood that educators in Charles’s school saw him as Black and assumed he was trouble. Based on a culturally relevant perspective, Charles’s teachers did not work within a framework of cultural relevance—they did not know him, so they could not adapt their teaching to help him with learning.

In my analysis of participants’ narratives, I found three types of criteria upon which educators would base their discrimination or prejudice of participants: (1) seeing them as Black, (2) knowing their previous misbehaviors, and/or (3) media portrayals of Black males.

Seeing Participants as Black. Some participants implied that educators would discriminate against Black male students as soon as they saw those students were Black. A passage from Dan is illustrative of that prejudice:

As soon as they [educators] see us [Black male students], all they think is “trouble.” Everything they [educators] did had a contradiction of ours, of us [Black male students]. We did something, they look at us like, “That’s not the way to do it, you’re] supposed to do it our [educators’] way. This is how we want you to do it. This is how we want you to dress. This is how we think you should be.” Every time we went to school, it was always something.
Based on CRT perspective, Dan’s educators acted with prejudice toward him. Those educators did not know Dan, but as soon as they saw he was Black, they considered him trouble.

**Previous misbehaviors.** Participants implied that some educators prejudged Black students based on those students’ previous misbehaviors. Marcus described how his educators prejudged him based on his past:

> I like doing schoolwork and stuff, and I like being in class. When I was in [entered] high school, I was in school every day, but it seemed like they [educators] were just trying to get it over with, just like using my past, and what they heard about me against me. I’ve been to [names two residential youth detention facilities], so they had a big idea that I was selling drugs and bringing drugs into the school. That’s what I had my biggest problems with, teachers expecting me to disrupt class, and I never really did that.

In this passage, Marcus suggests that educators who knew his past did not trust him.

Based on a CRT perspective, I think teachers heard gossip about Marcus’s past, so they assumed he was going to sell drugs in their classrooms. As such, those teachers felt that they needed to harshly punish Marcus, rather than treating him like a student who had served his time and was back in school to learn. Marcus’s perspective is illustrates Rios (2011) who concludes that a criminal record is an enduring classification of social
status that marks students of Color as incompetent and dangerous. Marcus served his sentences for the crimes he was charged for, but his teachers wanted to continue punishing him. Moreover Marcus described how teachers learned about is his past:

You know how like teachers talk in the teachers’ lounge like, “That [says his last name] kid is a pain in my neck in my class.” So, then [that teacher is] going to think that you’re [Black males] going to do the same thing in his class, so they just started being biased in their opinions. They [also] know what you’re doing outside of school, or they have a general idea of what you’re doing outside of school.

Teachers did not get to know Marcus by having relationships with him. They learned about him from gossip with other teachers. This illustrates Milner’s (2019) finding that some teachers’ formed beliefs and thoughts about Black male students from conversations in the teacher's’ lounge on the topic of Black male students. Marcus also told about another location where educators would gossip about him:

I think that our community was so small, so they [school personnel] might hear from somebody at the bar about what the [names his last name] kid’s doing. They’re drunk, and they might tell everyone in the bar, a whole bunch of teachers. And then you’ll notice, come Monday morning, they’re [those teachers are] looking at you like crazy.
Marcus implies that some teachers did not even have to meet him to discriminate against him. They merely had to hear gossip about him, and they would discriminate against him.

**Media portrayals of Blacks.** A number of participants inferred that educators based their prejudice of Black males on media portrayals of Black males. Palmer (2014) emphasizes that those portrayals often include gangster, drug dealer, and street thug. During the group interview, Marcus, Jackson, and Dominic talked about how the media’s portrayal of Black males can influence teachers:

Marcus: I don’t understand how like they [educators] look at Black kids being so dangerous when like Columbine was all White kids. All those school shootings are done by White kids, and they look at us like gangsters.


Dominic: If that’s what you [educators] see every day [Black males portrayed as criminals], that’s what you’re going to adapt to [believe about Black males]. It’s a part of your environment.

Based on a CRT framework, the dialogue between Jackson, Marcus, and Dominic illustrates the power of the media and the permanence of racism. Marcus questioned how teachers could believe the media portrayals of Blacks, even though evidence contradicted
that image. This also illustrates Milner’s (2010) finding that many of the school personnel who lack exposure to and experiences with people of color will rely on stereotypes of diverse students of color that they based on or deduced from the media.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is a second conceptual category that emerged from my analysis of participants’ narratives. Discrimination is a term for the differential treatment of similarly situated individuals, based on an individual's’ race, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, or national origin (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). I inferred from participants’ narratives that educators’ discriminated against them in two ways, either through their teaching and learning approaches or through disciplinary actions. I begin with teaching and learning contexts.

**Discrimination in teaching and learning contexts.** Six participants highlighted that educators discriminated against Black male students differently in teaching and learning contexts. Dominic, for example, implied that in those contexts, White teachers would give Black males limited amounts of help:

The educational system I grew up in is awesome….We [Black males] got the same tests as everybody else; if you ask for help, they’re not going to deny you. They might not give you as much help as other kids, but I thought it was fair. They’ve all tried to help me; they’ve all tried to give me as much as they gave the kid before me and the kid behind me, that’s how I feel. I don’t think they treated me
domically because of schooling, I think they treated me differently because of me being African American, not because of me not knowing something, or me knowing something. I think I got treated differently because of my skin color.

Dominic’s reflection and conclusion of why teachers treated him differently resonates with Garza (2009), who found that some teachers might be able to communicate with an entire classroom of students, but when interacting one-on-one with students who differ from them, those teachers may struggle. Dominic perceives that teachers did not treat him differently because they thought he may have been academically deficient. Rather, those teachers treated him differently, because he was Black. Similarly, David perceives that educators discriminated against him by limiting the help they gave him:

The academic stuff was okay in high school, but I feel they [educators] could have helped us [Black males] out a little bit more than what they did. They helped, but then again they just pushed you forward. If you were stuck on something, they took time, the time *they* thought was long enough; and if they didn’t think you grasped it, then they just pushed you forward. That’s not what schools are supposed to do. They’re supposed to teach you, to prepare you for the next year; not just push you forward, even though you don’t know *anything*.

David implies that his teachers would set a time that they would help Black males. If Black males did not learn in that amount of time, teachers simply pushed those
students ahead to the next grade. Similarly, Howard et al. (2012) note that when cultural dissonance exists between a culturally diverse student and his or her teachers, teachers discriminate against those students. Based on a CRT framework, I inferred that David’s teachers saw Black males either as a problem (Howard, 2012) or as too different to love (Duncan, 2002). Based on a CRT framework, David and Dominic’s narratives illustrate the pervasiveness of racism in education. Based on a CRP perspective, David’s and Dominic’s teachers did not have a developing understanding about the cultural background and/or lived experiences, and they did not adapt their teaching to help those boys achieve some educational success.

**Discrimination in disciplinary contexts.** Five participants highlighted that educators gave harsher consequences to Black male students who misbehaved compared to the consequences they gave White students who similarly misbehaviors. A passage from Dan is illustrative of the harsh consequences teachers gave Black males when they misbehaved:

> I had good days, I had bad days, I wasn’t a perfect student. I got into trouble for cutting in line, horseplay, stuff like that—kids’ stuff—it’s what kids do. But we [me and my Black cousins] got the worst of it. We got the worst of everything, the worst of the punishment. Like, instead of just correcting us and telling us what we did wrong, they would go as far as suspending us.
Dan perceives that educators disciplined him and his cousins harshly for childish misbehaviors, but those educators offered correction to White students who similarly misbehaved. Similarly, in the literature, Okonofua and Eberhardt (as cited in Staats, et al., 2015) found that when Black students were involved in misbehaviors, teachers would rate those incidents as more troubling and warranting of discipline.

Similarly, Dominic told a story in which educators punished him more harshly than they punished a White student who had broken the same rule:

They’d [educators would] see a White kid [with sagging jeans] and they’d tell them to pull them up; they’d see a Black kid and they’d tell them to pull them up. But, if they [those students] both do it again, they [educators] tell the White kid to pull them up again, and the Black kid they’re pulling him in the office…. I just felt like if you’re going to punish someone for an action, why just punish one person? You have to punish them all. That’s not right.

In that passage, Dominic demonstrates a critical consciousness of his education. He knew that he and the other student had similarly misbehaved, but he recognized that educators had been much harsher in the discipline they gave him. I inferred that Dominic was frustrated unequal treatment educators gave him. Jackson, too, expressed frustration that educators punished him more harshly than they punished White students:

Seems like we [my Black friends and I] talked about it—it’s like the Blacks had their own file cabinet in the office. It was the rest of the school and then us; it
seemed like that. We always stayed in the office for something…. So, yeah, it was a lot of singling out in my school.

Jackson uses the phrase “a separate file cabinet” as a metaphor for administrators singling out Black males to blame for discipline problems in his schools. This finding resonates with Gordon’s (2012) conclusion that educators’ pejorative conceptualization of Black male students as academically and socially problematic is such a dominant belief in education that it has become commonplace. Gordon’s (2012) argues that school personnel view Black males as the usual suspects in matters relating to disciplinary action and educational deficiency. A critical race framework enabled me to see the pervasiveness of racism in the administrators’ engagement with Black males. In Jackson’s schools, administrators assumed that Black males were guilty of all reported incidents.

Participants implied that educators would not discriminate against Black students who exhibited identity markers that those educators valued, such as athleticism or wealth. For example, Randall’s educators expected him to sleep in class, but they did not think that expect that behavior from Black males whom Randall described as “the preppy type” or Blacks who were athletes. According to Marcus, “If you [Black males] weren’t on the football team or the basketball team, teachers would think, ‘If you aren’t making our school look good, then why are you here?’” Similarly, Dan clarifies that educators in his schools were less likely to discriminate against Black students from wealthy families:
If you were a Black male, you barely got on our basketball squad or our football squad if you didn’t have money, if you wasn’t at the top of the class. If you came from money, your chances were better, a little bit better, but not better by much, because if you didn’t come from money, you weren’t playing [sports]. They prejudge us [Black males]. I wanted to play basketball in high school, and they were like, “We’re looking back at your middle school [records] and you got suspended for this, and we’re wondering if you’re going to be a problem.” And I was like, *middle school*?

Educators in Dan’s school were so intent that Black males not play sports that they went all the way back to Dan’s middle school records to find something they could use to keep him off their team. Similarly, Jackson, who perceived that educators treated Black athletes, better than Black non-athletes, denoted the limit of that better treatment: “You [Black male athletes] were not treated better than the White kids, you were just treated better than the non-athlete Blacks—just a little different from the average Black kid.” Jackson described a hierarchy upon which teachers put students. Teachers put White students at the top of that hierarchy and Black males at the bottom. Teachers placed Black male athletes just one step above their non-athlete counterparts.

**Institutionalized inequities**

Based on a CRT framework, racism is pervasive and persistent in education. Nevertheless, racism is not limited to actions between individual educators and Black
male students. Racism also is embedded in the education system, including policies and practices (Omi & Winant, 1994). Similarly, Carter et al. (2017) emphasize, “Issues of race and difference continue to be embedded in our schools and society, continuing to reinforce and replicate inequality in society, in education, and in school discipline” (p. 215). Institutional inequities is a term denoting forms of racism that are embedded in school policies and practices. Institutionalized inequities are a third conceptual category that emerged during my data analysis. These inequities are culturally sanctioned, or reinforced by the actions of people in authority. Eight of the nine participants in this study highlighted institutional racism. A passage from Randal is illustrative of institutional inequities in participants’ schools:

It was just the way they’d [school personnel had] come off at people. And most of the Blacks that go there will tell you that most of the teachers there are racist. And some of the White people, too, say, “Yeah they [educators] are racist. I don’t see why they acting like that towards you.”

This passage from Randall illustrates Williams (1985) who notes that inequities are normal process in some institutions. I inferred from Randall’s use of plural pronouns such as, “they” and “them” that he perceived that the majority of educators in his schools were more likely to stereotype, prejudge, and/or discriminate against Black male students. Based on a CRT framework, Randall’s narrative illustrates the pervasiveness of
racism in education. Similarly, Dominic’s story highlights the inequitable practices of
district-level administrators:

They built a new school far away from the old school, and they made it so you
have to drive to school. I feel more White kids drive than Black kids, [so] there’s
going to be less Black kids going there. I feel they’re going to leave the old high
school to all the Black kids that live in that area, and all the rich kids are going to
the new school. That’s not right. I, personally, feel that the school system where
I’m from does discriminate.

Dominic perceives that administrators wanted to keep Blacks from attending a
new high school, so they built that high school far from where Blacks lived. Dan, too,
perceives that the administrators in his schools had discriminated against Black students:

Like we, in the only school with the most minorities, didn’t have nothing going
on. They had your little basic Halloween party, Christmas party, stuff like that,
but it didn’t have no programs, no field trips, no field days. They knew where all
the minorities were going to school and that’s what it was: “We have a school for
you all—be thankful. Be thankful—you get a book.”

Dan implies that administrators provided minoritized students with the bare
minimum. Similarly, Marcus highlights the inequitable practices of textbook publishers:

There’d be a big play about George Washington, you know, but when it comes to
Malcolm X, we’re gonna have a little paragraph. It’s always the same picture—
it’s always Malcolm X writing on that piece of paper. It’s always like that in the textbooks.

In this passage, Marcus perceives that textbook publishers include much less information about Black historical figures compared to the information about White historical figures. Marcus’s experience illustrates Sleeter (2012) who notes that textbook publishers include much more content about Whites compared to the amount of content about people of color.

Prejudice, discrimination, and institutional inequities are three conceptual categories that emerged during my grounded analysis of participants’ narratives (see Table 2). These narratives illustrated how educators prejudged Black male students based on their skin color and how those students may have previously misbehaved. Participants also highlighted that educators discriminated Black males—they ignored Black males in teaching and learning contexts, and they punished them harshly in disciplinary contexts. Participants also described institutional inequities, or forms of racism that are embedded in school policies and practices. Based on a CRT framework, participants’ narratives highlight the endemic and pervasive nature of racism in education. A framework based on CRP, helped me analyze participants’ narratives to see that participants educators did not have relationships with Black male students. Based on my framework, those educators did not develop relationships with Black males that would allow these educators to get to know the students and help them with learning. In other words, as
soon as educators saw the students were Black, they prejudged and discriminated against them.

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Table 2: Participants Experiences at School with Prejudice, Discrimination, and/or Institutional Inequities from Educators

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I used a framework from the literature on CRP (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2006). This analytical framework helped me understand that only a few of participants’ educators had a developing cultural awareness of Black male
students and adapted their teaching based on that awareness. In other words, only a few of participants’ educators worked within a framework of CRP.

I also used a framework from the literature on CRT that helped me understand that many of participants’ educators acted with prejudice toward Black male students and/or discriminated against them. Nevertheless, neither analytical framework helped me to analyze the educational experiences that participants did have. Thus, I reviewed my data, and this time, I analyzed it using a framework from the literature on grounded theory. Grounded theory helped me discover the conceptual categories, or the behaviors that were most relevant to my study. In this study, eight of the nine participants told stories in which their educational experiences consisted of teachers acting with prejudice toward Black male students, discriminating against them, as well institutional inequities in their schools and classrooms.
Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis, Part II

In chapter 4, the analytical framework that I used from the literature on CRP (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006) helped me analyze participants’ narratives to better understand the cultural relevance of their educators. I assessed that relevance based on two criteria. First, an educator was culturally relevant if he or she had some cultural awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of people or students who are Black. Second, an educator was culturally relevant if he or she engaged in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students. I did not interview participants’ educators, but my analysis of participants’ narratives enabled me to infer how their educators did or did not work within a framework of cultural relevance. On the one hand, six of the nine Black males characterized one or two of their educators working within a CRP framework. On the other hand, eight participants implied that many K-12 educators lacked cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black. I inferred from participants’ narratives that many of these educators stereotyped, prejudged, and/or discriminated against them.

During data analysis, I realized that participants’ narratives were about their relationships with educators. On the one hand, neither the CRP nor the CRT frameworks could help men analyze participants’ stories about those relationships. On the other hand, scholars in the literature emphasize that the relationships between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds matter in the education of those students (Collins, 2000;
Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Ferguson, 2000; Gay, 2002, 2010; Gay & Howard, 2006; Harper, 2012; hooks, 1994; Howard, 2013; Noguera, 2003; Noddings, 1991; Strayhorn, 2010). Ladson-Billings, for example, implies that effective teaching of African American children begins with good relationships between teachers and these students. Similarly, Tyrone Howard (2013) stresses the importance of relationships between Black male students and their teachers, but also highlights a gap in that literature, stating, “There is a need to investigate the relationships that Black males have with school personnel to determine how they [those relationships] are formed sustained, and how they contribute to school success” (p. 78).

**Analytical Framework**

In this chapter, I used a framework from the literature on the relationships between students and their educators to reanalyze my data. In that literature, McDermott (1974, 1977) and van Manen (1982, 1991, 1994, 2016a, 2016b) analyze the relationships between students and teachers. McDermott is a sociologist who analyzes the ongoing social relations between teachers and students in schools and classrooms to understand the cultures in those settings. Base on his research, McDermott emphasizes that students and teachers who work together on learning may come to trust that each has the other’s best interest in mind. Those teachers and students are more likely to develop trusting relationships between them. Trusting relationships are contexts in which successful learning is more likely to occur. Van Manen is a phenomenologist. Phenomenological
research is “a method of study of human phenomena” (van Manen, 1984, p. 24). Van Manen (1994a) observes the relationships between a teacher and students as those relationships occur in incidents that require teacher’s immediate and appropriate action. He is interested in pedagogical relationships between them. A pedagogical relationship is a relationship between an educator and individual or groups of students in which that educator gets to know students, imagine what may help them achieve some educational success, and actually do what they imagined would help these students.

Pariah-Host Relations between Educators and Participants

I employed a framework based on the work of McDermott and van Manen to analyze participants’ narratives to understand more about the relationships between Black male participants and educators who did not support them. McDermott (1974) refers to such relationships as pariah-host relations. Pariah-host is a metaphor for the negative social relations between educators and students of color whom those educators judge as low-status. An example of a pariah-host relationship that I inferred from participants’ narratives is an educator acting with prejudice toward Black male students.

Educators Prejudice toward Black Male Students

Eight participants implied that many of their K-12 educators prejudged Black male students based on those students’ skin color, media portrayals of Black males, or gossip about Black males. A passage from Dan is illustrative of an educator’s prejudice of Black male students:
As soon as they [teachers] see us [Black males], all they think is “trouble.” The way we dress was against their dress code. Almost everything they did was a contradiction of ours, of us. We did something, and they look at us like, “That’s not the way to do it—supposed to do it our way—this how we want you to do it.” It was always something—every time we went to school, it was always something…. And, how I felt in school, “I shouldn’t even be here, they don’t care, so why should I care?”

Dan’s story of teachers not accepting Black students’ cultural ways of being illustrates a finding by Howard (2001): “Far too often, African-American students are expected to disconnect from their cultural identities and characteristics and conform to their teachers’ ways of thinking, learning, behaving, and communicating, which often are diametric opposites” (p. 147). Dan implied that those educators did not have cultural knowledge of him. What they did know about Dan came from sources other than a relationship with him. Teachers believed the gossip they heard about Dan. Without knowing Dan, educators had prejudged him as trouble. Dan clarifies that those teachers not only thought his ways were wrong, but they also suggested that he behave as if he were White. I inferred from Dan that his educators had some knowledge about Dan but that knowledge did not come from having a relationship with Dan.

Based McDermott’s perspective of trusting relations, I inferred that Dan’s teachers formed pariah-host relations with him—they did not understand him, and they
rejected engaging in a relationship with him. If van Manen analyzed Dan’s narrative, he might have inferred that Dan’s teachers did not have a caring interest in him. Dan affirms van Manen’s analysis, “I shouldn’t even be here, they [teachers] don’t care, so why should I care?”

Noddings (1991), education philosopher, emphasizes the importance of caring in education, “Caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and contemporary schools can be revitalized in its light” (p. 49). In other words, education, without caring, is likely to be unsuccessful. Noddings asserts that caring is an activity of relationship, in which teachers develop knowledge about students’ needs, and they respond to those needs. In the passage above, Dan implies that the teachers who did not know him were more likely to harbor racialized bias against his cultural ways of being. Based on Noddings view, I inferred that Dan’s teachers did not care for him, so his public education was less than successful. Dan left school before graduating.

Dan makes clear that everything teachers did was a contradiction of Black male students’ ways. He implied that those educators intentionally chose to do the opposite of Black male students’ cultural ways of being. As such, I infer that those teachers’ intentional choice to oppose Black male students’ cultural ways of being was a form oppositional identity toward the cultural ways of those students. I understand oppositional identity as a metaphor for an individual or group of persons who intentionally resists assimilation to the cultural ways of another group (e.g. Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 1987). On
the one hand, Noguera and Ogbu help explain minority students’ oppositional identities—those students intentionally chose not to assimilate to schools and educators’ White cultural values. Nevertheless, the literature is silent on White teachers’ oppositional identities. In other words, there is nothing in the literature on White teachers intentionally choosing to oppose minority students’ cultural ways of being. Nevertheless, Dan illustrated that his teacher intentionally chose to oppose his cultural ways of being. Similarly, Jackson implies that teachers judged him without knowing him:

That’s what teachers do—they base it [their knowledge of Blacks] on movies and what they heard, instead of learning [about] the individual themselves. I grew upon in a predominantly White town, and they [teachers] didn’t deal with you if they didn’t have to…. Most of our teachers thought most of the things we were doing was always trying to do something negative, when it wasn’t—we could be arguing or talking trash to each other, in fun, and the first thing they think is we’re gonna be start fighting. Teachers got to get a better understanding of the Black community.

Based on CRP, Dan and Jackson’s teachers did not operate within a framework of cultural relevance. Those teachers based their awareness Black male students on media portrayals of people who are Black or gossip about those students. Based on a CRT perspective, this teacher’s judgment of Jackson illustrates how culturally insensitive educators criticize ethnically diverse children’s ways of knowing, e.g. ways of dress,

**Educators Discriminate Against Black Males**

The eight participants who implied that some educators acted with prejudice toward them also perceived that some educators discriminated against them. A passage from Marcus is illustrative of teachers’ discrimination against him:

As the year went on, I started missing assignments, and it seemed like it didn’t matter [to teachers]. I didn’t hear repercussions from it, as the White kids would hear repercussions from it. I knew what they’re talking about, and if they would point at me and ask me a question, I would be able to tell them, but they never did. So, then I just quit doing it [schoolwork] completely—If they’re not going to care, I’m not going to do them. C average *every single class*, and I did absolutely *nothing*.

Marcus did not turn in assignments, and teachers would not comment about this to him, yet they gave him passing grades, and he would move on to another class. If a White student did not turn in work, it is likely that teachers would say something to that student. Based on a CRT perspective, teachers’ discrimination against Marcus illustrates institutionalized racism—they held Marcus to a lower academic standard compared to the academic standard to which they held other students (Massey et al., 1975). Based on McDermott’s understanding of school cultures, Marcus had learned that he did not have
to turn in work, and teachers would still give him passing grades. If van Manen had interpreted those teachers’ practices, he might have said that they had no caring interest in Marcus.

**Harsh discipline of Black males.** A few participants implied that some educators discriminated against them by giving Black males harsher consequences than they gave White students who similarly misbehaved. A passage from Randall is illustrative of educators’ harsher consequences to Black male students:

Things with one teacher [the nutrition teacher] got better, but a couple of the teachers, they’re just racist, and there’s’ no stopping it….I was trying to give it my best effort and everything, and sometimes, it just wasn’t good enough for the teachers…. They think that I came to school to sleep in class, but I actually tried. And sometimes, out of a whole bunch of people, they just say I’m not doing something right, as if everyone else was [doing it right]. They’d [teachers would] pull them [White students not paying attention] outside a classroom and tell them to start paying attention … but with me, they would just rant, “Pay attention!” So, there was times when I would slack off, just because of them coming at me in different ways, because, once they came at me that first time, I thought it was going to continue, just continue.

Based on a critical race perspective, Randall’s teachers illustrate institutionalized racism. They would yell at Randall, a Black male, in front of the class when they
supposed his work was shoddy. However, if they suspected that White students work was shoddy, they would privately discipline those students. Randall implied that overtime he had learned that a teacher who would treat him differently was a teacher whom he could not trust. One of Randall’s teachers valued his efforts to improve, but many of his other teachers did not. Based on McDermott’s work, Randall’s teachers based the cultures in their classrooms on the discriminatory treatment of Black male students.

**Exclusion of Black males in teaching and learning contexts.** A few participants also implied that educators discriminated against Black male students by excluding them in teaching and learning contexts. A quotation from Dan is an example of such exclusion: “I never had one of them where we sit down and talk, or [they tell me,] ‘I want to see you do good.’ I mean, like teachers or janitors, you never really had that in our school.” Teachers neither talked with Dan nor encouraged him to try. Dan implies that teachers did not engage in a relationship with him, and they did not help him achieve success in school. If Dan talked to van Manen about those teachers, I think van Manen would infer that Dan’s teachers did not care about him. A passage from Dan illustrates the extent to which teachers in his schools excluded Black male students from teaching and learning:

I understand that you’re one teacher looking over 25 or maybe 30 students at a time, but it’s still, they don’t take the time to at least help that [Black] student. Even in *study hall*, you get there, and the teacher, he didn’t care—he was just talking about going home and drinking. “Excuse me. You’re supposed to be a
teacher, and I got some stuff on this math [assignment] that I don’t know how to do. What can you help me with? What am I taking this class for and not getting credit for, and you’re not even helping me with anything?” It was just crazy.

“Even in study hall” is a metaphor Dan used to illustrate that not one teacher cared for him. Dan’s study hall teacher was engaged in a conversation with White students’ about drinking at home, but that teacher ignored Dan’s requests for help. Dan believed that study hall monitor was a teacher whose job is to help him, even if that teacher did not know the math Dan had a question about. Dan’s use of the term “crazy” illustrates his frustration with teachers who saw a Black male and ignored his pleas for help with learning. Based on McDermott’s analysis, I think Dan’s study hall teacher had no prior relationships with people who are Black. If he had, I think he may have been more likely to engage with Dan and help him with learning. Van Manen might say that this teacher—perhaps all of Dan’s teachers—lacked a caring interest in Black males.

In this section, I have described how the participants’ educators did not know about the cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of their Black male students. Those educators developed pariah-host relationships with Black male students. Those educators did not know those students, or what they did know about those students was based on media portrayals or gossip about Black males. Based on McDermott’s analysis, educators who lack awareness about the social and cultural realities of Blacks were more likely to act prejudice toward and/or discriminate against those students. Similarly, based on van
Manen’s analysis, I inferred that educators were less likely to develop pedagogical relationships with those students.

**Guest-Host Relations between Educators and Participants**

In contrast to the eight participants’ stories about educators who had prejudged and/or discriminated against them, all nine Black male participants told stories about one or two educators who would help them achieve some educational success, such as help with homework, and support. I use the metaphor, guest-host relationship, to represent the relationships between Black male students and those educators. Participants implied that those educators would treat Black males as guests in school and classrooms. Those educators got to know participants and gave them what they thought they needed to achieve some educational success.

In this section, I present representative extracts from participants’ narratives to illustrate some of the ways in which participants perceived that White educators formed guest-host relations with them.

**K-12 Educators**

I begin with participants’ narratives about educators in K-12 schools who developed guest-host relations with Black male students. David told a story about how an elementary school teacher had gotten to know him and help him:

I wish I would have stayed in Catholic school, because they took time to know you as a human being, not by your race or color but as a human being, *period.*
And then, Catholic schools are 10 times better, because they take the time with you—if you’re having problems with some subjects—they sit down and figure out why you’re having problems in these subjects and correct those errors.

David recalls that teachers at the Catholic elementary school had spent time getting to know him and helping him with schoolwork. I inferred that those teachers developed cultural awareness of David, and they helped him achieve some educational success, rather than prejudge him. Based on McDermott’s view, David’s educators developed guest-host relations with him. They got to know David and helped him achieve some success, or as van Manen might say, these teachers had a caring interest in David.

Dan is another participant who told a story about getting support from an educator. He got support from the principal of the elementary school he had attended:

I had good days, I had bad days, I wasn’t a perfect student. I got into trouble for cutting in line, horseplay, stuff like that—kids’ stuff—it’s what kids do. But, we [me and my Black cousins] got the worst of it. We got the worst of everything, the worst of the punishment. Like, instead of just correcting us and telling us what we did wrong, they would go as far as suspending us. … Elementary school, I had my principal behind my back. Our principal taught my mother when she was in school, so he ended up being my principal, when I was in elementary school. If anything ever happened, he always tried to give me the lesser time. He used to always say [to teachers], “Look their [Black males’] actions are a little rash, but I
know he’s [Dan’s] not a bad kid.” And, he would help me out, like, all the time.

That principal was the only person in my whole schooling who acted like that.

As an adult looking back on his public education, Dan realized that his teachers
gave him and his cousins the worst of everything—those teachers suspended those boys
for minor misbehaviors such as cutting in line. In contrast, Dan’s principal would
advocate for Dan. He encouraged Dan’s teachers to give Dan and his cousins less harsh
consequences when those students misbehaved. That principal had been one of his
mother’s teachers when she attended school. I inferred from Dan’s narrative that
principal had some cultural awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of students
who are Black.

Based on McDermott’s view, the principal’s awareness about Dan might have
helped the principal recognize Dan as a serious student, see that Dan’s teachers
discriminate against him by punishing more harshly than they punished White student,
and finally, advocate with Dan’s teachers for them to discipline Dan in a more equitable
manner. Based on a CRP perspective, the principal had some cultural awareness about
people, which he developed in a relationship with Dan’s mother. That awareness may
have helped the principal function within a framework of cultural relevance and
understand that Dan’s misbehaviors were typical of other students his age.

Correctional Educators
Dan, Dominic, Marcus, and Randall left school before graduating, but those four men also participated in correctional education, in either Springfield or some other correctional facility. When those participants told me stories about correctional educators, they illustrated that those educators helped them to prepare and/or pass the GED exam. Dominic, for example, said correctional educators helped him study for his OGTs (Ohio Graduation Tests), and they transported him back and forth to his high school, so he could attend classes to earn his high school diploma. Similarly, Marcus described how correctional educators encouraged him to believe in himself. Dan highlighted that the main reason he passed the GED exam is the support he got from the teachers at SCC:

I know my teachers care. Like, when I got here, I’m looking, and I’m thinking, “Wow man, they’re really riding my back about this.” If I wasn’t in class on time, they would call me to the front desk—I can’t even go out and smoke a cigarette, and they call. These [teachers] are like the most important teachers I ever have in my life. Like, they’re here for you—anytime you have a problem—they’re right there. They give you great advice, you know, support. They really push you. They want to see you succeed. In the end, I got my GED, and it was because I had that support—I had support from my teachers and they pushed me. And, just to have that support is one of the biggest things you can get from anybody, in or outside of school, and you didn’t get that in school. I tell them [the teachers] that all the time. I’m like, “Man, I wish my teachers in school [pushed] like you, then, I
probably would have made it somewhere.” Just having that [support] in here, [SCC] and I’ll be ready to walk out the GED room, like, “Yeah, you’re right, I can do this.”

I inferred from Dan that the correctional educators reached out to Dan as soon as he began the GED preparation program. Those educators did not need time to determine if Dan, a Black male, was worthy of their help. Based on a critical perspective, Dan’s experiences in the GED preparation program at SCC illustrates Noguera’s (2003) view: “If schools were to become more nurturing and supportive, students would be more likely to perceive schools as a source of help and opportunity rather than an inhospitable place that one should seek to escape and actively avoid” (p. 455). If McDermott analyzed that passage from Dan, he might say that the teachers continually checking on Dan, pushing him, and giving him advice helped Dan to trust those teachers and work together with them to prepare for the GED exam. Dan had passed that exam just two weeks prior to our first interview. If van Manen analyzed that passage, he might say that teachers’ interactions with Dan helped them get to know Dan, realize that he was a serious student, imagine how they could support him, and support him in meaningful ways. In fact, these teachers did help Dan achieve educational success—he passed the GED exam.

In a study of schools that help students of Color achieve some educational success, Howard (2015) found five characteristics that were common in those schools. One of those characteristics was effective practices: Teachers with effective practices
“seemed to teach in ways that recognized the importance of social interaction in teaching and learning” (p. 140). Based on Howard’s findings, I inferred from Dan’s narrative that the educators at SCC had some understanding about the importance of social interactions with Black male students. In addition, those teachers intentionally engaged in relationships with Dan. Those practices help helped Dan prepare for and pass the GED exam.

Dan saying the teachers at SCC were his most important teachers illustrates a comparison between Dan’s correctional educators and his educators in the public schools he had attended. Dan highlights that the correctional educators helped him to pass the GED exam by interacting with him, pushing him, and supporting him. In contrast, Dan’s teachers in his public schools continually prejudged him and his cultural ways as trouble, and they discriminated against him.

I also interviewed the three teachers at SCC. Those educators implied that they intentionally chose to form pedagogical relationships with Black male students. Jim, for example, talks about some of the intentional choices that he makes:

Here’s what I do: I make an effort to sit down and talk specifically with young Black males. I go out of my way, because I don’t want that young man to feel like he was in school—like put him in the C-D [academically low] class to just get him through. I go out of my way [because] I want them to understand that they’re
just as important as the next guy. I think young Black men in our society need that. I want to build confidence.

Jim takes time to talk to Black males to let them know that their experiences in education at SCC are going to be different from what Jim supposed their experiences had been in public school. Jim implies that he has some cultural awareness about the lived experiences of Black male students—that schools treated them inequitably. Jim talks about how he developed that awareness about people who are Black:

I am very comfortable with people. I don’t care if you're Black White, green, or yellow, but I am 50, and that comfort has come with time. The activities and jobs in my life have led me to where I have been around everybody. I grew up in [names city] where you have a significant Black population. I played basketball, even into my adult life, and met a lot of Black friends that way. Enlisted army is all kinds people who came from money, or not. I worked for three years in human services; [and] I worked in the kitchen at [names hospital] during high school. I had the wonderful opportunity to work for two Black females—they were my supervisors. Those women taught me more about work, than even my mother [taught me]. So, I have all this experience and feel comfortable with everybody. Between Black and White cultures in America, there is a difference—one’s not better than the other, but there’s a difference. If you’re [teachers] not adaptable—you don’t adapt to different people you’re working with—you’re going to have a
very difficult time getting anything across, a difficult time. But, being a stubborn Irishman, that took a lot for me to do, because at first it was, “Yep [bangs fist on the table]. This is this way.” But, it’s not, and that doesn’t get you anywhere in this life, or in teaching, or in tutoring. You have to be flexible with your audience. In the 17 years here, I have learned to be flexible. I try to be as flexible as I can.

Jim’s narrative illustrates Gay’s (2002) assertion that educators, who are conscious of their own cultural socialization, are able to recognize how their students differ from them, and use those insights to enhance their teaching skills. Based on constructivist theory of learning (cf. Wells, 2000), the relationships Jim had with people who are Black were contexts in which he could develop some cultural awareness about the lives of Blacks. He implies that awareness helped him to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black males. For example, Jim’s relationships with Blacks helped him to realize that there are differences between the Black culture and the White culture. I infer that Jim’s cultural awareness of Blacks may have helped him develop relationships with Black male students.

Based on CRP, Jim worked within a framework of cultural relevance. Jim’s major in college was business management, so I doubt that he ever studied critical race theory or culturally relevant pedagogy. Nevertheless, Jim had some prior relationships with people who are Black in which he developed a critical understanding of the lived experiences of Black males—he supposed that schools treated Black males inequitably,
and he wanted to treat Black males equitably in the GED preparation program at SCC. I also think Jim adapted his teaching of Black males based on his developing of their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. In other words, Jim worked within a framework of cultural relevance, even though he may have had no theoretical knowledge of CRT or CRP.

Jim implies that he had to overcome a barrier before he could be culturally relevant—he could no longer cling to the idea that his way was the best way for all students to learn. Jim implies that his developing awareness about the lived experiences of Blacks may have helped him to realize that he should adapt his teaching to students, rather than demand that students adapt to his way of teaching. Jim illustrates Ladson-Billings’s (2006) belief that the problem with helping teachers develop CRP is more about how teachers think, “about the social contexts, about the students, about curriculum, and about instruction (p. 163) and less about helping teachers know what to do. Moreover, Jim implies that becoming more culturally relevant improved the effectiveness of his teaching Black male students.

Unlike Jim, who, prior to teaching had learned that Black and Whites are different, Cindy admitted that she thought everyone was the same:

When I first started [in education], I was teaching special education, and most of my children came from poverty—I had no idea what it meant to grow up differently than I grew up. I thought everybody grew up the same.
On the one hand, based on King’s (1991) research, I infer that Cindy might be considered by some to be colorblind. She seems to ignore the cultural, social, economic, historical, and contemporary role that race plays in the lives of students who are Black. Colorblind teachers are uncomfortable talking about issues of race, so they do not get to know their students of color, which may affect the social and academic performance of these students (Milner, 2010). On the other hand, I inferred from the Black male participants’ narratives that Cindy treated all students equally, regardless of their skin color. One Black man student told a story about Cindy, which I think illustrates her equal treatment of students:

I could be sitting there working on a problem, and I’d be stuck on a problem. It’s like their [teachers at SCC] head is never down, so if they see something, they know your body language. For instance, I was in there [the classroom], and I just let out a deep breath, Miss Cindy came over and asked, “What’s wrong?” I told her I couldn’t do the [math] problem. And, she showed me the way to do it [the method to solve the problem]. So, even if it were Bill or Jack—same thing—they’re [those teachers at SCC are] always walking around from student to student making sure they doing OK. They give you encouragement to keep going, keep trying. Yeah, and that’s what gives me that great feeling.

This student highlighted that Cindy was aware of and helpful toward him in the classroom. When he needed help, she would help him. This student and Cindy would
work together to prepare for the GED exam. Over time, the student trusted that Cindy was going to help him with learning. Based on McDermott’s view, Cindy developed a trusting relationship with this Black male student.

Cindy got her teaching certificate in the late 1970s, so I think it is unlikely that she studied CRT or CRP; nevertheless, she worked within a framework of cultural relevance. Cindy had relationships with students in which she learned that these students would take more time to trust compared to the time it took them to trust with Jim. She used that knowledge to intentionally engage with these students to build trust with them.

In this section, I introduced the term guest-host relations as a metaphor for the relationships between Black male students and educators who developed relationships with those students, got to know them, and helped them achieve some educational success. Participants implied that educators who had a developing cultural awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of people who are Black were more likely to develop guest-host relationships with Black male students—engage to know those students and act on what they knew to help them. Based on van Manen’s analysis, educators’ developing awareness about people who are Black might have helped those educators form relationships with Black male students, get to know them, and help them with learning. Based on McDermott, educators’ developing a cultural awareness about the social realities of people who are Black may have helped those educators judge the behaviors of Black male students from those students’ point of view, assess those
students as normal, and to interact with those students to help them with learning. I think if Ladson-Billings analyzed the practices of participants’ teachers who developed guest-host relations with Black male students, she would say that those educators worked within a framework of cultural relevance—they had some awareness about the lived experiences of these students and adapted their practices to help those students achieve some educational success.

Both Jim and Cindy worked within a framework of cultural relevance, but it is unlikely that of these teachers studied either CRT or CRP. I inferred from participants’ narratives that those teachers had some relationships with people and/or students who are Black in which these educators had developed some awareness about the cultural backgrounds and/or lived experiences of Black male students. Jim and Cindy used that awareness to adapt their teaching to help these students achieve some educational success.

**Participants’ Suggestions to Improve the Educational Achievement of Black Male Students**

In this section, I present a synthesis of my data. I found that the Black males and correctional educators implied that there are three things educators could do to improve the educational success of Black male students: (1) regard Black males as human, (2) see them as students, and (3) treat Black males equally compared to how they treated other students.
Regard Black Males as Humans

Van Manen (2016) clarifies that teachers are child watchers who must have a philosophical view of children as human. Similarly, participants implied that the education of Black male students might improve if teachers could know Black male students as humans. A number of Black male participants wanted educators to see them as human. Marcus, for example, highlights that his desire for educators to know him and other Black males as human:

Notice me. Know what I feel. Have some kind of empathy. Know that we’re not all the same. We’re not all here to be animals. We’re not all [out of control] like the kids in that movie, *Lean on Me*.

Marcus wanted educators to regard Black males as human not prejudge them as animals. Marcus also wanted educators to have empathy with Black males—to know that they, as other humans, have feelings. Justus too wanted teachers to know him as human, “If they [teachers] were more open to me or if they just gave me more wisdom, I probably wouldn’t even be locked up. I’d probably be in college, or just finishing college.” I inferred from Justus that if educators could have worked within a framework of CRP—knowing him as a human and engaging with him as a student rather than ignoring him—he might be finishing a college degree, instead of a prison sentence. The correctional educators implied that they treated inmate students as humans:
Jim: Cindy and I tend to be empathetic. [I tell students], “OK, just talk. I can’t cure it, but I hope you feel better.” We do listen.

Cindy: We have that ability to let them talk for a few minutes, not merely tell them, “Sit down, get quiet, and listen.” You can tell when a man is having a bad time. I have to let them talk and may need to tell them to take the morning off. I have said, “Well, can you do anything about that right now? Alright. Do you think you can focus back on the work?” Or, I have said, “You need to take the rest of the morning, do what you can about this, and then comeback.”

Cindy and Jim implied that they knew that inmate students were humans, who had other things on their mind besides preparing for the GED exam. As such, these teachers chose to give students opportunities to talk about what might be on their minds.

**See Black Males as Students**

Black male participants also wanted educators to see them as students. This finding illustrates Van Manen’s (1977) viewpoint that educators must have a pedagogical view of children—a concern “with the child’s maturation, growth, and learning (p. 19). Nevertheless, participants highlighted that many educators in K-12 schools prejudged Black male students as trouble. The following from Dan is illustrative of educators not seeing Dan and other Black males as students who wanted an education:

I was there [at school] to learn, and I was a fast learner—I got skipped like two grades, because I was learning at such fast-paced level….When you [teachers]
start stereotyping and judging, you pit yourself as prejudice before meeting some of these people that could be smart, intellectual, you know, down to earth, and a very good learner, a fast learner. It shouldn’t be like that—you should be open.

And, that’s crazy, because I’ve seen it all my life; especially like going through school…. You [Black male students] hear [teachers’] racist comments, put-downs, disrespect. Others, they won’t say nothing to you—they just bypass you like you’re not there, like you’re just a shadow. They’re there for the paycheck.

Dan stressed that he was a smart student who attended school to learn. He wanted educators to support him, but those educators made racialized comments toward him and/or ignored him. Dan used a metaphor, working for a paycheck, to represent educators who did not care about or interact with Black male students, yet those educators received a paycheck. A number of other participants used that same metaphor. Jackson, for example, told a story about the teachers in his schools:

In school, they [teachers] just get a check—they show up, because they have that assignment on page 71. Then [afterwards], they go about what they’re doing—they might be reading a magazine, or doing a crossword puzzle. They didn’t pay attention to you [Black males] in school.

Jackson implied that educators who work for a paycheck do not take time to develop relationships with Black male students, and they do not help those students with learning. Based on van Manen’s analysis, educators who work for a paycheck are less
likely to develop pedagogical relationships with Black male students or act with pedagogical tact toward them.

Jim compares the dangers of teachers who work for a paycheck to other professionals who work for a paycheck:

There’s a percentage of every profession that says, “I get [work for] a paycheck.” The thing with teachers is, you’re impacting hundreds of lives every year, when you’re just cashing a check. But, if you are an accountant and you’re just cashing a check, you’re OK. Not to put down accountants, but your OK. But, a teacher cashing a check, you’re making a ripple effect that may never stop—a lot more responsibility as a teacher than with a lot of other professions. One out of ten teachers are cashing a check, and those are the ten percent of students that are coming here [SCC], or to places like this.

Jim acknowledges that some people in every profession simply work for a paycheck, but he thinks that educators who work for a paycheck are more likely to affect the lives of children, compared to people in other professions. I infer from Jim that educators work for a paycheck act racist toward Black male students. Jim implies that those students will eventually populate a prison cell. Jim’s conclusion affirms Justus’s theory that if educators would see Black males like students, rather than prejudge them as trouble or ignore them in classrooms, then less of those men would serve time in prison.
Treat Black Males Students Equally

Besides suggesting that educators regard Black male students as humans, and see those males as students, participants implied that they would have liked educators to treat Black male students equally compared to how those educators treated other students. A passage from Dan illustrates his desire for equal treatment:

I [have] seen it [the unequal treatment of Black males] all my life, especially like going through school. You [educators] shouldn’t do that…I’m a good student. I’m here to learn. I should get treated just like the next person.

I inferred from Dan that he wanted educators to stop discriminating against him. He wanted them to give him the same education they gave to other students. Similarly, Jackson highlights his desire for equal treatment:

We [Black males] should be treated fairly, treated more like the norm, but we had a different set of standards on what some people got away with and what other people got away with. It’s like a fight would cause one person to get suspended and the other person might get, what we call ice in school—they go to a classroom and stay there all day.

Jackson implied that educators discriminated against Black males—they gave harsher punishment to these males. He refers to the consequences that educators gave to White students in his schools as the norm, yet he implies that educators never gave Black
male the norm. Instead, educators gave harsher consequences to Black males compared to the consequences those educators gave to other students who similarly misbehaved.

**Common Decency**

Across the data, Black male participants implied that educators could improve the educational achievement of Black male students by knowing Black males as humans, seeing them as students, and treating them equally, as compared to how those educators treated other students. I use a metaphor, common decency, to represent a synthesis of those three recommendations—Black male participants wanted educators to treat them with common decency. Calhoun (2002), professor of philosophy, defines common decency as, “the basic sorts of things that we expect any minimally well-formed agent will elect to do for others absent any requirement to do so (p. 26). In other words, one can expect, but not legally demand, that educators do the decent thing, or live up to some minimal standard when it comes to how they treat others. Calhoun draws from a teaching code of ethics to illustrate common decency for teachers:

According to one teaching code of ethics, for example, teachers are to give foremost consideration to students’ well-being, to assisting students to develop their whole personality including their ability to work, to protecting students from conditions harmful to learning, health, and safety, to advancing the causes of education, including helping junior colleagues “in all possible ways” and improving one’s teaching effectiveness “in every possible way,” and to making
“every effort” to encourage parents to interest themselves actively in their children’s education and welfare. (p. 25)

This code of ethics outlines three standard behaviors of teachers: to consider students’ well-being, to assist children to develop as students, and to protect student from harm. In this study, the male participants give us an insider perspective of their desire for educators to treat them with common decency. They would have liked educators to know them as humans, see them as students, and treat them equally. Participants implied that if educators had used those behaviors, then Black male students would be less likely to serve time in prison, and more likely to have a career and/or participate in post-secondary education.

**Strategies for Teacher Education to Help Preservice Educators Develop Cultural Awareness about Black Male Students**

Participants made a number of other recommendations to help teachers improve the education of Black males, which they directed at teacher education programs. I believe that improving the education of preservice teachers is an important part of the struggle to improve the education of Black males, and an area in which I would like to be involved. Nevertheless, I also acknowledge that it is only one small part of that struggle for improving the lives and educations of Black males.

Participants’ recommendations included coursework and field-based teaching and learning opportunities to help preservice educators develop cultural awareness about
Black male students, as well as strategies that colleges of education could use to recruit students for their preservice programs. Using a CRT lens to analyze participants’ narratives, I understand that issues of race and racism were pervasive throughout participants’ educational experiences. Moreover, Jim illustrates how White teachers who did not know Blacks may have a tough time teaching in schools populated by students who are Black:

If you come from upper middle class, and you’re a female, and you have a bachelor's degree of education, and you’re [hired to teach] in [names local elementary] where 50% of your students are African American children, you don’t know how to deal with the children, and you certainly don’t know how to deal with mom and dad, because you may never had met a Black, or you may have never had a relationship with a Black person. That would be tough.

Jim implies that some White preservice educators who have not had prior relationships with people who are Black would be ignorant about the cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of people who are Black and unable to interact with these people. The literature agrees. For instance, Carter et al. (2017) makes clear, “Many students in pre-service education programs enter with little previous contact with racial groups other than their own” (p. 214). Jim also highlights that those teachers would not know how to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black students or members of their families. Jackson and Jim illustrate that educators who do not have
cultural awareness about people who are Black will not engage in developing
relationships with Black male students.

During the group interview, I asked participants if they could give me suggestions
for teacher education to help, preservice teachers increase their knowledge about the
black community. The following discussion took place between Charles, Dominic,
Marcus, and Jackson:

Charles: May be make them [preservice teacher] get so many hours in like an
urban school—someplace with mostly Black kids.

Dominic: It might be hard on them, but it’ll make it better in long run having to
deal with a Black kid coming in to their school.

Marcus: Kind of like a shadow.

Jackson: He [Charles] gave a good answer. Give them training—sensitivity
classes, and those types of things—where they have to deal with [Black kids].

That’s part of their education, not just going to a school, but learning the cultures,
just like they have to learn everything else. This should be part of their program—
dealing with different races and not just lacks, but anyone, to get to know them. I
guess the best thing is to have is situations of being around them to be more
comfortable with [them]. I think the more teachers are not comfortable with
Blacks is [important], because I grew upon in a predominantly White town, and
they [teachers] didn’t deal with you [Black students] if they didn’t have to.
Charles, Dominic, Marcus, and Jackson implied that teacher colleges could provide classroom- and field-based learning opportunities for preservice educators to better understand the social and cultural realities of Blacks and the Black community.

**Coursework to help preservice educators think differently.** In the passage above, Charles, Dominic, Marcus, and Justus recommend that teacher education offer classes to help preservice educators learn about diversity and culture. On the one hand, this affirms the literature in which scholars recommend that teacher preparation offer coursework to help preservice educators examine how they think about their own cultures, students from diverse culture as well as their beliefs and attitudes about other cultures (Gay, 2010, Gay & Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In the literature, Gay (2002) insists that whether teachers will implement CRP students is strongly influenced by their own knowledge of and comfort with ethnicity and diversity. She clarifies how teachers develop that knowledge:

Such knowledge and skills do not occur automatically; they have to be learned, which also means they must be taught. Here, then is a critical imperative for improving the education of ethnically diverse students. Professional preparation programs for regular and special education teachers, as well as inservice staff development, must be much more aggressive and diligent about including knowledge about and skills for teaching ethnically and culturally different students (Gay 2002, p. 627).
Coursework also gives preservice educators opportunities to identify any problematic attitudes and beliefs they may have about various dimensions of cultural diversity, and to develop positive attitudes and actions toward diversity in teaching. Based on his observations, van Manen (1991) emphasizes that teachers need subject matter mastery, but they also need “pedagogical sensitivity” (p. 139), or knowledge about how individual children learn, in what way circumstances and structures may help or hinder children's overall growth and development. Educators with a pedagogical sensitivity can act with pedagogical tact. Tactful teachers can effectively teach students across a variety of contexts. Educators who can think differently about their students are less likely to get frustrated with adapting their teaching practices to their students’ cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.

Field-based opportunities to develop awareness about people and/or students who are Black. Charles, Dominic, Marcus, and Jackson suggested that teacher education programs also provide field-based learning experiences. This recommendation also affirms the literature recommending that teacher education offer community-based immersion experience to all students, including those who enter teacher education with little or no cross-cultural experiences (Sleeter, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001, 2006). Field-based learning experiences in urban communities can help educators engage in developing personal relationships with students, families, and members of those communities. The goal is for educators to develop some cultural awareness about these
people and their communities. Furthermore, Jackson recommends that field experiences offer preservice educators opportunities to shadow teachers that are more experienced. This affirms Ladson-Billings’s (1994) recommendation that effective teacher education programs provide opportunities for preservice educators to observe master teachers.

**New recruiting strategies for colleges of education.** Some preservice educators reject learning about social inequities, others prefer to teach students whose backgrounds are similar to their own, and other preservice educators come to teacher education programs with beliefs that people of color are pathological, dangerous, and/or threatening. Thus, it is imperative that colleges of education find innovative and nontraditional ways to recruit better candidates to teach students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010). One such strategy, which I inferred from participants’ narratives, is for colleges to recruit students who have some awareness about the social and/or cultural realities of people and/or students of color. Participants implied that teacher candidates with that awareness are more likely to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students. To locate and recruit these students, colleges of education could ask applicants to describe their experiences, relationships, and/or awareness about people and/or students of color. I do not think that strategy guarantees an applicant's’ success in a teacher preparation program nor their commitment to teaching students of color, but I do think it may help colleges of education recruit
candidates who have some awareness about the social and cultural realities of people and/or students of color.

**Conclusion**

Participants’ narratives and the data analysis process helped me better understand the relationships between participants and their educators. For example, most participants implied that a few of their educators had some awareness about Blacks and those educators adapted their practices to those students. The educators engaged in developing pedagogical relationships with Black males and helped these students achieve some educational success—they supported participants, made sure they were attending classes, or helped them with homework. These educators were more likely to work within a framework of CRP. In contrast, participants implied that many of their educators stereotyped and/or prejudged Black male students. I inferred from participants’ narratives that those educators did not work within a framework of cultural relevance. In other words, these educators based their awareness of Black males on media portrayals or gossip, rather than developing relationships with Black males in which to know those students. With a lack of cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black, educators acted with prejudice and/or discrimination toward these students, rather than adapt their teaching to help these students achieve some educational success.
Chapter 6: Discussion

This study is a story about the relationships between nine Black men and some of the White educators in the K-12 schools and correctional education settings these men had attended. I developed this story from face-to-face individual and group interviews with nine Black male inmates and three correctional educators at SCC. These participants told stories about their experiences in schools and correctional education settings. In this chapter, I discuss some of what I learned from participants’ stories.

My Whiteness

In reflecting about the study, I realized that I began with only a nascent awareness of my whiteness. The term, whiteness, denotes the many forms of racialized advantage such as privilege that Whites enjoy in their daily lives (Leonardo, 2004). Leonardo informs that many Whites are oblivious to the privileges that society affords them. Nevertheless, the stories in this study helped me understand my whiteness in deeper and more meaningful ways.

I developed this study with some knowledge of CRT. CRT emphasizes that race and racism are endemic, pervasive, and permanent in society, including the institution of education. This perspective equipped me with a lens to see the racial disparities in education. For example, many K-12 schools and educators provide Black males with a lower quality education compared to the education they provide to White students. Having acquired some awareness of CRT, I thought I had a firm understanding of my
whiteness. Nevertheless, I did not realize CRT was a tool. As I listened to participants’ stories—their lives in schools and classroom—CRT enabled me to see the pervasiveness of race and racism in schools and classrooms. I was surprised at the stories participants told me about their experiences in schools. Moreover, I was caught off-guard by the degree of oppression and marginalization these men endured, particularly as I compared participants’ education with my own. My being caught off-guard and surprised by participants’ experiences made my Whiteness visible to me.

In the sections below, I discuss some of other findings from my study. I begin by highlighting some of the answers to the two research questions that guided this study.

**Findings Based on the Research Questions**

**Additions to the Literature on the Education of Black Males**

I developed this study with two research questions in mind. One of those questions focused on what participants’ narratives add to the literature on the education of Black males. This study makes four additions to that literature: (1) new voices, (2) a developing awareness about the cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of people and/or students who are Black, (3) guest-host relations, and (4) the relationships between educators and Black male students. I begin with the addition of new voices.

**New voices.** This study adds new voices to the literature on the education of Black males. One new voice is Black male inmates. I conducted face-to-face individual and group interviews with these men to better understand the cultural relevance of their
educators, as well as their relationships with those educators. The other new voice this study adds to the literature is correctional educators. I conducted two face-to-face group interviews with these participants (all of whom were White) to better understand their perceptions of educating Black male students.

**The importance of educator’ cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black.** This study also adds to the literature an understanding of the importance of educators’ cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black. Several participants implied that educators who had a developing cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black were more likely to engage in developing relationships with Black male students. Participants also implied that educators with such awareness were more likely to work within a framework of CRP. I inferred from participants that educators with a developing cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black males had knowledge from which to adapt their teaching practices to help these students with learning.

**Guest-host relations.** This study adds a new metaphor, guest host relations, to the literature on the education of Black males. I use this metaphor to describe the positive relationships between educators and Black male students whom those educators had treated like guests in their schools and classrooms. In his study, McDermott (1974) uses the metaphor, pariah-host, to signify the negative social relations between White host educators in schools populated by students of color. Those educators did not have
awareness about the lived experiences of students of color, and they rejected developing relationships with those students because they were Black. In contrast, eight of the nine Black male participants told stories in which the educators who had cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black also engaged in developing relationships with these students and helped them achieve some educational success. As such, I use the metaphor, guest-host relations, to signify the positive relationship between educators and the Black male students whom those educators had treated like guests.

A Better Understanding about the Relationships between Educators and Black Male students. This study also adds a better understanding about the relationships between educators and Black male students. It helps fill the gaps that Howard (2013) identified: Scholars need to know how educators develop relationships with Black male students, how educators sustain those relationships, and how those relationships contribute to Black male students’ educational success.

How educators develop relationships with Black males Wanting to further highlight the nature of pedagogy in the life of teachers, van Manen (1991) asks:

Suppose someone [a preservice teacher] had learned all theories of child development, knew all curriculum methods, and had learned all techniques of instruction—isn’t it strange that this person can nevertheless be a poor teacher? (p. 185)
I inferred from participants’ narratives that well-trained teachers might be poor teachers if they lacked a developing cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black. Participants implied that teachers who lack such awareness are more likely to act with prejudice toward and/or discrimination against Black male students, than to work within a framework of CRP. In contrast, educators who had a developing cultural awareness about Blacks were more likely to engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students, as well as work within a framework of CRP.

The Black male participants implied that their relationships with educators were important to their achieving some educational success. The literature agrees. Ladson-Billings (1994), for example, emphasizes that effective teachers develop relationships with students. Nevertheless, she does not focus on how teachers can develop relationships with students who differ from them. Participants implied a number of ways teachers had developed relationships with them:

- Coaching and/or playing sports with Black;
- Working with or for people who are Black;
- Work in schools populated by Black males; and
- Attend colleges of education that offer course- and field-based learning opportunities for preservice teachers to develop personal relationships with people and/or students who are Black.
How educators sustain relationships with Black males. I inferred from some participants’ narratives that educators might sustain pedagogical relationships with Black male students by continually interacting with those students. A number of participants described how some educators had always been available for them, working together with them, helping them with learning, checking on their work, as well as advocating, advising, caring, and/or supporting them.

A quotation from Jackson is illustrative of the continual support that a coach gave him, “He actually tried to keep me on the right path. I was a little rebellious in school, and he tried to help me as much as possible—he made sure I was doing my schoolwork, and he made sure I was making my classes.” Similarly, a quotation from Dan illustrates the continual support he got from the teachers at SCC, “These [teachers at SCC] are like the most important teachers I ever have in my life. Like, they’re here for you—anytime you have a problem—they’re right there.”

How relationships contribute to Black males’ educational success. I inferred from participants that there are a number of ways that educators’ relationships helped them to achieve some educational success. Educators who engaged in developing relationships with Black male students gave these students, advice, support, encouragement, teaching, help, and attention.
Additions to the Conceptualization of CRP

How educators develop cultural awareness about people who are Black. The second research question that guided this study was what do the storied experiences of participants add to the conceptualization of CRP? One addition this study makes is a number ways that educators to develop cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black. I inferred from participants that educators who had a developing awareness about the cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of people and/or students who are Black were more likely to adapt their teaching practices to help Black male students with learning, to work within a framework of cultural relevance. In contrast, educators who based their knowledge of Black male on portrayals of Black males in the media or gossip about Black male students were more likely to act with prejudice towards or discriminate against these students. Participants implied a number of ways that their educators developed some cultural awareness about people and/or students who are Black male:

- Visits to students’ homes to learn about their families;
- Talking with students; and
- Engaging in developing relationships with people and/or students who are Black on jobs, on sports teams, in schools and classrooms.

Participants also recommended that teacher education programs offer classroom- and field-based learning experiences to help preservice educators develop relationships
with people and/or students who are Black. Participants implied that such relationships might help those educators develop some cultural awareness about these people. In contrast, classroom-based opportunities might help educators learn about CRT and CRP; and help those educators to talk about their feelings of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Field-based learning opportunities in urban communities can help preservice teachers develop relationships with people and students who differ from them. Those relationships may offer opportunities for those teachers to develop some cultural awareness about these people. This awareness may help those teachers work within a framework of CRP and engage in developing pedagogical relationships with Black male students.

**Educators who lacked cultural awareness about Blacks were less likely to work within a framework of CRP.** Participants implied that a majority of their educators had not engaged in developing relationships with Black male students. Those educators were less likely to develop cultural awareness about these students. Participants implied that the awareness those educators did have of Black male students was based on media portrayals of Black males or gossip with other teachers about these students. Participants implied that educators with such awareness were less likely to work within a framework of CRP and more likely to act with prejudice and/or discriminate against Black male students.
Pedagogical Practices for Educators to Improve the Education of Black Male Students

A critical race perspective not only values the voice of the oppressed as a witness to that oppression, it also privileges those voices “to ameliorate the conditions attendant to oppression and dominations (Duncan, 2002, p. 141). In other words, when critical scholars conceptualize remedies to oppression, they include insiders’ perspectives. During this study, nine participants talked about various actions or behaviors educators might employ to improve the education of Black male students, namely (a) regard Black male students as humans; (b) see those males as students; and (c) treat those students equally compared to how they treat other students.

Regard Black Male as Human. In the literature, Duncan (2002) emphasizes that some people may regard Black male as too different. These people may have little concern or consideration for those male. In this study, Marcus illustrates how educators regarded him and other Black male students as animals:

Notice me. Know what I feel. Have some kind of empathy. Know that we’re not all the same. We’re not all here to be animals. We’re not all [out of control] like the kids in that movie, Lean on Me.

On the one hand, Marcus insists that educators stereotyped him and other Black males as out-of-control animals. On the other hand, he recommended that educators notice, empathize, and realize that Black males are human. Similarly, Justus implied that
he wanted teachers to regard him as human, “If they [teachers] were more open to me or if they just gave me more wisdom, I probably wouldn’t even be locked up. I’d probably be in college, or just finishing college.” I inferred from Justus’ narrative that he wanted educators to be open to recognizing him as human. He implies that if they had recognized him as human, then he might have been completing a college degree instead of a prison sentence.

A passage from an interview with Cindy and Jim is illustrative of educators recognizing Black males as humans:

Jim: Cindy and I tend to be empathetic. [I tell students], “OK, just talk. I can’t cure it, but I hope you feel better.” We do listen.

Cindy: We have that ability to let them talk for a few minutes, not [just] tell them, “Sit down, get quiet, and listen.” You can tell when a man is having a bad time. I have to let them talk and may need to tell them to take the morning off. [For example,] I have said, “Well, can you do anything about that right now? All right. Do you think you can focus back on the work? Sure? OK, let’s try.” Or, I have said, “You need to take the rest of the morning. Do what you can about this, and then comeback.”

Cindy and Jim understand that students have other things on their mind besides preparing for the GED exam, and they invite them to talk about what is on their mind. In other words, those educators treat Black male students as humans.
See Black Males as Students. Not only did some participants want educators to recognize that they were human, some also wanted educators to see them as students. Black male students in Duncan (2002) believed that teachers saw them as talented athletes mentally, but as mentally deficient learners. Similarly, Dan, Marcus, David, and Randall implied that educators in their schools would stereotype, prejudge, and discriminate against them, but not see them as students. For example, Marcus says that some educators saw him based on what they knew about his past:

I like doing schoolwork and stuff, and I like being in class, because once I was in high school, I was in school every day. But, it seemed like they [teachers] were just trying to get it over with. Just like using my past and what they heard about me against me. I had been to [names of youth detention and residential treatment facilities], so they had a big idea that I was selling drugs and bringing drugs into the school. And, that’s what I had my biggest problems with, teachers expecting me to disrupt the class and stuff. And I never really did that.

I inferred that Marcus was frustrated. He was at school to learn, but his educators supposed he was going to sell drugs at school, because that is what he had previously done. Marcus’s educators more easily saw him as a criminal than as a student.

Give Equal Treatment to Black Males. Based on his findings, Duncan found that the general complaint of Black male students is that they are “subject to double standards at school, in and out of the classroom (Duncan, 2002, p 135). A passage from
Jackson illustrates the double standard that his educators had toward the misbehaviors of Black male students compared to their White counterparts:

We were looked at differently because of the color of the skin—circumstances of punishment were different because of Color of the skin…. [We] should be treated fairly—treated more like the norm, as far as punishments, anything, helping with learning. Just treat everyone equally, but everyone was treated differently.

Jackson clarifies that educators punished Blacks more harshly, but he stressed that they should treat Black males fairly. Nevertheless, he seemed resigned to educators’ double standard of punishing Black male students.

**Implications for my Teaching, Research, and Service**

This study helped me develop a better understanding about the education of Black males, CRP, and the pedagogical relationships between educators and Black male participants. It also helped me develop as a scholar, researcher, and analyst--skills that no doubt will enhance and improve my teaching, research, and service.

**Teaching**

As a teacher, I think it would be helpful to do the following:

- Engage in developing relationships with fellow faculty and staff members to develop awareness about their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences
- Engage in collaborative partnerships with fellow faculty and staff member to draw from their perspectives and expertise.
• Develop relationships with students to gain awareness about their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.

• Help students become better writers, across the curriculum.

• Help students to better understand post-structural research perspectives, such as critical theories of race to look at, think about, and describe the world.

• Use group discussion and in-class projects to help students develop awareness about themselves, as well as others.

• Develop and facilitate classroom- and field-based teaching and learning opportunities for student to develop cultural awareness about themselves and others who differ from them.

• Use a variety of teaching styles, e.g. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, to meet students’ learning styles.

**Research**

As a researcher, I plan to:

• Seek funding to conduct further narrative inquiries with inmates and add to the literature in this field. As a follow-up to this study, I plan to conduct studies in a variety of correctional settings, such as prisons, jails, and community correctional facilities. I also want to interview female inmates from a variety of races, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds. I would ask participants general questions such
as, “Do you have a story about something you remember from a school you attended?” I would follow-up with probing questions about their experiences.

- Research any efforts to prepare preservice educators for teaching students from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Service

In my service, I would like to contribute the following:

- Serve as an active member of local, state, and/or national education organizations, such as professional organizations, state departments of education, and local boards of education.
- Serve as an active member of department, college, or university teams committed to improving the education of students.
- Collaborate with other scholars to develop and research courses and/or curricula to prepare preservice teachers to work in schools populated by students from ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.
- Submit articles drawn from my research to peer-reviewed education journals.

Limitations of this Study

One limitation of this study is that my data lacks some detail from participants’ point of view. Spradley (1979) may say that I did not express sufficient cultural ignorance (p. 62). I began this study with minimal experience at interviewing, so I sometimes assumed that I understood what participants meant. As such, I sometimes missed opportunities to ask
ethnographic questions to better understand participants’ perspective of the culture in their schools. I think that the experience I gained from conducting interviews for this project may help me be a better interviewer. One way to help students overcome this limitation would be to assist them on one or two pilot narrative inquiries for them to gain experience in conducting interviews.

Another limitation of this study is my lack to follow up with Larry. Larry is the participant whose educators had treated him as they had treated other students. Larry was scheduled to be released shortly following our first interview. Nevertheless, looking back, I wish I had scheduled a second interview with Larry, so I could have possibly learned more about his experiences in school. Without that follow up, I am unsure why Larry’s experiences might have been so much different from the other participants.

**Directions for Further Research**

**Preservice Teacher Preparation**

In an article on recruitment and retention of diverse students in gifted education, Ford and Whiting (2008) highlight the need for further research on the preparation of teachers of such students:

Despite the changing demographics that make our public schools more culturally and linguistically diverse and the growing body of knowledge in issues of diversity and difference, multicultural teacher education continues to suffer from a thin, poorly
developed, fragmented literature that provides an inaccurate picture of the kind of preparation teachers receive to teach in culturally diverse classrooms. (p. 114).

In order to consistently prepare preservice educators to work in schools populated by students from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, scholars must examine what preparation is working best for whom. Similarly, Howard (2013) emphasizes that scholars give careful consideration to how teachers build the capacity, skill set, and knowledge to educate males of Color, in general, and Black males, in particular. As a teacher educator, I would research my course- and field-based teaching and learning opportunities for preservice teachers. I would also collaborate with other teacher educators to develop a better picture of the preparation of these teachers.

Participants’ Educators

Another direction of further research is to interview the teachers in participants’ stories. I understand the challenges to conducting such interviews, but I wonder what these teachers would say about educating Black male students. Would those teachers reflect on the differences in how they educated these students compared to White students? Might any of those educators say that they lacked prior experiences or relationships with Black male students? Might any of those educators imply that Black males simply did not have what it takes to succeed in school, or that those students were not in school to learn? I am unsure of the answers to these questions, but I believe those teachers stories could help me better understand the education of Black males.
Correctional Educators’ Education and Training

Further research is needed to examine correctional educators’ education backgrounds and training, such as pre- and/or in-service education. In this study, I did not intentionally ask these educators about their teacher preparation. I think a better understanding about their education and training may help inform the preparation of teachers to work in schools populated by Black males.

A Broader Sample of Participants

In this study, I only interviewed Black males serving time in a community based correctional facility. Further research could examine the educational experiences of Black males in other types of correctional contexts, such as jails or prisons. Further research could examine the educational experiences of inmates from a variety of racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural backgrounds. This may help scholars to better understand the educational experiences of students of color, not just Black males.

Moreover, I recommend that a framework from the literature on grounded theory be used to guide further studies of Black male inmates’ experiences in schools and classrooms. Glaser (1978) emphasizes that grounded theory can help researchers to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior, rather than simply producing voluminous description or clever verification of existing theory.

Finally, I would recommend that interviews begin with researchers asking participants open-ended questions, such as, “What can you tell me about something you
remember from a school or classroom?” I would encourage researchers to follow-up participants’ responses with probing questions to better understand their experiences, which could help them to develop a conceptual theory about the education experiences of participants. A better understanding about the educational education experience of students of color from the voices of those students may help stakeholders develop solutions to the racialized inequities in schools, classrooms, as well as the institution of education.
References


Howard, T. C., Flennaugh, T. K., & Terry, C. L. (2012). Black males, social imagery & the disruption of pathological identities: Implications for research & teaching.


guide to building inclusive schools, promoting high expectations, and eliminating racism, (pp. 29-42). Sterling, VA: Stylus.


Appendix A: Letter of Support from Springdale Correction Center
April 8, 2013

Ohio State University
Human Subjects Internal Review Board

To Whom It May Concern:

Joseph Maiorano has continued to support the rehabilitation of offenders in Ohio for a long time. He has always been a source of support and education to the residents of the Correction Center. He is an outstanding educator and colleague.

We wish to continue to support the research project that Mr. Maiorano has been conducting. Mr. Maiorano will have access to our Education Department Staff for interviews to assist in his research.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.
Appendix B: OSU IRB Approval
September 28, 2012

Protocol Number: 2012B0217
Protocol Title: INSIDERS: BLACK AMERICAN MALE INMATES' NARRATIVES ON THE CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THEIR SCHOOLING, Brian Edmiston, Joseph Mairano, School of Teaching & Learning

Type of Review: Initial Review
IRB Staff Contact: Jacob R. Stodard
Phone: 614-292-0576
Email: stodard.13@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Edmiston,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED the above referenced research.

Date of IRB Approval: September 28, 2012
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: September 28, 2013

In addition, in addition; the protocol has been approved for the inclusion of prisoners.

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federally Multicenter Assurance #00006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

[Signature]
Steve Beck, PhD, Co-Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board

bs 017-04 Approval New CR
Version 01/3/09

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Appendix C: Interview Questions
Interview Questions

Interview One

1. What would you like me to know more about you?

2. I want to find out about who cared for you in your schooling. Could you tell me about a teacher, principal or staff member in your school with whom you had a good relationship?

3. What other school personnel do you remember having a good relationship with? Can you tell me about that person?

4. Can you tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member in your school who went out of his or her way to make sure you understood something—to help you be a successful student?

5. Any other school personnel who helped you to be a successful student?

6. What did that person do?

7. Any other school personnel who helped you feel included?

8. I am interested in who welcomed your Black culture in school. Can you tell me a story about a teacher, principal, or staff member who welcomed you and your ways of doing things in your school or classroom? What other school personnel do you remember that welcomed your Black culture at school? What did that person do?

9. How did teachers, principals, or staff members help your family members feel comfortable coming into your school?
10. Did other family members visit your school? Who welcomed them? How?

11. Can you tell me about a teacher, principal, or staff member who would talk to you about events that involved racism?

12. Any other school personnel who discussed events involving racism with you?

13. Can you tell me about teacher, principal, or staff member could you go to if you got in trouble?

14. Can you tell me a story about a time you got into trouble and a teacher, principal, or staff member stood with you?

15. Any other school personnel who were your ally when you got into trouble?

16. What could a teacher, principal or staff member have done when you got into trouble, even if they knew you were in the wrong?

17. Any other ideas how teachers, principals, or staff members could have supported you when you got into trouble?
Interview Two

1. What do you believe teachers, principals, and/or staff should do in today's K-12 schools that would be similar to what you experienced in school?

2. Any other school experiences that should be similar today?

3. What you believe teachers, principals, and/or staff should do in today's K-12 schools that would be different to what you experienced in school.

4. Any other school experiences that should be different today?

5. I have one last question for you. How would your being locked up today have been different if the teachers, principals, or staff at your school had been different?
Group Interview

1. When I asked you to rate your school experiences, some of you gave lower numbers to high school than elementary or middle school. What can you tell me about those lower scores as you got into higher grades?

2. A couple of you said your trouble in school started about 7th, 8th grade. What was different in those grades? What changed in you during that time?

3. A couple of you told stories of educators treating Black males athletes better than Black males who did not play sports. Anyone else have something they would like to say about that?

4. Some of you said coaches had a better understanding of Black males. What does that mean?

5. A couple of you talked about being pushed through school. Was that anyone else’s experience? What can you tell me about that?

6. Some of you said that when you got treated badly that educators told you to brush it off, or just ignore it. Was this helpful for you? What would you have like educators to say?

7. If you could go back to teachers in your school. What would you say to them?

8. Some of you have been involved in education during your incarceration. How are your education experience while you been in, been different from what you experienced on the outs?
9. How was participating in this research project?
Interview with GED teachers

All the Black males I spoke to said they got support in corrections education. They said the reason they got their GED was because of the support they got from you.

Do you agree that support is important for the Black male students to pass the GED?

Can tell me a story about a time when you were really supportive?

Question 2

The Black men in my study said schools treated them differently than White students. School personnel stereotyped them, discriminated against them, and their schools as institutions discriminate against them (low funding to the schools with the most minorities; no make-up test to Blacks who were absent on test days).

Do you agree that schools treat Black males differently than other students?

Can you tell me a story about what you do to ensure that Black GED students are treated equally?

Are there times when you found it challenging to treat Black student the same as a White student? What did you do?

Jim you said you were adaptable to Blacks because of the differences between the Black culture and the White culture. Can you tell me a story about when you were adaptable in the classroom with a Black?

Are you adaptable to Black students? Can you tell me what you do? Are there some instances when it was hard to be adaptable? How so?
Question 3

When a new teacher begins here, what do to prepare him/her to teach Black males?

What would you tell the new teacher?

Is what you do different if the teacher is White? Black?

Question 4

Jim said, Black males come from the streets and think everyone is out to take from them.

“I’m not going to take from them, I show them verbally and otherwise that I am not going to take from them. That seemed important. Have I got that right?

a. What do you mean “taking from”?

b. Can you tell me a story of what you do to show them you’re not going to take from them?

c. Can you tell me a time when it was hard to show that?
Appendix D: SCC Floorplan
Appendix E: Recruiting Handout
Insiders: Black American Male Inmates’ Narratives on the Cultural Relevance of Their Schooling

I’m Joseph Maiorano, the Fit 2B FATHERS teacher. I am also a graduate student at Ohio State University who is conducting a study on how schoolteachers, administrators and other personnel may treat students differently based on students’ race, social class, or gender. I think one group affected by this is African American males. Given that I am White, I don’t know much about this, but I expect you do.

Your school experiences are interesting to me. To find out about these experiences, I invite you to tell me stories about your school experiences during interviews with me. You are invited to two one-hour individual interviews. I will have both interviews with all participants completed in twelve weeks. At that time, if you are still incarcerated, you will be invited to a one-hour pizza party so all participants can talk together about the study. All interviews, including the pizza party will be audio recorded.

The school experiences of African American male students are an important story that needs told. Stakeholders in education who care about the education of all students can read your story and be encouraged to improve schooling for Black males in the US.

Agreeing to participate, or not participate in this study will not modify anything about your stay at this facility, your sentence, parole, or probation. However, you will be helping create a better understand the possible influence of school experiences on African American males. Your expert witness is a significant contribution to this understanding.
If you would like to be interviewed for this study, we can begin by scheduling time for our first interview.

Joseph Maiorano
Appendix F: Marcus’s Recommendations for Schools to Improve the Education of Black Males
A good alternative for Saturday School can be a Saturday Group where the kids that get in trouble will have a group on Saturdays where they talk about their feelings and what they could have done to prevent those actions.

1. They will have to complete a anger management course.

2. Group will have no required participation but participation will give you more points to getting out of groups (Points explained later)

3. Saturday Group kids should be required to work concessions stands for freshman games on Saturdays to gain more social skills and also to gain points to be out of group.

Kids in Saturday Group must have a 2.0 gpa to graduate from the group anything higher than that will give the student more points to graduate program.

Students in Saturday group will be able to graduate from the group with points a student can get points for.

Completing anger management (20 points)
Participating in groups (up to 5 points)
Working concession stands for freshman games (up to 10 points)
5 points for A's on report cards
3 points for B's on report cards.

I believe this will help the black youth especially because it will give them a chance to let their feelings out and maybe give them the reassurance that there lives are not that bad, give them a little responsibility and the drive to complete something.