The Experiences of At-Risk African American Males in an Online Credit Recovery Program

Marcus H. Scott
Concordia University - Portland, cabuka80@hotmail.com

Recommended Citation

Scott, M. H. (2017). *The Experiences of At-Risk African American Males in an Online Credit Recovery Program* (Thesis, Concordia University, St. Paul). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup_commons_grad_edd/61

3-2017

The Experiences of At-Risk African American Males in an Online Credit Recovery Program

Marcus H. Scott
Concordia University - Portland

Concordia University – Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Marcus Henry Scott

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Julie McCann, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Lori Sanchez, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Daniel Sheppard, Ed.D., Content Reader

ACCEPTED BY

Joe Mannion, Ed.D.
Provost, Concordia University, Portland

Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Education, Concordia University, Portland

Jerry McGuire, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Studies, Concordia University, Portland

THE EXPERIENCES OF AT-RISK AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN AN ONLINE

CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM

Marcus Scott

Concordia University – Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Educational Administration

Julie McCann, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Lori Sanchez, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Daniel Sheppard, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University Portland

2017

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to capture the essence of experience as at-risk African American males engaged in online credit recovery coursework.   In specific, the research questions reviewed what supports were needed and what strategies were employed by research participants in order to be successful in the alternative learning environment. The ultimate goal was course completion. The reader is afforded the opportunity to view these experiences through the lens of the microsystem and macrosystem. These systems were a part of Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory. Critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and the self-regulated theory (Zimmerman, 1989) were interconnected in the dominant ecological systems theory for the reader to understand how these systems influenced the behavior of at-risk African American males.

In depth one-on-one interviews were conducted as the primary method of data collection. The interpretative phenomenological approach during data analysis yielded findings that revealed supportive environments were prevalent in the home, classroom, and school settings. These supportive environments were catalyst, coupled with research participants' intrinsic motivation, for self-developed strategies and self-regulatory habits to be employed. Moreover, results revealed the at-risk African Americans males were resilient and strived to overcome previous obstacles that were once barriers to achievement.

Keywords: at-risk, African American males, online credit recovery

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all educators and parents who still believe that black males can learn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To our Lord Jesus Christ, who continuously gives me power to prosper in this dimension. Every mountain top and every valley experience cannot be explained. However, all I can say at the end of the day is, "Yes Lord and Thank You Jesus".

To my wife, Kasaundra Scott, thank you for enduring this long process with me. The Lord has kept us through this long journey. Let the record show, you are smarter than your husband! To my sons Judah, Isaiah, and Alex, know that there is no pressure on you to earn a doctorate degree, however Daddy expects you to achieve to the highest level of your God-given potential. Possess the land; the Lord will be with you.

To my parents Randolph and Jacqueline Scott, know that a portion of this degree belongs to you. I believe you are living in a season where you are seeing the fulfillment of prayer and His word concerning your children. Your struggle was not in vain. Thank you for the work ethic you instilled in me from day one. I proudly say that you are my heroes. To my siblings, Jason and Sarah thank you for your support and encouragement. To my extended family, thank you all as well.

To Dr. Julie McCann, thank you for your support and guidance. Thank you for believing the truth concerning race and discrimination. Thank you for being an advocate for change and reason. Please do not stop your work. To Dr. Lori Sanchez and Dr. Daniel Sheppard, thank you for believing in this study. Thank you for your guidance and sharing your perceptive. To Dr. Leicha Shaver, you were my first mentor as an administrator. I learned so much from you. Thank the Lord for new life, hope, strength, and His guidance.

Lastly, thank you to the research participants who shared their voice and story. You are not a statistic nor forgotten. You will be prosperous. I am praying for all of you.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Recent United States statistics suggested that the American education system is improving in regards to the national dropout and high school completion rates. Fry's (2014) research revealed that dropout rates are decreasing and high school graduation completion rates are increasing amongst African Americans. The national dropout rate has decreased due to more African American and other minorities completing their high school graduation plan. At the end of the 2012–2013 school year, the national dropout rate was 8% for African Americans; however, if one were to review the entering cohort completion, a different conclusion could be formulated (Fry, 2014).

A cohort can be defined as a group of students who are educated at the same time (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). For this study, the term cohort referred to the graduating class per students entering high school in the ninth grade within the researched school district. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) reported that African Americans had the second to lowest adjusted cohort graduation rate ACGR. The ACGR divides the number of students who graduate within four years by the number of students that formed the cohort. The ACGR for African Americans students in the United States was 73%. This graduation rate is below the national ACGR of 82%.

In addition, Savas' (2016) study, that included 9,940 research subjects and 12% of which were African American, reported that overall African Americans students had lower high school GPAs than their White and Hispanic counterparts as well. The average high school GPA of all participants was 2.89, but the GPA of African American students was only 2.45. Moreover, African American students were outscored in Math and Reading assessments at the high school

level. In order to address the root issue concerning African American student academic success one must examine the short-comings that prevented successful outcomes (Kena, Hussar, McFarland, De Brey, Musu-Gillette & Wang, Dunlop-Velez, 2016).

Engaging environments where learning is supported are important components for all learning environments and high schools in general. Large urban cities are creating specialized alternative campuses to address the students who are struggling with completion of their high school academic careers (Forte, 2009; Furger, 2008). Students who are identified as at-risk and enrolled in alternative education centers often have low reading levels. Upon entering these alternative programs are students with deficient credits. This meant that the student did not enough credits for graduation. Even while enrolled in alternative learning programs students still face issues such as destitution (homelessness), adolescent parenthood, academic distress, and embarrassment for being enrolled in an alternative learning environment (Forte, 2009).

The United States Department of Education (2008) developed non-regulatory guidance for the adjusted cohort graduation rate ACGR. To review, the ACGR divided the number of students who graduated within four years by the number of students who formed the cohort, and the cohort is formed at the inception of the ninth grade year for first-time enrolled students at a public secondary institution of learning. The cohort is adjusted when students transfer in and out of the group over the next three subsequent school years. Regulations, under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), required states to include a four year graduation rate that aligned with the statute in the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for adequate yearly progress (AYP).

The Schott Foundation performed a national study in 2007–2008, and their findings revealed that half of African American males graduated with their cohort (Mata, 2011). At the close of the 2012–2013 school year, African American male graduation rates increased to almost

2

60%, however they lagged behind the Hispanic males at 65% and White male graduation rates at 80% (Superville, 2015). When the Schott Foundation looked at low performing schools, at most, only 28% graduated from their original cohort. Many of these students attended public school systems that had not met acceptable academic standards (Mata, 2011).

Overall, the graduation rates for African American males are lower than the graduation rates of African American females, and several studies revealed there is a direct correlation between the students dropping out of school and entering prison (Connely, 2014; Dillon, 2009; Stephens & Repa, 1992). Connely (2014) explained that the qualitative and quantitative data is unfavorable concerning African American males who fail to complete high school. When African American males drop out they have a higher risk of arrests and conviction rates.

Kearney and Harris (2014) reported alarming statistics from the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project. Statistics stated that imprisonment is likely for 70% of African American male non-graduates. The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University reported that 25% of African American males who abandoned school ended up in the prison system (Forte, 2009). These rates gained national attention and prompted the need for preventative action (Connely, 2014).

Bell (2010) noted that fiscal, instructional, and human resources have been allocated in schools to increase the academic achievement of African American males. In addition, there were reformation strategies, such as redistricting or rezoning them to better schools, so that African American males can avoid academic decay. However, poor academic achievement amongst African American males remained rampant across the country (Bell, 2010; Cook, 2015).

Accordingly, the academic gap was also evident at the junior high school level. The Schott Foundation (2015) reported the results from the National Assessment Educational Progress (NAEP) Math and Reading proficiency examination for African American male students in the eigth grade. Test results revealed a proficiency rate of only 12% for reading and 13% for math achieved by African American males. White males scored over 25% higher in both tested categories.

At-risk African American youth bring challenges to professionals, such as psychologists and community intervention program directors, who are trying to assist this population. The need for community programs to intervene with psychological and educational remediation programs is great. The prevailing issues became troublesome as this sub group entered the workforce ill-equipped and unprepared (Sanchez, 2016; Wood, Hillman, & Sawilowsky, 1996).

At-risk African American youth became increasingly disconnected from society due to their lack of proficiency (McDaniel, Simms, Fortuny, & Monson, 2013; Miah, 2006; Vanderhaar & Munoz, 2006). However, research indicated that African Americans (males) did have academic aspirations, and desired a high level of achievement (Bell, 2010; Savas, 2016). There are several components that prevented academic success (Bell, 2010). The negative spiraling effect of their economically disadvantaged status created a barrier and was a major factor of their academic underachievement in comparison to their more affluent peers (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell & Palacios, 2012). In order to prevent the continuance of low academic achievement of at-risk African American males, school districts made concerted efforts to prevent the increase in dropouts.

Instead of using traditional credit recovery programs, school many districts have been utilizing online curriculum for students to regain credits that were lost due to academic failure

(Jones, 2011). Districts resorted to dropout prevention programs to address the issues faced with at-risk students. The main purposes of dropout prevention programs were to provide alterative academic services to students, and restructure the traditional high school program so these students can graduate. Online credit recovery programs in school districts served at-risk students and helped them regain course credit due to academic failure. These programs specifically operated to help students graduate on time and provide opportunities in the classroom to address all learners (Watson & Gemin, 2008). This mode of credit recovery became attractive to school districts because of the flexibility embedded in online curriculum programs where student were able to complete their coursework at their conveniences as well as ability to work at their own pace (Jones, 2011).

The Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015) stressed that democracy was built on the foundation of education, and public education remains the greatest conduit to interrupt African American males from the cyclical effects of poverty. Therefore, at-risk African American males must be placed in the right learning environment to graduate from high school. By developing local and state operated environments that support a better chance of learning and healthy living, African American males have a better chance of succeeding. Overall, at-risk African American lives matter because they play an important role in all facets of the American society (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015).

Statement of the problem

In the southwestern state where this study was conducted, more than half or 53.7% of the African American male population were classified as at-risk of dropping out of high school. These statistics were staggering because African American males only constituted 6.4% of the total population of students by the demographic group in the state (State Data, 2016d).

Moreover, during the 2013–2014 school year, there were 97, 286 African American males enrolled in grades 9–12, and 3.5% (3,460) actually fulfilled their at-risk projection and dropped out of school (State Data, 2016a).

In response to the at-risk population in state high school programs, many districts employed the use of online credit recovery programs for students to regain credit due to failure nationwide. It is unknown the number of districts or the number of students that utilized online credit recovery courses, however large urban districts across the state all utilize online curriculum as a measure of drop-out prevention (Thevenot & Butrymowicz, 2010).

 In addition, specified funding was earmarked to specifically address and meet the needs of this student population. State funding was reserved to supplement the basic education program with compensatory, concentrated, or accelerated instruction for students who met one statutory requirement of being classified as at-risk (State Data, 2016c). Therefore, this state had a vested interest and intentional focus on this identified population of students to be properly serviced. For this study, the percentage of at-risk African American males revealed the need for the researcher to note their experiences, and what solutions can surface to improve their experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine and evaluate the lived experiences of at-risk African American males enrolled in an online credit recovery program. This study attempted to gather experiences from up to 10 research participants enrolled in online credit recovery program initiatives in a large urban school district. In evaluation, the primary objective was to capture any common experiences of the research subjects. The ultimate findings of this study revealed practical information that would benefit students, central staff administrators, campus

administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders who manage and enroll at-risk African American males in online credit recovery programs.

Significance of the Study

The academic success of American students mattered in regards to obtaining a quality education; however African American males were at the bottom of graduation achievement in 71.4% of individual states in the United States of America (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Since 1984, the researched state school districts were required to employ programs to intervene, increase graduation rates, and offset further the upsurge of at-risk and dropout data (State Data, 2014).

The nature of this study was significant due to the escalating numbers of African American males classified as at-risk and the percentage of them who were actually dropping out of high school in the state. This study yielded researcher recommendations, and practical implications for online credit recovery learning center programs. The reader will gain more insight, based on commonalities reported, of at-risk African American males in this educational setting.

Districts need to know the experiences of this endangered sub-group so they can strategize and formulate new methods to meet their needs. This research will ultimately add to the body of existing information on how to educate African American males who are at-risk of dropping out of high school. The literature presented in Chapter 2 investigated the various theories and factors that contributed to the classification of at-risk African American males, and how school districts managed and utilized credit recovery programs in response to this growing population. Overall, this literature supported the following research questions discussed during the interview phase:

(a) What strategies did at-risk African American males employ in the face of previous obstacles to ultimately work towards the goal of course completion?

(b) What supports are needed for at-risk African American males to be successful learners in an online credit recovery environment?

Definition of Terms

African Americans are citizens or residents of the United States of America that ancestry total or partial derives from Black African descent (African American, n.d; Carson, 2001).

At-risk is terminology used to classify students in this study who met one or more of the indicators as identified by the state education code (State Data, 2016c).

Bioecological is the incorporation of one's biology in their immediate environment stimulating development (Ryan, 2001).

Cohort is individuals belonging to a identified group by an indistinguishable defining characteristic such as age or school grade level (Cohort, 2010).

Convention (social) is an instituted understanding, custom, belief, or practice held by members of a culture or civilization (Convention, 2011).

Credit Recovery is the terminology used to describe the credit recovery of high school graduation courses that were not originally awarded to the student. In most cases, the course credit was not awarded due to academic failure (McCabe and St.Andrie, 2012).

Ecological is how organisms interact with their physical environments (Ecological, 2013).

Self-perception is how an individual perceives themselves based on their personal beliefs, judgment, and attitude (Sincero, n.d.).

8

Setting is the immediate surrounding of the individual. When used in reference to the Ecological System Theory the setting reflects everything that occurs in surrounding where development takes place (Härkönen, 2001).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with an overview of associated issues detailing national and state historical information concerning African American males at-risk of dropping out of high school, and how districts responded to this growing issue. As aforementioned, at-risk and dropout rates for African American males far exceeded other sub-groups in the reviewed state associated with this study.

In this state, school districts were obligated to not only respond, but increase the graduation rates of all students. Therefore, knowing what at-risk African American males have experienced while enrolled in the program would help formulate effective strategies that would be beneficial. Chapter 2 reviewed literature that specifically explained why and how African American males were likely classified as at-risk of dropping out of high school. In addition, the chapter discussed how districts have responded in the utilization of online credit recovery programs as a means of intervention.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter surveyed literature related to the experiences of African American males who were classified as at-risk of dropping out of high school, and to review how school districts utilized credit recovery programs as measures of intervention for the purpose of increasing graduation rates. The conceptual framework concerning this study supported the literature reviewed in this chapter and ultimately connected the research to the reviewed literature.

The pursuit for scholarly research related to the problem was executed via the Internet and online databases available through the Concordia University Portland library site. Hard copy text was also utilized. The university's online databases, ERIC (ProQuest), Education Database (ProQuest), and JSTOR were searched for peer reviewed reports, books, scholarly articles, and dissertations. Education articles, scholarly articles and books were also searched using the Google search engine. The following key terms were used to direct the research: ecological systems theory, critical race theory, self-regulated theory, at-risk African American males in high school, African American males failures, online credit recovery, drop-out prevention programs, and credit recovery.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study built on the foundation of three specific theories germane to the overall focus of the research. Those theories were the ecological systems theory, Critical race theory, and Self-Regulation Theory. For this study, it was important that the theories reviewed for this analysis were interwoven into the ecological systems theory. Throughout the course of this study, components of these theories explained the related issues associated with at-risk African American males, the lasting effects of their environments, and

how the technologically driven option of online credit recovery programs school districts utilized could rectify the level of concern for at-risk populations.

Ecological Systems Theory

The ecological systems theory was a philosophy introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner that specifically viewed child development through the lens of system relationships. These relationships influenced their environment (Ryan, 2001). Each system was complex and the complexity grows as the child develops (Eamon, 2001). Ryan (2001) explained, "The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development" (para 1). The settings of society also influenced the development of the child. If there was variance or change in one system it can affect the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Therefore, to properly study the development of children, it was imperative that one reviews the environment directly surrounding them (Ryan, 2001).

Essentially, the five systems that comprised the ecological systems theory were the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Härkönen, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the interaction and interplay between the microsystem and macrosystem was examined.

In the microsystem, the child interacted with their direct contacts such as family, school, and neighborhood environment. The development of the child in this system is predicated on the relationships with directs contacts. Likewise, direct contacts were influenced and affected by the child conduct. Interaction in this system affected the child's behavior and formative belief system (Ryan, 2001). Jack Mezirow (1991) contended that by means of socialization, we unconsciously understood the world in our childhood. Our differentiated viewpoints remained

unconscious in our adulthood; however, they were essential in the interpretation of experience. The outcome of child development depended on the interaction between direct contacts in the microsystem (Eamon, 2001). This interaction was important because bi-directional relations had the most influence on the child's life (Härkönen, 2001). Eamon (2001) stated,

> If these interactions, or proximal processes, were to be effective they must occur regularly over extended periods of time. Proximal processes occur between the parent and child and within the peer, school, learning, and recreational activities; they were the mechanisms by which genetic potential for effective psychological functioning is realized. (p. 257)

It was important to note that proximal processes could be simply defined as the continuing interaction that occurs between an individual and their direct environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The greatest impact made on the child was within the microsystem, and outside components affected this system. For this study, the direct contacts in the microsystem were the parents, teachers, school administrators, and peers.

The macrosystem involved the incorporation of societal customs, values, and beliefs into the overall system (Ryan, 2001). This system was viewed as the blueprint of a culture that is developed by society (Härkönen, 2001). The precepts or principles that governed this system affected the microsystem.   If the customs or conventions believed by society predetermined the child's conduct or demeanor, then the direct contacts within the microsystems were influenced. As a result the developing child was influenced and their environment altered (Ryan, 2001).

As the development of the child continued, the interplay between the systems continued. As the child matured, they reacted differently to events that occurred in their environment. This reaction determined how a change to the environment provoked behavior (Härkönen, 2001;

Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner's (1989) model was an indication on how complex systems effect the holistic development of the child (Ryan, 2001). The customary public conventions about at-risk African American males affected interaction in their microsystems (see Figure 1). For this study, this diagram shows how the two systems interact with each other and affect the child per components of Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory. This thought was further reviewed in the research presented in this chapter.
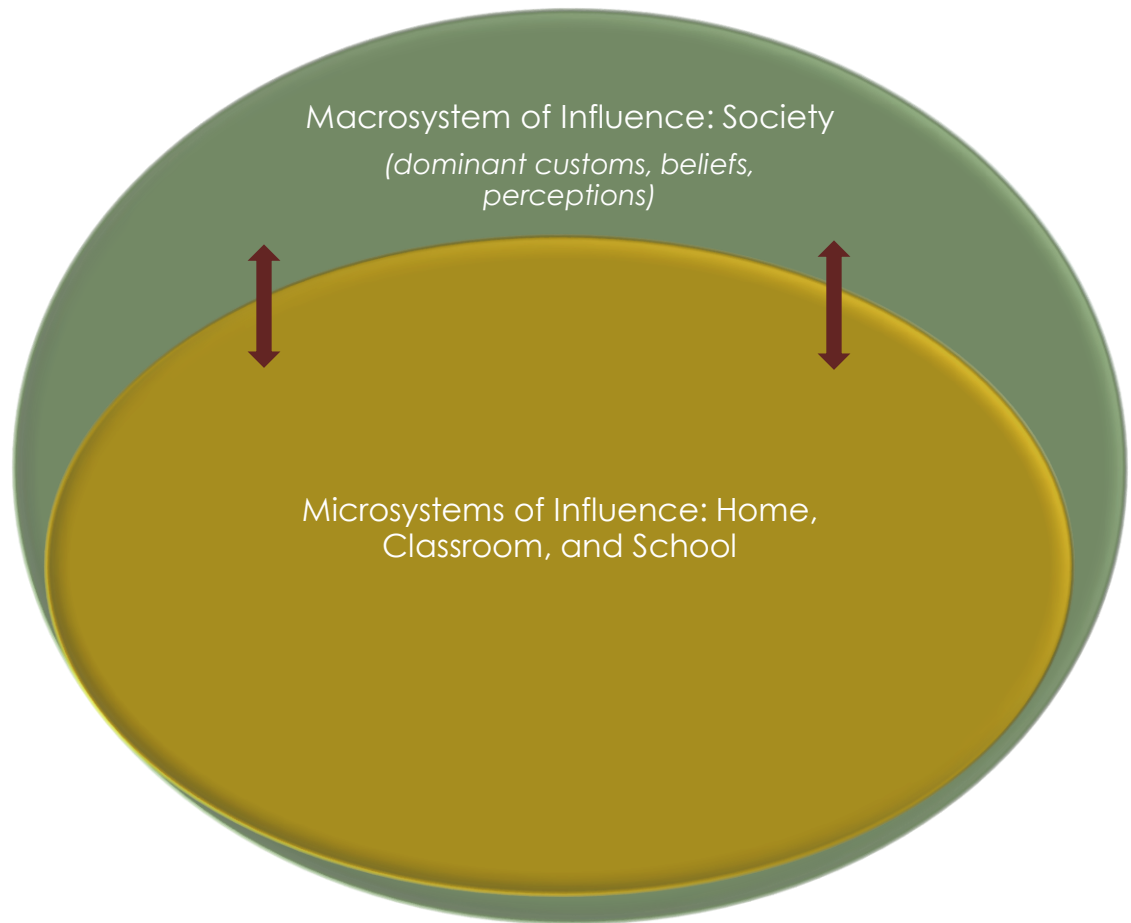
Figure 1. the interpretation of the microsystem and macrosystem.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory was introduced in the 1970s, by legal professionals of color, to discuss the concerns of race, racism, and the influence or power (Zuberi, 2011). Notable professionals responsible for the introduction of this theory included Derrick Bell, Alan Foreman, and Richard Delgado (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Other professionals, such as Lani Guinier, further stressed the major themes of critical race theory and advocated for minority perspectives concerning race (Will, 1993). The principles of critical race theory can be traced back to the enslavement of Africans in America. During this period, the concepts of White superiority and Whiteness were present (Zuberi, 2011). There are five basic principles of critical race theory. The five basic principles are (a) normal science, (b) interest convergence, (c) social construction, (d) differential racialization, and (e) legal storytelling. For this study, only interest convergence and social construction were reviewed. These components were relevant in the macrosystem.

Interest convergence affirms White ascendancy or hierarchy over people of color is of great significance for the majority group. Racism advances the future ambitions and goals of elite Whites from a materialistic perspective and a working class White mentally. Whites must see the benefit for themselves before they alter or change practices that would make life better for people of color. Because of the benefits associated with continued institutional racism, efforts for eradication were not a priority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The social construction of critical race theory adopted the principle that race in the United States was a result of societal thought, relations, and ideas. These conventions were subjective and invented. The acquired thoughts can be swayed, influenced, and abandoned to benefit the dominant group (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

15

In education, this theory became a foundational piece in educational research when explaining the dynamics of racism and race in school settings. Researchers and scientists proved that race was a social construct and not predetermined from biological or genealogical components (Allen, 2010).

Critical race theory in education. Critical race theory specifically addressed how students of color were continuously marginalized and downgraded in schools (Allen, 2010). The theory was utilized to solve issues that were consistently present in the education field such as discipline and alternative measures to educate children (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Racism was exposed in education when White supremacist teachings, curriculum, and design were continuously enacted. As a result, students of color failed (Knaus, 2009). Matias and Mackey (2016) noted, "it becomes imperative to unveil pedagogical applications of critical Whiteness studies. Unwillingness to do so maintains the recycled nature of the hegemonic Whiteness that dominates the field of education (p.32). White supremacy in education failed to recognize the cultural contributions of other racial groups (Knaus, 2009).

Additionally, when students of color continuously failed academically, the ambitions or interests of Whites fostered the exclusionary economic practices in the United States (Knaus, 2009). Knaus' viewpoint supported one of the components of social construction where acquired thoughts of Whites were swayed, influenced, and abandoned for their benefit (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The exclusionary economic practices were evident due to the number of people of color who were utilized in the labor market but paid very little in wages. This further eliminated any competition for employment between Whites and people of color because they would not meet the preliminary qualifications to apply for higher paying jobs due to low or no academic proficiency. In order for this cycle of

underachievement to continue, students of color were groomed for failure in the classroom. Tolbert (2014) reported academic gaps continued to widen between Black and White students because these students were subjected to curriculum and instruction that did not prepare them for college. African American students also tended to had teachers who had less classroom experience. However, when there was application of equitable practices in the classroom, all students, particularly students of color, had the opportunity to be equipped with the needed resources to be successful (Knaus, 2009).

Stereotypes, Self-Perception, and Stigmatization in the Macrosystem

Crocker and Major (1989) expressed the following in reference to stigmatized individuals in society, "…who by virtue of their membership in a social category were vulnerable to being labeled as deviant targets of prejudice or victims of discrimination, or had negative economic or interpersonal outcomes" (p. 609). Stigmatization could occur based on physical attributes such as race, gender, or physical handicaps for example. Negative self-perception and behavioral changes were some of the outcomes for individuals that faced this dilemma. Also, negativity could stem from societal feedback based on its perception of that particular group. The societal feedback   received does not provoke the individual to correct their actions, and when a large group of individuals had been stigmatized, the community agrees and relies on their developed beliefs. (Wood, Hillman, & Sawilowsky, 1996).

Societal conventions, concerning racial groups, generated in the macrosystem (society) ultimately affect the perceptions and viewpoints in the classroom. There were several self-perception intervention programs and initiatives in operation at urban schools and in low socio-economic neighborhoods; however more emphasis should be placed on molding, modeling, development, and perception of African American males as academic scholars (Fleischman &

17

Heppen, 2009; Whiting, 2006; Wiggan, 2007). Self-perception, in regards to learning and academic achievement, played a significant role when determining student confidence levels at school. Therefore, the confidence levels of African American males were depleted and they were uninterested and not engaged in their academics. (Booth & Gerald, 2011).

Unfortunately, the self-esteem and self-perceptions of young African American males were sometimes developed in unfavorable surroundings such as the streets and juvenile detention centers. There was a lack of balance in their home environment (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). Based on the aforementioned research presented in this study concerning microsystems, the development of self-esteem, and self-perception in the streets and juvenile detention centers rather than the home would negatively affect the African American male's microsystem.

Likewise, if the academic identities of at-risk African American males were not developed, then they will be less likely to become high academic achievers and more likely to identify and fulfill the predictions associated with at-risk students. Whiting (2006) noted disproportionate numbers of African American males who were disengaged because of their self-perception in regards to academics. Developing an academic identity should start as early as possible, and should continue throughout adult learning. Self-perception, academic identity, and confidence, in association with achievement, were necessary for all students regardless of their race or gender. However, when addressing academic identity with African American males one must first consider their racial identity and masculinity complexes (Whiting, 2006).

The perceptions of African American males as being uneducated, lethargic, unpredictable, angry, and violent were prevalent in popular culture (Knight, 2015; Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). The self-esteem of an individual can be continuously influenced if these perceptions are prevalent. Having to deal with these branded labels was burdensome and

possibly affected their personal achievement. In addition, the negative stereotypes affected

African American males' attitudes toward education as they took on the persona as the hard to

engage uninterested learner (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

The macrosystem conventions concerning the Black male learner were explained through

prevalent stigmas and stereotypes. The stereotypical images of African American males were not

positive in regards to academics. Images were mainly seen in the entertainment industry where

wealthy African American males were involved in fields such as music, film/television, and

sports. Therefore, negative self-images and self-esteem can result if jaded images persist in the

media concerning these industry occupations (The Opportunity Agenda, 2011).

Undoubtedly, those who overcame academic and social obstacles, according to society

standards, had truly accomplished a milestone (Henfield, 2012). As stated, the negative

conventions in the macrosystem can plague microsystem environments and lead to further issues

in the African American male's development.

Family Microsystem

Primarily, role strains originated when African American fathers failed to find substantial

employment, were absent from the home, or had not obtained a substantial education. Many

times their risky coping strategies led them to be involved in illegal drug activity, entry or re-

entry in prison, distress, and adherence to public policy initiatives such as child support (Rowley

& Bowman, 2009).

When African American mothers failed to marry, failed to find significant employment,

and lacked education, their risky coping strategies could lead them to distress because of the

multiple roles they played in the household to keep it balanced. These African American mothers

sometimes received welfare and other federal aid programs (Rowley & Bowman, 2009). Jackson

(1994) found that when roles were strained concerning African American mothers, their children were perceived negatively. Particularly, African American boys were perceived more negatively than girls were.

High unemployment rates devastated the African American community. Specifically, African American males living in large urban cities had disproportionate rates of unemployment in comparison to their White counterparts. The instability of unemployment fostered continued presence of fear, mistrust, economic insecurity, and unpredictability to African American families (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). The presence of fear, mistrust, economic insecurity, and unpredictability would create an unstable microsystem for an African American male.

Because men in general connected employment, or the ability to provide with their identity, the roles of African American males were strained when they could not find employment. Eventually, a number of them detached or left their families due to feelings of inadequacy. The absence of the father in the home contributed to economic hardship and the spiraling effects of poverty (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006; Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010).

Violent crime in America decreased; however, the number of African American males who were incarcerated continued to steadily increase. African American males represent 7% of the population in America, but they accounted for 37% of inmates who were in prison (Milton & Zheng, 2014). Statistics show 33% of African American males between the ages of 20 and 29 were incarcerated or currently on probation. The root cause of these statistics was limited employment opportunities and premature activity in illegal drugs in large urban communities (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

The social and economic issues faced by African American parents led to the classification of African American male students as at-risk and other unfavorable outcomes such

as academic gaps, a lack of motivation, and higher education enrollment and completion

problems. The ecological approach within the microsystem suggested that the strained role of the

mother and father causes cyclical poverty and other environmental ramifications that were cross-

generational. As a result, these factors negatively affect the African American community. More

importantly, the father's absence created the greatest role strain that influenced African

American male academic achievement (Rowley and Bowman, 2009). These stated statistics and

issues presented a negative social construction for African American males, and also resulted in

conventions in the macrosystem (society) that predetermined underachievement for children

living in these fractured microsystems.

School Microsystem

Over the past three decades, there was great concern and interest in specifically

addressing whether public schools had the proper resources to educate at-risk African American

males (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). This focus centers on equipping these individuals with

the necessary skills and abilities to be at a level of readiness to be productive in school. In urban

areas, 25% of African American males enrolled in school were expelled, and there was a

disparity in the number of students placed in corrective or remedial reading classes (Henfield,

2012). The national high school graduate and college attendance rates had steadily increased for

African Americans over the past twenty years; however the increase can be attributed primarily

to African American female enrollment (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013).

It was important to note that even with the increase, enrollment numbers did not equate

to White and Asian American student enrollment statistics. In addition, there was a lack of

attendance, participation, and graduation in post-high school or collegiate educational programs.

The low academic proficiency and completion rates of African American males in grades K–12

had caused the nation to be in crisis mode because of the main concern of race and gender achievement gap (Rowley & Bowman, 2009).

National Accountability of Schools

Murrell-Heydorf (2011) stated that the current culture of accountability in schools that focuses on increased student achievement but disregarded race, gender, and other socioeconomic factors had not necessarily resulted in African American males being educated in a better manner. More likely, quality education and proven pedagogical strategies were not implemented in these schools because of the added pressure and intimidation that teachers encountered for students to perform at the minimum standard (Murrell-Heydorf, 2011). Blame had been placed on state education agencies, lawmakers, local school district administration, and classroom instructors for the lack of achievement levels of African American males. Some had stressed that low performing teachers and administrators should be terminated. Additionally, this crisis had provoked many to advocate for special programs and reform of the learning standards and classroom instructional curriculum (Henfield, 2012).

At-Risk Characteristics and Indicators

Whiting (2006) expressed identifiable indicators when classifying students as at-risk of dropping out of school. Some students can be classified as at-risk due to their learning disability, or students could have an at-risk classification because they were not assimilating with the assertive or more dominant student group on campus. However, there were common characteristics for most students who were classified as at-risk such as the following: (a) Poor academic achievement (b) Overaged (c) Behavioral or emotional issues (d) No psychological attachment to school (e) No involvement in school in the form of excessive absences (Ormrod, 2010). For this study, the at-risk indicators on Table 1 were used to categorize research subjects.

Table 1 disclosed the indicators this southwestern state had utilized to classify students that attended public schools as at-risk. Students were considered at-risk if they met one or more indicators. These indicators were approved by state legislature during the 2009–2010 legislative session.

Table 1

State At-Risk Indicators

Indicators	Descriptors
1	Has remained in the same grade for more than one academic year (State Data, 2016c).
2	In grades seven–12, and the student has not upheld a 70 average during the current or preceding school years in two or more core content subjects (State Data, 2016c).
3	The student did not meet standard of the state assessment (State Data, 2016c).
4	In grades Pre-K–3, the student did not met standard on the readiness examination (State Data, 2016c).
5	The student is pregnant or a parent (State Data, 2016c).
6	The student has been placed at an alternative campus due to behavior (State Data, 2016c).
7	The student was expelled in the current or preceding year (State Data, 2016c).
8	The student is on parole or probation (State Data, 2016c).
9	The student was previously reported as a drop-out by the school district (State Data, 2016c).
10	The student has limited English proficiency as identified per state law (State Data, 2016c).
11	The Department of Family and Protective Services has the student in custody (State Data, 2016c).
12	The student is homeless per state guidelines (State Data, 2016c).
13	The student lives at a detention facility, treatment facility, shelter, specialized hospital, halfway house, or foster home (State Data, 2016c).

The Classroom Environment

Whiting (2006) stressed that the attributes that make a successful student in any learning environment were lacking for African American males because of disengagement. School was not viewed as an institution where they could discover their identity, or a place where they could exhibit the proper behavior to produce excellence, to positively affect their future. African American males viewed occupational fields in sports and entertainment as careers where they can receive monetary reward, honor, and recognition as more desirable (Phillips, 2015; Whiting, 2006).

There were other factors to consider when determining why African American males were not achieving academically. There was a propensity for African American males to underperform academically if there was no challenge in the presented curriculum. There could also be underachievement if the curriculum was not culturally specific and relevant. Poor student conduct issues were related to African American males not being challenged in the presented curriculum, under-identification of academic talent, and continued boredom. The maximization of potential occurred when the curriculum presented was culturally relevant and rigorous to engage the learner at various levels (Henfield, 2012).

Using a cultural context to define the ecological approach would require one to incorporate the issues such as poverty, education, fatherlessness, violence, racism, incarceration, and employment. In addition, prejudices must be reviewed in each of these areas to gain a level of understanding. When general assumptions were made, other factors of influence were left out of the equation that could possibly benefit the African American males. (Livingston &

Nahimana, 2006). With the prevailing prejudices that plague the classroom environment, greater advocacy is needed regarding the African American males.

Advocacy for the Learning Environment

Traditional classrooms were not meeting the needs of African American males (McCoy, 2012). Some African American students were not given the same educational opportunities in traditional classrooms because of technological limitations. Specifically, technological limitations in low socio-economic schools limited their ability to increase learning and problem solving abilities, particularly in math and science classes (Winston, Philips, & Lloyd, 2007). The exposure to technology could aid in the overall comprehension, expansion, and explanation of academic content (McCoy, 2012). An active learning classroom required different strategies to be implemented at the time of instruction, to enable the student to actually absorb the academic content being presented (Holland, 2014). Active learning occurred when specific questions were asked, problems surfaced, and certain issues reviewed that involved the input of students. (Felder & Brent, 2009). The University of North Carolina found that the incorporation and implementation of active learning in classrooms was of benefit to African American students (Holland, 2014). Felder and Brent (2009) explained that active learning was anything done in a classroom setting that involved thinking about what they were actually doing within the classroom setting. It did not matter whether the instructor was deemed great or not. What mattered was that learners were engaged in the present content (Holland, 2014).

Hudson Valley Press Online (2011) clarified that there were three basic categories for student learners. Those categories were visual learners (picture and print), oral/auditory learners, and tactile/kinesthetic learners. Kunjufu (2011) projected that there were a large number of learners, especially African American males, were visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/physical

learners. Most activities in the classroom, based on his research, were geared toward visual print or left-brain thinkers. This conflict was continuous when educating African American males and most teachers had not adjusted their instructional delivery methods to fulfil this learning necessity.

Robbins (2011) stressed that when culturally relevant instructional practices, coupled with stimulating lessons were implemented, then African American males had a higher propensity to learn. The curriculum in secondary schools must be improved to address such topics as student backgrounds, applicable interaction in relation to the curriculum, and prior knowledge. Instructional practices should incorporate relevant issues that could arise in the real world. The presentation of curriculum should generate interest with students. In addition, students in the twenty-first century positively responded to relevant curriculum presented technologically (Robbins, 2011). African American students positively responded to culturally responsive learning environments that established clear goals through standards based on strategic planning (Hill, 2012). Based on the aforementioned research concerning the learning environments, educators explored technological integrated differentiated learning environments to address at-risk learners.

Online Credit Recovery Programs

In general, when the term credit recovery was used, it referred to high school students in need of credits in order to fulfill required graduation standards. However, the need of credits or course completion extended to students in grades six through eight as well, to advance to the next grade level (Zinth, 2011). Credit recovery occurred when a student had been unsuccessful in achieving the required grade in academic coursework, and was placed in an alternative learning

environment to recover credits that were not awarded during the initial attempt (McCabe and St.Andrie, 2012).

Some districts elected the use of online curriculum as a means of intervention for at-risk student learners in need of credit recovery (McCabe & St.Andrie, 2012). In online credit recovery classrooms, mastery in the presented coursework was established after students showed academic proficiency in online curriculum. Academic proficiency was aligned with state curriculum and district standards (Lewis, 2016; Zinth, 2011).

Virtual classrooms enabled the student to complete all coursework in need of recovery online. The format of Credit recovery programs were fully online, blended, or in-person. In a fully online program there was little to no supervision, but blended programs incorporated content professionals, or teachers facilitated the presented curriculum and student learning. In-person credit recovery resembled common summer school programs across the country (McCabe & St.Andrie, 2012). More traditional programs created smaller classroom sizes and emphasized small-group direct instruction. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that more than 50% of school districts reporting exclusive use of online curriculum conveyed that 60% of classes were utilized for credit recovery purposes (Carr, 2014). The goal and the intent of credit recovery programs were to increase graduation rates and concurrently prepare students for post-graduate academic coursework (Zinth, 2011).

National data reflecting the number of students who were enrolled in credit recovery or effectiveness of program implementation was lacking. Moreover, a list that reflected the number of states that utilized online credit recovery programs was not available (Zinth, 2011). The oversight of credit programs was not common by governmental entities; therefore the practices of credit recovery programs were unregulated. In addition, these programs were not fully

researched in regards to them being deemed as deterrence to at-risk students dropping out of high school (McCabe & St. Andrie 2012). However, Zinth (2011) and Watson and Gemin (2008) countered this argument, and stated that the implementation of credit recovery programs had resulted in the lower drop-out rate and decrease in the number of students classified as at-risk.

Due to the number of students classified as at-risk, enrollments increased across the nation concerning online credit recovery programs. For example, one educational program enrolled about one million students nationwide. The tracking of enrollment for the various online curriculum programs was not concrete; however these programs were mainstream (Carr, 2014).

There was a surge of credit recovery programs put into operation after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation imposed high standards across the nation. Federal guidelines required states to establish goals concerning the graduation rate and regulated the progress of that data (McCabe & St.Andrie, 2012). In 2015, the federal education reform legislation Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) required states to maintain high standards when setting the expectation for the graduation of students. The high schools were required to allocate resources to address the high dropout rates. In addition, states had to ensure specified provisions were made for struggling student sub-groups (The White House, 2015). Facts previously stated were considered when implementing online credit recovery programs.

Zinth (2011) researched state legislatures and reported the state of Idaho required that local education agencies implement credit recovery programs by grade seven. Per Idaho state guidelines, opportunity to recover credits had to be offered to students that did not meet minimum credit obligations during the academic school year. In addition to the credit recovery program, the school district had to offer an alternative invention program so that students were ready for promotion to the next grade level, before the inception of the next academic school

year. The state of Colorado required all secondary campuses to confirm, on their yearly performance report, whether credit recovery programs were offered at their school. The rationale behind this method supported the notion that the student population had to know what services were available to them if they failed to meet the passing standard in a traditional classroom. Likewise, South Carolina legislature promoted the access of credit recovery programs through the state's virtual high school component and access was available to all students in the state (Zinth, 2011). The southwestern state in this study mirrored the standards that Idaho implemented. Some of the components of successful programs were immediate responsiveness, awareness, and availability/accessibility (Zinth, 2011; Watson & Gemin, 2008). The components of online credit recovery programs aligns to the final theory that were reviewed for this study.

Self-Regulated Theory

Barry Zimmerman (1989) described self-regulated theory as that which is built on the foundation of an individual being fully active and involved in the process and monitoring of their learning. Self-regulated learning was a constructive practice where learners generated their feelings, thoughts, and actions toward accomplishing their goals. During this process, the learner developed a stronger sense of observational skills, imitation, and self-control (Kuo, 2010).

Self-regulated learners were motivated, continuously thought about what they were thinking, and their behavior reflected the ultimate goal they were endeavoring to achieve. Initiatives and goals of the students were highly evident as the learners did not rely on instructors or other students to obtain the needed knowledge to progress further. Self-regulated strategies had to be employed in order for the learner to be identified as self-regulated. Strategies included organization, pursuing and transforming data, and self-consequating. Self-consequation involved

the learner creating their own reprimands and incentives towards progression of achieving their goal (Zimmerman, 1989).

Kuo (2010) reported that self-regulation was not a mental ability, but rather a self-directive method where the learner transformed lethargic practices to self-directed learning. The skill and will of the learner was challenged and altered during self-regulation. Therefore, it was critical that the learner understood their purpose and what goal they were trying to achieve (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martin-Pons, 1992; Zimmerman, 1989).

Zimmerman's (1989) argument was in accordance with Bandura's (1986) triadic formulation model. This model described the function (components) of self-regulation through the learner's environment, behavior, and person or self. Each component of the model systematically and cyclically engaged with another sector, and placed the focus on self-regulation. For example, a self-regulated individual altered their environment by removing themselves from unrestricted atmospheres and eliminating distractions. The learner was proactive and changed their cultural associations and acquaintances. When the individual moved to the new environment their thoughts, preferences, and personality changed. The change of person or self, ultimately affected their behavioral actions and affirmations concerning their ultimate goal. Interaction between self-regulated learners was reciprocal, and relations between the three components of the triadic formulation were altered by personal effort, performance outcomes, and further changes to one's environment (Zimmerman, 1989).

Self-efficacy referred to the belief that an individual possessed. The individual believed they were capable of achieving their desired performance based on their actions. Bandura (1999) explained, "Whatever other factors serve as motivators, they were rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce changes by one's actions" (p.28). Students that struggled with

30

self-regulation struggled with academic achievement and caused behavior issues in the classroom (Kuo, 2010). On the other hand, students who possessed a high level of self-efficacy employed more superior strategies than students with low self-efficacy. Moreover, researchers found that efficacy levels were coupled with the learner's ability of self-monitoring and making persistent progress measures toward tasks (Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmerman et al., 1992).

A study by Zimmerman et al. (1992) concluded that students must possess a desire and belief predicated on the intent to complete what they started. In addition, the research revealed that the accomplishment or lack of accomplishment in former academic work did not relate to the student after they exhibited these self-efficacy attributes in their current tasks. Bandura (1999) also asserted, "Goal adoption enlists self-investment in the activity. Once people commit themselves to valued goals, they seek self-satisfaction from fulfilling them and intensify their efforts by discontent with substandard performances" (p. 28). For this study the attainable goal was the completion recovery courses so that students ultimately graduated.

The aforementioned characteristics of self-regulated learners were identified as students engaged in online curriculum. Students that participated in web curriculum were able to go beyond the classroom to employ learning opportunities. Learning was extended when their learning experience was positive. Their positive learning experience continuously fostered a balanced academic self-esteem to keep them on target to graduate (Robbins, 2011).

Volkerding (2012) explained that intrinsic motivation was a key attribute of students who successfully completed the online credit recovery program.   Self-efficacy accompanied the self-regulation exhibited while completing online coursework. Moreover, this display of character built confidence and fostered the mastery of the academic subjects. The greatest reward of these

students engaging in online curriculum was the ability for them to view evidence that indicated progression (progress monitoring).

As a result, they were intrinsically motivated to make progress in the coursework and perform at elevated levels. When this motivation was coupled with autonomy, self-determination was inevitable. Students who were placed in environments where they were able to self-manage, self-regulate, and monitor progress were more likely to increase their chances to graduate. In addition, when expectations were high and clearly communicated, they viewed their learning as relevant (Volkerding, 2012). The foundations of self-regulated learning surfaced in programs across the country.

Researched Literature in Relation to the Study

A campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky was specifically organized to address students who were at-risk (Robbins, 2011). In addition, they experienced major attendance issues. As a solution, the campus adopted an online curriculum program and gave students the option of learning remotely. Because student curriculum was individualized and tailored to their academic needs, the response from the student body improved in regards to academics and attendance

A portion of Robbins' (2011) research focused on the outside support campuses received, and if the program was accessible to at-risk students using web-based curriculum for credit recovery. The study revealed that school administrators who were specifically and directly involved with program utilization found that web-based curriculum was successful in addressing the needs of at-risk students. Schools that focused on at-risk student success experienced elevated graduation rates. However, across the board teachers did not view the web-based curriculum favorably, and implementation would be difficult without teacher buy-in. The researcher recommended that teachers should lead the charge for these programs on campus.

Lewis (2016) revealed that African American males who participated in online learning found the experience positive. Research participants were interested in their learning, and they utilized active learning approaches (strategies) for motivation. In addition, the researcher revealed that the participants took responsibility for their actions that caused them to be placed in an alternative learning environment.

In another study McCoy (2012) revealed that African American males, overall, experienced an increase in their self-esteem, and a greater ability to learn independently. The research was performed in a school designated for online learning, not credit recovery. Research participant's viewpoints varied concerning their instructors. Some reported that instructors were friendly and attended to their needs. However, some responded that their instructors were not responsive to their individual academic needs, and there was a lack of African American instructor representation in classrooms.

The previous literature reviewed framed this study. The self-regulation theory was embraced in this study due to the implications that it had on students who were enrolled in online coursework. Critical race theory was embedded in the discussion of the ecological systems theory and explained the prevalence of negative conventions concerning African American males. Knowing the issues related to at-risk African American males, this study focused on their experiences while in the mode of academic intervention. The central research questions were:

(a) What strategies did at-risk African American males employ in face of previous obstacles to ultimately work towards the goal of course completion?

(b) What supports were needed for at-risk African American males to be successful learners in an online credit recovery environment?

Summary

The review of literature presented two theories that were interconnected to the dominant theory of ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory established the framework to examine how the elements mainly in the microsystem and macrosystem, effected at-risk African Americans males' environments. Secondly, social construction and interest convergence of critical race theory were reviewed and provided another dimension in this discussion concerning at-risk African American males. Lastly, the self-regulated theory provided insight on how learners were incentivized.

The specific review of related literature illustrated that there were various issues that affected the microsystem and macrosystem of African American males. These issues resulted in them being classified as at-risk. Some of the consequences for African Americans males, who were considered at-risk due to low socio-economic status and low academic achievement, could result in family distress, behavior issues, and dropping out of high school (Wood, Hillman, & Sawilowsky, 1996). This study specifically addressed how at-risk African American males responded and adapted to the intervention of online credit recovery, and what supports were needed for them to be successful while enrolled.

In response to the known inclination of at-risk African American males to drop out, school districts, within the southwestern state of study, adopted technologically driven credit recovery curriculum that addressed academic achievement and course completion. Students who were engaged in online credit recovery programs could be self-regulated learners. The self-regulated learner was intrinsically motivated towards achieving goals.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological details of how this study, concerning the experiences of at-risk African American males in an online credit recovery program, was

conducted. The sections in Chapter 3 specifically address the design; data collected, considerations and limitations, and expected findings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methodology that was used to perform the study concerning at-risk African American males in an online credit recovery program. A phenomenological research design model ultimately captured the essence of experiences as expressed by the individuals involved in the study. Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenological studies focused on the experiences that were lived by the individuals who were being interviewed.

One of the main priorities of a phenomenological approach is to defer judgement about the reality of a situation until one's assessment is grounded on a more certain foundation. Creswell (2013) explained the act of this deferment is called an epoche or bracketing. The commonality of experience is then reviewed by the researcher to develop into the universal essence of experience that is headed by identified themes. The researcher should be conscious of bracketing prior to the collection of data and the analysis stage due to the relation between the literature review, the collection of data, and the analysis of the data collected (Chan, Fung, Chien, 2013).

German philosopher Wilhelm Wundt expressed that there were two types of experiences, immediate and mediate. These experiences derived from consciousness, "the subject matter of psychology" (Kendler, 2005, p. 318). Immediate experience was subjective because responses were original in nature and not preconditioned by bias or a former experience. On the other

hand, mediate experience was objective and "a result of social training about the nature of the world" (Kendler, 2005, p. 318). Hence, the lived experience of the individual cannot be equivalent to the natural science truth; however, one could make a moral judgement on the phenomenological conviction presented. This study attempted to capture the aforementioned immediate experiences in the section devoted to the reporting of data and conclusions.

This study also mirrored Lewis' (2016) inductive process where information from research participants was gathered to develop a concept or theory. This study was still classified as phenomenological because the primary researcher refrains from presumptions by viewing the research topic from new lens. In addition, questions were developed to direct the study to ultimately provide research findings, conclusions, and implications (Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, this body of research defined was through the practices of critical phenomenology. Critical phenomenology focused on how prevalent influences, such as politics, known ideologies, language, affect the lived experiences of individuals (Lewis, 2016). It was also a reflexive phenomenology where, "experimenters to have first-person experiences that they can describe much as their subjects do. And crucially, experimenter's third-person reports of others are based, in the first instance, on their own first-person experiences" (Velmans, 2007, p. 221).

Critical phenomenology was incorporated because this study examined how entities within the microsystem and macrosystem affected at-risk African American males, and what strategies they employed as they maneuvered through online credit recovery coursework (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Under this sect of phenomenology the interpretation of reports or data are unrestricted (Lewis, 2016). Therefore, the researcher selected the qualitative explanatory analysis approach. For this study, the phenomenon identified was the online credit recovery program.

Research Questions

As previously stated, the goal of this study was to explore the experiences of at-risk African American males who were enrolled in an online credit recovery program. The literature previously presented in Chapter 2 explained the factors that led to a classification of at-risk amongst African American males, how critical race theory is interwoven into the social-psychological ecological systems theory, the self-regulatory learning theory, and online credit recovery program implementation across the nation. This literature supported the following research questions that were asked during the interview phases:

(a) What strategies did at-risk African American males employ in face of previous

obstacles to ultimately working towards the goal of course completion?

(b) What supports are needed for at-risk African American males to be successful

learners in an online credit recovery environment?

Sub-questions during the different phrases of the interview process inquired why the at-risk African American male research participants were enrolled in credit recovery courses, and if their academic experiences in an online credit recovery program influenced their academic behavior in traditional their classes. A copy of research questions and sub-questions are located in Appendix C.

Target Population and Sampling Method

Criterion sampling was utilized to select research participants, and it involved participants meeting some criteria in order for quality data to be extracted (Creswell, 2013). African American male students, who were enrolled in coursework during the fall semester of the 2016–2017 school year were considered eligible to participate in the study. Current grades,

attendance patterns, and course completion statuses were not considered for the selected students.

The researcher met with the campus credit recovery instructional facilitator (teacher) and discussed the research project. The researcher received permission from the facilitator to make an announcement to the students in a limited number of class periods. The researcher asked the facilitator for class periods with a high percentage of African American male enrollments. Group and individual recruitment sessions occurred at least one week prior to the beginning of the interview process. All students were encouraged to participate. If students were interested in being a part of the study they had the opportunity to sign-up on the spot or sign-up later with the instructional facilitator. The sign-up sheet contained the student's last name, first name, identification number, race identification, and contact information. The sign-up sheets were left in the learning centers.

If the students agreed to participate in the study, and were 18 at the time of recruitment, informed consent forms were given to the students to endorse. These students had the option of submitting the consent forms to the researcher at that time or submitting them to the instructional facilitator later. If the students were not 18 at the time of recruitment, and wanted to participate, consent forms were given to them for their parents/guardians to endorse before they endorsed the document. All forms were collected before the study began. The study had to have a minimum of five and no more than 10 African American male students to participate in order for it to begin. The student selection continued until five agreed to be participants in the study.

This study referred to the school district, research participants, and location where the research convened with pseudonyms. The study deliberately targeted at-risk African American males that attend Urban School District (Urban SD) high schools in the Southwestern portion of

the United States. All voluntary participants were classified in grades 9–12 and met one or more

indicators to be classified as at-risk per the guidelines established by the state Education Code.

The at-risk African American males, who agreed to be a part of the study, were randomly chosen

from two different campuses. Both Campus A and Campus B were traditional high school

programs in Urban SD.

Data Collection

Based on Urban SD policies and procedures, both campus principals approved research

to be conducted on campus before data collection commenced. Per district guidelines, the

collection and completion of data occurred before the scheduled student spring break session in

the 2016–2017 academic school year. The district provided the researcher access to student files

and enrollment documents stored at the campus. Both data sources were used in this study. The

identification of the campuses and participants were concealed to maintain confidentially. All

stakeholders of this study were informed of the confidential nature of the study verbally and in

formal written notification. However, only research participants signed informed consent

documents.

Instrumentation

Precisely 10 in depth face-to-face interviews were conducted on campus and each

session was audio recorded. Five student participants were given pseudonyms to protect their

identity. Specifically, the utilized pseudonyms were Participants A-E. Two interview sessions

were audio recorded so that the researcher could accurately transcribe the responses of the

participants. The researcher transcribed the recorded sessions to a Microsoft word document. The

selected students were asked the interview questions in interview sessions. Interview data was

securely stored on an electronic recording device and only the researcher had access to the files. The recorded files were converted to mp3 recordings and utilized by the researcher to transcribe.

The purpose of the first phase of the interview process was to align their experiences with the preliminary at-risk data and socio-psychological theories, such as the ecological systems theory and critical race theory reviewed in Chapter 2 of this study. Phase two questions were specifically aligned with the self-regulation theory regarding the student experiences while enrolled in online coursework and connected to individual student goals toward graduation. In addition, the intent of the second phase of interview questions reflected the effects of experiences encountered by the research subjects. As aforementioned, full text research questions are located in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological approach allowed the participant to develop thought on their social and personal encounter and specifically analyzes their personal perception. The participant discussed their experiences and the researcher made sense of their sentiments (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Data analysis for this study followed Moustakas (1994) approach of: (a) the researchers eliminated presumptions and bias; (b) reviewing and reexamining transcripts to note encompassing or similar experiences; (c) the researcher reasons participant experiences; (d) noting the themes pertaining to the phenomena. Lastly, the researcher noted the connection between how entities within Bronfenbrenner's (1989) reviewed systems affected at-risk African American males and what strategies were employed in their online credit recovery program.

The collected data from research subjects were analyzed by the researcher to ultimately capture the essence of their lived experiences in an online credit recovery learning environment. Creswell's (2013) format for phenomenological research design in regards to data analysis was

strategically utilized. The interview data was initially reviewed to portion responses made by the research subjects into coherent themes based on the questions. The comparison of statements that developed common themes made during the interview process supported the textual and structural description evidence disclosed. The common themes provided a focus for this phenomenological study, and offered generality or simplification of the presented ideas.

The structural description of how their experiences with online credit recovery program began was noted. In addition, the textual description of this experience was documented. A fresh perspective on the responses of the research participants while analyzing and reporting the data was essential; therefore bracketing occurred. Lastly, the researcher presented the essence of experience in tables based on common themes and the frequency of responses. This process generated the commonalities of the lived experiences for reflection. Ultimately, this analytical process explained how the essence of this phenomenological study was captured (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

There were certain limitations that restricted the nature of this study. Primarily, this study only discussed the experiences of African American males documented as at-risk by the guidelines in the state Education Code. The Education Code established the boundaries of how students were classified as educationally disadvantaged statewide. Five students agreed to be a part of the study. The researcher ensured that the conducted interviews were practicable, analyzed accurately, and generalized for so that a conclusion could be determined.

Within Urban SD, only two schools and five African American male students from Campus A and Campus B were selected as research participants. The campus selection was a

limitation to this study because it would only record the lived experiences of students that were exposed to the learning environments that Urban School District promoted.

Only one school district in the regional area was considered. Urban SD has the largest student population. However, the researcher did not consider other districts in the area due to proximity, access to research subjects, and the prior knowledge of how credit recovery programs impacted the large urban student population in regards to completion of coursework. In addition, this study only captured the experiences of at-risk African American males in a Title I schoolwide or economically disadvantaged campuses as determined by federal law (Title I, Part A Program, n.d.).

The instrumentation used in this study was completed in the interview sessions for the researcher to adequately capture the experience associated with the research subjects. The long-term effects of sustainable supports and strategies for students were not captured for this study.

Validation

Due to the stated limitations, the researcher ensured the creditability and dependability of the collected data. Interviews were the primary method of instrumentation to substantiate the captured experience of research participants. Therefore, as a strategy to warrant a more credible study, the researcher employed member checking, the clarification of researcher bias, and researcher reflection. The strategy of member checking involved the researcher ensuring that the interpretation of the research subjects was valid by taking the transcribed data and letting the research participants decipher the accuracy. Reflexivity allowed the researcher to express how personal experiences shaped interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

Expected Findings

At the inception of this study, the researcher expected research participants to exhibit a heightened level of optimism and positivity towards online learning. This expectation was partly based on the preliminary literature review that aligned to the aforementioned self-regulated theory. Zimmerman (1989) asserted that self-regulated learners were motivated and monitored their own learning, and Volkerding (2012) further expressed that intrinsic motivation were key attributes of students who complete online credit recovery programs. Therefore, the researcher expected: (a) the at-risk African American male research participants to directly or indirectly articulate these attributes or; (b) indicate academic self-regulatory behavior while completing online coursework for credit recovery; (c) and express what supports contributed to their success. The expected results underscored the preceding literature and acted as an overall conduit in this study as the true essence of experience is denoted.

Researcher bias was addressed so that the study remained credible based on the responses of the participants. Bracketing was employed by the researcher as directed by Moustakas (1994) as the first process in the analytical process. This action occurred so that the researcher could have a fresh perspective on the studied phenomena of online credit recovery. The researcher initially employed reflective self-discovery by engaging in conversation with several colleagues and peers to delineate any presumptions about the nature of this study (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Because the researcher directly managed operations and the instructional landscape for district personnel, the researcher was aware of researcher bias. However, the focus of this study was centered on student perception and experience. Therefore, member checking and reflexive practices were implemented so that responses were a true reaction to the prompted questions. The researcher also drafted a journal to capture immediate thoughts and feelings following

student interviews. In addition, several reviews of student transcripts and student information occurred so that the main focus was student experiences, and researcher bias eliminated.

Ethical Issues in the Study

The researcher considered and developed guidelines based on the American Psychological Association and Urban School District concerning the associated ethical issues. Urban SD strictly managed those who were interested in performing research and collecting data within the boundaries of the local education agency. All research that was conducted was performed in accordance to federal and state laws including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). The Urban School District required the consent of all stakeholders related to the performed research before any data was gathered. The names and personal identification of any student, staff member, or campus were strictly prohibited. Researchers who had direct contact with any student in the district had to undergo a criminal background check. All of the previously mentioned guidelines were considered before the researcher selected Urban SD as the entity to conduct research that was aligned with the focus of this study.

Urban School District required that all individuals wanting to conduct research with the district students, teachers, or programs submit a research proposal to the department of Evaluation and Assessment for review. The research department had a research review board that granted approval for using Urban SD as a research entity. The research review board did not allow graduate students to conduct research until the Institution Review Board (IRB) at the university completed and submitted written approval for the conducted research to commence.

Research participants were first approached by the researcher and given the opportunity to voluntarily sign-up to be a part of the study. After sign-up, an informed consent form was

given to each research participant. Each participant was treated with utmost respect, and research participants were not subjected to any emotional or physical risk. Any issues with discomfort were quickly addressed during the interview process, and the participants were informed that they could opt out of the study at any time without prejudice.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to provide the reader with the methodology that was utilized in the research design of this study. A phenomenological research strategy was used to capture the experience of African American males at risk of dropping out of school in an online credit recovery environment. Five African American males were selected who were currently enrolled in online credit recovery courses. Ten face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted in two cycles.

The researcher utilized various strategies to ensure that the study was valid and credible, such as member checking, researcher memos, and reflexivity. These enacted procedures ultimately established more credibility, dependability, and validity to the gathered data that was reported. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to disclose the results of the conducted research, analyze, and interpret the collected data from research participants.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports the results of the field research conducted for this study and analyzes the qualitative data collected. Direct quotes from research participants were interwoven in this chapter as the purpose of this study was to examine and evaluate the lived experiences of these at-risk students. A critical phenomenology framework was employed for this qualitative research. Five at-risk African American males participated in this study. The researcher utilized one-on-one interviews with research participants, enrollment documentation, and student records to acquire data for analyzing.

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory was employed to facilitate data analysis of the research participant's microsystems and the macrosystem. In particular, the home microsystem, classroom microsystem, school microsystem, and society macrosystem were the major areas used for discussion through data analysis. This study answered the following overall research questions:

(a) What strategies did at-risk African American males employ in face of previous obstacles to ultimately work towards the goal of course completion?

(b) What supports are needed for at-risk African American males to be successful learners in an online credit recovery environment?

Campus Profiles

The neighborhoods surrounding Campus A and Campus B were identical concerning the poverty level. Simek (2016) reported that the poverty levels were above 40% in both neighborhoods. Both campuses were located in the southern sector of the city. Consequently, this sector was the epicenter of poverty in the region. Based on statistical evidence, critics argued that the city council failed to maintain support for schools or educational programs (Simek,

2016), and consistently masked the issues faced by the constituents that resided in these communities (Evans, 2016; Simek, 2016; Wilonsky, 2016).

According to district documentation, Campus A had a student enrollment of 790 for the 2015–2016 school year. The economically disadvantaged percentage was 85.9%. The campus was predominately African American at 63.9% with 33.4% Hispanic. African American males accounted for 30.8% of the population. Of the 67.2% of at-risk students campus wide, 33.1% or 164 African American males were classified as at-risk. For the African American male school-wide population, 72.1% were classified at-risk (Urban School District, 2016b).

State campuses were rated yearly in student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness. Four performance indices govern schools in regards to accountability in this state. The indices are termed student achievement (Index 1), student progress (Index 2), closing performance gaps (Index 3), and post-secondary readiness (Index 4). In order to meet an acceptable state accountability rating for 2016, state schools must meet Index 1 or 2, and meet Index 3 and 4(State Data, 2016b). Campus A met the state standard overall, and met the student achievement index. In terms of graduation, 95.4% was the ACGR (Urban School District, 2016b).

District documentation revealed that Campus B had a student enrollment of 589 for the 2015–2016 school year. The economically disadvantaged percentage was 84.1%. The campus' African American population was 42.8% and 52.2% were Hispanic. African American males accounted for 25% of the population. Of the 82.3% of at-risk students campus wide, 24.9% or 121 African American males were classified as at-risk. For the African American male school population, 82.8% were classified at-risk (Urban School District, 2016c). Campus B met the

47

state standard overall, however, did not meet the student achievement index. In terms of

graduation, 77.5% was the ACGR (Urban Independent School District, 2016c).

<center>**Research Context**</center>

Campus A and B were a part of an urban school district in the southwestern region of the

United of States of America. Both campuses served students in grades 9–12, and the district used

state compensatory education funding to address at-risk learners district wide. Out of the 39 high

schools, the district instituted 29 online credit recovery centers that operated like a "school

within a school". Twenty-six instructional facilitators were staffed in these centers, and the

student referral process to the credit bearing program began with the high school counselor.

Students were able to retake the previously failed semesters, incomplete six weeks periods (for

internal and external transfers only), and coursework, for the first time, based on their at-risk

classification (Urban School District, 2016a)

The program is termed Reconnection Centers. Some campuses staffed centers with

matching teachers to assist with academic instruction; however that staffing decision was mainly

decided by the campus principal. Matching teachers were teachers that principals placed in the

learning centers to help the facilitation of learning. Most Reconnection Centers were equipped

with 25–35 desktop computers and/or laptops.

<center>**Online Curriculum Profile**</center>

The district formerly used online curriculum from another well-known online curriculum

vendor. However, at the start of the 2014–2015 school year they shifted to a more effective

program as the sole online curriculum program that would be utilized in the online credit

recovery centers. The chosen program aligned to both state and national learning standards

(Moore & Bauer, 2010). In this southwestern state, national curriculum standards or common

<center>48</center>

core were forbidden to be taught; therefore this curriculum is solely aligned to state education standards (State Education Code, 2016). The foundation of the program was built on rigorous direct instruction, instructional feedback, and equipping learners to develop essential knowledge and reasoning of the presented curriculum (Moore & Bauer, 2010). Within the program foundation, student learners developed intricate learner-centered paths until content mastery was proven (Spark, 2016).

The curriculum coursework was mainly for high school courses. Research based standards were implemented when knowledge was presented to learners and the program curriculum sought to engage students in critical thinking, problem resolution, and questioning to facilitate learner engagement (Apex Learning, 2016). Program staff advocated, "The ideal learner experience is driven by empowered teachers, strong relationships, high engagement, consistent rigor, positive culture, authentic learning, frequent feedback, and student agency" (2016, p. 12).

Active learning was evident for student learners as the curriculum compelled them to make observations, confirmations, connections to prior learning, and creation as they navigated through the curriculum (Moore & Bauer, 2010). This curriculum profile aligned with research in Chapter 2 by Felder and Brent (2009) in response to the definition of active learning in the classroom. The curriculum also encouraged student learners to engage in personalized learning as the program provided high quality coursework that produced measurable results. Ultimately, this instructional approach led to mastery (Spark, 2016).

Lesson activities were designed for the students to work on coursework at their own pace, however the district mandated that each student complete at least five lesson activities during the

instructional week (Moore & Bauer, 2010). Spark stressed, "Data is collected and reports on that data are accessible for a view of learner usage, progress, and achievement" (2016, p.5). This weekly demonstration of learning assured the student stayed on target towards course completion and fulfillment of the learning objective (Moore & Bauer, 2010).

Program curriculum crafted lessons to present curriculum in a coherent fashion to spark interest in student learners. The curriculum was designed so that active reading strategies were intensified and utilized to connect the learner to printed and online content. Lesson activities were not solely web-based or online. Students were required to complete dry labs, journals, discussions, and projects (Moore & Bauer, 2010). Officials expressed, "Digital curriculum is key to creating the high engagement, high rigor and high support environments that we know we need consistently and at scale" (Apex Learning, 2016, p.12). For this study, the online credit recovery program utilized a blended-learning model where online curriculum was facilitated by one or more classroom teachers (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015).

Participant Profiles

(For the purpose of clarity, some translations of direct student quotes will be in parentheses.)

Participant A. Participant A was an eighteen-year-old African American male. At the time of the interview, he was classified as a junior rather than a senior. During his high school career, the student remained at Campus A, and attended the same school district for the entirety of his academic career for grades K–10.

Participant A experienced a high level of discord with his World Geography class teacher, and subsequently was suspended/expelled from the classroom for inappropriate behavior. As a result of his deferment from the learning community, the student did not receive credit for the class due to excessive absences. He specifically said, "I mean uh, I really didn't

50

fail; it's just I had got expelled and I was out of school for like two weeks…" However, enrollment data documents revealed that the student academically failed every 6 week period during the second semester in his World Geography class.

Participant A's consistent academic failure during the second semester could have resulted from his transition back into the classroom and the continuation of discord with the teacher of record. This assumption was supported by the first semester enrollment documentation that revealed a passing grade for the first semester of World Geography, and no change of instructor. Enrollment documentation for admittance in the campus online credit recovery classified the student as at-risk due to academic failure. The classification aligned with the state education code and indicator two, noted on Table 1 in Chapter 2. Based on the failure to advance to the twelfth grade he could also be classified at-risk using indicator one on Table 1.

Participant A did not live with his biological mother, and his father was deceased. He lived with his maternal grandparents with his two younger siblings. Although he did not live with his mother, he remained in contact with her. He expressed his grandmother suffered late onset dementia and her care was top priority for him.

Student records classified Participant A as economically disadvantaged. The annual household income was less than $22,000.00, and he was employed part-time. However, the student expressed he really did not have any obstacles. He said, "I don't really face no obstacles. It's just uh–I mean uh–I don't face no obstacles."

Participant A had a positive self-perception as a learner and recognized the way he learns, "Oh, like I learn if you like tell me. If you like teach me something and I don't get it like that I be like can you like explain it in a different way. But most of the time I would get it…." He expressed that he could learn in a traditional classroom, however, if he didn't understand what

was presented originally, he wanted the information presented in a different format. Participant A aspired to go to college to major in engineering and work as an engineer.

Participant B. Participant B was an 18-year-old African American male. At the time of the interview process he was classified as a junior rather than a senior. During his high school career, the student transferred to Campus A, but attended the same school district for the entirety of his academic career for grades K–10.

Participant B faced hardship due to circumstances from home and had to transfer mid-semester during his first junior year. He did not take the end of course examination at the end of his English III class. Because of the incomplete examination, the student academically failed the course due to an "I" or incomplete recorded for the final second semester grade. Participant B was enrolled in the Reconnection program to complete the second semester of Algebra II because he failed to maintain a passing average by the adjournment of the second semester. He specifically said, "And I was like absent for two months 'cause like we was going through a lot." He further explained, "I missed school because my momma lost her car so we couldn't count on nobody to get me to school." Participant B's attendance issues resulted in him academically failing or receiving an incomplete in 43% of all coursework during the second semester of his junior year. Participant B did not have a positive outlook when he was first informed by his counselor that he would have to attend the Reconnection program. He stressed, "I was mad. Because I only needed the ACP and they said that y'all just changed the program this year where you had to retake the whole thing instead of the semester." Course completion requirements were altered at the inception of the 2016–2017 school year by district officials to ensure equity across the district. Urban School District's online credit recovery procedural manual stated, "The

student who has incomplete grades (I) or missing grades (No Grade) must complete the entire semester coursework and ACP exam in the Reconnection Center."(Urban School District, 2016a)

Enrollment documentation for admittance in the Reconnection Center classified the student as at-risk due to academic failure. The classification aligned with the state education code and indicator two, noted on Table 1 in Chapter 2. Based on the non-advancement to the twelfth grade, Participant B could also be classified as at-risk by using indicator one on Table 1. Participant B lived with his biological mother, and his father was no longer an active part of his life. He expressed that before enrolling in the Reconnection program he did not reach out to his extended family who lived in the area. However, after enrollment he contacted his extended family, in case he needed transportation to school.

The district did not have enrollment documentation that verified Participant B as economically disadvantaged. However, based on his interview about the obstacles he faced at home due to poverty, he would be classified as economically disadvantaged. Undoubtedly, the student participant recognized the obstacles he faced at home due to economic instability and employment issues that his mother encountered. He stated,

> Well, she's gone through a lot. She went from job to job. She's trying to get to like a stable job, well now she's at a stable job and she's hoping like she can stay there longer. But every time she thinks that she's staying somewhere for like a long time something end up going wrong and she has to start all the way over again.

Participant B recognized the way he learned. He expressed that he is a fast learner despite the learning environment. He said, "I learn pretty fast." He aspires to go to college, and ultimately work in the engineering field.

Participant C. Participant C was an 18-year-old African American male. He was one of two participants classified as a twelfth grader. Upon entering the 2016–2017 school year, the student earned enough credits to be classified as a senior with his ninth grade cohort that entered high school during the 2013–2014 school year. Participant C was formally enrolled at an early college high school and transferred to his current campus during his junior year; the district did not have records available of where the student attended before ninth grade.

Participant C recognized his learning obstacles in his English III class during his junior year. He expressed the instructional methods used in the class did not appeal to him. He verbalized, "Teacher wise, honestly, like I learn like hands-on, and she wasn't the type to, you know, deal with kids that learn like me." As a result of his conflict in the classroom, he did not put any effort in his coursework and failed academically. Consequently, enrollment documents revealed the student academically failed every six week period during the spring semester. Participant C's academics and home circumstances resulted in him transferring to another campus in the district.

Enrollment documentation for admittance in the campus online credit recovery program classified the student as at-risk due academic failure. The classification aligned with state education code and indicator two, noted on Table 1 in Chapter 2.

Participant C did not live with his biological mother or father, and he was not in regular contact with them. He lived with his maternal grandparents and his two younger siblings. His grandparents created and maintained a positive environment at home for Participant C, and they were supportive when they discovered he would be completing coursework at the campus online credit recovery center. His grandparents verbally expressed their confidence in him as a smart learner. He said,

They were positive. They know I'm capable of passing a class such as that topic.

I mean they was 100 percent behind me. They was like, "You know what this

may not be the first time, but you can always do it a second time. And you

always get another chance at, another go at it." So I mean they push me as much

as they can in order for me to pass you the class.

Enrollment documentation classified Participant C as economically disadvantaged. The

annual household income was less than 22,000, and he did not have a part-time job. When

specifically asked about the struggles he faced at home, he said, "Nothing really. Maybe just

doing like being able to focus at home 'cause it's a comforting place." When Participant C was

asked if he believed he was smart he responded, "I do. I think everybody is capable of being

smart. It's just the way you conceive yourself." He recognized the way he learns and expressed

he was a hands on learner. In response to his experiences in his traditional class he said, "She

was that, 'Oh. Write it down. I teach it. You do it.' And I was like I can't learn like that. I

don't know how to do what you doing…" Participant C aspired to go to college, major in

engineering, and work as an engineer. He received inspiration from a friend that worked as an

engineer for a firm in a nearby city.

Participant D. Participant D was an eighteen-year-old African American male. He was

one of two participants who were classified as a twelfth grader. Upon entering the 2016–2017

school year, the student earned enough credits to be classified with his ninth grade cohort that

entered high school during the 2013–2014 school year. During his high school career, the

student remained at Campus B, and attended the same school district for the entirety of his

academic career grades K–11.

Participant D recognized conflict in his Spanish I class and experienced personality struggles with the instructor. He expressed, "I don't know it was just we always had a problem. My grades always came up looking wrong when I know when I know…my grades shouldn't be looking that low." He was enrolled in classes with this teacher since his tenth and eleventh grade year and did not receive a passing grade for any of the academic semesters. Consequently, enrollment data documents revealed he was enrolled another semester in the 2016–2017 current academic school year for the same course. The student only received a passing grade for one of three six weeks period in his Spanish class.

Enrollment documentation for admittance in the campus online credit recovery program classified the student as at-risk due to academic failure. The classification aligned with state education code and indicator two, which are noted on Table 1 in Chapter 2. Documentation revealed that the student did not have any other qualifiers that would grant him a secondary at-risk classification.

Participant D lived with his biological mother, and he was the only participant in regular contact with his father. He lived with his two younger siblings, and expressed his mother was absent from home a lot due to her work schedule. His mother verbally expressed confidence in him as a smart learner, however his father had not. He said, "Nothing really. She was just saying you got to do better than what you doing you know what I'm saying. Like basically saying don't be like your uncle all the time you know. Just you know be better."

The district did not have enrollment documentation that verified Participant D as economically disadvantaged. However, based on his testimony about the obstacles he faced at home due to poverty, one could conclude he would be classified as economically disadvantaged. When asked what struggles he faced he responded, "Uh, a lot."

Of all the participants, he expressed he mostly faced obstacles due to the effects of poverty and surrounding community conflict. He said, "Like to be honest with you, just like what yesterday somebody called me on the street, I'm going to come to your spot, I'm come get you…" He further expressed, "I was trying to get a job and things like that you know what I'm saying I went to like 50 something interviews not one of them hit me back."

Participant D did not have a positive self-perception as a learner; however, he recognized the way he learned. Though his mother was supportive of him, he perceived himself as a poor learner based on the response of a former teacher. He explained, "Uh, I wanted to get into Pre-AP one time and said I was too dumb for it." This incident occurred in middle school and it shaped his viewpoint concerning his attitude and approach to learning. Participant D aspired to be a realtor and ultimately a broker.

Participant E. Participant E was a 17-year-old African American male. At the time of the interview process, he was classified as a sophomore rather than a junior. During his high school career, the student transferred to Campus B but attended the same school district for the majority of his academic career for grades K–9.

Participant E experienced distractions in the learning environment for his Spanish I class. As a result, there was a lack of focus and the student ultimately failed the semester. He specifically said, "And just lack of focus on my work. Not having a perfect time with the teacher because other people were acting up." Enrollment database documents revealed the student academically failed one six week period and the semester exam, but passed the other two six week periods. Participant E's academic failure was the highest during his first sophomore year. He did not receive credit for Chemistry, Algebra II, or a business elective class.

57

Enrollment documentation for admittance in the campus online credit recovery program classified the student as at-risk due to academic failure. The classification aligned with state education code and indicator two, noted on Table 1 in Chapter 2. Based on the non-advancement to the eleventh grade, and not passing the state examination in English I and II, he could also be classified as at-risk by using indicator 1 and 3 on Table 1.

Participant E lived with his biological mother and was not in regular contact with his father. Participant E responded when asked about his mother finding out about his enrollment in his the online credit recovery program, "Actually, I gave her like I did—Can I do that…And then she called up to the school and she was like he should do this…cause I'm supposed to be a senior."

Enrollment documentation classified Participant E as economically disadvantaged. The annual household income was between $21,796 and $29,478, and he was not employed part-time. He recognized that laziness was an obstacle for him when he was at home. He said, "When I go home I'm just lazy. I don't do no type of work. I just leave the smart kid at school and I don't take him home with me."

Participant E had a positive self-perception as a learner, and recognized the way he learned. He expressed that he was a quick learner. He said, "Once I get it—I get a hold to it or if somebody struggling I help them. I'm a real quick learner." Participant E aspired to go to college, major in sports medicine, and work to train athletes.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study examined and evaluated the experiences of at-risk African American males while enrolled in an online credit recovery learning program. The researcher first received approval from the institutional board to conduct research. After the institutional

board approval, the researcher received approval from the district's research review board to conduct research.

Campuses were selected at random based on their historical data that disclosed the percentage of African American students. Both campus principals approved research to be conducted on their campus during the onset of the fall semester 2016. After principal approval, signed documentation was submitted for review to the district's research review board for endorsement.

Strict district policies and protocols were adhered by the researcher because the research participants were current students in the district. Per district policy, research participants engaged in one-on-one interviews before or after the instructional school day. Additionally, if participants were under the age of 18, a parent consented to the student's participation. Per district policy, the researcher recruited students to participate in the study. No qualifying criteria were considered by the researcher other than participants being African American males enrolled in online credit recovery coursework and available during the approved time of research collection.

The researcher visited classes at Campus A and B and received permission from the instructional facilitator to recruit African American male students in groups and individually. Approximately, 15 students agreed to talk with the researcher about the study, and seven students agreed to participate. The criterion sampling referred in Chapter 3 occurred in regards to the sampling of research participants.

Consent forms were given to interested research participants and returned to the instructional facilitators (teacher) or the researcher. Seven students completed the sign-up sheet; four from Campus A and 3 from Campus B. The instructional facilitator at Campus A informed

the researcher that one of the student participants would no longer be enrolled in the program. The six remaining participants were contacted by text after consent forms were collected. Five of the six interested participants responded to interview scheduling. The one student that did not respond was dropped from the study because the researcher had the minimum number of research participants to complete the study.

The researcher collected data from one-on-one in depth interviews. Each research participant was present in the first interviews. Research participants contributed to the second interviews after that time. The interviews were audio recorded using an electronic device and then transcribed by the researcher.

Reflexive and evaluative notes were taken after each interview to ensure research participants understood the context of the question. During the second interviews, some research participants clarified responses that were made during the first interview cycle. Each participant engaged in member checking with the researcher to ensure accuracy of student transcripts and other information shared. After ratification, sub questions were classified by the home microsystem, classroom microsystem, school microsystem, society macrosystem, and then coded for the researcher to identify common themes from the transcripts of student experiences. These processes embodied the first three steps in Moustakas (1994) process as reviewed in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Through the interpretative phenomenological approach the data analysis of this study began. Primarily, the data analysis began with the transcription of one-on-one interviews by the researcher. After transcription, interview questions were placed in groups based on the nature and premise of the question. Transcribed interview data was coded and classified so that emerging themes could surface. Identified themes conveyed the overall experiences of at-risk

African American male participants in regards to the strategies utilized to work toward their goal of course completion. Again, the groups or classifications per Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory Model were the home microsystem, classroom microsystem, school microsystem, and society macrosystem. These classifications were used as research participant responses were coded.

Ecological Systems Theory Model

Only applicable systems within Bronfenbrenner's (1989) model were employed to analyze data captured during the interview process. In particular, the two major systems used were the following:

- *Microsystem* the child had interaction with their direct contacts such as family, school, or neighborhood environment

- *Macrosystem* involved the incorporation of societal customs, values, and beliefs system as the blueprint of a culture

For this study, the sub groups under the microsystem were the home microsystem, classroom microsystem, and school microsystem. Under the macrosystem, the sub group was the society macrosystem. The aforementioned information further clarifies the sub groups used to define this information in this study.

Distinctively, Tables 2–5 were the end result of the data analysis that was germane to this study. The tables captured the common themes/experiences based on the frequency of positive responses from research participants during the interview phases. Table 6 captured common themes or experiences that directly contributed to the personal utilization of strategies by research participants. The common themes/experiences columns disclosed the occurrences, and are bracketed to highlight the home microsystem, classroom microsystem, school microsystem,

61

society macrosystem, and common experiences employed to support their self-developed

strategies. The frequency column specifically recorded the recurrent instances that research

participants discussed commonality based on the conclusions of the researcher.

Table 2

Common Themes and Experiences in the Home Microsystem

Common Theme/Experiences	Frequency
Father displaced	4
Parents/guardians verbally express their feelings towards intelligence	5
Parents/guardian perception positive of online credit recovery (OCR).	5
Participants self-perception as smart	4
Motivated to complete coursework to graduate	4
Initially developing strategic self-regulatory plans to succeed in (OCR).	5
Access and complete assignments at home	5

Table 3

Common Themes and Experiences in the Classroom Microsystem

Common Theme/Experiences	Frequency
Instructional facilitators (teacher) set high performance standards, set clear expectations and build a strong rapport.	5
Developed own system of note taking in (OCR)	4
Utilizes new system in other traditional classes	4
Better understanding in traditional classes after utilizing self-developed strategies (OCR)	5
Newly developed strategies will help them in college	5

Table 4

Common Themes and Experiences in the School Microsystem

Common Theme/Experiences	Frequency
Had a positive perception about (OCR) before enrollment	4
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from teachers	5
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from counselors	5
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from principals	4
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from peers	4

Table 5

Common Themes and Experiences concerning the Society Macrosystem

Common Theme/Experiences	Frequency
Ultimately Black males will fail/Negative expectation	5
Intrinsically motivated and confidence was evident despite negative societal conventions	5

Table 6

Common Themes and Experiences that Motivated Participants

Common Theme/Experiences	Frequency
Ultimately Black males will fail/Negative expectation	5
Parents/guardians verbally express their feelings towards their intelligence	5
Parents/guardian perception of online credit recovery (OCR).	5
Participants self-perception as smart	4
Initially developing strategic self-regulatory plans to succeed in (OCR).*	5
Teachers set high performance standards, set clear expectations and build a strong rapport.	5
Utilizes new system in other traditional classes*	5
Better understanding in traditional classes after utilizing self-developed strategies (OCR)*	5
Developed own system of note taking in (OCR)*	4
Had a positive perception about (OCR) before enrollment	4
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from teachers	5
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from counselor	5
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from principal(s)	4
Expectation to succeed in (OCR) from peers	4
Access and complete assignments at home*	5
Motivated to complete coursework to graduate*	4
Intrinsically motivated and confidence evident despite negative societal conventions*	5

Note. * denotes self-regulatory indicators.

Home Microsystem

Four out of five biological fathers were not present in the participant's life and 60% of the participants expressed they felt their mother's role was strained at home due to job stress and the effects of poverty. These interview responses aligned with Rowley and Bowman's (2009) discussion concerning the effects of absentee fathers for African American males. However, 60% conveyed they did not recognize that obstacles were evident at home. McMillian and Reed (1994) noted that resilient at-risk learners view the world in a positive manner despite surroundings that are unfavorable. The researchers noted,

> Resilient at-risk students possess temperamental characteristics that elicit positive
>
> responses from individuals around them…their positive attitudes are usually
>
> rewarded with helpful reactions from those around them. Thus, they come to see
>
> the world as a positive place in spite of the difficult issues with which they have
>
> to deal (p. 137).

In the face of academic failure in traditional classes, all but one participant professed they were smart.   All research participants except Participant D's father verbally expressed their parents or guardians beliefs/viewpoints about them were communicated, and their parents believed they were intelligent. The actions of the participant's parents/guardians aligned with Neblett, Chavous, Nguyen, and Sellers (2009) who argued that the promotion of success and value occurred when African American parents affirmed their children and focused on self-worth.

A prevalent common theme among all participants was that they all accessed their coursework from home and worked on their assignments outside the instructional day. Participant E testified that his mother was actually learning coursework with him, and Participant

C expressed his grandmother periodically checked on him to ensure he was following through

with his assignments. Participant E stated,

> She tries to help me and at the same time when she tries to help me and when she
>
> stuck on something, I'll teach her kind of stuff. And it's like she helping me, I'm
>
> helping her and at the end of the day we still going to be happy with each other."

Participant C explained,

> Yes, yes. She's had, I think one phone call, and I had got home one day, and uh,
>
> she was like, "Hey, this nice lady called me on the phone." I was like, "Hmmm."
>
> She was like, "Yeah, I think she was one of your teachers." I was like, "Do you
>
> know her name?" She was like, "I think it was Miss Johnson." I was like, "Oh
>
> ok. That was my Reconnect teacher." She was like, "Ok. Well, just make sure
>
> you doing that work. I'm going to be on you."

This type of parent monitoring, explained by Madura (2006), and supportive actions led to

successful African American students.

Classroom Microsystem

Participants earned failing grades in their previous courses due to absences, lack of focus,

and lack of effort. Failure was ignited by various conflicts, including struggles with teachers, the

classroom environment, impoverished obstacles facing their home life, and negative influence

from peers. These response backed research previewed in Chapter 2 from Kunjufu (2011), as he

specifically discussed why African American males became disengaged in traditional

classrooms. Participant B stated, "and I was absent for like two months cause like we was going

through a lot." Participant D noted, "I failed Spanish because my grades was low and plus it

wasn't just low it was like a sixty something…like 67, 68, but I had missed like 72 days out of

school." He also said, "I didn't get along with the teacher that was with me first so you know…

we always had a problem. My grades always came up looking wrong." Participant A said,

"Yeah, I failed both of them. Ah, technically I got expelled and then I had to come back."

A common theme that surfaced amongst research participants was that all of their

instructors in their learning centers built strong rapport and set high standards for performance.

The actions taken by the instructors motivated each participant to work towards their ultimate

goal of course completion. Participant A, B, and C all expressed their continued motivation

because the instructor offered grade booster incentives. Participant A also expressed continued

motivation because the instructor at Campus A offered extended learning time before and after

school. Participant E was motivated to complete coursework because his instructors consistently

discussed with him the decay of African American males and how he could achieve higher than

what was expected. Participant B explained, "you get a hundred on the quiz or something like

that she (credit recovery teacher) does this thing where she gives you a graduation cap and it's

basically like a free hundred whenever…" Participant E expressed, "Talking about the

stereotype and how Black males are usually listed as he's going to jail, or he ain't going to be

nothing in life, or he is going to be by the corner store…And it just motivates me..." These

forms of extrinsic motivation from the online credit recovery instructors influenced their intrinsic

motivation. In addition, the actions of the instructors correct marginalization and downgrading

that can occur in classrooms per critical race theory (Allen, 2010).

Once enrolled in their online credit recovery coursework, all participants developed

strategic plans so they could complete coursework. Participant A and C revealed they primarily

strategized to employ a laser-like focus while completing assignments in their coursework.

Participant E was avid about completion in the online credit recovery program after realizing his

70

fault in his previous class. He acknowledged his wrongdoing and wanted to make himself and others happy. He stated,

I'm starting to realize it's like I could have did this at first instead of playing around. It's kind of coming easy. It's kind of making me upset a little bit because I could have did it right the first time... To make my mom happy, myself happy, my counselors and my principal, Mr. _____ happy, my football coach and just my football team in general (Participant E talked about repositioning himself to be successful in his online coursework.)

Participant D expressed he first recreated his approach to learning by actually trying to comprehend the material presented. Participant B first strategized by ensuring he attended school regularly. The responses by participants aligned with the research revealed in Chapter 2. Research revealed that immediate responsiveness, awareness, and accessibility were components that surfaced in credit recovery programs (Zinth, 2011; Watson & Gemin, 2008).

The most notable common theme between research participants, in regards to strategic actions employed to ensure completion was note taking. Eighty percent of research participants expressed they had devised and developed their own system of note taking. Participant A utilized his own short note taking system and Participant B utilized his descriptive note taking based on incorrect answers. Participant C expressed he used his adaptation of Cornell Notes, and Participant E explained he used a categorical note system. All participants responded that either they developed their note taking system from a strategy previously learned or they created it on their own. All reported that the use of this strategy was further developed and implemented when they enrolled in their online credit recovery class. Participant E stated,

Like, I started making like tables like for stuff that to make a category about it and

I like wrote it down and then I study before I went to the test the quiz on the

Reconnect period and I looked it and it asked me that exact same information.

And ever since I did that I've been taking that type of notes in all of my classes.

Participant A said, "I use to didn't take notes. Now I'm in there taking notes and reading

between the lines of what going on like…" Participant B articulated,"But by us writing

the answer it's like we remember it." Participant C communicated, "And it helps the

teacher understand what I'm thinking as well so that they'll understand I'm doing the

work. So yeah, that's one thing I think that sticks when I'm doing Cornell notes or

applying it to the class."

Some of the participants conveyed the pace they learned. Three of the five participants

categorized themselves as fast or quick learners. Participant C further articulated he was a visual

learner, and both Participant A and E shared it was easy for them to catch on to something once

they were initially shown. Knowing how and what pace they learned at could have played a role

in their strategic move to formulate their own notes. Participant D could not communicate how

he learned, however he could articulate his refined strategy of networking he employed to

complete his Spanish I assignments. He specifically consulted his Spanish-speaking classmates

for help with presented curriculum and surrounded himself with the Spanish language and

culture. Participant D turned on Spanish captions on the television set and incorporated the

Spanish language while he worked at his part-time work position. He stated, "Now it just getting

a little complicated cause you trying to learn something from it…it's more like do you

understand what they know…" He further expressed,

Once you feel like this your last option it's like you either going to learn it or you

don't graduate. You finna sit there and ask all the lil' Mexican homeboys in the

classroom what's up, how you do this? Or you going to sit there and look stupid

and they going to try to kick you out to night school…With that being said I'm

going to adapt to the situation period (Participant D specifically discusses his

unction to adapting and being focused in completing coursework.)

Sixty percent of research participants communicated they shared their strategies with

other classmates who were enrolled in credit recovery coursework. Participant B expressed he

only discussed classroom incentives, and Participant A said he did not discuss his strategies with

other students in the program. Participant A and C felt the online coursework was of the same

level of difficulty as traditional coursework, but delivered in a different format. Participant B and

E felt the online coursework was harder than the traditional coursework, and Participant D felt

that coursework was easier.   The majority (80%) of research participants believed the strategies

they utilized, while enrolled in coursework, positively altered their perception, adaptation, and

execution of coursework in their traditional courses on campus. Another prevalent theme

surfaced as four out of five expressed they exercised the new strategies outside their online credit

recovery class. In addition, all participants felt their self-developed strategies would help them

complete coursework at the college level. Participant A stated,

I'm taking notes, the professor wants to go all fast and not go over what he said I

could phone a friend and ask him how he get it. And I used some of my method

with some of his method, going along with the professor saying, so I just put it all

together to come up with my understanding.

73

Participant B said, "So if I apply that same method when I go to college I can be ahead there too. I won't get behind I should be ahead too I should be fine."

At the adjournment of the interview process and based on the participant responses, the researcher concluded that each participant possessed the intrinsic motivation and self-regulation to be successful later in life. Participant A asserted,

> I can care less about what most people say about me. I feel like I'm a do good. I'm a do good. I feel like I don't want to do it, ain't going to it but I have pretty good feeling about myself so I don't care what ya'll be saying. Ya'll can't do for me. Ya'll ain't (Participant A name). I put myself on too high of a pedestal to be brought down by what other people going to say. I got to go on (Participant A expressed his self-motivation to overcome in life.)

Participant B communicated,

> Because I like to prove people wrong. I like to show people that not everybody is the same like you do have some people that care about their care education, care about making good money, you care about yourself, and that makes me I know what I can have when I get up. So that makes me do everything that I can to make sure that I show society that everybody's not lie that.

Participant C stated,

> But as soon as I was born she went to go back to school, and it didn't happen so you know we all, they both fell into that average category as a Black American as you know just a average person. And people always expect that from African Americans and I'm one of those people that, okay, this might be a chance to prove everyone wrong. You know, it takes one person to change the world so I feel like

I could be that person you know to prove to everyone that it's still some hope for

Black American people.

Participant D said, "No matter what I am going to do I am always going to be me…You ain't

never taking [name] from [name]. That's it."(Participant D expressed his self-worth and

motivation to stay truth to himself) Participant E articulated,

And it just motivates me to come back to (Campus B) with my college letterman

on or the suit on and show that I like made something out of my life trying to be

an example for the next generation.

School Microsystem

In regards to common themes in the school microsystem, the majority of participants had

a positive viewpoint concerning the online credit recovery program before enrollment, except for

one participant. This determination was based on their interview responses. Participant A stated,

"Originally I was just like wow. I just got to complete work. Then I actually thought about it

like, I'm really in Reconnect doing work on the computer. It was like ok, it was cool."

The majority of research participants reported that at their school there was a positive

expectation for Black males to succeed in Reconnection from teachers, principals, counselors,

and peers. Participant D responded, "Yeah my teachers. I mean, I mean, they trying to help you

even if you don't need help…" He also responded, "Yeah that's the expectation for any color,

race, whatever you know what I'm saying for them." Campus planning documentation for the

current and previous school year revealed that Campus A (Urban School District, 2016d) and

Campus B (Urban School District, 2016e) intentionally planned to address the learning and

overall graduation of at-risk students. The responses of the participants explained the attitude of

the environment of the school towards the online credit recovery program. Both Campus A and B's attitude was perceived as favorable.

Society Macrosystem

Based on student responses, common themes were captured when research participants were asked particular questions about the perception of society towards African Americans males. The aforementioned components of critical race theory were validated. Three out of five participants felt that Black males were motivated learners, however Participant D expressed Black males were not self-motivated. Livingston and Nahimana's (2006) argument of societal perception was upheld in Participant D's response. Participant B stated Black male motivation varied; some would be motivated while some would not be motivated.

Participant D and E had similar responses that were negative when asked if they felt that society wanted them be successful in their online credit recovery class. Participant A and C felt that society wanted them to be successful, and Participant B expressed that society would negate success based on who took advantage of it. Participant B explained,

> That's you have some that's going to do what they got to do to take care of their
> business to make that they are successful, and then you got some that's not going
> to take advantage of it and just going to mess around… Because that's reality.
> You got some people that are going to take advantage of opportunity and you are
> going to always have people that just don't care. They just in 'cause they have to
> be in it.

A common theme captured for all participants was that they ultimately felt society had a negative expectation for African-American male success. Their responses aligned with the fundaments of social construction as described by Delgado and Stefancic (2012) validating

critical race theory. Social construction embraced the standard that race in the United States was a result of societal thought, relations, and ideas. These principles were subjective and invented. The acquired thinking can be swayed, influenced, and abandoned to benefit the dominant group (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015, Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Participant B and D felt like society ultimately viewed Black males as unambitious, African American males were not liked, and sometimes these viewpoints were justified. Participant C specifically noted,

Like they tend to, maybe, as uh, they try to forget about us in a way, and that we, sometimes we feel like we need to be heard, and you know, the only way we can do is as anybody else has been doing is protesting you know, and that's all that's been going on in the world right now and with the politics and you know education-wise and you know the new presidential election. It's all been tied up into one thing you know and that's we just tired of the things going on in the world that needs to be put to an end. The Black males especially with all the killings of the Black males; it just needs to be put to a stop. I feel like they underestimate us in a way that you know, we have to show them otherwise that we're still here. We're here for a reason, and we can do things that's better… Honestly I think society wants us to fail. Like just because of you know things racism, that's the main topic; that's the main thing; that's the main course. I think everyone exceedingly wants us to fail just because of who we are because of the color of our skin.

Participant C discussed the society's opposition against Black males. His sentiments embodied social construction Delgado and Stefancic (2012) under critical race theory.

Participant C also expressed that society expected Black males to be successful in an online

recovery program, but after high school graduation the plan was for African American males to

fail. His feelings personified interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). He stated,

> and as soon as you get out in that world and get a bit of a taste of what it is… And
>
> they're going to expect less than what other people out there can do just because
>
> of who we are. We're Black Americans.

His sentiments aligned with Knaus'(2009) argument concerning critical race theory, education,

and the exclusionary practices that follow people of color; particularly African Americans.

Interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) was embedded in Participant C's rhetoric as

he explained the ultimate plan for African American males. The response of the research

participants defined how critical race theory was interwoven in the discussion of the society

macrosystem and its lasting impact. Participant B's comments showed social construction as he

stated,

> they're going to settle for minority jobs like once they graduate from school
>
> they're going settle for anything something that's going to bring them an income.
>
> They're not going to try to get to the highest they will just settle for anything.

Participant D shared his personal encounters with racism and society viewpoints as he

stated,

> It was the police…yeah we were out too late but they were tryin' to make it seem
>
> like we just came from robbing somebody, you know what I'm saying…they
>
> pulled up on us and said we robbed somebody…they feel that we ain't goin'
>
> never amount to nothing…certain cases they right–certain cases they wrong.

Self-Regulatory Theory and Motivation

The indicators of self-regulatory practices, Zimmerman (1989) noted, were interwoven in their shared experiences. Seven of the common themes or experiences in Table 7 directly connected to attributes of self-regulatory learners. The identified common themes had characteristics of self-regulatory theory due to the following: learners changing their actions to achieve their goal; self-reliance and; self-direction. Through the data analysis, this research finding was significant because it proved the expected findings of the researcher.

The inception interviews revealed that three out of five participants shared they were motivated to complete coursework because of graduation. Participant D shared he was motivated to complete coursework because he just wanted to be finished with his enrollment. Participant E expressed that his motivation to complete coursework stemmed from making himself and other people happy.

Further Analysis

The main research questions of this study centered on the strategies that research participants exercised in the face of previous obstacles and what supportive systems were needed for success. The researcher identified 19 common themes or shared experiences of the research participants. In order for these experiences to be considered common or shared, 80% or four out of five participants had to respond similarly. Tables 3–6 specifically recorded their common themes or experiences, and categorized experiences based on the home microsystem, class microsystem, school microsystem, and society macrosystem. The home microsystem had more common themes identified than the other microsystems and macrosystem noted. This finding could imply that the home played a more significant role in African American male's support and motivation. Hilt (2011) found that African American students revealed there was a strong

79

maternal presence at the home (either mother or grandmother) that pushed them to excel.   All tables captured the frequency as research participants responded to questions and their shared experiences corresponded with the identified realities.

Summary

This chapter exhibited the themes extracted from the data collected during qualitative interviews. Profile details collected by the researcher depicted an image of each at-risk African American male participant. Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory and the self-regulated learning theories were ultimately utilized as the portal to analyze data that was collected by the researcher. After the two interview cycles, 28 themes were extracted based on research question analysis. Of the 28 identified themes, commonalities were evident for 18 themes or 64%, as experienced by the research participants who agreed to be a part of this study. The interwoven nature of the research findings, discussions, and well-defined conclusions are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study examined the lived experiences of at-risk African American males that were enrolled in an online credit recovery program. The study specifically investigated: (a) What strategies did research participants employ in the face of previous obstacles, to work toward the goal of completion; (b) What supports are needed for at-risk African American males to be successful learners in an online credit recovery environment? The results of the interview data were categorized using Brofenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory. In particular, the microsystem and macrosystem were utilized from the theory to categorize questioning and responses.

The study allowed students to share their sentiments about their: (a) home environment and self-perception; (b) previous and current classroom experiences; (c) school perception; (d) perception of society as it relates to African American males. These areas were selected based on literature reviewed in Chapter 2 that linked them to African American male academic achievement. Questions during the interview process ultimately led to the discussion of student perception and support measures. In addition, what motivational, work, and study strategies were employed while enrolled in online credit recovery coursework were also reviewed.

Summary of Results and Discussion

Home Microsystem

The researcher utilized the following research to determine the initial finding:

- The home coordination and the cohesive nature of the family supported the learner (Lin, 1994; Williams, 1994)

- Research participants were admired by others (parents) in their home environment (Lin, 1994; Haynes, 2011); and strong interpersonal relationship between parent and child existed (Williams, 1994)

- The communication within the environment established a belonging (Lin, 1994). The parental involvement encouraged positive perception towards the components of school (Haynes, 2011), and their actions provided influence on their academics (Haynes, 2011; McMillion & Edwards, 2000)

- Self-reliance and seriousness concerning life was expected and modeled by parents (Williams, 1994)

Finding 1: In the face of the obstacles encountered by the parents and guardians of the research participants, positive supportive household environments were maintained. Supportive household environments were maintained on behalf of the participants as parents and guardians verbally expressed their feelings, per research participant's testimonies, towards each participant's intelligence and perceived their children as smart. These perceptions were expressed despite previous downfalls by the participants to maintain academically acceptable grades. The assertive vote by parents and guardians translated into the promotion of confidence, motivation, and self-esteem for the research participant. The participants felt like their parents and guardians had a positive perception of the online credit recovery program before student enrollment, and that contributed to participants initially planning self-regulatory strategies of success at the inception of program. These plans were executed as participants planned to attend class regularly and maintain laser focus towards their goal of course completion. Moreover, they ensured that resources were available so that the participants could work on assignments at home. Though high school graduation can be deemed as a personal goal, it was further advanced

82

and encouraged by custodial action. The actions of parents and guardians occurred despite the negative stigmas and stereotypes that were immanent of at-risk African American males.

Neblett et al. (2009) reviewed the message of African American parents and guardians to their children. In their prior review of research they found that despite disparaging stereotypes, describing African Americans, parents or guardians focused on conveying messages of self-worth within the framework of being African American. Their study revealed that African American parents find it necessary to communicate both messages of African American pride and self-worth. Parents also fostered activities that affirmed their children and stressed the importance of positive relations with other groups. Parenting goals reflected the assurance of their child's self-worth within a society that would traditionally devalue him. The actions of the research participant's parents/guardians bypassed negative social constructive perceptions connected to race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

When parents exercised an African American version of authoritative parenting their children are more likely to succeed. This adaption of African American authoritative parenting involves: (a) parents educating their children about their cultural significance and heritage; (b) regularly monitoring school work and homework assignments and; (c) cultivating and developing personal strength in them to overcome prevalent societal barriers (Mandara, 2006). Intervention methods that integrated positive role models and career preparation would help to influence the aspirations and goals of African American males. However, the personal views, perceptions, and attitudes of African American males are the greatest factors that needed to be rectified in order for change to occur (Rowley & Bowman, 2009).

This summary supported the ideologies of Brofenbrenner (1989) stating that agents within the microsystem greatly impact the development of the child. Fortunately, the negative

83

effects that could stem from the macrosystem, particularly critical race theory, did not influence the parents and guardians of these participants to treat them in a manner that would not result in their success as learners.

Classroom Microsystem

In order to come to a conclusion concerning the classroom microsystem, the following research was applied:

- The teacher created an environment where students felt secure when taking a risk (McMillion & Edwards, 2000)

- The teacher recognized the reception of the student to the curriculum and provided intervention (Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, 2011; McMillion & Edwards, 2000)

- The teacher understood the social and academic background of the child and addressed by building strong rapport to ultimately motivate and promote growth (Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, 2011; McMillion & Edwards, 2000)

- Online course preparation consisted of instructing students how to take adequate notes and personalizing instruction for student comprehension (Carr, 2014), and learners gained the opportunity to be self-regulated (Adams, Forsyth, Dollarhide, Miskell, & Ware, 2015; Carr, 2014;)

- The accountability rested on the student to perform and complete the prescriptive coursework that was assigned (Volkerding, 2012)

Finding 2: Teachers established high standards, clear expectations, and built strong rapport with students, and as a result students developed their own work and study habits.
The classroom experience for research participants differed from the classrooms where they were not academic successful. Teachers established high performance standards and established clear

84

expectations for their learning in each learning environment. In addition to these measures, research participants responded that teachers built strong relationships by conducting individual meetings and addressing their need to improve. These instructor strategies starkly differ from the actions exhibited by their former instructors, and they acted as motivation and support to the research participants.

As a result of the high standards and clear expectations, each research participant developed or refined study and work habits to navigate through coursework. The study and work habits were then reinforced in their current traditional classes, and participants felt that their strategies enabled them to understand curriculum better in their traditional classes.

Research participants also believed that their developed strategies would assist them in college. The exercises of these mechanisms are milestones because they redirected behaviors that were previously exhibited. Additionally, the note taking and networking strategies can be undoubtedly classified as self-regulatory.

Instructors must foster a model in the classroom that promotes self-control, efficacy, optimism, and the responsibility of the learner (McMillian & Reed, 1994). At-risk learners should identify learning strategies that will help achieve their goals. These strategies can range from the very basic to complex, and include summation, reading comprehension, and question asking. Because learners control their own effort, teachers should encourage students to put all of their effort leading to completion of assignments. This may result in the completion of extra practice, homework, and attending tutorial sessions. In order to promote a classroom that motivates, the at-risk learner must take responsibility for their learning (Alderman, 1990).

At-risk learners need to know exactly what is expected of them, and the criteria that must be executed for them to be successful. When there are low expectations for African American

males they are denied quality instruction. Moreover, when these students are not held accountable for their actions such as not submitting homework on time or failure to complete classroom assignments minimal expectancy levels prevail (Alderman, 1990). More creative campuses are developing ways to insert the online curriculum as a supplement to specifically address the individual needs of their student population. Nevertheless, if an instructional program does not have the proper support, then more creative measures for implementing curriculum cannot be explored (Carr, 2014). It would be of benefit to design intervention programs and instructional strategies around factors such as family structure, community crime, and peer relationships to specifically address this subgroup (Rowley & Bowman, 2009).

The online credit recovery learning environment, coupled with the instructional strategies of their teachers, aided research participants in this study to build their self-confidence and self-regulation as learners. In addition, this environment reinforces the positive attitudes and perceptions expressed in their home environment. The level of student accountability and responsibility experienced has worked in the research participants' favor.

This summary supports the research literature that African American students benefit from active learning classrooms (Holland, 2014), and ultimately will decrease the dropout rate for these research participants (Watson & Gemin, 2008Zinth, 2011). The learning environment acted as a support for the research participants while they implemented their personalized strategies to complete coursework.

School Microsystem

The conclusion concerning the school environment stemmed from the following research:

- Interpersonal relationship between teachers, administrators, and students were evident (Nasir, Jones, & McLaughlin 2011; Schaps, 2005)

- Positive institutional connection exemplified student attitudes and behavior toward school context (Nasir, Jones, & McLaughlin 2011)

- A caring climate and high expectations were apparent (Schaps, 2005)

Finding 3: The school environment entities (teachers, counselors, principals, peers) were positive and supportive towards programs that service at-risk African American males. The school environment aided in a supportive manner in regards to the expectation, stigma, and entity perception when credit recovery programs are rendered to at-risk African American males. African American male research participants had a positive view of the program before enrollment. Against this background, the entities that compose the school microsystem, in regards to credit recovery, carried a positive expectation for achievement. The expectation for African American males enrolling in the credit recovery to succeed was positive and tied to the following entities: teachers, counselors, principals, peers.

The relationship between school climate and academics improves when the relationships between adults and students are collaborative. The climate progressed when students felt they had a sense of belonging, a good relationship with peers, and were respected and treated fairly. Additionally, school staff members should share a common vision in regards to the achievement of African American males and specify the roles they will play to benefit them. Likewise, the social and learning environment of the campus should foster positive school relationships with staff and peers. (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2012).

The following research points were considered when determining the last finding:

- Zimmerman (1989) noted that learners were motivated, continuously think about what they are thinking, and their behavior reflects the ultimate goal they are endeavoring to achieve.

- Volkerding (2012) explained that intrinsic motivation is a key attribute of students that successfully completed the online credit recovery program.

Society Macrosystem

Finding 4: The research participant's intrinsic motivation is continuously ignited by their goal of graduation/completion, and it overcomes negative societal conventions that prevail.

Although critical race theory was not the focus of this study, it was evident that the fundaments of theory resided in testimonials. The social constructions of race and interest convergence were undeniable factors in their perceptions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, the supports from their home, classroom, and school microsystems have countered negative portrayals and expectations of society, in reference to their success.

The research participants' goals of graduation or course completion further ignited their intrinsic motivation. Their goals inspired them to progress further into coursework and complete. The desire to complete coursework and graduate was compelling as they expressed how committed they were to staying focused while enrolled. Evidently, the concentration of their goals acted as an employed strategy.

The research participants expressed their viewpoint of society's perception and expectation. They felt that the expectation was for them to ultimately fail. However, their desire to succeed and concentration on their goals overshadowed the looming negative stereotypes and stigmas concerning at-risk African American males. Based on their responses, all participants possessed internal strength and fortitude to achieve both short term and long term goals. The characteristics of self-regulated learners and learning were prevalent, self-regulation was continuous, and it evolved due to existing preconditions in the aforementioned systems.

The theory of self-regulatory learning can be applied and emphasized with a population of struggling at-risk African American male learners. At-risk African American males may not have control of their family dynamics and the changing aspects or conventions of society that can be oppressing; but the opportunity for self-regulated learning to occur would give them a sense of empowerment because they would be motivated towards an attainable goal.

Further Discussion: At-Risk But Resilient

The issues associated with poverty were reviewed in Chapter 2 when discussing the deterioration of the family as it relates to African American males. However, poverty is not one of the indicators the state legislature adopted to determine a student as being educationally disadvantaged (at-risk) or more likely of dropping out of high school. Arguably, an African American male in the state could be impoverished or economically disadvantaged but not classified as educationally disadvantaged.

The expected findings of this study slated research participants to be self-regulated learners, and based on their actions that prejudgment was fulfilled. In addition, research participants can be classified as resilient based on the mechanisms they employed and utilized as motivation despite their obstacles. Their personality mixed with their beliefs and self-efficacy advanced their academic success in this learning environment.

Resilient at-risk learners take responsibilities for both successes and failures. These actions filter self-efficacy, and these learners have positive expectations and plans for ambitious futures. Despite any negative societal conventions these learners continue to progress until their ultimate goal has been achieved (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Due to their past academic mishaps and other blunders the learners of this study meet state education code qualifications to be

classified as educationally disadvantaged or at-risk. However, their surrounding support and employed strategies continue to motivate them and their resiliency continues to fester.

Limitations

This study was limited because it only focuses on the experiences of at-risk African American males enrolled in online credit coursework. No other ethnic groups or females were represented in this study. Their experiences could be similar. However, this study only evaluated at-risk African American males enrolled in one large urban public school system. Other settings were not considered to complete the study.

The sample size of research participants was small. Only five participants volunteered to be a part of the study. The study allowed up to 10 participants, however the minimum number of volunteers were utilized. This study could have yielded different results if 10 additional volunteers were a part of the study. This evaluation is limited due to only two campus programs reviewed and school support was an important factor of this study.

The utilized online curriculum was the only online curriculum that was accessed by students. There could be a possibility the research participants could have reacted differently to their learning environment if the curriculum were not challenging. Ultimately, this could have affected the level of classroom support that was received by the student.

<div align="center">

Conclusions and Implications

</div>

The triad combination of a supportive home, classroom, and school environments, before and during course activity, acted as crucial foundational factors that led to the success of these learners. The desired goal of graduation then fueled the motivation of the learner to engage in resilient self-developed strategies to ultimately complete online coursework. The strong relationship between support and student self-developed and regulatory strategies ultimately

<div align="center">90</div>

bypassed the negative customary societal conventions that could have influenced these at-risk African American males.

The participants associated with this study focused on their goals, and were self-motivated not to make the same mistakes that were exhibited beforehand. There was less concentration by these African American males on their impoverished conditions and personal obstacles faced. They rerouted their energy, employed self-developed strategies, and continued further with progress. This implies that these African American males possessed a motivational skill set that should be emphasized to other learners entering the online credit recovery program.

Because of the strong support and positive perceptions garnered from supportive home, classroom, and school environments the participants in this study were able to build confidence in the abilities they already possessed. The forerunners of these environments provided atmospheres that encouraged the participants to strive and succeed. The implications of these actions suggest that individuals such as parents, teachers, school officials, and peers have great influence. With that great influence, comes a responsibility to ensure that all learners, especially at-risk, receive authentic assistance and encouragement.

Recommendations for Future Studies

It is recommended that this study expands to more participants. One could obtain a more comprehensive study if more participants discussed their experiences regarding support, perception, and the employment of self-developed strategies. In addition, the study should expand to capture the essence of experience of instructors who teach at-risk African American males in this type of learning environment.

All participants responded that their strategies would be of benefit to them in a college setting. Longitudinal study is also recommended for this study in regards to the employment and

longevity of self-developed strategies. This study will note the long-term effects of self-developed strategies utilized by formerly enrolled students in an online learning environment.

The study should expand to discuss the relationship between of parents and guardians and school staff regarding proactively communicating about support message for at-risk African American males. The relationship between microsystems will venture into Bronfenbrenner's (1989) discussion of the mesosystem. Each possible mesosystem relationship should be reviewed in order for a comprehensive study to be completed. More research associated with this study is needed to assess and identify the proper supports and instructional strategies to further develop at-risk African American males as self-regulatory learners in an online credit recovery learning environment.

Above all, this study opens dialogue to specifically address the best mode of blended-learning instruction for at-risk African American males who are assigned to an online credit recovery programs. Due to the scarcity of literature that specifically addresses the blended-learning instruction model in online credit recovery environments; more research is needed to guide districts across the country on what specific actions must be employed by stakeholders in leadership positions.

Online learning environments represented new approaches to learning. Common themes of flexibilty, increased self-esteem, independent learning, and preference were common in these environments (McCoy, 2012). Therefore, online credit recovery learning environment were used as an agent to empower at-risk African American males and positively impact their microsystems; and ultimately mesosystems. Campus teachers, administrators, and the community can only execute what is in their reach to tackle the effects of poverty in the lives of at-risk African American males. However, they must make valiant efforts to build supportive

92

environments and implement instructional strategies to cultivate self-regulatory learners. These corrective measures could also possibly affect the societal conventions, resident in the macrosystem, that were unfavorable to at-risk African American males. Implementation strategies that specifically rebuild the self-esteem and self-concept were not expensive to enact (Garibaldi, 1992).

It is important that the reader notes the nature of this study. This study was limited to the experiences of only five at-risk African American males in a large urban school district. The conclusions made by the researcher were only absolute for this study. It would not be prudent for one to determine that the research participant's experiences and responses reflect all at-risk African American males' encounters and viewpoints. However, all stakeholders can collectively work together to ensure that the proper support follows this sub-group of students so they can achieve to their highest potential, and help eliminate the drop-out rate of African American males.

References

African-American. (n.d.). In *YourDictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.yourdictionary.com/
    african-american

African Americans. (2001). In *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*. Retrieved from
    http://www.oxfordreference.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780195117394
    .001.0001/acref-9780195117394-e-0007

Alderman, K. M. (1990). Motivation for at-risk students. *Educational Leadership, 48*(1), 27–30.
    Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership.aspx

Allen, A. G. (2010). *A critical race theory analysis of the disproportionate representation of
    blacks and males participating in Florida's special education programs*. (Doctoral
    Dissertation). Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED523463)

Apex Learning. (2016). Realizing the potential of blended learning: Beyond personalized to
    active learning. Retrieved from https://www.apexlearning.com/resources/white-
    papers/201601/realizing-potential-blended-learning-beyond-personalized-active

Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Asian Journal of Social
    Psychology*, *2*, 21–41. doi:10.1111/1467–839X.00024

Bell, E. E. (2010). *Educating African American males.* Retrieved from ERIC database.
    (ED514552)

Booth, M. Z., & Gerard, J. M. (2011). Self-esteem and academic achievement: A comparative
    study of adolescent students in England and the United States. *Compare: A Journal of
    Comparative and International Education*, *41*, 629–648. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.
    nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3779915/

Bowman, P. J. (2006). Role strain and adaptation issues in the strength-based model: Diversity, multilevel, and life-span considerations. *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(1), 118–133. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/loi/tcp

Brizee, A., Tompkins, J. C., Chernouski, L., and Boyle, E. (2015). Critical race theory (1970s–present). Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/14/

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989). Ecological systems theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Six Theories of Child Development Revised Formulations and Current Issues* (Vol. 6). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Oxford, UK: Elsevier. (Reprinted from Readings on the development of children, 2nd ed., pp. 37–43, by M. Gauvain & M. Cole, Eds., 1993, New York, NY: Freeman). Retrieved from http://www.columbia.edu/cu/psychology/courses/3615 /Readings/BronfenbrennerModelofDevelopment (short%20version).pdf

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2009). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Retrieved from http://www.ebrary.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org

Carr, S. (2014). Credit recovery hits the mainstream. *Education Next*, *14*(3), 30–36. Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/

Casserly, M., Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., & Palacios, M. (2012). *A call for change: Providing solutions for black male achievement*. Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools. Retrieved from http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/88/A%20Call%20For%20Change_FinaleBook.pdf

Chan, Z. C. Y., Fung, Y., & Chien, W. (2013). Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process? *The Qualitative Report*, *18*(30), 1–9. Retrieved from http://tqr.nova.edu/

Cohort. (2010). In *A Dictionary of Ecology*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordreference.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199567 669.001.0001/ acref-9780199567669-e-1204.

Connley, C. (2014). *Study: Black male high-school dropouts have high prison risk.* Retrieved from http://www.blackenterprise.com/education/black-men-who-drop-out-of-high-school-prison/

Convention. (2011). In *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 30 Jul. 2016, from http://www.oxfordreference .com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/view/ 10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-528.

Cook, L. (2015, January 28). U.S. Education: Still separate and unequal. *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/01/28/us-education-still-separate-and-unequal

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review, 96*(4), 608–630. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pubs/ journals/rev/

Urban School District. (2016a). *Reconnection centers program 2016–2017: Procedural Manual*. http://www.████isd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/Domain/

14248/Reconnection%20Centers%20Program%20Procedural%20Manual%202016-

2017.pdf

Urban School District. (2016b). *Data packet for 2016–2017 planning*. Retrieved from

https://mydata.███isd.org/docs/CILT2017/DP2380.pdf

Urban School District. (2016c). *Data packet for 2016–2017 planning*. Retrieved from

https://mydata.███isd.org/docs/CILT2017/DP380.pdf

Urban School District. (2016d). *Campus improvement plan 2016–2017*. Retrieved from

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AP9p-PrGIjseC_nS50hT3OXJBOBJ1xyKG4

-wVaqeHuw/edit?ts=57e41958

Urban School District. (2016e). *Campus improvement plan 2016–2017*.

Dancy, E. T. (2014). (Un)doing hegemony in education: Disrupting school-to-prison pipelines

for black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*(4), 476–493. Retrieved from

http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ueee20/current

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). Critical race theory: An introduction (2nd ed.). New York,

NY: NYU Press.

Dillon, S. (2009, October 8). Study finds high imprisonment rate among dropouts. *The New York

Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?

_r=0

Eamon, M. K. (2001). The effects of poverty on children's socioemotional development: An

ecological systems analysis. *Social Work, 46*(3), 256–266. Retrieved from

https://academic.oup.com/sw

Ecological. (2013). In *A Dictionary of Environment and Conservation*. Oxford University Press.

    Retrieved from http://www.oxfordreference.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/

    9780199641666.001.0001/acref-9780199641666-e-2332.

Evans, M. (2016, September 8). ▇▇▇ *has highest child poverty rate among 10 largest U.S.*

    cities, report finds. Retrieved from http://keranews.org/post/dallas-has-highest-child-

    poverty-rate-among-10-largest-us-cities-report-finds

Felder, R. M., & Brent, R. (2009). Active learning: An introduction. *ASQ Higher Education*

    Brief, 2(4).

Fleischman, S., & Heppen, J. (2009). Improving low-performing high schools: Searching for

    evidence of promise. *Future of Children*, *19*(1), 105–133.

Forte, L. (2009, Fall). Dropout recovery: Tough job, but someone's got to do it. *Catalyst in*

    Depth, *21*, 2. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org /docview/

    195436746?accountid=10248

Fry, R. (2014, October 2). *U.S. High school dropout rate reaches record low, driven by*

    improvements among Hispanics, blacks. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/

    fact-tank/2014/10/02/u-s-high-school-dropout-rate-reaches-record-low-driven-by-

    improvements-among-hispanics-blacks/

Furger, R. (2008, December 3). *How to end the dropout crisis: Ten strategies for student*

    retention. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/student-dropout-retention-strategies

Garibaldi, A. M. (1992). Educating and motivating African American males to succeed. *Journal*

    of Negro Education, 61(1), 4–11. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Härkönen, U. (2001). *The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development*. Retrieved from http://wanda.uef.fi/~uharkone/tuotoksia/Bronfenbrenner _in_%20English_07_sent.pdf

Henfield, M. S. (2012). The stress of black male achievement: Ten nonnegotiables. *Gifted Child Today*, *35*(3), 215–219. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/home/gct

Hidden Curriculum. (2014). In S. Abbott (Ed.), *The glossary of education reform*. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum

Hill, A. (2012). *Culturally responsive teaching: An investigation of effective practices for African American learners* (Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University Chicago). Retrieved from http://ecommons.luc.edu /luc_diss/353.

Holland, K. (2014, September 11). *The death of the classroom as we know it*. Retrieved from http://www.cnbc.com/2014/09/11/f-the-classroom-as-we-know-it.html

Hudson Valley Press Online. (2011). *Understanding black males learning styles* [Review of the book *Understanding Black Male Learning Styles*, by J. Kunjufu]. Retrieved from http://www.hvpress.net/news/129/ARTICLE/10051/2011-02-23.html

Jackson, A. P. (1994). The effects of role strain on single, working, black mothers' perceptions of their young children. *Social Work Research*, *18*(1), 36–40. Retrieved from https://academic.oup.com/swr

Jackson, B., & Hilliard, A. (2013). Too many boys are failing in American schools: What can we do about it? *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, *6*(3), 311–316. doi: 10.19030/cier.v6i3.7901

Jones, E. L. (2011). *A second chance to graduate on time: High school students' perceptions on participating in an online credit recovery program*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED535794)

Kaufman, P. (1992). *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 — Characteristics of at-risk students in NELS:88.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs92/92042.pdf

Kearney, M., & Harris, B. (2014). Ten economic facts about crime and incarceration in the United States. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2014/05/10-crime-facts

Kena, G., Hussar, W., McFarland, J., De Brey, C., Musu-Gillette, L., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Barmer, A., Mann, F. B., Velez, E. D. (2016). *The condition of education 2016*. Jessup, MD: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016144.pdf

Kendler, H. H. (2005). Psychology and phenomenology: A clarification. *American Psychologist, 60*(4), 318–324. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/amp/

Knaus, C. B. (2009). Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, *12*(2), 133–154. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cree20/current

Kuo, Y. (2010). *Self-regulated learning: From theory to practice*. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/754905038?accountid=10248

Lewis, N. (2016). African American male students' experiences in an online learning program in an urban alternative school. *Electronic Theses & Dissertations*. Paper 1414. Retrieved

from http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent. cgi?article=2494 &context=etd

Livingston, J. N., & Nahimana, C. (2006). Problem child or problem context: An ecological approach to young black males. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems*, *14*(4), 209–214. Retrieved from http://www.youthpolicy.org/ journals/reclaiming-children-and-youth-journal-of-emotional-and-behavioral-problems/

Long, S. (2012). Reducing the black male dropout rate. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *81*(2), 175–176. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Mandara, J. (2006). The impact of family functioning on African American males' academic achievement: A review and clarification of the empirical literature. *Teachers College Record, 108*(2), 206–223. Retrieved from http://www.tcrecord.org/

Mata, E. (2011). Reason to hope. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education, 27*(25), 16. Retrieved from http://diverseeducation.com/

McCabe, J., & St.Andrie, R. 2012. *Credit recovery programs: Full report*. Retrieved from http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/ Creditrecovery-programs/Credit-recovery-programs-full-report.html

McCoy, K. (2012). *A study of African American males and their response to online learning*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED551658)

McDaniel, M., Simms, M., Fortuny, K., & Monson, W. (2013). *A demographic snapshot of disconnected low-income men. Race, place and poverty (Issue Brief No. 1)*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/13/LowIncomeMen/ Demographic/rpt_DemographicSnapshot.pdf

McMillan, J., & Reed, D. (1994). At-Risk students and resiliency: Factors contributing to

    academic success. *The Clearing House, 67*(3), 137–140. Retrieved from http://www.

    jstor.org.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/stable/30188771

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

    Bass.

Miah, M. (2006). *Plight of young black men: The scars and the crisis*. Retrieved from https://

    www.solidarity-us.org/node/23

Milton, T., & Zheng, Z. (2014). *Jail inmates at midyear 2014*. Retrieved from

    http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim14.pdf

Miss Fruge. (2011). *Understanding black male learning styles—Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu* [Review

    of the book *Understanding Black Male Learning Styles*, by J. Kunjufu]. Retrieved from

    the NewsTalk WCHB wiki: http://wchbnewsdetroit.newsone.com/2329132/

    understanding-black-male-learning-styles-dr-jawanza-kunjufu/

Moore, A., & Bauer, T. (2010). *Research put into practice: Apex learning curriculum &*

    pedagogy. Retrieved from https://www.apexlearning.com/resources/white-papers/201007

    /research-put-practice-apex-learning-curriculum-pedagogy

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Murnane, R. J., & Hoffman, S. L. (2013). Graduations on the rise. *Education Next,13*(4), 58–65.

    Retrieved from http://educationnext.org/

Murrell-Heydorf, T. (2011). *High stakes testing of African-American male student performance*

    on middle school assessments. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED546427)

Neblett, E., Chavous, T., Nguyên, H., & Sellers, R. (2009). Say it loud–I'm black and I'm proud:

    Parents' messages about race, racial discrimination, and academic achievement in

African American boys. *The Journal of Negro Education, 78*(3), 246–259. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Nedhari, A. (2009). In search of manhood: The black male's struggle for identity and power. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, *1*(11). Retrieved from http://www.inquiriesjournal.com /a?id=32

Phillips, J. (2015). *Legacy of the past? Slavery's impact on modern black identity*. Retrieved from https://lawstreetmedia.com/issues/entertainment-and-culture/perverse-black-identity/

Powell, A., Roberts, V., & Patrick, S. (2015). *Using online learning for credit recovery: Getting back on track to graduation.* Retrieved from http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/ 2015/09/iNACOL_UsingOnlineLearningForCreditRecovery.pdf

Robbins, W. S. (2011). *Alternative school education: Using web-based curriculum programs to assist at-risk students with high school credit recovery in select east central Indiana schools*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED536845)

Rowley, L. L., & Bowman, P. J. (2009). Risk, protection, and achievement disparities among African American males: Cross-generation theory, research, and comprehensive intervention. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(3), 305–320,362–363. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Ryan, D. P. J. (2001). *Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory*. Retrieved from ___ .

Sanchez, B. (2016). *Mentoring for black male youth*. Retrieved from http://www.nationalmentor ingresourcecenter.org/index.php/what-works-in-mentoring/model-and-population-reviews/html?id=177

Savas, G. (2016). Understanding gender and race differences in high school achievement in the

    United States. *American Journal of Educational Research*, *4*(6), 427–438. Retrieved from

    http://pubs.sciepub.com/education/4/6/1

Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2015). *Black lives matter: The Schott 50 state report on*

    public education and black males. Retrieved from http://blackboysreport.org/

    bbreport2015.pdf

Sharp, J. (2016). *More learning happens with high-quality digital curriculum*. Retrieved from

    https://www.apexlearning.com/resources/white-papers/201609/more-learning-happens-

    high-quality-digital-curriculum

Simek, P. (2016) *When it comes to poverty, ▓▓▓ is world class*. Retrieved from

    http://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2016/09/when-it-comes-to-poverty-dallas-is-

    world-class/

Simms, E., & Stawarska, B. (2013). Introduction: Concepts and Methods in Interdisciplinary

    Feminist Phenomenology. *Janus Head*, *13*(1), 6.

Sincero, S. (n.d.) *Self-concept theory.* Retrieved from https://explorable.com/self-concept-theory

Smith, J., & Osborn, M. (2007). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. Retrieved from

    http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/17418_04_Smith_2e_Ch_04.pdf

Stephens, R. T., & Repa, T. J. (1992). Dropping out and its ultimate consequence: A study of

    dropouts in prison. *Urban Education, 26*(4), 401–422. Retrieved from

    http://journals.sagepub.com/home/uex

Superville, D. (2015, February 11). Graduation rates rise; Gap between black and white males

    grows, report says [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/

    District_Dossier/2015/02/as_nation_graduation_rate_grew.html

State Data. (2014). *Secondary school completion and dropouts in* ▮▮▮ *public schools 2012–13*.

Retrieved from http://tea.▮▮▮.gov/acctres/DropComp_2012-13.pdf

State Data. (2016a). *2013–14 Student program reports*. Retrieved from

https://rptsvr1.tea.▮▮▮.gov/cgi/sas/broker

State Data. (2016b). *2016 Accountability manual for* ▮▮▮ *schools and districts*. Retrieved from

http://tea.▮▮▮.gov/2016accountabilitymanual.aspx

State Data. (2016c). *Financial accountability system resource guide* (Version 15.0). Retrieved

from http://tea.▮▮▮.gov/Finance_and_Grants/Financial_Accountability/

Financial__Accountability_System_Resource_Guide/

State Data. (2016d). *2015–2016 Student program reports*. Retrieved from

https://rptsvr1.tea.▮▮▮.gov/cgi/sas/broker

The Opportunity Agenda. (2011). *Social science literature review: Media representations and

impact of the lives of black men and boys*. Retrieved from http://www.racialequitytools.

org/resourcefiles/Media-Impact-onLives-of-Black-Men-and-Boys-OppAgenda.pdf

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2015). *Fact sheet: Congress acts to fix No

Child Left Behind* [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-

press-office/2015/12/03/fact-sheet-congress-acts-fix-no-child-left-behind

Thevenot, B., & Butrymowicz, S. (2010, November 4). More high school students acquire online

credits. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/05/us/05

ttcredits.html

Tolbert, I. (2009). *9 Biggest lies about black males and academic success*. Retrieved from

http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/03/_9_biggest_lies_about_black_males_an

d_academic_success/

Tsoi-A-Fatt, R. (2010). *We dream a world: The 2025 vision for black men and boys.*

    Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. Retrieved from https://www.

    opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/we-dream-a-world-20110104.pdf

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work,*

    11(1), 80–96. doi: 10.1177/1473325010368316

United States Department of Education. (2008). *High school graduation rate non-regulatory*

    guidance. Retrieved from www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/hsgrguidance

United States Department of Education. (2015). *Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local*

    Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A). Retrieved July 16, 2016 from http://www2.ed.

    gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html

Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2008) *Promising practices in online learning: Using online learning*

    for at-risk students and credit recovery. Vienna, VA: iNACOL. Retrieved from

    http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL_CreditRecovery_Promising

    Practices.pdf

Whiting, G. W. (2006). From at risk to at promise: Developing scholar identities among black

    males. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *17*(4), 222–229, 285. Retrieved from

    http://journals.sagepub.com/home/joa

Wiggan, G. (2007). Race, school achievement, and educational inequality: Toward a student

    based inquiry perspective. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(3), 310–333.

Will, G. F. (1993, June 13). Sympathy for Guinier. *Newsweek.* Retrieved from

    http://www.newsweek.com/sympathy-guinier-194016

Wilonsky, R. (2016). *How can a city as rich as Dallas be so poor?* Retrieved from

    http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2016/09/08/can-city-rich-dallas-poor

Winston, C. E., Philip, C. L., & Lloyd, D. L. (2007). The identity and success life story method: A new paradigm for digital inclusion. *Journal of Negro Education, 76*(1), 31. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Wood, P. C., Hillman, S. B., & Sawilowsky, S. S. (1996). Locus of control, self-concept, and self-esteem among at-risk African-American adolescents. *Adolescence*, *31*(123), 597–604. Available from the ProQuest database.

Wright, B. (2009). Racial-ethnic identity, academic achievement, and African American males: A review of literature. *The Journal of Negro Education, 78*(2), 123–134. Retrieved from http://www.journalnegroed.org/

Vanderhaar, J., & Munoz, M. A. (2006). *Educating at-risk African American males: Formative and summative evaluation of the street academy program*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED495958)

Velmans, M. (2007). Heterophenomenology versus critical phenomenology. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *6*(1–2), 221–230.

Volkerding, R. L. (2012). Do at-risk students benefit when NovaNET is used for credit recovery? Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED548074)

Zimmerman, B. J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated academic learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *81*(3), 329–339. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/edu/

Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992). Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. *American Educational Research Journal*, *29*(3), 663–676. doi:10.2307/1163261

Zinth, J. D. (2011). Credit recovery and proficiency-based credit: Maintaining high expectations

    while providing flexibility. *The Progress of Education Reform, 12*(3). Retrieved from

    ERIC database. (ED521327)

Zuberi, T. (2011). Critical race theory of society. *Connecticut Law Review, 43*(5), 1573–

    1591. Retrieved from http://uconn.lawreviewnetwork.com/files/documents/Zuberi.pdf.

Student Consent Form

Research Study Title: The experiences of at-risk African American males in an online credit recovery program
Principle Investigator: Marcus Scott
Research Institution: Concordia University Portland
Faculty Advisor: Julie McCann

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the experiences of at-risk African American males in an online credit recovery program (Reconnection).

This project is looking for volunteers and after expressing interest in participating, you will be given a registration form and I will explain the risks and benefits of the study. You may chose to leave the study at any time without penalty or consequence. . The study is looking for up to 10 individuals to participate in this study. No one will be paid to be in the study.

WHY ARE WE DOING THE STUDY?

The campus is exploring how it can serve students in credit recovery more effectively on your campus. This study will ask questions about your experience while enrolled in Reconnection. The results of this study could help to improve the overall experience of online credit recovery students in courses which will be beneficial to all students in the Reconnection program.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE STUDY?

To participate in the study, you agree to share your experiences while enrolled in your online recovery course(s). I will talk with you every month for approximately 30 minutes, talking three times during your enrollment in your credit recovery course. In each visit with you, I will ask you to give information and respond to questions being used in the study. For example, volunteer means you will

- Answer questions on how you got into Reconnection and share your experiences in the course.
- Answer questions on how you are doing and what strategies are you using to help you complete your coursework
- Answer questions on whether your strategies have helped your work in your regular classes.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

You could possibly benefit from this study through discussion about your experiences while working towards graduation which could influence behavior or study habits that will support your success. In addition, you could identify areas that are in need of improvement your study or work in class. You will also be contributing to others who will be in this program as efforts to make improvements.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

You might feel uncomfortable or shy when answering some questions. This is normal and you can expect this. If you want to stop and talk about something else, we can do that. After we talk, if you remain uncomfortable or have stress due to our talk, you can call or write me at (the principle investigator: Marcus Scott, at ███████████, ██████████████████. I work for ████████████████████████████████████).

The study specifically reviews at-risk African American male experiences. Based on some of the questioning associated in the first phase of interviewing, there is a risk that you could be emotional when describing your experiences in the traditional classroom and how your parents have experienced your high school experience. I will continually express to you that this study is about your voice being heard. Other than the aforementioned risks, I do not foresee any additional risks associated with the study. Because all information is confidential and your name will not be used, you will not have to worry about being identified in the study.

WHAT IF I WANT TO STOP, OR TAKE AWAY CONSENT SOME PART OF THE STUDY?

All research participants will be strongly encouraged to participate until the interview process is complete. If they cannot complete the interview process but still want their information to be recorded in the study then the participant

information will be included in the study. If they cannot complete the interview process and do not want their information recorded in the study then any existing interview files will be erased. Participants will be told they can refuse to answer any question and/or drop out of the study without consequence.

HOW DO YOU KEEP MY DATA PRIVATE?

All participants and campuses will be given a participant letter A-J to protect their identity. This study will refer to the school district, research participants, and location where the research convened with pseudonyms. Data will be destroyed after the interview sessions are over.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You will be given a copy of a consent form explaining all the details of the study. If you have any questions about the study you can contact me, Marcus Scott. If you have questions about the study but want to ask a person who is not working in the study, you can contact the participant and volunteer advocate, Dr. OraLee Branch, IRB Director, ███████████████████ ████████████████████████████████████.

YOUR STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____
Participant Name

_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

_____
Parent or Guardian Name (if participant is a minor)

_____   _____
Parent or Guardian Signature   Date

INVESTIGATORS:

Marcus Scott
████████████████████

_____   _____
Investigator Name   Date

_____   _____
Investigator Signature   Date

Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Form

Your child has been invited to participate in a research study of examining the experiences of African American males in an online credit recovery program (Reconnection). Your child was asked to volunteer, which is to consent, after expressing initial interest by signing up on the registration sheet in his or her credit recovery class.   Up to 10 individuals will be selected to participate in this study. No one will be paid to be in the study.

My signature below indicates that I have read the information provided and have decided to allow my child, _____ (print student's name), to participate in the project titled, "The Experiences of At-Risk African American Males in an Online Credit Recovery Program" to be conducted at my child's school. I agree to the conditions listed below with the understanding that I may withdraw my child from the project at any time, and that my child may choose not to answer any questions that he/she does not want to answer.

The parent/legal guardian agrees to the following:

1. To be in the study, your child must agree to meet with the researcher and answer questions or share their experiences in the online recovery course(s). Your child's enrollment data for Reconnection classes will be collected. The researcher will talk with your child every month for approximately 30 minutes, three times during their enrollment in their credit recovery course. In each visit, the researcher will ask questions related to student experiences in Reconnection. Visits will occur before or after school hours at a specified location on campus.

2. The information collected in this project will be kept confidential and your child's name will never be used or shared. Student responses to questions during face-to-face interviews will be mp3 recordings. The recordings will be transcribed. After the study, the recordings will be destroyed within the time period data is required to be kept. The recordings will be password protected and kept locked. .

3. My consent is optional and voluntary. My decision whether or not to allow my child to participate will not prejudice my present or future relations with (your institution's name here) or my child's school or teacher. If I decide to let my child participate, I am free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. To the extent that my child may be identified, if I withdraw my student from the project, my student's information will be removed from the project results.

4. If my child participates in the project, I can get information about the project and copies of any surveys or tests given to my child by contacting (provide the name of the project contact and contact information here).

5. I understand that, while this project has been reviewed by the _____, _____ is not conducting the project activities.

Based on some of the questioning associated in the first phase of interviewing, there is a risk that your child could be emotional when describing their experiences in the traditional classroom. I will continually express to your child that this study is about their voice being heard. Other than the aforementioned risks, no additional risks are associated with the study.

Your child could possibly benefit from this study due to the theme of graduation intermixed in the second and third phase of the interview process. The discussion about working towards graduation could influence behavior or study habits. In addition, your child could identify areas that are in need of refinement in their study or work ethic. Gifts will be provided to research participants for their participation at each phase of the interview process. Gifts will not be in the form of cash, electronic devices, or anything that would coerce participation in this study. Gifts will be in the form of gift cards not to exceed 10 dollars to places of interest in the immediate area such as McDonalds, ███████████████████████, and other fast food restaurants.

A copy of this signed agreement will remain in your child's permanent school folder in accordance with the records retention schedule. Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to allow your child to participate in this research study. If you later decide to withdraw your consent for participation in the study, you should contact the Project Director/Researcher. You may discontinue participation at any time.

Signature: _____   _____
                    Parent/Legal Guardian   **Date**

Signature: _____   _____
                    Project Director/Researcher   **Date**

APPENDIX C: Research Questions

Interview Questions

1. Interview I: Background and factors of entrance in online credit recovery

    A. What class are you taking in Reconnection? For credit recovery or original credit?

    B. What were your experiences in the traditional class that caused you to struggle, or why did you fail?(microsystem)

    C. How do you view yourself as a learner, or what is your self-perception as a learner? (macrosystem)

    D. Do you view yourself as being smart?

    E. Do your parents view you as being smart? (macrosystem, critical race theory)

    F. Why do you view yourself in this manner? (macrosystem)

    G. What are some of the obstacles you face when you get home? (microsystem)

    H. What are some of the obstacles your parents face, specifically your mom and dad, face at home?

    I. How did your parents, specifically mom and dad, respond to traditional class failure and then your enrollment in credit recovery? (microsystem)

    J. How did you feel when you knew you had to complete the class in Reconnection?

    K. What do you think is the expectation for black males enrolled in Reconnection? (teachers, counselors, principals, peers)

    L. What is your goal for your credit recovery class?

2. Interview II: Intrinsic motivation towards graduation and course completion

    A. What is the expectation of society for black males enrolled in (Reconnection credit recovery?

    B. Why do you feel that way?

    C. Do you think black males are motivated learners? Why? Why not?

    D. What strategies are you using in the face of your previous obstacles to ultimately work towards the goal? (self-regulated theory, self-efficacy)

    E. What individualized study/classroom habits were used while completing coursework?

    F. Were you able to work on coursework at home? (self-regulated theory)

    G. If so, what helped you get through your coursework at home?

    H. If not, what kept you from working on your coursework at home?

    I. Have you and your classmates discussed your work/study habits and goals towards graduation and course completion? (classroom culture comradery) (microsystem, critical race theory)

    J. What actions has your credit recovery teacher taken that motivate/support you during class/outside of class? (microsystem, macrosystem, critical race theory)

    K. Did the strategies used and learned in your online credit recovery coursework help you in your regular (traditional classes)? (microsystem, self-regulated theory, self-efficacy)

    L. Are you on track to pass this class, or have you already completed the coursework?

    M. Do you feel that the same strategies you mentioned beforehand contributed to your success?

Appendix D: Statement of Original Work

Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

    1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

    2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.*

Marcus Scott
_____
Digital Signature

Marcus Scott
_____
Name (Typed)

03/25/2017
_____
Date