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COUNTER-NARRATIVES MATTER: A CRITICAL RACE ANALYSIS OF BLACK SERVICEMEN'S SCHOOL-TO-MILITARY TRAJECTORY

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COUNTER-NARRATIVES MATTER:
A CRITICAL RACE ANALYSIS OF BLACK SERVICEMEN'S
SCHOOL-TO-MILITARY TRAJECTORY

By

DERECE VANTERPOOL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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2021

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

COUNTER-NARRATIVES MATTER: A CRITICAL RACE ANALYSIS OF BLACK MEN'S SCHOOL-TO-MILITARY TRAJECTORY

Directed by Dr. Gerri S. August

For more than a decade the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and more recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) have mandated that schools allow military recruiters access to student information with the objective of recruitment for military service. Thus, national education reform has become the conduit through which schools are legally obligated to support the military agenda to recruit children. Enabled by ESSA, the military launched campaigns predominantly in large urban schools attended by poor and working-class Black students (Furumoto, 2005), which often offer a narrow and disempowering curriculum and are under-resourced (Anyon, 2014). The practice of military recruitment suggests a “School-to-Military Pipeline” (STMP), in which poor and working-class children are targeted and led to believe that military service is *the* viable career choice.

Drawing upon Critical Race Theory of Education (Ladson-Billings, 1995), I examined the narratives of nine Black Servicemen’s lived experiences to understand how institutionalized racism works in the school-to-military (STMP) nexus along the lines of race, class, and gender. The findings indicated race was a determining factor in their school to military trajectory. Seven out of nine participants reported racialized experiences with teachers or military recruiters. None of the participants reported knowledge of military recruitment policy in

schools. Next steps call for curricular reform: the inclusion of the critical examination of military recruitment and education policy within a CRT lens. Perhaps then school districts, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, policy makers and, most important, our Black young men will take notice.

KEYWORDS: Critical Race Theory, Black boys, Black Servicemen, military recruitment, education policy

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I dedicate this work to my beloved mother Viola.

Your strength and spirit lives within me. Thank you for your guiding light.



Glory to God through whom this journey was made possible.

To my son, Shaun: Thank you for being the best kiddo.

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INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, Congress has mandated that public secondary and high schools, as well as charter schools, allow military recruiters access to school grounds and to students' directory information. For this reason, the nation's education reform has become the conduit through which schools are legally obligated to support the military agenda to recruit children. One example of this drive to recruit children through education reform can be found in the "Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information" clause, which facilitates military recruitment in schools through the SEC. 8528, as shown in *Appendix A*, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA¹). In short, SEC. 8528 of ESSA mandates that schools receiving Title I² subsidies allow military recruiters access to schools and to children's directory information (including grades and test scores) for the purpose of military recruiting. Schools that do not comply risk losing this subsidy. Although SEC. 8528 of ESSA legally authorizes the solicitation of school children for military recruitment, the legislation provides the opportunity to opt out³ in writing to withhold the student's directory information. But, under the ESSA legislation, only the parent can exercise this opt out alternative, which differs from the former No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation that allowed the student or the parent to opt out. I included Section 9528 in *Appendix B*.

As stated previously, SEC. 8528 of ESSA mandate schools allow military recruitment in public secondary and high schools that receive Title I federal funds. I will now explain the influence and impact this section of the law has on

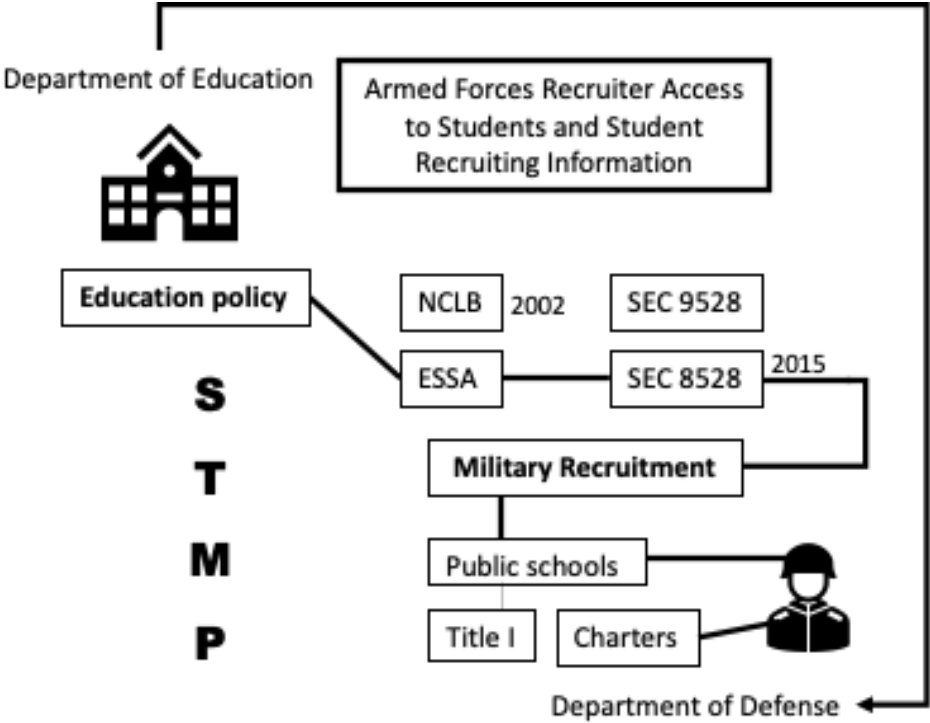
poor, working-class children of color. First, I draw on Dumas & Nelson's (2016) definition of "child" and who counts as a child in U.S. society. Dumas & Nelson (2016) assert, "Children are young people between the ages of three and eighteen (or twenty-one) and those who are older than eighteen (or twenty-one) are young adults" (p. 28). Simply put, three to eighteen-year-olds are characterized as children; young adulthood does not begin until after the age of eighteen. The Black male child⁴, however, is often perceived and treated as if he were older and, therefore, receives fewer of the legal protections of childhood than his white peers⁵ (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta & DiTomasso, 2014). In this regard, he is less characterized by his chronological age and instead characterized by how U.S. society perceives his life as a commodity to be exploited (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Sharpe, 2016). For example, Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old Black child who was gunned down in a neighborhood park by a [white] police officer in 2014 was described by the officer that shot and killed him as a "...Black male, maybe 20" (Video shows Cleveland officer shooting 12-year-old Tamir Rice within seconds, Izadi & Holley, 2014). Furthermore, and particularly relevant to this study, such a construction of the Black child makes him more susceptible to military recruitment because he is defined by the conditions of his environment. That is, he is a social problem, and he is perceived to lack "cognitive, linguistic, social, and motivational competencies" (Ogbu, 2013, p. 46) or the critical dexterity to thrive within society. Within this racist and classist context, military recruitment for the Black male child is presented as the solitary road toward prosperity.

The military recruitment enabled by ESSA occurs primarily in large urban schools attended by poor and working-class Black boys (Furumoto, 2005; Robbins, 2008). These schools often offer a narrow and disempowering curriculum; face structural issues, such as concentrated poverty and racial segregation; and are inequitably under-resourced (Anyon, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lipman, 2006). Black students who attend these schools demonstrate lower levels of academic success and are particularly vulnerable to military recruitment because of a substandard education (e.g., education lacking the application of critical thought and education that might lead to higher education or upward economic mobility) (Anyon, 2014). The military's recruitment of students in under-performing, high poverty schools, as opposed to schools in wealthier and whiter suburban areas (Furumoto, 2005; Tannock, 2005; Lagotte, 2015) suggests it specifically seeks to entice vulnerable students with promises of educational and monetary benefits (e.g., money for college and sign-on bonuses) in exchange for military service. Similarly, the practice of military recruitment, in particular, suggests what Chu (2016) calls the “School-to-Military Pipeline” (STMP), in which poor, working-class children are targeted and familiarized toward the military service as the viable career choice, as opposed to a college or a non-military career (Anderson, 2011). Specifically, the practice exploits and reinforces race and class inequality while meeting the demands of U.S. military “imperialism” (Harvey, 2003, p. 63). In other words, the military seeks, establishes, and maintains ways for political, economic, and military advantage by

means of exploiting the vulnerabilities and the lack opportunities that face Black youth in urban schools.

In Figure 1, I illustrate a conceptual map of how the STMP works. In it, I show a system to which the Department of Defense penetrates the Department of Education in a determined and perpetual system of military recruitment in public schools and Charters by way of Education policy. As mentioned previously, both policies contain sections of law (i.e., Sec 9528 and Sec 8528) that legally grant military recruiters access to public schools, primarily Title 1, and charters to orient and recruit students for military service.

Figure 1: Conceptual Map of the STMP



So far, I have explained how military recruitment in school reform targets poor and working-class Black boys. I will now explain how the “master narrative”

(Montecinos, 1995, p. 293) about military service impacts Black boys' career decisions.

The master (or dominant) narrative, weaved overtime, claims that military service is the best means for students to go to college and find upward social mobility. To illustrate this dominant paradigm, I refer to a joint letter written in 2002, as shown in *Appendix C*, penned by former Secretary of Education Rod Paige, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In part, the letter reads, “Student directory information will be used specifically for armed services recruiting purposes and for informing young people of scholarship opportunities... For *some of our students* this may be the best opportunity they have to get a college education” (Paige & Rumsfeld, 2002). While Paige and Rumsfeld link military service to increased educational opportunity, they erase from the dominant narrative around recruitment the deeper problems of inequitable education systems and structural anti-Black racism in U.S. society. Although they do not explicitly mention race, their statement implies that Black boys' college attainment is only by way of military service. To illustrate this, many scholars (Baber, 2015; Fry, 2010; Ma, 2016) have shown that Black and Latino male students, across all educational levels, have poor college enrollment [and completion] and limited access to financial resources (Dukakis, et al., 2014). Therefore, the likely unspoken targets for military recruitment are Black boys with few options beyond high school. How then do Black men, looking back, describe their experiences in racialized education institutions? This core question is pursued in my study and is the inquiry upon which this research is based.

Framing the Problem

Black males in the U.S. public schools are at the “academic margins” (Howard, 2013, p. 54). Simply put, they face a variety of educational challenges (i.e., under achievement and low educational aspirations) (Davis, 2003; Harper 2012; Jackson, 2007). As discussed, Black boys who attend Title I public high schools and charter schools in the U.S. face military recruitment by way of education reform (i.e., SEC 8528 of ESSA). Although military recruitment might affect students across all racial, gender, and socio-economic groups, data consistently show that certain student groups (i.e., Blacks and Latino) and communities (i.e., low income, urban, working class) are disproportionately affected by military recruitment in schools (Elder, 2016; Furumoto, 2005).

My research inquiry is necessary to problematize the integration of military recruitment in education reform and to explain how the SEC. 8528 of ESSA impacts the educational trajectory of Black males and how this recruitment might factor into the preservation of the U.S. racist social order. The study illuminates how intersectional and institutionalized discrimination work in the STMP nexus along the lines of race, class, and gender and considers the larger societal context in which racism is embedded. The supplementary focus points to the importance of understanding how racism works in large powerful institutions that shape U.S. society and restrict Black boys' life chances. What is necessary for this inquiry is a critical theoretical race analysis to help gain understanding of systemic discrimination by exposing, highlighting, and analyzing how military recruitment in schools reflect and reproduce systems of oppression. The objective of this

study then is to amplify Black men's voices in an effort to understand how racism operates in and through the STMP nexus. The study's findings add to the deficient literature with regard to the experiences of Black men in school-to-military trajectory. For interest groups (i.e., parents, teachers, counselors, and policy makers), my research may broaden their understanding of the ways in which social structures and policies affect the lived experiences of Black men.

Rationale for Research

Stressors that attend young Black boys in public schools are widely published (Ferguson, 2003; Harper & Davis, 2012; Howard, 2008), as have been their desperate circumstances (i.e., poverty, poor schools, joblessness, crime, incarceration, discrimination, drugs, and handguns) within larger society (Anderson, 2008; Howard & Reynolds, 2013). Likewise, literature on military recruitment in schools (Anderson, 2011; Chu, 2016; Elder, 2013) have been published with some attention to counter recruitment, although with fewer frequency and less attention. Lacking in the literature, however, was any analysis grounded in critical race theory. Given the intransigence of race and racism in U.S. society (Crenshaw 1990) and data that suggest Black male students, across all educational levels, have poor college enrollment and limited access to financial resources (Baber, 2015; Dukakis, et al., 2014; Fry, 2010), a critical race analysis around the issue of military recruitment in schools is overdue.

Actions by the U.S Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Defense (DoD) suggest that they target poor, working class Black boys for participation in military systems that perpetuate racism. Two specific actions,

outlined below, suggest targeted discrimination and highlight the importance of this study. First, DoE's initiative for education reform (i.e., NCLB and its successor ESSA) to raise student academic achievement, focused inadequate attention on the limitations of English language learners and students with special needs and the social and economic disadvantages of traditionally underserved students (i.e., Black and Latinx). Data suggest low-income percentages are highest for Black and Hispanic students (45% each), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native students (41% in the highest poverty schools (Hussar et al., 2020). Within a larger context, the disinvestment in the education of poor, working class, and children of color and the communities they live in seem to make them targets for larger systems that perpetuate racial oppression.

Under the provision of the law called the "Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information," military recruiters have unprecedented access to students and their directory information (Nava, 2011). As previously mentioned, military recruitment occurs primarily in large urban schools attended by poor and working-class Black boys (Furumoto, 2005). The school enrollment population of minoritized⁶ students is higher among Hispanic (60 %), Blacks (58 %) and Pacific Islanders (53 %) in public schools (NCES, 2020). Therefore, it might be reasonable to speculate that the military uses the poor and working-class population as their "target market" (Elder, 2016). Similarly, recent data suggest Black and Hispanic children in families live in deeper poverty than do White and Asian children (Logan, 2011; Lopez, & Velasco, 2011; NCES, 2019). Data also show that elevated military presence

occurs more predominantly in schools that serve a high proportion of low-income students (Lipman, 2006). Therefore, military recruiters' largely unregulated presence in public schools (Elder, 2016) serving resource-deprived children (i.e., Black, Brown, immigrant, and low-income students) has implications for targeted recruitment and this effort paints the military as a racist institution that perpetuate systems of oppression for young, poor, working class, children of color.

For the purpose of inquiry, I offer myself as a critical researcher to help readers understand how Black men perceive their existence in the context of a *target market* for military service. How do Black men perceive institutionalized violence, racism, and discrimination, while striving for equitable social and economic inclusion in education and military institutions? My study helps to gain an understanding of how Black men perceive their experiences leading up to their enlistment in the military and how their social identities (e.g., race, gender, and class) have influenced their experiences.

Questions for Exploration

My research questions explore a school-to-military trajectory, as experienced by Black men who were approached by military recruiters while attending a public high school and enlisted in the military after completing high school. Therefore, I seek to examine these central questions:

1. How might Black men describe the ways in which education policy influenced their trajectory from school-to military service under the auspices of education reform?

2. How might Black men describe racially-motivated practices that focused recruitment on young Black boys for military service from primarily economically deprived schools and communities?

These questions centered my project in the qualitative paradigm, specifically in the critical theoretical lens tradition in which to examine how power and inequality work in education and military institutions. In the next section, I detail the role of critical race theory [in education].

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

As previously mentioned, my study examines how race, gender, and class shape the experiences of its participants. Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1980, 1995; Crenshaw, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), particularly Ladson-Billings' (1998) CRT of education (CRTofEd) are necessary critical analytical lenses to guide the design and implementation of this study, which seeks to understand the experiences of Black men within the STMP. A CRT perspective is not only fitting, it is a necessary theoretical framework for this study because it centralizes race and racism and examines how these forces are fixed in American society (Bell, 1980, 1995; Crenshaw, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Creswell, 2013, Parker & Lynn, 2002). My intention with this research is to “swim against the current” (Ladson-Billings, 1989, p. 22). In other words, I seek understanding within a larger political and historical context of discrimination and racial oppression in education and military institutions by going against the popular perspective. Black men's experiences within the STMP cannot be reduced to race and gender alone. Their experiences require a critical theoretical framework that attends to the complexity of Black men's social locations, identities, and lived experiences. CRT then emerges as a necessary epistemological and theoretical practice that integrates storytelling and [counter] narratives of individual's lived experiences in order to disrupt dominant discourse (Bell 1995; Crenshaw, 1990; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Therefore, I use CRT to

examine stories about discrimination and racial oppression from the perspective of people of color to expose the continuity of new and existing ways of racial oppression. Equally relevant to my study is CRT's implications of the utility of race in education matters. In this section, I first expound on CRT's inception and the foundation on which it is built. Then, I explain Gloria Ladson-Billings's (1998) extension — CRTofEd — to understand the experiences of Black men within the STMP trajectory.

CRT: The Movement

The CRT movement was birthed in the 1970s by extension of critical legal studies (CLS), an earlier legal movement that was primarily concentrated on legal scholarship and policy analysis (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gordon, 1990). Ladson-Billings (1998), however, points out that policy analysis and legal doctrine did not recognize Black people's social or cultural identity in its interpretations and thereby suggested a comprehensive understanding of legal matters without regard to social aspects to which people belong. The failure of CLS to recognize and confront, head on, the issues of race and racism (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998) prompted the CRT movement. Principal figures Derrick Bell, credited as “the intellectual father figure,” and the late Alan Freeman argued that new theories and strategies, in the form of oppositional scholarship, is necessary to fight against growing forms of racism (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2017, p. 5). Bell insisted on “placing race at the center of intellectual inquiry rather than marginalizing it in this or that legal doctrine” (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xx). Bell encouraged the centering and

amplifying of race where it appears neutral in the discourse rather than reducing or concealing it in race-neutral or colorblind perspectives.

Central Component to CRT

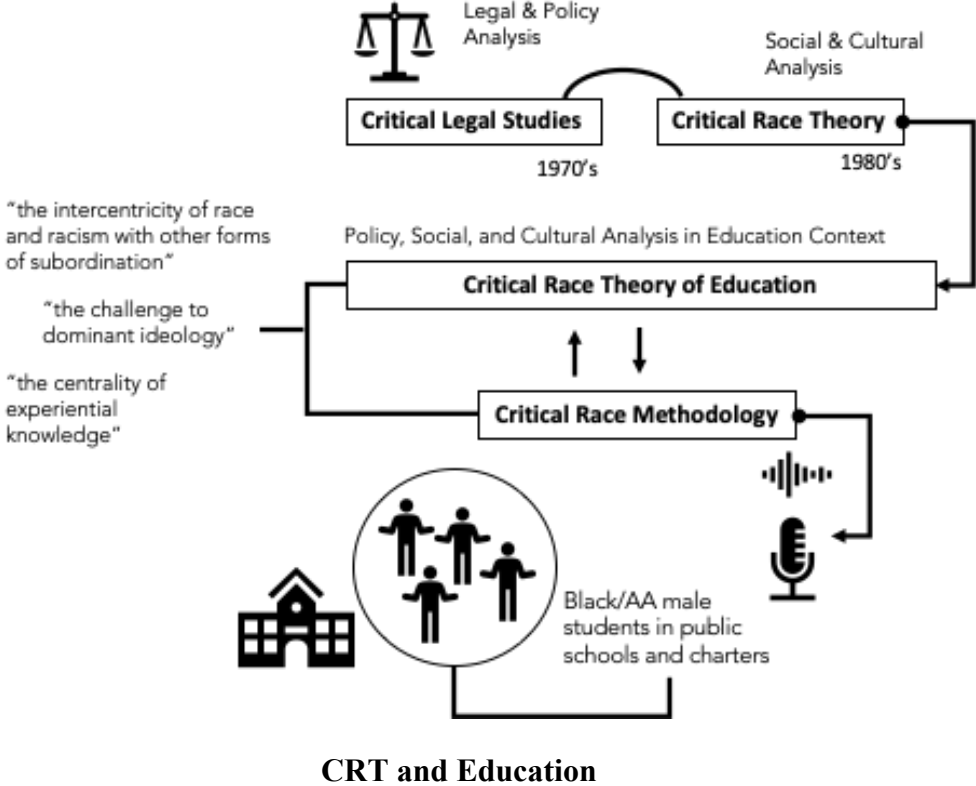
Ladson-Billings (1995) contends the *voice* (p. 58) provides a way to convey the lived reality of people of color. In the optics of CRTofEd, the role of “voice” helps us to define one’s reality. Simply put, CRT examines the narrative that is provided by the individual’s lived experience. In my research, *voice*, “by virtue of marginal status” (Delgado, 1990, p. 95) is central, as the stories of Black men are encouraged and valued because they represent experiences created and sustained by systemic racism. My study, then, focuses on Black servicemen and aims to amplify their voice as they narrate their experiences in the STMP nexus. Similarly, because my study explores Black men’s experiences as students in public school, Gloria Ladson-Billings’s (1998) extension of CRT in education provides a necessary critical theoretical framework that lays a foundation to understand how inequities within education threaten the educational trajectory of young Black boys.

In Figure 2, I illustrate the two key theoretical foundations that I draw upon to shape the study: Critical Race Theory and its cousin Critical Race Theory of Education (CRTofED). CRT and CRTofEd share similar assumptions; however, CRTofEd places these assumptions in the context of Education. In the illustration, I show the CRT movement’s formation from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and toward a CRTofEd. In the next section, I expound on CRTofEd, key tenets that guide the study, and Intersectionality Theory. I then discuss how

CRTofEd and inform the study by helping me to 1) place race at the forefront to examine the experiences as told by Black men, and 2) examine how other identity constructs (i.e., race, gender, and class) intersect and shape forms of oppression.

In Chapter 3, I explain Critical Race Methodology (CRM) and how using this methodology was a good fit to help me answer my research questions. Likewise, CRM helped me to shape how I collected the data for later analysis.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Theoretical Framework



So far, I summarized the historical background of CRT. CRT’s historical background, however, does not explain the relevance CRT has to education. In this section, I expound on the relevance of CRT to education to help readers understand what Black men might experience in public schools in their trajectory towards military enlistment. Ladson-Billings (1995) asserts that a CRTofEd can

expose and examine matters such as these in schools. I thereby adapt her scholarly work to explain how race factors into school and education experiences of Black men within the STMP trajectory.

An Explanatory Tool for Inequity. In past discussions of education, a controversial issue has been the equitable treatment of Black children. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) asserts that the connection between law and education arose from early legislative attempts for equal education. An example of one such attempt is Massachusetts's "Old Deluder Satan Act" of 1647, which required states to provide moral and religious education for all children (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Under this law, states were mandated to teach all children (including Black children) to read and write. On one hand, states had to uphold this law. On the other hand, Black children were not allowed to attend school with white children. Thus, civil rights battles for school desegregation became the annals for "equal opportunity" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 17) and access to schooling. In other words, the desegregation of schools became the focus of discourse to help Black students achieve the same access to school opportunities (i.e., curriculum, funding, instruction, and facilities) as might be afforded to white students attending better-funded schools. The emphasis of equal opportunity led to the pursuit of "equal treatment under the law" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 17), that is, a legal mandate that requires the treatment of students of color be equal to that of white students. CRT, then, utilized as an explanatory tool, can expose the inequities that Black students and other marginalized students might experience in public schools.

While Ladson-Billings (1998) asserted that curriculum, assessment, instruction, funding, and desegregation are models for inequity in the relationship of CRT and education, I introduce military recruitment in schools to suggest that it, too, adds to the educational and school inequity of Black and Brown students. Ladson-Billings and Tate's (2006) theory on "race and property" (p. 48) provides a foundation to understand school inequity that includes three central propositions. The first is this: "Race, in U.S. society, is a significant factor in determining inequity." (p. 48). That is, although "race remains untheorized" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. 50), (i.e., lacking theoretical meaning or comprehensive understanding), it is often still used to determine allocations (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Indeed, the construction *race* is a staple of American society (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In the same way, "the constructs of property" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and "whiteness" (Harris, 1993) have both established anti-Black constructs that work to further depress Black people's status in U.S. society.

To explain this, Ladson-Billings and Tate's (2006) second proposition claims that the very foundation of American society is property (p. 48). Harris (1993) makes useful points in this regard "Property owners have exclusive "rights to use and enjoyment" of their holdings (p. 1734). In this proposition, whiteness as an identity is a "property interest" (p. 1725), bestowing entitlements afforded only to those who own it.

The last proposition to understand school inequity is this: "The intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool" (Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995, p. 48). Simply put, the ways in which race and property intersect can help us to understand how inequities in schools exist and persist. Following the three propositions, my study will help to illuminate school inequities based on property rights to help explain Black servicemen's school experiences toward military enlistment. CRT within the STMP nexus examines the implication of military recruitment in urban public schools that might target a high concentration of poor, working class children of color. The STMP suggests an interconnection between race and class. Consequently, military recruitment in urban schools could mean exploiting the vulnerabilities and the lack of opportunities that face Black, poor, working class youth in urban schools, as opposed to schools in wealthier and whiter suburban areas (Castro, 2015; Furumoto, 2005; Lagotte, 2015) for educational and monetary benefits in exchange for military service.

Tenets of CRT in Education

In the preceding sections, I described the historical foundation of CRT, and I explained the relevance of CRT to education. In this section, I expound on key tenets (i.e., foundations) that inform CRT in education. I then explain how I adapted three of the tenets to my study.

A central tenet of CRT is *voice*, which demands the “recognition and experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6). The essence of *voice* then is the affirmation and acknowledgement of the personal and community experiences of people of color, which count as unique sources of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). CRT's use of using *voice* to understand meaning helps us to shift the “frameworks of gender and race”

(Crenshaw, 1990, p 1244) and “look to the bottom” (Matsuda 1987, p. 324).

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989) use of *voice* helps us uplift the narratives of those who are minoritized using their personal accounts. What Crenshaw (1989) means is to shift the focus from the presumed normative stories often told about marginalized people.

Critical Race Methodology [of Education]

Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) Critical Race methodology (CRM) of Education offers a way to explain the lived experiences of those who are on the margins along the educational pipeline. Therefore, I adopted CRM’s five-function theoretically grounded approach that helped me to interrogate social issues within the STMP. The first is that CRM “foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process” (p. 24). That is, bringing to the front race and racism and how these functions to affect students in the STMP. Following this element of CRM, I kept race, class, and gender at the fore and asked how these intersect in the experiences of Black men in the STMP. Second, CRM “challenges traditional research paradigms, text, and theories that explain the experiences of people of color” (p. 24). In other words, CRM asserts that researchers must confront the popular assumptions of others to explain the experiences of people of color. Following this element of CRM, I searched for counter-narratives from Black men in the STMP to challenge what is told *or implied* about them. The third is that CRM “offers a liberatory and transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination” (p. 24). That is, with race and racism at the fore, researchers must offer a resolution to forms of subordination. Following this element, I

asserted implications and possible solutions based on the analysis of the data. Fourth, CRM “focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color” (p. 24). Simply put, CRM centers the experiences of students of color. Following this element, my study centered the racialized experiences (if any) of the Black men in the STMP. Fifth, CRM “uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base (e.g., sociology, history, humanities) to better understand the experiences of students of color” In other words, researchers must apply a multidisciplinary approach in the analysis of the literature to better understand the experiences of people of color. Following this element of CRM, I draw on the literature of multiple disciplines (i.e., history, sociology, humanities) to help me better understand Black men in the STMP. Above all, a CRM extends CRTofEd (Ladson-Billings,1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to help me identify and analyze inequitable arrangements in education policies that preserve subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of schools (e.g., the STMP).

Key Assumptions of CRTofEd

At least five assumptions (i.e., tenets) inform CRT and methodology that extends to education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002; Yosso, 2013). Following Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) CRT and methodology, the tenets are: (1) “the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination” (p. 25), (2) “the challenge to dominant ideology” (p. 26), (3) “the commitment to social justice” (p.26), (4) “the centrality of experiential knowledge” (p.26), and (5) “the transdisciplinary perspective” (p. 26).

The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination:

CRT is established on the premise that “race and racism are endemic and permanent” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). In other words, race and racism are native and perpetually affixed in the accounts that explain how structural oppression functions in education, and in U.S. society, as a whole (Yosso, 2006, 2013).

The challenge to dominant ideology: CRT “challenges traditional claims toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). In other words, these themed perspectives (i.e., objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity), primarily in education, can exist in schools and education policy to camouflage the interest of dominant groups, more pointedly, whites in U.S. society (Yosso, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Simply put, they may contain misleading rhetoric to show neutrality in a “*nice* field like education” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22).

The commitment to Social Justice: CRT is committed to a social justice research agenda that targets 1) “the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty”, and 2) “empower[s] subordinated minority groups” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). To put another way, CRT seeks to eradicate forms of subordination based on race, sex, and social economic status (SES) and to emancipate and empower subordinated groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The centrality of experiential knowledge: CRT recognizes that “the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racial

subordination” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.26). Simply put, the epistemologies of people of color who are often subordinated, ignored, and silenced in popular discourse, helps us understand racialized experiences, *as experienced and told* by their voice.

The transdisciplinary perspective: CRT challenges “ahistoricism and undisciplinary focus of most analyses” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). To put it another way, CRT objects to copious analyses that lack focus or concern for historical traditions.

CRTofEd and STMP

In the scope of discussion of race and racism in education and toward the STMP nexus, I employed three of the tenets because these, particularly, aimed to help me understand Black servicemen’s experiences in the STMP trajectory on which primes the basis of my inquiry. They are as follows: (1) “the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination” (2) “the challenge to dominant ideology” and (3) “the centrality of experiential knowledge” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). Indeed, “the commitment to social justice” and “the transdisciplinary perspective” are meaningful elements of CRT; however, these tenets are beyond the scope of my study, and not expanded upon. I now expound on each of the three tenets and explain the relevance to the study.

First, “the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination” (p. 25). This tenet highlights the co-mixture of race and racism traversed with other forms of subordination (i.e., gender and class) (Crenshaw, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A CRT in education then “centralizes race and

racism” (Yosso, 2013, p. 7), at the same time placing a lens at the intersections of other forms of subservience based on, for example, gender, race, class. For example, Black students more predominantly face racial, gender, and discipline bias by teachers (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003) than do white students (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). My study then seeks to examine the experiences of Black servicemen in their STMP trajectory, which might reveal how the *intercentricity* of race and racism intersect with other forms of social divisions that function to subordinate and oppress Black students.

Table 1 shows, as an example, the percentage metrics of Black and white students across five disciplinary metrics. These examples are a short list of discrimination facing Black students, predominantly Black boys, in U.S. schools.

Table 1: Disciplinary Metrics

Disciplinary actions	Black	White
School arrest	0.28%	0.08%
Expulsions	0.51%	0.18%
Law enforcement referral	0.91%	0.34%
In-school suspension	11.22%	4.23%
Out of school suspension	13.46%	3.5%

Note. Adapted from "Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias" by T. Riddle and S. Sinclair, 2019, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) of the United States of America*. p. 8256. Copyright 2019 by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Reprinted with permission.

Second, “the challenge to dominant ideology” (p. 26): That is, CRT challenges the “deficit-theorizing” (Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002, p. 156) of minoritized voices. Deficit-theorizing can play an important role in Black men’s school racial-related experiences because of the dominant stories told, historically, about them. These dominant stories are primarily majoritarian stories, which include myths of white supremacy that serve as the master narrative in the ideology of racism. CRT in education then challenges claims that educational institutions make towards “race neutrality” (p. 26). That is, as in no difference exist with regard to race for education and “equal opportunity” (p. 26).

Equally important, CRT employs storytelling and counterstories to “analyze myths, presuppositions, and the received wisdoms that make up the

common culture about race and what invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down (i.e., disadvantaged)” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2000, p. xvii). Following this tenet, my study examines narratives that are told about Black men and seeks to bring voice to the forefront to share their lived experiences and use their counterstories to dispel claims about or against them.

The third tenet is “the centrality of experiential knowledge” (p. 26). CRT recognizes that “the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and appropriate to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Simply put, the insight to people of color experiences is best described and represented by people of color with a lived experience of the phenomena or event. Their *voice* provides important context (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and social position) to their lived experiences that no other person can describe in telling their story. Following this tenet, my study explores the participant’s personal encounter and lived experience with race and racism and the impact they have had in their STMP trajectory.

Thus far, I have introduced the key theoretical tenets that inform the study. These tenets help me apply a critical lens in which to examine the problem that this research alleges. Equally important, is a survey of the literature that situate my work with existing knowledge. In Chapter 2, I explicate three key literature that informed the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter explores five bodies of knowledge that inform my study. As mentioned earlier, my research problem addresses the ways in which the integration of military recruitment in education reform, particularly SEC. 8528 of ESSA, impacts the educational trajectory of Black ⁽⁷⁾enlisted servicemen in the U.S. military. My study examines Black men's understanding of their intersectional identities in the STMP trajectory and how they perceive their social position in systems that target them in school for military service. The literature supporting my study includes (1) past and current history of Black men in the military, (2) critical analyses of racism and the military, (3) critiques of neoliberalism and neoliberal education reform (4) Education Policy and Military Recruitment, and (5) Black Boys' Perceptions of School. I expound on these bodies of literature to illustrate how each grounds my research. I then follow up with the implications of the literature.

Black men in the military (Past to Current)

In this section, I briefly provide some historical highlights of Black men in the military to partially illustrate their experience with a changing military and how historic negative perceptions of Blacks preserve disproportionate recruitment. The literature on Blacks in the military asserts that they have served in every war since the American Revolution under a draft system (Buckley, 2008; De Angelis & Segal, 2012; Lutz, 2008). Gail Buckley's (2001) analysis lays out historical accounts of Blacks Americans in America's military history. While

Buckley's (2001) historical account highlights the accomplishments of Black soldiers who served in the military, Lutz (2008) points out that military participation excluded Black men – except when the military needed manpower, who some have described as “cannon fodder” (Armor, 1996, p. 9) that the military could exploit and sacrifice in order to advance its aims.

Historically, negative and racist perceptions of Blacks have perpetuated targeted military recruitment from economically underprivileged communities and groups. One example of these perceptions is found in the 1925 Army War Report and Memo (AWRM) “proposed plan for use of negro power” (Army War Report Memo, 1925). The memo points out that “The Black man is inferior and mentally and inherently weak in character, compared to the white man” (AWRM, 1925, p. 2). This perception has implications that continue to maintain Blacks in a subclass category to whites. In 1973, Congress enacted the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) to replace the draft system to allow all qualified individuals to volunteer to serve. The AVF produced two problems with regard to Black recruits that are the most relevant to my study. First, Armor and Gilroy (2010) assert that the views among many whites was that an AVF would be composed of mostly the “poor, black, and uneducated” (p. 228) and that the voluntary force would become “too black” (p. 228). The second problem can be seen in Lanaras's (2016) account that the AVF attracts individuals from lower socioeconomic classes (e.g., with lower family incomes, larger family sizes, and less-educated parents). Lanaras (2016) further points out that the overrepresentation of Blacks in the military is because of “their disadvantaged position as result of discrimination or lack of opportunity

because of their race” (p. 2). Simply put, Blacks have a harder time in society due to racial inequality (Horowitz et al., 2019) and may enlist in the military to overcome these obstacles.

While De Angelis and Segal (2012) point out the overrepresentation of Blacks serving in the enlisted force, Cooper (2020) argues that Blacks are not visible in top positions of leadership. This disparity is evident in the 2020 Trump administration’s Military Leadership portrait, as shown in Appendix D, in which the top commanders are entirely white and male, 47 years after the creation of the AVF. Important to note here is that the U.S. enlisted force is the backbone of the military. The enlisted force, generally, are non-degreed at the time of enlistment and are led by officers who hold four-year degrees.

Critically lacking from the scholarly work are analyses from a theoretical lens, specifically Critical Race Theory (CRT), in which Black servicemen’s experiences, under these negative perceptions, are collected and amplified. Therefore, my study starts from the premise that it is important and necessary to use CRT to expose racism towards Black servicemen and to attempt to understand the problematics of their encounter with recruiters in schools. My study will collect and analyze their experiences.

Institutionalized Racism and the Military

In this section, I will briefly review some key literature on racism in the military and point out some important racial disparities. I then explain how my study will help to move this literature forward.

Webb and Hermann (2002) point out there is abundant literature on Black peoples' experiences of racism in the military. For decades, overt racist and discriminatory policies (e.g., white men only) and practices (e.g., exclusion of Blacks to bear arms and ammunition) have been perpetuated within the U.S. military towards Blacks and other minoritized groups (Webb & Hermann, 2002). Some of these practices remain a persistent reality for Blacks in the military. To build on existing literature on racism in the military, I adopt Jones's (2002) definition of institutionalized racism (IR) as "the structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by 'race'" (p. 10). Simply put, IR is a structural system of inequality. Burk and Espinoza's (2012) scholarship on race relations in the military provides an important illustration of how IR works in a military context. Their analysis revealed that racial bias and institutional racism existed in three areas: (1) "officer promotion and inadequate enforcement of affirmative action programs," (2) "overly punitive military justice and longer prison sentences," and (3) "insufficient access to the VA healthcare system" (p. 414). Kirby, Harrell, and Sloan's (2000) analysis uncovered racial disparities in another arena: active service for Special Operation Forces (SOFs) and Navy Sea-Air-Land forces. The underrepresentation of Black men in SOFs is deeply ingrained within the history and culture of the U.S military because Black service members are perceived as "a class from which leadership is not expected" (Cooper, 2020; AWRM, 1925). That is, they are least to be likely looked at or considered for top leadership roles in the military.

Others have agreed that once enlisted, Black men, in general, experience discrimination with regard to promotions to senior positions and assignment of “elite” specializations (Burke & Espinoza, 2012; Cooper, 2020). Kirby et al.’s, (2000) scholarship complements that of Burk & Espinoza (2012) and Cooper (2020) by providing further evidence of racial disparities in the military, with a particular focus on specific structural barriers that result in the under-representation of Black men (enlisted and officer) in SOFs. The data suggest structural barriers (e.g., ASVAB cutoff scores, and clean discipline records) and perceived barriers (e.g., lack of individual knowledge and community support for SOF as a career choice) that disproportionately inhibited access for Blacks in SOFs.

What the literature so far does not address, and what I intend to rectify, is how Black men describe their experiences of racial disparities in school prior to military enlistment. My study pulls forward their voices to understand persistent racism. This project then builds on the preexisting work of previous and current scholars and extends the critical literature of Black men in the military with regards to race relations in their school to military trajectory.

Neoliberal [ism] Education Reform

While the previous sections have examined literature around the history of Black men in the military and anti-Black racism in the military, this section extends the racial analysis by considering how neoliberal ideology and education reform have exacerbated the vulnerability of Black men in terms of military recruitment. Harvey’s (2007) definition of neoliberalism provides a good

foundation to explain how current education policy exacerbates class structures. Neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007) is a particular type of capitalism that features political and economic practices that maximize “entrepreneurial freedoms” within an institutional framework characterized by “free markets” (p. 2). Pauline Lipman’s (2006) analysis provides a basis for understanding how neoliberal economic policy works within an educational context. First, Lipman asserts that the key feature of neoliberal economic policy is to “open new areas of social life” (p.105) to the market. Therefore, “[H]igh-stakes accountability, standardization of the curriculum, privatization, and militarization” (p.111) become the criterion measures for the process of elimination to set up “market mechanisms to improve schools” (p. 100). That is, neoliberal reform seeks to align various aspects of public schooling to free market ideologies and practices. Therefore, the lack of funding to urban schools that serve Black, poor, working class students exacerbates the mischaracterization of “failing public schools” (Lipman, 2006, p. 101) and “clears the way against public education and for privatization” (p.112). Harvey (2007) refers to this type of neoliberal agenda as “creative destruction” which involves the “dismantling of institutions” (p. 22) in order to support private markets. Likewise, Saltman (2014) agrees that the “creative destruction” (p. 254) agenda is, by design, aimed to defund urban public schools by declaring them as failing so that they can be privatized. In short, neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007) and “creative destruction” (Harvey 2007; Saltman 2014) aim to defund schools in order to justify the privatization of them.

Neoliberal education reform (Lipman, 2006) relates to military recruitment because the neoliberal education agenda creates inequitable education conditions, especially in urban schools attended by working class and poor Black boys, and because neoliberal economics have resulted in fewer job opportunities after high school, Black boys become more vulnerable to the STMP (Lipman, 2006; Anderson, 2011; Chu, 2016). My study will extend on the work of these scholars in two ways: (1) by amplifying the voices of Black men to understand how neoliberal social and economic policy has impacted their experiences and trajectories in school and (2) by drawing on CRT to highlight how neoliberalism is not just about profits but also about racial dominance.

Education Policy and Military Recruitment

Building upon education reform, in this section I look to the policy that fundamentally shapes the educational experiences of Black boys. In recent discussions of education reform, a controversial issue has been the military recruitment clause outlined in SEC. §9528 of NCLB now SEC. §8528 of ESSA. Both sections gave access to military recruiters, which sparked controversy because of the implications for working class and low-income students. While few researchers challenge this policy, Anderson's (2009) scholarship is an exception. He has leveled harsh critiques of military presence for recruitment by way of education policy. For example, the policy directs secondary schools to provide military recruiters the same access as other organizations (i.e., colleges). Anderson (2009) argues that military recruiters penetrate the high school market to recruit students who are 17 years of age or older. Military recruiters develop a

school penetration plan to “gain, maintain, and improve access) (USAREC Reg 350-13, 2014, p. 4) that includes access to student profile folders in information systems (i.e., School Zone (SZ)) which provides past and current historical data (i.e., performance and productivity) of students. At the same time, the military also gets student directory information from other sources such as Equifax Database Services which resides in the Pentagon's Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which is a recruitment tool disguised as a career exploration test. The military uses the test scores to spot students with a specialized skillset for recruitment (Anderson, 2009).

While Anderson (2009) pointed out the ways in which the military intrusively gains access to student directory information, others identify the disparities in whom the military targets for recruitment (Bennett & MacDonald, 2013; Bryan, 2016). For example, Griffith and Bryan (2016) contend recruits disproportionately come from nondominant family structures (i.e., single-family households and households of adverse childhood experiences). In a related line of inquiry, Bennett & MacDonald (2013) argue that disadvantaged youth from low socioeconomic backgrounds and racial and ethnic minority groups have cumulative disadvantage that contributes to disadvantage later in life, often growing more acute overtime. By the end of high school or soon thereafter, they realize that many social resources are not available and the pathway for economic independence is closed. Lutz (2008) contends the intimate connection the military has with American schools amounts to militarization strategies aimed to increase

the size of the military and channel human potential into the hierarchies of race, class, and gender. Lipman (2006) makes a similar point: “Schools are a partnership between the military and public school systems” (p. 108) which makes joining the military a viable option for working class and low-income students. In other words, such partnership grounds itself in educational and economic inequalities for young Black boys who have limited options. The military then serves as the default pathway to achieve economic independence and socioeconomic advancement for underrepresented groups (Bennett & MacDonald, 2013). Equally important, Furumoto (2005) warns that the system in which poor, working-class children of color face military recruitment in school operates more intensively in larger, poorer, urban schools. This organized system—the school-to-military pipeline (STMP)—is the orchestration of military familiarization through targeted practices in the enlistment of minoritized populations (Furumoto, 2005). While Furumoto (2005) pointed out the imbalance of focused recruitment, Noguera (2003) contended that this system manifests itself through systemic policies that prioritize the institution of the military, similarly to how the school-to-prison pipeline funnel predominantly minoritized students out of schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. To this point, young boys and girls from poor disadvantaged working-class neighborhoods, warehoused in dilapidated schools, face aggressive recruitment to fight in wars abroad (Giroux, 2004) because of their social positioning (e.g., people of color in poor, disadvantaged, working-class communities) that make them predominant focus for military recruitment.

Indeed, the nexus of race, class, and gender make possible the production of a militarized class of disadvantaged and socially minoritized students from under-served schools for military enlistment.

Missing from the literature are the perceptions of those who education policy and military recruitment in schools allege to affect. Therefore, my study focuses on the perceptions of Black servicemen that attended high school during the time this policy was saturated in schools to pull forward the literature, namely, on the learning and the curriculum. My study can pull forward how Black boys perceive their learning on sociopolitical topics. For example, how do Black servicemen, looking back, describe education policy that mandate the release of their directory information for the purpose of military recruitment? Moreso, how do Black servicemen perceive military recruitment in school that is alleged to work against them? By drawing upon CRT, my study will extend on the work of these scholars by amplifying the voices of Black men to understand, from their lived experience, how they perceive systems of oppression. In the next section, I review some key literature on how black boys perceive school, in general, as a learning space.

Black Boys' Perceptions of School

While the previous section pointed out the implications of how education policy permeates the learning space of the alleged military target market, this section reviews two significant bodies of literature on Black boys' perceptions of school and points out some deficit theorizing that shape their learning environments.

There is an abundance of literature that concerns Black boys' troubled academic paths (Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Harper, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Toldson, 2008). Harper (2012) pointed out a clear impression: Black male students "don't care about education" (Harper, 2012, p. 104). In other words, the academic and public discourse have worked together to impart a dominant narrative that Black boys don't value education. Equally important, cumulative data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (2017-18) sustains this narrative by reporting that of the 23.5 % of male teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, only 6.7 % of them are Black. This statistic is used to illustrate that Black men don't perceive the value of education.

Despite these persistent deficit narratives, Harper (2006) asserts that Black male students offer counter narratives that belie the dominant perception that they do not value education. As an example, a narrative study (2012) conducted on "Black Male Students' Responses to Inequitable Schooling" (Harper, 2006,) revealed that most respondents indicated a strong belief in the value of education. A common theme was "Anything is possible through education" (p. 102). The study included seven participants from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, types of K-12 school attended, and family structures (Harper, 2012).

While Harper (2012) reported counternarratives to this dominant narrative, Kunjufu (2005) complicates matters. He reported that by the end of elementary school, Black boys have lost faith in the value of education. This is due in part to a suspended effort to cultivate the academic achievements of Black boys from a young age (Kunjufu, 2005). What Kunjufu (2005) means is this: Black boys are

different, *not* deficient from their peers. Therefore, teachers must develop different strategies to expand their learning potential. Kunjufu (2005) asserts that some white teachers disadvantage Black students by limiting their enthusiasm for learning. That is, limiting the curriculum with culturally grounded experiences and values of peoples of African descent. He further asserts that the curricula in some schools concentrate on rote learning rather than critical thinking. Harper (2012) agrees that culturally responsive teaching aligned with educational needs of Black male students would inspire the academic skills and equity they need to succeed. He asks this poignant question: "Why would Black boys who are made to believe they are bad at school maintain excitement about education?" (Harper, 2012, p. 117). Simply put, if the curriculum lacks an engaged alignment to culturally-relevant topics, Black boys, indeed, disengage.

While Harper's (2012) literature focuses on Black male student's perceptions of inequitable schooling, my study pulls forward this literature by examining perceptions of school experiences shaped by education policy that further shapes inequitable schooling.

The next literature I will highlight is Anderson's (2018) survey report of African American (AA) perceptions of K-12 education. Anderson (2018) asserts that AA students want to give their perspective on learning, schooling, and teaching and the structural issues that infringe upon their success. Anderson (2018) contends that AA students value education. However, the information for them to successfully navigate the education system is often hard to attain. What Anderson (2018) means is there is "information deficit" (p. 5) in which the lack of

information creates ostensible obstacles to attain academic success and access to college. Despite these challenges and negative perceptions of academic success, AA students demonstrate determination and drive for success (Anderson, 2008; Harper, 2012).

In a study (2013) of (1,700) African American respondent perceptions of K-12 education, Anderson (2018) reported four key themes in the findings: (1) Education Priorities, (2) Race and Opportunity, (3) Safety and Discipline, and (4) Preparation for College (p. 6). The findings are as follows: The first finding indicated that a strong majority of low-income AA youth (70 %) in the study rated education as a top priority and stated that postsecondary education was important. This aligns with Harper's (2012) assertion on Black boys having value in education. The second finding indicated that a full one-third of AA students felt race shaped their opportunities in life. The third finding indicated that only 43% of AA students felt safe at school, and they reported they experienced disciplinary actions that pulled them out of the classroom. Finally, the fourth finding indicated that 65% of AA respondents felt they had adequate college prep in high school. However, they reported financial constraints, standardized tests, and lack of in-school support services. The findings overall have implications for plausible strategies to lessen burdens and barriers that shape the education and schooling experiences for AA students. The study reveals and illuminates the quantifiable perspectives of low-income AA in K-12. What the study does not reveal, but alludes to, is the centering—not at the margins— of voice. What Anderson (2018) means is that AAs want to tell their stories about their learning environment and

schooling experiences. What is severely missing from the study is the student's narrative of their lived experiences. Anderson's (2018) message is clear: AA students need a "voice at the table" (p. 19) —not at the margins to talk about the quality of education they deserve versus what is offered to them. By drawing upon CRT, my study will extend on the work of Anderson (2018) by illuminating the voices of Black boys to explain, using their voice, their learning and schooling trajectory. My study adds to the literature the participant's voice in the telling of their stories.

Apart from the perceptions Black boys have about school, they engage in a stage of development during which they explore what it means to be Black (Tatum, 2017; Battle, 2017). Young Black adolescents explore their identity more intensely than do most other adolescents as they struggle with what it means to be Black (Tatum, 2017). They are intuitively in a phase of analyzing themselves in racial terms as they search for personal identity *and* look at themselves based upon how others, especially white individuals, might perceive them. In other words, Black boys' self-perceptions are shaped by what others perceive of them (Tatum, 2017). Tatum (2017) illustrates a case in point: When young thirteen-year-old Malcolm Little, later known as Malcolm X, aspired to become a lawyer, his teacher discouraged him, advising him to consider being a carpenter instead. Malcolm alienated himself, withdrew from his white classmates and eventually relocated from his predominantly White Michigan town. The message to Malcolm was clear: you are a n****r and should consider practical occupations suitable to

your racial group. In that moment, young Malcolm was forced to think of his racial identity as a marker that positioned him in society.

Racial Identity Development Theory (Helms, 1990) describes psychological consequences of racial-group membership caused by belief systems built on perceived differences of its members. In response, Black racial identity development (Cross, 1991) plays an important role in Black children's psychological health (Tatum, 1992). Tatum (2017) suggests that young Black children get socialized into absorbing the beliefs and values of dominant white culture. During the process of socialization, the notion of white supremacy is strengthened through stereotype and bias (Tatum, 2017). Black children (and white) then get socialized into a belief system of European culture in which images representing the white (i.e., the dominant) experience dominate and those of the Black or Afrocentric cultural group are devalued.

Positive images and messages about being Black and the value of Blackness builds a positive racial identity and reduces the impact of the uncritical elevation of whiteness. Furthermore, racial grouping (Tatum, 2017), that is, for example, Black children who socialize as a peer group is a positive coping mechanism that supports their developmental process in the face of stress or racism. Black racial identity broadens the understanding of how Black men in the study navigate their racial identity in the face of race related experiences in the STMP nexus and how they acknowledge the personal impact of racism.

Taken together, these five bodies of literature have informed my study by citing pre-existing issues that affect Black boys in school and Black men as a whole. In

this way, my study will carry this work forward by offering critical theoretical explanations, using CRT and Critical Race Methodology (CRM) counter-narratives to elucidate the experiences of Black men using their voice.

Implications of the Literature

The literature leaves room to contend that a theoretical analysis of conceptualizations that led up to the disparities and injustices that shape Black boys' lived experiences is necessary. These bodies of literature need further examination using a critical theoretical race analysis to examine lived experiences in racialized institutions. For example, lived experiences serve as a gateway to understand the underlying complexities and trepidations that face young Black boys in institutions that perpetuate racialism. The present study will offer an understanding of the STMP nexus to help us understand how the military recruitment clause in education reform influenced Black men's experiences with military recruiters and how those interactions influenced them to enlist. This study adds to the body of knowledge that theorizes Black men's lived experiences.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter outlines the elements of my research design. As previously mentioned, my research questions are as follows: 1) How might Black men describe the ways in which education policy influenced their trajectory from school-to military service under the auspices of education reform? 2) How might Black men describe racially-motivated practices that focused recruitment on young Black boys for military service from primarily economically deprived schools and communities? These questions point to qualitative research methods which aim to collect first-hand narratives (Riessman, 2008) to help me understand the complex realities of Black men’s school-military trajectory. In this section, I expound on the qualitative research methodology approach I selected and explain my rationale. Following this, I introduce the data collection and analysis of the data in the next sections.

Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research explores a problem or issue when a need requires analysis to “study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, hear silenced voices, or to empower individuals to share their stories” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). In other words, qualitative research allows a researcher to examine subjective meanings by centering the research participants’ voices in the narration of their lived experiences. During the exploration of meaning, qualitative researchers extract insight from the data. New insight allows us to refine questions during the interview or adjust data collections, as new

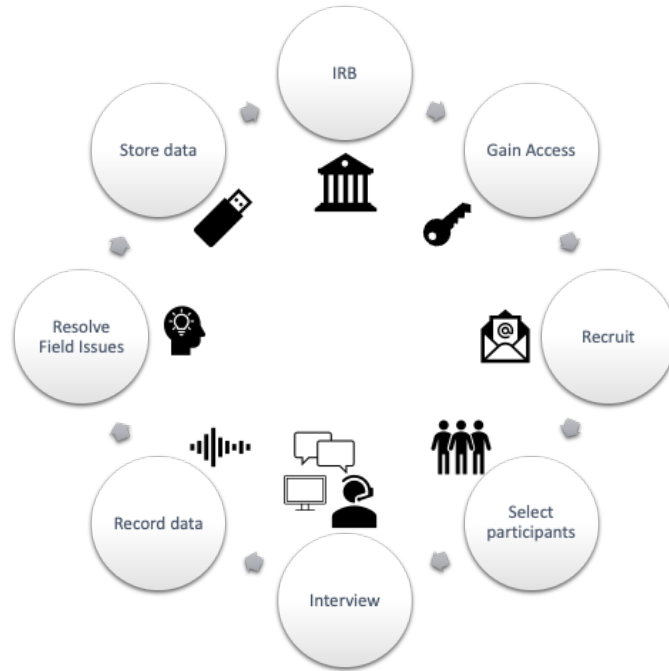
insight to learning occurs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research is “emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). In other words, qualitative research is versatile in that patterns and themes are identified during the study of its participants, rather than the data collected from fixed variables such as in quantitative research.

Following a qualitative approach, I examined identifiable patterns and themes in the data. Moreover, my research problem requires a critical lens to help me examine Black student’s lived experiences in school toward military recruitment. Because people of color speak from experiences girdled in racism (Delgado, 1990), a critical methodology that employs first-hand spoken narratives (Riessman, 2008) of their experience is essential to understand the subordination and discrimination they might experience (Yosso, 2013). For this reason, narratives, as told by Black students in their own voice, of their lived experiences is central to the examination of racially motivated practices towards them. Spoken narratives document “voice” in three ways: personal, co-constructed, and composite (Riessman, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

A personal narrative can reveal experiences with and about various forms of discrimination (e.g., racism and sexism) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). When drawing on these narratives, a researcher recounts the person’s verbal depiction of their experience. Co-constructed stories (Riessman, 2008) interact through “dialogic engagement” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 118) in which the researcher and the individual participate in the retelling of the story. A composite story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) draws from various forms of racialized data.

The researcher then conveys the racialized experiences of people of color from the data. Of these three types of narratives, personal stories (Riessman, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), those told by the researcher as they were told to the researcher, best fit the objective of my study. I am drawn to documenting Black men's voices using their personal stories (i.e., narratives) because they can contribute a counter narrative that is divergent from what is told about them. With this intention, I draw from critical race methodology (CRM) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Delgado, 1989) counter-narratives (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to help me understand the complex realities of Black men's school-to-military trajectory by centering their voices in the narration of their lived experiences at the intersection of race, class, and gender (Crenshaw, 1990). Personal narrative is a method that is congruent with CRM counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Delgado, 1989), which also has roots in CRT (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As previously mentioned, a qualitative research design for this study, helps me to center the participant's voice in the narration of their experiences (Riessman, 2008). In the upcoming sections, I describe the procedures I used to help me collect the data for the study in order to examine narratives and conduct the analysis of its findings. In Figure 4, I illustrate the processes that I used to solicit, recruit, collect, and store the data for the study. I expound on each of these in the upcoming sections.

Figure 3: Data Gathering Process



Gaining Access

I contacted several organizations nationwide to request access to potential participants. I contacted the individuals of authority (i.e., gatekeepers) of the organizations primarily by email to request permission to study individuals who are affiliated with their organization. Overall, I contacted seven veteran-affiliated organizations, two military-affiliated social media groups, and nine personal contacts to help me solicit a sample for the study. In my email correspondence to the gatekeepers of each organization, I included a brief context of what my research involved and asked for permission to recruit for research. A copy of the solicitation email is included in Appendix E.

Once the gatekeepers of each organization or institution granted permission to conduct the study (Creswell, 2014), I emailed the recruitment flyer,

as shown in Appendix F, and requested the dissemination of the flyer on my behalf. I asked personal contacts across the U.S. to help solicit participants who might be interested in the study and asked that potential participants email me directly for information about the study.

Recruiting Participants

In addition to recruiting from various organizations, social media groups and personal contacts, I recruited potential participants from physical sites that appealed to military servicemen. During my visit to sites, I adhered to the requirements of six-foot social distancing protocols and used the iPad to provide interested participants with the consent form. Similarly, all interested participants received the IRB approved consent form electronically to review and sign. I used Qualtrics (XM) web application to email the consent form because it added a layer of confidentiality for individuals who wanted to participate in the study. In Figure 4, I show how I adjusted the electronic form to make up for the lack of a handwritten signature. I supplemented the consent form with a space to type in their consent and five checkbox options to indicate (1) I consent to be audiotaped for this study (2) I consent to be videotaped on Zoom. (3) I DO NOT consent and do not wish to participate (4) I DO NOT consent to be audiotaped and (5) I DO NOT consent to be videotaped and will opt out of using the video feature in Zoom. The participant would then select all that apply and enter the date of their consent. I sent each participant a copy of the consent form for their records.

Figure 4: Consent and Signature Block

Please select your consent. (Select all that apply A-E)

I consent to this study. My consent was made on the date in the space below.

A. I consent to be audiotaped for this study.

B. I consent to be videotaped on Zoom.

C. I DO NOT consent and do not wish to participate.

D. I DO NOT consent to be audiotaped.

E. I DO NOT consent to be videotaped and opt out of using the video feature in Zoom.

Name of Participant:

Selecting Participants

Creswell (2003) recommends “purposefully selected” (p. 185) individuals that are best suited to help answer the research questions. I conscientiously selected the participants based on a criteria that can *best* speak to the aim of the study (Creswell, 2003). The target population for the study is military-enlisted Black men, ages 30 to 40 who attended a public or charter school. Primarily, I selected this age group because they attended high school during the impact of NCLB, now ESSA. From a simple demographic questionnaire at the end of the consent form, I collected data about the participant and placed it on a Microsoft excel spreadsheet. I reviewed who might best speak to the aim of the study based on their demographics. I then set up proposed dates and times using Doodle (™) web application to set up individual interviews.

The interest in my study yielded sixteen prospective participants. Nine of those participants, however, fit the criteria. The other seven exceeded the age criteria or did not return the consent to participate form. I initially planned for a

maximum of seven participants, but the data reached maturation with nine participants. I concluded the selection of participants with a small number of participants however, the sample size is appropriate for qualitative research (Creswell 2003) using a narrative approach (Riessman, 2005). My study does not claim to have generalizable findings. The primary participants in this study included seven active-duty military servicemen. Six participants identified as Black/African American, and one identified as African. The participants' age range included 27 to 35 years and were in high school during the time that NCLB and ESSA saturated U.S. schools. The age range was slightly modified from the original targeted range of 30-40. All participants identified their schools as public institutions. Notably, two participants identified their public school as urban institutions. One participant identified his school as a public school with a high concentration of students of military families. I denoted his school type as military because it is what he used to describe his school. Two participants identified that they attended public schools in suburban areas, and one identified his school as rural.

A secondary participant whom I call Jay in the study, volunteered to participate; however, Jay was outside the range of the target audience. I decided to include his narratives to describe his education experiences in a suburban school and inner-city urban school in high school prior to enlisting in the military. Because his attendance in public school was prior to NCLB (now ESSA) mandates, Jay provided experiences that was not influenced by military recruitment policy in high school. Jay's experience adds value in the way Black

men perceive and experience schooling prior to and after the recruitment policy that led to their enlistment in military service.

In Table 2, I show a list of basic demographics statistics. I list the participants by their pseudonym with their self-identified racial identity, school type, school location, degree type, and their military status. I show these demographics to help the reader know more about the participants and potentially understand their narratives. I redacted the participant’s military affiliation to further protect their identity; however, the participants represent the four branches of the Department of Defense (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps).

Table 2: Participant Demographics

	Ethnicity	Type	Loc	Deg	Mil
Duke	Black/AA	Suburban	TX	B	O
Core	African	Urban	TX	B	O
Robert	Black/AA	Rural	NY	C	E
Jo	Black/AA	Urban	NY	A	E
Broderick	Black/AA	n/a	NC	B	O
Prince	Black/AA	Suburban	VA	In	NA
Shane	Black/AA	Urban	SC	B	O
Troy	Black/AA	Suburban	MD	NA	E
Jay	Black/AA	Urban & Suburban	MD UT	M	O

B = Bachelors C= Technical Certification A = Associates M= Masters
E= Enlisted In=Incomplete NA = not specified

Research Location

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting research in a virtual space was widely recommended because it aligned with the stay home recommendations by the State to curtail the spread of the virus. Therefore, in adhering with the State recommendations to keep myself and others safe from potential exposure to the virus, I conducted the research in my home office, using primarily a computer equipped with a camera and Zoom capabilities.

Collecting Data

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I began recruitment for the study. My data collection procedures are consistent with Creswell (2007) collection procedures. However, the procedures were somewhat tempered by the onset of a nationwide pandemic. The pandemic, referred to as COVID-19, somewhat inhibited the data collection process by means of prohibiting in-person contact that so often serves to establish trust and to gain access to potential participants. Because of COVID-19 restrictions designed to minimize the risk of spreading, the collection of data commenced primarily by technology means (i.e., computer or iPad with internet and email access). In the face of these limitations, I nonetheless, adopted Creswell's (2003, 2014) approach to data collection for qualitative research using technological support.

Following Creswell's (2003) qualitative approach, I then considered the techniques to conduct the study. Creswell (2003) describes four basic types of data collection in qualitative research: observation, interviews, documents, and

audiovisual materials. I utilized interviews as the primary source of data collection with my role as the primary tool in data collection and analysis of the data (Creswell, 2014). I utilized two archival documents in the collection of data and displayed these on my computer screen during the corresponding interview questions. The archival documents are as shown in Appendix C and Appendix J. Additionally, I wrote field notes (Riessman, 2008) of exhibited behaviors from the participants that I could observe on the Zoom screen. After each interview, I immediately wrote up journal entries of my own reactions and interpretations for later analysis (Riessman, 2008; Luttrell, 2000).

Technological support. I used Zoom (™) to collect raw data. Zoom offered video, audio, collaboration, and chat features with encryption and meeting access controls for an added layer of security. Because of the guidelines for social distancing during the pandemic, using Zoom as a means to collect data, allowed me to substitute in person interviews for a virtual meeting space. I conducted eight virtual interviews using Zoom aimed at engaging participants in narratives about their experiences in K-12 leading up to their military enlistment. One interviewee received the interview questions by email because of his deployment status. Because of his deployment, email became the only option for him to participate. I then used Qualtrics (™) to place the interview questions into a survey-like form with text entry spaces and email the link to the questions. The participant did, however, participate in a Zoom interview.

During each Zoom interview, the interview protocol, as shown in Appendix G, served as a guide (Creswell, 2014). The interview protocol included five semi-

structured, open-ended questions that allowed the participant to share narratives (Reisman, 2008) of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2003). The interviews were, on average, 45 to 60 minutes. Importantly, some participants did not consent to use the video-enabled feature in Zoom. I, therefore, relied on the pitch and tone of their voice to notate their emotions. In some instances, I asked participants to describe what they were feeling in the moment.

Most important to qualitative study is the transcript. The transcript seizes the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Edwards & Lambert, 1993). I used Microsoft Word and integrated the Dictate feature to help me transcribe the data. At the end of each interview, I replayed the Zoom audio file and allowed Dictate to transcribe the audio onto the Word document. I did not use the transcription feature in Zoom because of the subscription cost. I then immersed myself in the details of the data (Creswell, 2014). I replayed the audio, then cautiously and meticulously filled in the missing text to complete the context of the participant's narrative. I conducted this process for each participant's transcription. I then emailed the participant a copy of their transcription, using Qualtrics, to enable each participant to check their transcript's accuracy. With each participant transcription, I added a space under each question to allow the participant an area to submit a comment or to make clarifications to their response to the question. I also provided space for "oh by the way" comments. That is, comments or responses they remembered post interview. I secured the aforementioned research materials in a locked cabinet and the audio recordings are stored on a password encrypted external drive.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) is conducted within the naturalistic inquiry paradigm (i.e., the phenomenological, anthropological, or ethnographic) rather than the rationalistic inquiry paradigm (e.g., scientific approach in quantitative research). In naturalistic terms, trustworthiness seeks to address the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria in qualitative research. Consistent with constructivist perspective (Creswell & Miller, 2000) toward constructing reality, I conducted the below procedures to exercise trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and to enhance the standards of rigor (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto, 2018) in the research design of this study.

Confirmation. I compared the raw interview data with my field notes of each participant interview to confirm or counter my interpretations. Apart from this, I reviewed my reflective journal notes to help validate the interpretations. Both procedures helped me to seek convergence in the data to form themes and categories (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Member-checks. Following the transcription of each participant's interview, I provided the participant with a copy of the raw data to review and confirm the credibility of the account. Member-checking provides the means to which the participant can comment, validate their responses, and judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Ethical assurances. As with all research involving human subjects, ethical considerations of potential impacts deserve attention (Creswell, 2014). I

applied to the institutional review board (IRB) to have my research plan reviewed. After approval, I obtained permission from gatekeepers to gain access to prospective participants to conduct the study (Creswell, 2014). I placed the highest priority and care to preserve the anonymity of the participants. Because the study involved military servicemen, I extracted from the data any information that could be traced to the individual. I assured each participant that their pseudonym is exhibited throughout the data collection, interpretation, and reporting of the findings.

Field Issues and Resolutions

Insofar, I described the research design and how I implemented the steps to collect data and conduct the study. These steps, however, were not without hiccups. I now describe three significant field issues that transpired and what I did to resolve the issue. The issues were, (1) interest in the study (2) dispersing the consent form in Qualtrics and (3) losing Zoom audio.

First, the interest in the study seemed slow-moving after several weeks of trying to solicit a sample. I pondered if the social unrest in the U.S. attributed to the interest to participate in a study about race. In addition to the pandemic and in the center of the social unrest in the U.S., Black men, it appeared, were being targeted. For example, George Floyd, a Black man was murdered, on camera, by a white police officer, and it sparked national outrage. Although both Black and white people from around the world protested the grave injustice and inhumane treatment of a Black man that resulted in his death on national TV, the event was, indeed, an emotionally crushing reality for many Blacks. George Floyd's murder

and a number of other race-related events in 2020, included increased death and racial discrimination towards Black men, women, and children. Perhaps these heightened events influenced the interest in talking further about race. Similarly, Executive Order 13950 - Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping that the President issued on September 22, 2020 threatened the collection data for the study.

Although I include the entire Executive Order in Appendix H, I highlight, only, a short relevant part of section 1. Section 1 of the Executive Order 13950 partially states, “Many people are pushing a different vision of America that is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than in the inherent and equal dignity of every person as an individual.” In other words, the assumption is that many people are telling a counterstory of their lived experience in U.S. society with regard to race. The Executive Order further states,

...this ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people, simply on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans. (The White House, Executive Order 13950, 2020. [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)).

The implication of the Executive Order is that some people push an agenda that is damaging and untrue about America; that on the basis of race and sex, some people are oppressors; and that race and sexual identities take precedence over being human in American society. The potential participant then might be reluctant to speak in opposition to the U.S, its government, or its military. Military service members are bound by a standard of ethics to uphold the trust and confidence of the American people, regardless of their personal beliefs. Because I felt that these issues could possibly affect the interest in the study, I

reached out again to the aforementioned organizations, groups, and personal contacts, and revealed that as a Black woman and education scholar, it is important for me to examine the narratives of Black men's experiences during their school-to military trajectory to disrupt the master narrative that might be told about them. I felt that by revealing my identity, this might put potential participants at ease to tell me their stories rather than speaking to a non-Black person collecting data about race-related experiences. Indeed, after my follow up email, I began to receive inquiries from potential participants about the study.

The second issue involved using Qualtrics. In order to ensure that participants received the consent form using this medium, and how the form would look to the participant, I ran two tests. One test included sending the consent form to my email. The other test was sent to a friend to complete the form as a demo. This enabled me to check the client-side of the Qualtrics program. However, the first participant did not receive the consent form after several attempts to send it to his email. I sought assistance through customer support to resolve the issue. The resolution was to use different naming conventions for each consent form sent to a participant. In other words, the consent form could not be sent with the same name as the ones that I used for tests. Moving forward, I had to rename each consent form to send to each participant in the study.

The third issue occurred during two interviews. Unfortunately, I lost audio connection during two interviews. I resolved the audio lost by quickly using the chat feature to communicate that audio was lost. My contingency plan for this included a phone call to finish conducting the interview. However, as I was about

to execute that plan the audio returned. I then resumed the interview and restated the question to which the participant restated their response. Fortunately, audio was not lost for a long period of time in both interviews, which might have disrupted the flow of data collection. So far, I explained the approaches to the design of the research. In the next section, I describe the data analysis procedures and explain the steps I implemented in the analysis of the data.

Data Analysis and Procedures

My study is consistent with narrative qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and centers the voices of Black servicemen in describing and interpreting their lived experiences through spoken narratives (Riessman, 2005). Therefore, I adapted Riessman's (2005) narrative analysis approach and Braun and Clark's (2006) six phase guide to thematic analysis. I expound on these approaches and illustrate with how I implemented the phases in the analysis of the data.

Approach to Narrative Analysis

Riessman's (2005) narrative approach describes the typology of four models of narrative analysis that are particularly suited for spoken narratives and analysis of personal experience: (1) thematic, (2) structural, (3) performative, and (4) visual. I, however, am drawn to Riessman's (2008) description of thematic analysis because it borrows from Mishler's (1995) distinction of the features in narrative analysis: "what is said rather than how it is said"— "the told rather than the aspect of telling" (Riessman, 2008, p.54). Simply put, the focus is on what the narrator (i.e., participant) discloses of their lived experience rather than how the

experience is narrated. For example, the semantics (i.e., word meanings) in which a participant might use such as, ‘terminal’ and ‘end’ is not the focus of my analysis. These, distinctively, can mean the same thing depending on the context. This distinction is important for my study because I wished not to “specialize Black speech” (K. Moore, personal communication, August 8, 2020) in the interpretation of their experiences. In other words, I wish not to place emphasis on linguistics or on the postulations of Black vernacular speech.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for theorizing across the data by identifying common thematic elements from research participants, the stories they report, and the actions they take (Reisman, 2008). In the thematic analysis approach, “the researcher identifies the themes told by a participant” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 70). Or rather, the researcher draws from the participant’s lived experience — as described by the individual — a pattern that characterizes the experiences. The process of thematic analysis involves looking for “patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data” (Braun and Clark, 2006, p. 15). That is, the researcher constructs an arrangement of repeated perceptions and concerns that have probable relevance to the research. Braun and Clark’s (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis provides a credible way to systematically analyze data: “familiarizing yourself with the data” (p. 16), “generating initial codes” (p. 18), “searching for themes” (p. 19), “reviewing themes” (p. 20), “defining and naming themes” (p. 22), and “producing the report” (p. 23). I adapted their guidelines to help me analyze my research data, using a recursive (i.e., back and

forth) process throughout the phases. In the upcoming sections, I describe how I performed each phase.

Phase 1: Familiarization with the data. The initial phase of analysis involved the process of immersion (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 17). In other words, I developed a sort of contextual intimacy with the data. I immersed myself in the data in three stages: 1) reading the data, 2) re-reading the data and adding notes, 3) and rereading the data with the notes. I first read each transcript data in its entirety that I received after the member check. Second, I reread each transcript and added notes. The notes included a preliminary interpretation of the participant's experiences and the observations from my journal notes. During this phase, I took a break from the data which allowed time to reflect upon the interaction I had with the participant during the interview. Third, I re-read the data line by line with my notes. I inserted additional notes that came to mind during my reflections that would be relevant to the research. I performed these steps with each dataset (i.e., interview transcript) (Creswell, 2012).

Phase 2: The generating of initial codes and sub codes. Cooper and his colleagues (2012) assert that generating codes is analogous with building a brick house. The codes (i.e., bricks) build up the frame (i.e., themes) of the house. In phase two, I formed what Cooper et al. (2012) calls “the building blocks of analysis” (p. 61). To begin, I generated codes using a manual coding process. I manually organized the layout of each transcript in a Word document. I created a table divided by two margins (e.g., left margin and right margin). I populated the left margin with the interview questions and responses, and I kept the right side of

the table blank to later assign codes. I then printed each transcript in landscape. This step helped me to visualize the data before I assigned codes to the interview excerpts. Second, I initiated the “systematic analysis of the data” (Cooper et al., 2012 p. 61). That is, I engaged in the step-by-step coding of the data. I then selected one hard copy of the dataset (i.e., a complete interview transcript), and I used colored pens and to highlight lines of text and phrases. I used the right margin to assign initial codes and fledgling codes (i.e., unambiguous sub codes) (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell, 2013) that were “potentially relevant to the research question” (Cooper et al., 2012, p. 61). That is, the codes may have had probable (or even possible) relevance to the research. All the fledgling codes, however, did not meet the iterative analysis. In other words, these codes did not align with my research questions, therefore, I omitted them from further analysis. (One example: experiencing racism in the military.)

The codes that I erected from the data represented my succinct short-hand interpretation about the narrative excerpts. Following Cooper et al.'s (2012) approach to generating initial codes, I sought a “latent level of meaning” (p. 61) to interpret underlying meaning about the data in the coding process. I used “interpretive codes” (Cooper et al., 2012, p. 61) that encroached on the participant’s meaning to help “identify meanings that lie beneath the semantic surface of the data” (Cooper et al., 2012, p. 61). In other words, I looked at the underlying (or latent) meaning of the excerpts rather than the basic or literal sense of meaning. I then clustered together and merged the codes that shared associated features. The clustered codes appeared to have a close relationship and suggested

a meaningful coherent pattern (or themes) in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006; Cooper et al., 2012).

My initial phase of analysis yielded approximately sixty-one possible codes. These initial codes were exploratory and represented unstructured thoughts. As I reviewed the data several times, I discovered redundant items and worked to cluster or collapse these and similar codes more succinctly. While all the codes that were generated were important, I wanted to focus on codes that were most relevant to the study to help answer the research questions. I considered carefully the removal of any codes that might tell a counterstory. The collapsed codes, however, fit naturally into the preliminary codes.

I ended this process after formulating twenty-six preliminary codes. The preliminary codes describe a variety of descriptive and interpretive text that are relevant to the research. I show these codes in Appendix I. I then reviewed the descriptive and interpretive codes and worked to create categories. I created the categories by reviewing each discrete item and by breaking the data into bits of information (Merriam, 2009). I used a color-coded scheme to symbolize similar relationships. For example, line-items 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 16, and 17 share common experiences related to preparation for the future. Line-items 4, 4, 7, 8, 11, 25, and 25 share experiences of racial discrimination. Line-items 9 and 13 share the motivation for enlisting in the military. Line-items 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21-23, shares the description of their interactions with a military recruiter. Line-item 20 and 26 describes the awareness and perceptions of military recruitment in high school.

I, therefore, organized the codes into five working categories: 1) preparation, 2) discrimination, 3) interaction, 4) motivation, and 5) awareness. I then developed definitions to help the reader understand how I formed each category. For example, preparation describes how the participant viewed their future with regard to education advancement and career aspirations. This category includes influence from family, friends, or peers to make life choices in high school. Nine units of talk helped to determine this category. Discrimination describes the racial prejudices experienced by the participant and how they managed and perceived racial discrimination in high school. Six units of talk helped to determine this category. Interactions describes the participant's positive or negative experiences with the military recruiter. Nine units of talk helped to determine this category. Motivation describes the incentive or motivations driving their choice to enlist in or after high school. Awareness describes the participant's awareness and perception of military recruitment in high school as part of a mandate. Nine units of talk helped to determine this category. In Table 3, I illustrate five categories and their meaning.

Table 3: Categories and Meanings

Categories	Meaning of the category
Preparation	Perceived future: Family influence, career or educational planning after HS
Discrimination	Racial prejudice: Managing the experiences of differential treatment, negative perceptions, and discouragement
Interaction	Recruiter interactions: Positive/negative interactions with a military recruiter
Motivation	Motivation/ perceived rewards: Motivation for serving in the military
Awareness	Recruitment by mandate: Understanding of narrow/broad recruitment

After I added meaning to the categories, I ordered the coded excerpts within the categories (Braun & Clark, 2006). In table 4, I show the categories and selected excerpts for illustration.

Table 4: Preliminary Categories

CATEGORY 1- PERCEIVED FUTURE:

My main goal was, at the minimum, graduate with a B average, get a scholarship and go to college. I actually had no desire to join the military.

...my parents, more specifically, my father did 20 years in the military. He had no major concern as to what I want to do with my life as long as I was able to do it or by the time I was 18, and if I had no plan then I would enlist in the military. Because I had no concrete plan as I was nearing graduating high school, the military became an option.

I always wanted to join the Marine Corps. My granddad was in the Marine Corp. I heard about all his stories when he was in Vietnam.

.....
CATEGORY 2 - RACIAL PREJUDICE:

In my experiences, a lot of the jokes were kind of geared towards an area of race and there was honestly a choice I had to make. Do I laugh with it and just kind of play it down? Or do I completely ostracize myself 'cause I was already separated?

... reflecting on it, maybe I could have sat a year by myself, but yeah, I chose not to.

One time we were shaking hands at a lacrosse game and this kid said, "good game, coon" and I choked his ass out.

We had all AP classes, and we had this teacher [Caucasian]for our AP chemistry class who in the first week in class said, "you guys (we were the only Blacks in there) aren't going to make it in here.

.....
CATEGORY 3 - MILITARY RECRUITER INTERACTIONS:

Ah, you from there? You can get any job. You can do anything you want to. Check it out my n***a. I didn't hear anything after "check this out my n***a" because I knew what he was doing, and I was completely turned off.

It seemed genuine like he wanted me to succeed...positive attitude.

.....
CATEGORY 4 - PERCEIVED REWARDS FOR MILITARY
SERVICE:

I get paid every two weeks, the benefits are good, health benefits are always there. Um yeah, and I get free education. Can't go wrong there.

...Free college.

.....
CATEGORY 5 - RECRUITMENT BY MANDATE:

I didn't know about that. And uhh [pauses]. I don't think that's right because when you're in high school you have such a young mind.

Um. It makes me feel like it's predatory recruiting in the sense of... it's very intrusive first of all.

Phase 3: The search for themes. In this phase of analysis, I searched for themes. Braun and Clark (2006) assert that “keyness” (p. 10) of a theme in relation to the research question is essential. In other words, the theme captures the material that is pertinent to answer the overarching research question. A theme counts as patterned responses that help to answer the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006; Cooper, et al., 2012). I began with listing all the findings of the study. I first searched the data for repetitive units of talk that described an experience. The repetition of the events led to my assumption that the occurrence is a possible key finding. I then searched the findings and looked for areas that I could group related experiences. Initially, I reported eighteen key findings and initiated grouping into five categories that I could use to develop themes. The themes convey the “richness and complexity of the data” (Cooper, et al., 2012, p. 66). That is, the extent in which the codes and themes that appear to share a

coherent relationship with the research and answers the research questions. Following Braun and Clark's (2006) latent thematic analysis, I proceeded to "examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and ideologies" (p. 13) that may have informed the "semantic surface of the data" (Cooper et al., 2012, p. 61). Simply put, I developed the themes by seeking the underlying meaning of the content using an interpretive approach rather than developing themes using cursory meanings. Using this interpretive approach to develop the latent themes not only provided descriptive analysis of the data, but rather, the approach theorized the themes in the latent thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) approach. I show these themes in the report of the analysis in Chapter 4.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. Phase four of the analysis involved reviewing the potential themes to serve as a "quality check" (Cooper et. al., 2012, p. 65). In other words, checking the themes and the collated excerpts to explore the relationship. I reviewed the themes and the collated excerpts back and forth to explore potential relationships that could answer the research questions. I then updated the theme, as necessary. Following Braun and Clark (2006), I allowed each theme to build upon the previous theme(s) to tell a meaningful story about the data.

Phase 5: Labeling the themes. In this phase of analysis, I added a singular focus of the theme to "sum up the essence" of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 66). That is, state what the theme will address in relation to the research questions. In chapter 4, show the focus to which each theme addresses in relation to the research questions.

Notably, the categories and [sub]themes do not match. At this point, I constructed a storyline of events to help me conceptualize the participant's lived experiences leading up to military enlistment. This is how I organized the thematic events. The storyline in my head was this: In high school, the participants faced a mirage of racial perceptions by others during a time of career and education planning for post high school. The participants, at a point, were familiarized with the military during military recruitment interactions. Some of these interactions led to the military as a career option. The participants had limited awareness of education mandates or perceptions I then reported the findings in that order.

Phase 6: Producing the report. In this phase of analysis, I aimed to contribute a cogent story about the data based on my analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). I included in the report, the meaningful themes to tell a story about the data and provided arguments that aim to answer the research questions. This report is in Chapter 4.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Given my close involvement to this research, my positioning is necessary to evaluate the potential or actual effects on the findings. First, my social identity is the strongest characteristic that supports my position in this study. As a critical scholar, researcher, and Black woman living in U.S. society, my stance is a valid extension of how I conduct race-related research. To clarify, I identify as “Black” because it bears significant historical meaning for Africans forced to sojourn in this country. As a Black woman, and Caribbean-born native, I choose to express

multiple geographical and culturally based identities along with my African ancestral roots. Furthermore, the social constructs bestowed upon me by U.S. society became definitive markers in my scholastic identity, research agenda, and analysis of the data.

As a scholar of the lived experiences of a Black woman living in U.S. society who have worked in white, male-dominated military institutions, I offer myself as a research tool to expose how race, class, gender, and institutionalized racism work to affect Black men who enlist in the military. I wish to agitate and shed light on system(s) that covertly and sometimes overtly perpetuates racial discrimination and inequitable opportunities in schools aimed predominantly toward Black boys, under the auspices of education school reform that is simply a campaign for military recruitment of black bodies.

In each step of the research process, I acknowledged and reckoned with the inherent power to resist seeking the truth and incorporated “dialogic engagement” practices (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 118). That is, I engaged in a dialogue with other critical and non-critical scholars throughout the research process to help me to check my bias that may have influenced the interpretation of the data. The impetus of this work aims to understand experiences of primarily Black boys by way of a critical theoretical analysis of themes, rather than fact-finding or the generalization of black male students facing military recruitment in high school.

In this chapter, I outlined the scope of my research. In chapter 4, I present the findings and a thematic theoretical analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present a report of the findings yielded from the data. The questions on which the study focused are as follows: 1) How might Black men respond to the ways in which education policy influences their trajectory from school-to military service under the auspices of education reform? and 2) How might Black men respond to racially-motivated practices that focus recruitment on young Black boys for military service from primarily economically deprived schools and communities?

Four themes and their related findings form the basis for answering these questions. First, I identify each key theme and provide illustrative excerpts for each one. My finding for each theme follows with the underlying critical theoretical interpretation.

Theme 1: Racial Perceptions by Others

I labeled the first theme Racial Perceptions by Others. Racial perceptions by others focused on how the participants perceived and managed racial discrimination during high school. This theme incorporates subthemes of 1) negative perceptions of Black boys, and 2) aimed racial slurs. All participants experienced some form of the oppression outlined in these themes in high school. Here are some excerpts of the lived experiences they shared during the interview.

Negative perceptions of Black boys

Core shared that his school's counselors had a predetermined negative outlook on the students' future. Core did not attend "the best schools." His

counselors' perceptions made him feel like he should work harder to challenge the stereotype.

Um so I didn't really... my schools weren't the best schools, especially in high school. My school was kind of the urban school rumored to have bad kids and all that. That kind of motivated me to want to do better. It motivated me to not want to just be some stereotype or somebody who's marginalized as the person who goes to [that] school.

Counselors [African American] in my school would treat us like we were lesser than. They would treat us like... especially if you played football. They would be like...off the cuff like...work on getting a football scholarship. They wouldn't even point you towards getting academic scholarships.

We had this teacher [African American] for our AP chemistry class. The first week in class, she said, " you guys, (we were the only Blacks in there) aren't going to make it in here. You guys should probably go to regular chemistry classes. It's too much work for you guys, you guys shouldn't do it.

Jay shared his experiences of being part of a minority and majority member of his schools. Jay shared how he was subjected to reading and hearing racial slurs in the textbooks in his Utah school.

Growing up in Baltimore MD, every school I went to may have had two to four white people max and the majority was all black. Growing up in Utah was totally different. Now there's four [Black] kids in the whole entire high school. When you're in class, you read and hear about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn stories, and you hear the word n****r.

My interactions with my teachers were never comfortable, especially the ones that would read stories like Tom Sawyer. I would approach them and tell them I was not comfortable, but they would say, that's just how it was. I didn't know who I could turn to help me out. I, basically, just had to fight through it.

Two of the participants, Jo and Troy, shared that their racial-related experiences in high school were limited. Here is what they shared:

Jo shared that he personally did not have race-related experiences at his school. I didn't really have any racial issue with Black, White, or Spanish or whatever. I think because New York is a very diverse area. I'm not gonna say there's [wasn't] racial issues, but I, from personal experience, didn't run across anything like that. Likewise, Troy shared that his school was diverse, and he did not experience what he perceived as race-related incidents or issues. He shared: All the schools I attended were very diverse, so I personally never experienced any racism.

Broderick shared his experience when he and his friends hung together in a group. He said he felt criminalized, and he (and his friends) made a choice to get past those perceptions:

There was a time when we all got stereotyped as a certain clique. [Now]there's means to question that and pull [us] apart and see if something is going on. I think they probably thought we were doing [or]having criminal activity going on in school. I think they thought we're a gang, [doing] criminal activity, um [thinking] we're not fit to do much after high school.

They pulled every single one of us into their offices and questioned every single one of us. None of us were doing anything. It's not like we did anything on campus. It's not like we were fighting, it's not like anyone caught us selling anything or nothing like that 'cause we wasn't.

We understood what it looked like, but we also understood probably a little bit more about society than we should have at that young age and understanding that the racial motivations behind informing young black men, specifically, that if I keep telling you you're going to do bad —you're probably going to do bad. We decided, hey, we're gonna focus, we're gonna finish, then we're gonna keep doing us and we're gonna figure it out. We're not giving anyone else a choice to take our choice away.

I interpreted it as targeting. They were reaching for something because they thought something was going on. So sure, it was

targeting, and nobody [ever] got in trouble. At the time, I was upset about it. It made me feel like a criminal, absolutely.

Duke shared that there was a perception by others that he should play sports because he was African American:

The high school I went to was predominantly white. Most of the African Americans in my high school played a sport, primarily either football or basketball. It was kind of the expectation to do either one of those things. I also came from an athlete family, so I was kind of pressured into doing those things because I was told that hey, if you play a sport, you will get a scholarship. Regardless of how much I tried to force it, athletics wasn't necessarily my forte, nor was I fully invested or interested in it.

There was a lot of assuming and expectations of me that I just did not meet. There were certain kids that would make certain jokes that I didn't necessarily find funny because [they had] different views of me and just being uninformed. I had to have thick skin and deal with those things.

Shane recalled a lived experience from a white teacher who had a predetermined outlook on his military career:

Junior year, every Wednesday or special occasion, we [ROTC] wore the uniform. I had a Caucasian female teacher that was proud of all her students who were in ROTC. We are in the South and she makes a comment like, "it's great but you don't see a lot of black officers, so enlisting is most definitely your ticket to go forward." She was like, you know, "some routes are harder than others, but I think you can do anything you want to. I'm just saying it's a tough route to go."

[Shane said] Alright...thank you ma'am.

It most definitely made me understand that whatever I decided to do was going to be difficult and because I was Black, that was going to make it more difficult.

Duke expressed that African Americans are exposed to limited choices but are told to seek education:

I believe it ties back to African Americans in general just being exposed to things like sports and entertainment and things of that

nature. So that's all I focused on as far as education goes. Yes, we're told to [seek] education but if the only opportunities are thrown in our faces are entertainment or professional athleticism, and not... and I'm not saying that those things don't matter but these things don't directly influence society like medicine or teaching or things of that nature. [If we are] not being fed that information then are we going to do just lean more towards what we know.

Aimed racial slurs

Robert talked about racial slurs which he referred to as "racial energy." He shared how he managed the racial energy to make a critical decision for his social survival during high school. The experience empowered him:

I don't ever remember hearing the "n-word" (ever), but it was mentioned kind of indirectly. A lot of the conversations reflected my skin or reflected the differences in our skin...our experiences...a lot of the jokes were kind of geared towards an area of race. It was honestly a choice I had to make. Do I laugh with it and just kind of play it down or do I completely ostracize myself? I was already separated and there were clear times where I was sitting at a huge, long table in the cafeteria by myself... the only black kid in the whole cafeteria.

The racial stuff...the n-word was never mentioned towards me but just a lot of the jokes that I had to deal with otherwise, I was going to be alone. I made my choice back then. Now, reflecting on it, maybe I could have sat a year by myself but, yeah, I chose not to.

[The experience] gave me a sense of power because I had choices. I looked different, I talked differently, but when sports came around, they said...oh basketball! Come on, come on, come on! Back then, it made me feel a sense of I was part of the crew and so having at least two people to stay with or one person to sit with, it made lunch that much more bearable. It made it a little bit more bearable as opposed to just being alone because most times, I was just alone.

Prince shared an experience with a peer that aimed a racial slur at him after a school game and during military service that ended up in a physical altercation. He expressed how the experiences made him feel:

Um, oh, I guess one time we were shaking hands at a lacrosse game and this kid said, “good game, coon” and I choked his ass out.

When I got to the [redacted], we had a sprint test and I beat everybody. There was a [servicemember] who was like, "oh yeah, he won...blah blah blah...you know all n****s are fast and strong." I beat the shit out of him.

It was bullshit. That’s why I fought them. It always made me feel like no matter what I do, or [where] I go, how much money I got. I'm always gonna be a n****r. I know if I want something, I can get it, but white folks are always going to try to do everything that they can just to stop you. But I won’t let that happen.

Shane shared that a recruiter used he experienced racial slurs in addressing toward him during a recruiter visit. He was turned off by the unprofessionalism of the recruiter:

I had predominantly black teachers growing up and I cannot recall having a racial issue with any. [However]... I took it on my own accord and went downtown to the recruiter’s office. I took the practice ASVAB and did really well. The recruiter [African American male] saw my score. He shuts the door, sits me down, and says, “You know, with this score, you could practically do any job that you want in the [redacted]. Where are you from?” I gave him the location of the school in the neighborhood. The schools in the area weren't the best and they weren't the shining light of the city. He finds out where I'm from and [his] professionalism drops. I think that this was his attempt to meet me where he believed I was but that's not where I was. [He said] I quote, “Ah you from there? You can get any job. You can do anything you want to. Check it out my n***a.” He gives me this spiel. I didn't hear anything after “check this out my n***a” because I knew what he was doing, and I was completely turned off.

Theme 1 Finding: Participants faced race-related perceptions; they navigated these and other race-related experiences in order to persevere, fit in, and graduate high school.

I collected nine samples of text using questions aimed at racially motivated experiences in K-12. I compiled the narratives and erected the findings from the following question: How would you describe a racially motivated experience in K-12, if any, with 1) teachers, 2) school administrators, 3) school counselors, or 3) community members that influenced your decision to enlist?

The responses from the narratives were overwhelmingly race-related. However, there was nothing overly surprising about the findings, as teachers' negative and harmful assumptions regarding Black boys have been documented many times in the literature (Howard, 2013; 2008; Lewis & Bryant, 2018; Noguera, 2003). Based on the data describing the lived experiences of the participants, I conclude that the majority of participants (seven out of nine) in the study faced negative racial perceptions and accompanying low expectations of academic aptitude and criminalization by both Black and White teachers or community members. The participants managed the overt actions taken by others by choosing to "turn the other cheek" (i.e., navigate the offense) and persevere. As Jay shared, "I just had to deal with it." The "it" Jay refers to is ongoing racial discrimination. Tatum (1992) might describe these instances as coping mechanisms in order to assimilate and be accepted by whites. What Tatum refers to is "internalization" (Cross, 1991) in racial identity development in which the participants rose above notions of race to establish consequential relationships with whites. This action might have contributed to the participants' belief of meritocracy, whereby doing good (i.e., turning the other cheek) gets rewarded or, better yet, is accepted by whites.

A basic tenet of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) is the perpetuation of racism in such a way that it appears normal. Looking through a CRTofEd (Ladson-Billings, 1998) lens, I view the participants' lived experiences as shaped by a dominant ideology that perceives young Black men with limited intellectual capability. (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Importantly, participants used voice to provide important context to their lived experiences.

Three striking examples from Core, Prince, and Shane are as follows: 1) A teacher advised Core and his Black classmate to withdraw from AP chemistry because “you guys aren’t going to make it in here.” This directive was given on the first day of class and was directed at the two Black students in the class. The message was clear: Black young men are incapable of academic rigor. As a Black student, Core did not align with the teacher’s image of someone who should be taking a course for college credit. A different future was imagined for him, one that did not include scientific study. In the context of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Core’s teacher perpetuated deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997; Anyon, 1981). The teacher predetermined the alleged limited intelligence of Core and his classmate based on their race. Pearl (1997) might assert that this exclusion acted as a protection of the learning space for white students. By excluding students who are perceived as unfit for academic rigor, “the capable are not held back by those who are unable to learn” (Pearl, 1997, p. 214). In other words, the white student’s learning is not infringed upon by the alleged limited intelligence of Core and his classmate. “Deficit-thinking then results in a justified unlevel playing field” (Pearl, 1997, p. 214). Simply put, if Core and his classmate had withdrawn

as advised, they would have been excluded from the opportunity to earn college credit. However, Core and his classmate remained in the class despite the disparaging characteristics inferred by his teacher.

2) Prince faced ongoing and overt racism perpetrated by his peers. Here is one such incident: Prince was called a coon, an overt racial slur, by a peer after winning a lacrosse game. Prince swiftly acted upon his emotions and choked the student, resulting in a fight that took five people to stop. Although Prince did not specify that he was suspended or expelled for choking the student, he did mention that he eventually transferred schools. He shared: "...there was a group of guys who called me n****r and stuff like that, and I just deal[t] with them too. That's why I transferred."

From a CRT (Ladson Billings, 1998) perspective, Black boys are disproportionately suspended or expelled from school compared to white students (Smith & Harper, 2015; Townsend, 2000; UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2020). Prince could have faced consequential disciplinary action. Regardless, Prince's educational experience was disrupted by white supremacy and privilege, which further marginalized him at his school. The outcome was that Prince, a target of racist aggression, left his school. The message: You are the problem. You don't belong here. "Whiteness as property" (Harris, 1993, p. 1736) then operates on the absolute right to exclude (Hiraldo, 2010). His white peers viciously guarded and preserved their whiteness and privilege by repeatedly and menacingly calling Prince a "n****r." They were enforcing their right to exclude. Prince, by virtue of his Blackness, was denied the "privileges that inhere in whiteness" (Harris, 1993,

p. 1736). Simply put, in the context of education, Prince is denied the entitlement and right to learn at that school.

3) Shane experienced a case of what he called “mistaken familiarity.” In an attempt to establish a connection, an African American military recruiter called him “n****r.” Shane was appalled. This word immediately invoked the legacy of racism. Shane had anticipated information on becoming part of a professional culture that would view him as a quintessential servicemember and leader. Instead, he was labeled with a word steeped in racism because he was a Black man. Shane reacted repulsively to being called “n****r,” even as a cultural greeting by a Black man. He expected a higher level of professionalism from the military recruiter. The message: You are a young thug. Let me ‘holla’ at you to help you understand what I’m saying. With this racial slur, the recruiter revealed his assumptions regarding Shane; he perceived him to be a young Black man coming off the street. The recruiter thought Shane would welcome this form of talk. He did not. In this exchange, Shane experienced “conceptual blackness” (King, 1992, p. 321), that is the distinct humanity and characterization of Blackness (Wynter, 1990). Ladson-Billings (2014) would call this encounter a relegation of Shane’s Blackness to “the underclass” (p.83). That is, those who are marginalized from society (Jencks & Peterson, 2001; Marks, 1991).

Seven of the nine participants recounted racialized experiences akin to those described above to which “race, in and of itself, is a structure of oppression” (Young, 2014, p.16). Although some participants experienced negative perceptions by African American teachers and counselors, all the participants are,

nonetheless, socially identified as members of the underclass (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Therefore, the participants were perpetually confined to “social marginality” (Young, 2014, p.18) in which they were permanently and distinctively racially conspicuous as part of a marginalized group in U.S. society. Young (2014) would say, accordingly, they all faced “material deprivation” (p.14). That is, the participants are Black and objectified as undeserving, and therefore denied the right to education experiences that are free of psychological tyranny. From a critical perspective one might ask, would the lived experiences of white, male students attending the same schools face the same negative perceptions by teachers, peers, and community members similar to what the Black participants in the study experienced? No. Seen through the lens of CRTofEd (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), these experiences were forged in the fire of racism. Building upon the negative perceptions by others, the next theme focuses on career preparation post high school.

Theme 2: Career and Education Planning

I labeled the second theme Career and Education Planning. Career and Education Planning focused on the participant's education and career preparation during high school. This theme incorporates subthemes of career and education aspirations, school support, and family influence. Here are some excerpts of the lived experiences the participants shared during the interview.

Career and education aspirations

Core shared that he had academic and sport scholarships. Core's career aspiration was to become a lawyer which was inspired by wanting to help others:

In high school I wanted to go to law school from when I was 10 years old. I had a desire to help people. [It was] the need to help people. My cousin had an immigration lawyer who helped him be a citizen, so I always thought you know... he left a good impression on me, so I was like hey, I want to aspire to be like this person.

I had a football and academic scholarship, so I was fortunate because of my background.

Robert shared that he did not have any educational aspirations. He just wanted to be out of high school. He then recalled that his career aspiration was to be a veterinarian because of his love for animals:

...I don't believe I had any. It was something more of to get it [school]over with. Simply check the box as far as showing up go. Don't get in trouble, basically. There was benefits as far as going to school but as far as academic achievements, I had none. As long as I didn't fail classes my parents didn't follow up.

remember when I was young, I wanted to be a veterinarian at one point, but as far as high school was concerned, I was more concerned with just getting out my mom's house and just getting on my own. I really had no long-term or short-term goals to look to.

Broderick shared that his aspirations were basic, as in make the grades to qualify for sports. Period. He later realized that he was good at leading. He shared that he had plenty of resources for information about military service but not so much for higher education:

I would say they [aspirations] were relatively basic. Do well and get good grades so you could play on the sports teams.

Initially in high school, it was sports at first and then later, I realized that I was good at being a teammate. I was good at being a leader of teammates, so I just knew what I wanted to be in a position where I was leading other people because I like people a lot.

... it was the fathers of my friends since they were all military, I could pick their brains. They were resources for the military

portion but opportunities outside for higher education, I can't say there were too many outside of those few sources to be honest.

Prince shared his many school affiliations. He shared that his only aspiration, at the time, was to join the Marine Corp:

In high school, I graduated top ten [sic]. I played football, I wrestled, I played lacrosse, and I was also the president of my history club. I always wanted to join the Marine Corps. That was the only thing.

Shane shared that growing up, he wasn't sure what he wanted to be. He was inspired by many things and sometimes repeated what sounded good to others:

Honestly, from my recollection, [I]cannot recall having anything. I was a bright student but very, very distracted. I know in elementary school, I wanted to be a cartoonist. In middle school, I do not recall. I didn't know what I wanted to be... didn't know what I want to do, and I know at some point, I think I started regurgitating just because it sounded really well. I want to be a biochemist...not the greatest when it came to sciences. I think it just sounds really well to instructors, teachers, and those in that capacity, but [I]never took the steps to dig deeper into finding out what it takes to do those things.

Duke shared that he wanted to graduate, get a scholarship, and go to college. Duke later shared his career aspiration was to become a chef:

My main goal, at the minimum, [was to] graduate with a B average, get a scholarship, and go to college. Initially, I wanted to be a chef. Besides practicing with culinary skills at home, I would ask my parents to send me to classes.

Our high school had a contract with a career center in the city and the career center allowed us to strengthen and explore whatever skillsets that we had or wanted to learn in certain careers. I did not follow through with that. So, my next career aspirations were journalism and music producing.

Jo shared that his goal was to go to college after high school. He shared that his career aspiration was to become a radiologist. He shared that although there may have been resources in his school, he was unmotivated to seek any:

My main thing in high school is that I wanted to go to college. I wanted to graduate within four years...I wanted to become a radiologist, but school was so expensive. I was working and I didn't wanna burden my parents with the funding of school. They [FAFSA] weren't giving me financial aid [so] I just went ahead with just working.

I didn't really have [pauses]. I'm from New York, so I'm not going to say there are no resources [for education or career opportunities]. You have to go out there and find the resources. But I didn't have that motivation to go and find anything really.

If you're not in like a private school, you don't really have that influence. You don't really have someone motivating you to do anything, unless it's your family or something.

Troy shared that he did not have a plan and didn't like school. He stated that at one point, he aspired to be a barber:

I didn't really have a plan or any aspirations. I wasn't sure on what I wanted to do after high school. I just knew I didn't like school and college wasn't for me. The only memory I have of actually wanting to pursue a career was being a barber. It seemed fairly easy and [is] quick money with the possibility of owning my own shop and other entrepreneurial opportunities.

I had the option to attend [redacted]college, because my mother worked there. I just knew school wasn't for me.

Jay shared that he did not have a plan after high school. He aspired to be a carpenter like his dad. His main goal was to graduate:

My dad...was a carpenter and of course, I wanted to be like my dad. I didn't really focus on school. I wanted to graduate but I didn't know how important it was that you do good in each class. So ultimately, C's were very comfortable for me. Getting a grade of C. So, there wasn't really an aspiration after graduating. There was really nothing there besides the fact that I wanted to graduate and get that diploma.

Teacher, counselor, school support

Core shared that he [and his Black friend] did not have support from their African American teacher to take a challenging AP course. He shared that she discouraged them from taking the class. He thought she was “looking out” for him [them] to take an easier route:

I interpreted it [the interaction] as somebody who is looking out for me more than anything. I was probably appreciative that she pulled us to the side and said, "Hey, you guys should probably take easier classes. You should take the regular class."

I couldn't process it [racism] at that moment. I thought at that moment that she's probably trying to lookout for us... make life easier for us but that's not her job to decide if our life should be easier when it comes to academia. In fact, it should be the opposite.

It probably made me feel as though I don't have to work hard to get to the top. I can just take the easy route...take the easy classes and it'll work out because you are an athlete.

Prince shared he had no support from his guidance counselor. She advised him to go to a trade school. Prince felt “down” after getting her advice:

I remember my[white] guidance counselor said that I should probably go to like a trade school or something like that. Basically, she said that I wasn't smart enough.

At that time, I remember just feeling down. I graduated like top ten. I had like a 3.94 [GPA] and I was a three-sport athlete. Telling me that made me feel down, but I knew I was better.

Shane shared that he received support from an English teacher. She advised him to seek creative writing:

I had an English teacher sophomore year who said, "You have a writing ability, you're very creative. This is something that I think you should continue [writing]." I did not follow up on that opportunity to nurture what she saw in me. I failed in that instance.

Duke shared that he received scholastic support from a teacher and guidance counselor:

I had the most interaction with Ms. [redacted]. She was black mixed with, I believe, Caribbean... and identified as an African American woman. Besides teaching me English...she taught me about life and other racial aspects and culture that went along with it.

My counselor, Ms. [redacted], was also a woman of color. She saw that I was struggling in school in comparison to the rest of my counterparts. She took the time to help me out knowing that I was having issues... and knowing that I was one of a handful of African American males within the school, she counseled me and worked with me as far as filling out college applications and just trying to get me on my feet.

Jo shared that he did not receive or seek help or support. He shared that up to the twelfth grade, you don't receive much help:

...there was tutoring...but as you make it higher in the education system to twelve grade, you're not really getting that much help.

Broderick shared that the support he received from his counselor was helpful but limited. She guided him by helping him clarify whether he wanted to pursue sports or a military career.

The counselor—she was helpful, but it was just administrative. It wasn't—it was never like I'm going to push you to do this. It was just very administrative, like these are the things that are required of you to make sure all these things happen. Um she knew that I was interested in sports at the time as well. She didn't really push sports on me either but she— what I'm trying to get at is, she would say, okay well if you go military, you're probably not going to do sports. And that military thing was the biggest thing for me at the time, so she just wanted to make sure she was directing me in just clarifying some things for me. so, she was helpful— she was helpful at the end of the day.

Robert did not mention receiving support from teachers, counselors or the school. He shared that he didn't know about AP classes:

I was one of seven black kids that I knew about. I didn't know about AP courses or like the college courses you probably take in high school. I had no clue they existed. I was just going to class and the next class, and the next class, then it's 2:00 o'clock, let's go.

Troy did not report if he received support from a teacher, or counselor.

Troy shared that his school was well resourced with many options:

I had plenty of resources in grade school. All the schools I went to had current textbooks and computers and plenty of educational programs. In high school, they offered advanced English/math. One of the high schools I attended even offered vocational school to learn a trade.

Jay shared that he did not have teacher or guidance counselor support. He said he did not seek guidance from counselors at either school. He shared that his experiences were mainly about "survival":

I would say in Utah, I didn't feel that at all. I just felt isolated like I don't even know what planet I was on. I didn't feel it at either place.

In Utah, the four black kids [in the school], we really didn't talk to each other because each one of us was under different programs. The interaction with school counselors and all that... I don't know, I really didn't look for them for any direction. I didn't even know they were there for direction. In Maryland, that wasn't even a thought. In Maryland, you're just happy to make it home. It was truly like the jungle. Just imagine when you go through the doors you have to go through metal detectors. It would be normal for people to get their guns through...it was just survival.

Family influence

In contrast to the lack of support noted above, the participants noted a strong network of family support. I begin with Core's straightforward statement about the support he received from his parents:

I had a strong support system [my parents], so I guess they would...they would push me in that right direction and tell me about different things to do...make good grades and stuff like that.

Broderick shared that he and his mom moved a lot because of the military but the moves helped him to get a better understanding of the world and people, which he reflected upon to make his decision to enlist:

So, mom not so much because [of us] moving around so much. I kind of didn't want to continue to do that at first. I wanted to call somewhere home at some point in time. I didn't want to keep moving away from friends, but when the opportunity presented itself, I think I kind of [in] passing conversation with her, I kind of understood that I actually got a lot of pros out of that movement. I got to understand people a lot more understood how to connect a lot better with people. I learned all these different things and when I took the time to reflect on that, prior to making the decision to actually go into the military. She said, "it sounds like you kind of want to do it." [I said] Yeah, you're right... and it's free. So free just sits in the back [of my mind] and it's like, well, there's nobody else giving you free education... take it.

I was also coming into the age where I was understanding that a lot of the people in my situation, you know growing up without a father consistently in the household, don't always have these opportunities to prevail. [I said] Get it and then make the best of it when you get there was kind of the mindset.

Shane shared that Shane shared that he was repeatedly told “you have to go to college.” His father helped him put things into perspective and guided him towards a career in football:

I got involved in band. My father said, “band is great, and we paid a lot of money for the instrument that you're learning from today, but when you get to high school you are going to be on the football field.” I get to high school and that was my focus.

Once I started to excel in football, I [now] have to go to college. Now it's time for me to start putting those pieces together. I wasn't necessarily serious then still, but I had to start [putting] pieces together on how to get to college in order to continue playing football.

Prince shared that his grandfather, primarily, influenced his decision for military service:

... my granddad and maybe my great uncles 'cause they were some of the first black Marines, ever. I heard stories about my granddad and stories about the Marines, which made me like... I just wanted to make a change.

Duke expressed that his influence was from his parents but primarily his father who urged him to join the military, if he had no plan in place:

I would have to say my parents [but] more specifically, my father. I would say because my father did 20 years in the military. He had no major concern as to what I want to do with my life as long as I was able to do it or by the time I was 18, and if I had no plan then I would enlist in the military. Because I had no concrete plan, as I was nearing graduating high school, the military became an option.

Jo expressed that his wife pushed him into getting serious with his education:

When I joined the military, I didn't go directly into school. I had to learn the ins and outs of the military and how it is. When I did my first four years...there was time for school but it's very difficult. I was still trying to adjust.

My wife...she was like [claps hands] "c'mon, c'mon let's go you want to do it. The only thing that was really stopping me was me. At that point she just kept pushing me and pushing me. Like she pushed me...like she pushed me [laughs]. It's really her, honestly speaking.

Troy shared that his mom influenced him to make a choice about his future:

My mother influenced me, she told me I was an adult. I graduated high school and it was time to do something, whether I go to college, join the military, learn I trade I just need to make choice.

Robert recalls hearing a tune from a video game (Socom). Socom is a Navy SEALs tactical shooter video game for PlayStation that was created in collaboration with Naval Special Warfare Command. Robert shared that although

he was always around the military, he was not compelled to enlist. He, however, acknowledged that it may have subconsciously influenced him:

There's a video game I grew up playing "Socom" and the theme song, to this day, it makes me want to join the military, and back when I used to play the game, every time it came on, it was something about the brass or something... like that trumpet...the melody. That song was definitely an emotional bedding that was laid and kind of influenced me.

It was never a moment where I saw my dad in uniform, I said, "I want to be just like my dad. "It was honestly... I was so used to the military growing up on military bases. In hindsight, I can tell how those things probably influenced me subconsciously. I don't believe anything consciously pushed me towards the military, it was more so after I graduated high school and the necessity to get financially stable and I saw other people living their best life.

Jay shared that his dad and grandad inspired him to be better.

My grandfather and my dad. My grandfather was that leader. He was a great, great man. When I was growing up, my dad was going through a lot of tough times, so I saw the battle. I just wanted a better life and not living in a bubble that I saw in Baltimore MD. They would show me things that I didn't see in life. Especially, seeing my peer group selling drugs, going to jail, getting women pregnant, and being absentee fathers. It was a revolving door that traps young black men. So, they would show me those things that they did not want me to do, as well as they wanted me to be better than them.

Theme Findings 2: Participants received limited teacher support, guidance, and mentorship in pursuing their career or educational aspirations; they did not seek out such guidance on their own.

I collected nine samples of text using a question aimed at career and educational aspirations and planning. I compiled the narratives and erected the findings from the following questions: In high school, what were your 1) education aspirations? 2) Career aspirations? 3) How, if at all, has racially motivated experience in school impacted your educational aspirations or career

choice? I included sub questions aimed at revealing what types of resources (if any) were available and who (if anyone) provided guidance or support in your educational or career pursuit.

Most noteworthy is that none of the participants mentioned receiving help to guide and cultivate their career and education interests. Based on the data describing the lived experiences of the participants, these Black young men received limited teacher support, guidance, or mentorship in career or education preparation during high school. While it cannot be categorically asserted that this guidance was intentionally withheld or causal, Jo's words are fitting, "...as you make it higher in the education system to twelfth grade, you're not really getting that much help."

A compelling example comes from Core's experience that I previously described (i.e., being advised to drop an AP Chemistry class). To further illustrate my point, I link his "racist injury" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74) (i.e., racist offense) to counter the dominant script of Black boys in high school. In this case, Core had aspirations to become a lawyer, yet faced dismissal and ill advice from his teacher that discouraged him. The teacher was blind to Core's aspirations and potential (as was young Malcolm X's teacher), and her advice stripped him of a suitable educational experience. Freire (2000) would call this interaction "false generosity" (p. 44) because she thought she was helping them make an easier choice. His teacher's "racist injury" (Solórzano, 2002; Yosso, 2005) functions to maintain the structures of white supremacy by "murdering the spirits" (Williams, 1991, p. X). Bettina Love would charge this teacher with "spirit murder" (Love,

2014, p. 14) of Black students' soul through the fixed, and fluid structures of racism, entitlement, and power (Love, 2016; Williams, 1991). Simply put, the "denial of inclusion" (Love, 2016, p. 2) caused by her prediction of Core and his classmate's intellectual ability threatened their right to educational equity.

Although he saw the racist undertones, Core also saw the teacher as somebody who was 'looking out for him.' Because Core played football in high school and had a football scholarship, the teacher made him feel like he did not have to work hard. Her [false] generosity was not in Core's best interests but was necessary to sustain the system in which Black boys are excluded from academics that conform to the norms of whiteness.

The message is clear: Black boys can compete in sports, but not AP chemistry (Noguera, 2003)! Core experienced covert structural oppression for having the audacity to take a college preparatory course. Colleges consider AP courses in a student's application and a distinct disadvantage is given to those without AP credits (Solórzano, & Ornelas, 2004). These structural inequalities in access to knowledge and resources create dire constraints to educational opportunity for Black boys (Harper & Davis III, 2012).

The participants in this study had aspirations such as cartoonist (illustrator), chef, lawyer, radiologist, barber, carpenter, and, in some instances, desires to attend college. Neither teachers nor guidance counselors nurtured and promoted education attainment or achievement of these Black boys (Harper & Davis III, 2012). Critical theorists would say that the participants in the study received inequitable schooling (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Harper & Davis

III, 2012; James, 2012) that systematically deprived them of educational achievement and advantage. As a result, the education system perpetually disrupted their educational experience and created a pipeline of racial inequity in school.

Five participants shared that they did not receive support or guidance during high school; three shared that they received teacher support, although it was limited. The support did not prepare them to meet college preparatory levels or skills they needed to meet the economy. Simply put, the participants did not get access to resources for economic or educational success. Troy reported he did not receive support of any kind, although his school was favorably resourced. “I had plenty of resources in grade school, all the schools I went to had current textbooks and computers and plenty of educational programs. In high school they offered advanced English/math.” Here, Troy is a Black student that attended all well-resourced schools, still without the guidance and support to nurture his aspirations and prepare him for his post high school education or career path. Troy had interest in entrepreneurship rather than higher education. “...only memory I have of actually wanting to pursue a career was being a barber...with the possibility of owning my own shop and other entrepreneurial opportunities.” Despite access to resources in school, Troy lacked educational nurturing to facilitate and encourage his aspirations (Dillard, 2012). From a pedagogical perspective, what would teacher support look like if participants in this study received support and guidance toward career and educational interests? What role then did these teachers and guidance counselors play in nurturing these young Black men to

plan, prepare, and succeed? The answer is clear: one of neglect. From a critical perspective one might ask, do white students need to go out of their way to seek career and educational support during high school to succeed post high school? Likely not. Would a Black teacher advise a white student not to take a course because of their race? No. In a thousand small and not so small ways, students who look like their teachers and come from middle-class backgrounds receive academic encouragement.

Black male educational despondency (e.g., stereotype and low rates of academic achievement) in culturally unresponsive K-12 schools is evidenced in abundant publications (Toldson, 2008; Noguera, 2003; James, 2012; Lynn, et al., 2010; Schott Foundation, 2010). All nine participants had goals that surpassed the deficit-ridden teacher expectations of disengagement in their education (Harper & Davis III, 2012). Duke's sentiment captured this best, "My main goal was, at the minimum, graduate with a B average, get a scholarship and go to college." All the participants persevered and successfully completed high school in spite of the structural racism that threatened their learning, life chances, and educational outcomes (James, 2012). The reason: Family. The importance of family influence is well-documented in the literature (Jeynes, 2007; Epstein, 1996). Harper & Davis III (2012) contend, "Black men's perspectives on the liberating potential of education were usually shaped by their parents and other family members." In other words, Black parents and family members strongly imbue the importance of education. All nine participants shared that a family or community member influenced their post high school decisions, even if it was not higher education.

For example, Shane declared, “In high school I just remember all through school continuously being told [by his parents] you gotta go to college, you have to go to college, you have to go to college. So almost every day before high school, I didn't even think of the military [as] an option. Core said his parents were his support system. “My parents had a strong support system. They would push me [in the] right direction and tell me about different things to do...make good grades and stuff like that.”

Looking through a CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998) lens, I viewed the participant's family influence as shaped by “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005). Communities of color benefit from multiple forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) encompassing a host of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. Indeed, where support from teachers and guidance counselors was inadequate during high school, the participants drew from “familial capital” (Delgado Bernal, 2002) (i.e., cultural knowledge from family) for encouragement to establish a direction for their lives (Yosso, 2005).

Theme 3: Military Recruitment Interactions

I labeled the third theme Military Recruitment Interaction. Military Recruitment Interaction focuses on the participant's overall experience with a military recruiter and the [lack of] knowledge of the purpose of military recruitment in high schools. This theme incorporates subthemes of targeted recruitment, presentation of and perception of military recruitment in high school and scholarship opportunities.

Interaction with the recruiter

Core shared that his interaction with the military was “forgettable.” His interaction was led by talk about making... “a lot of money”, and no talk of scholarship opportunities. I asked Core if the recruiter informed him of scholarship opportunities, he replied, “No...no no no... no no.”

... he [white military recruiter] was telling me there was a [branch redacted] gap and he was telling me about the opportunities that the military can afford me and how it can help me so much in life. [He] kind of framed it in a way as this is my way to achieve financial freedom. I guess break generational curses that didn't exist. But that's how he packaged it to me.

...the first thing he said was "hey, do you want to make a lot of money? I said yeah, who doesn't want to make a lot of money. He said, "hey, let me tell you about this..."He told me that I could actually go to law school and the military will pay for it. He was saying just enlist, the military will pay for it and after a while you get to [go to] college. He was telling me all this stuff, which I later found out was a total lie and I'm glad I didn't do that.

They would always talk about how it's a great benefit to serve and the importance. They didn't talk about service, they just talked about the benefits more than anything. They talked about getting paid and traveling really that was it. So, you didn't, as a kid, know what the military does by the way we were recruited. It was more...this is what the military can do for you. [My overall experience with the recruiter was] Forgettable. It was just a guy who came and was trying to give me a job with a lot of money, but I didn't really take heed to it because I think at that point, I understood the differences between an officer and enlisted.

Robert's interaction with the military recruiter was typical and again, scholarship opportunities were not mentioned:

I remember that the interaction between the Marines [white male recruiter] was a brief conversation. [He said] Like have you ever thought about joining Marines? We get you some benefits and you know... get your education, fancy cars. Like the typical stuff you hear about recruiters. Nothing surprising and nothing over the top. Nothing that could convince me I'm joining the Marines. Although, today, if you asked me to join the Marines it will be between the

Marines and Air Force. The two extremes, the lightest or the hardest. The interaction was brief it was far from interesting but yeah, it didn't result to anything.

I don't remember exact words or conversations, but the understanding was, kind of, I guess to get me early. It's like catch me naïve. I was living with my mom, so my parents were going through a divorce. I'm not sure if they had information on that, but it wouldn't be hard to find out that couples are going through a divorce... maybe that was [the]targeted variable as far as finding kids, which was the poor part of [redacted]. It was where all the broke people lived. It had controlled rent, so it wouldn't be impossible to pull a nice [inaudible] from that group because we are the broke people of that society in that area. So of course, we're trying to find a way out to provide for ourselves. We all want to car, we all want stuff, and so if I was a recruiter, that's where I would start. I'm like why is there Marines here. I don't remember calling them. I don't know how they got my information [or] why they came in my house.

Broderick's interaction with the military recruiter as “cut and dry.”

I was not approached by a recruiting officer or anything. I told my mom about it [the person who came to speak and give the presentation at our school] and then we [mom] started setting up the application [for the Academy] and everything. After I applied, we had an interview with the recruitment officer [white male]. We had a one-on-one conversation. He asked me some questions and I explained to him why I wanted to join and ended up being accepted. After that there was nothing else from military recruitment or personnel.

He was very cut and dry. The questions he asked were very personal questions. I don't think I knew enough at the time about diversity numbers or anything like that to understand if I was filling the quota. But now, being on this side of it, I understand that it is possible. It [interaction] seemed genuine like he wanted me to succeed.

Prince approached the recruiter for information on enlisting for military service. He described his interaction with the military recruiter as “good:”

He [white male] just told me to get in shape. I was too fat. I think I was 210 pounds. Not good. I don't want anyone tell me that I'm too

fat but then I lost weight and I think I was like 180. I shipped. I was a squad leader. I got meritoriously to Pfc. It made me feel good. He [recruiter] took real good care of me too. I think like...it was good.

Jo shared that his experience with the recruiter was good, but he was not interested in the military:

My recruiter... he was very much hands-on and then he was very much involved. Like he always trying to push me. He just kept telling me what I have to do to make it to the highest available rank [rate] before I actually join. So, he was helping me in that aspect. He was just explaining to me and tell me exactly what I needed to do. I didn't really care much for it. For the simple fact that I knew that I didn't want to do it. I knew I didn't really want to join the military, so I was like whatever.

They need people to join the military and to me I always thought it was just a numbers thing. Like they have quotas. They have needs so they are just trying to get anyone they can. Like I said, I was just always against joining the military because it's not something that I saw in my future.

Duke's father set up an appointment with his recruiter after other plans failed.

I wasn't approach in high school it was more the other way around. When it came time to figuring out what I'm wanting to do and getting into the service academies didn't happen. It was more so I reach out to the recruiter [Hispanic] vice the other way around. My father was the one that set it up mainly because he was prior enlisted, and he also served as a recruiter. He had connections to start a process rather quickly. It made me feel that, one, I had an opportunity to do something. However, it made me feel like this was my only choice now and there was nowhere else to go. Because at the time I had no scholarships.

I think he [military recruiter] cared more so about my career aspirations vice the education. He did mention that I would have an opportunity to go get an education while serving. He would share some of his experiences very briefly, but it was... it was very... I don't want to say it was very rushed, but it felt very standard.

Shane described having pleasant interactions with more than one military recruiter except for one when a recruiter used the n-word:

He was a really cool individual. He had talked it up. He kind of gave us some of the hardships and it wasn't necessarily all race, but he just he talked us through some of the hardships of being a part of the Armed Services.

The other one, I remember her (and you have to forgive me 'cause I'm being completely candid here) [she was a] very, very, very, pretty woman and yeah, I mean she might have got me to sign the dotted line ...very, very attractive woman. She finally talked me into having the conversation about joining. She came to the house and the disappointment she came to the house with another male, I was like oh...hi guys. The male did all the talking. He did all the talking and I wasn't moved. It wasn't it what I wanted to hear, and I wasn't interested. That was that. They were all positive experiences.

With the exception of the one, they were all pleasant, very informative and for the most part professional. Again, very, very, very, very positive attempts as to not only make their numbers, but you know, assist with swelling the ranks of the military because we were at war.

Jay shared his interactions he had with the military recruiters Utah and in Maryland:

The one time [in Utah] they did approach was we were taking the SAT. Even taking the SAT, I didn't even know what the SAT was. I went in there and they told me if you take the test, once you're done for the day. I had no value in the SAT, I just wanted to get out of school

Recruiters are very good. They can sell you, especially not knowing. There are really big with, you know, joining the military you can get your education you can travel the world. I asked, you know, what kind of job would I do, and they sold me on being non designated, which means you join the military you don't have any specific rate (rank), so I thought that was a good idea because I can go in get the experience and then choose my rate which is NOT the best.

I had very good interaction with the recruiter [Maryland]. Very good, and it was a white guy, but I didn't even see that. You didn't

see that when you're talking, you know, I enlisted in a city that had a lot of racial problems but that recruiter... you didn't even see that there is a black and white talking.

Targeted recruitment

Core did not feel targeted in high school. He listened to what the recruiters had to say but did not pay much attention to the conversation after that.

No not necessarily. I really didn't give any leeway to it. I didn't really give an opportunity for that to happen. I didn't take their calls. I didn't really respond to people unless the person saw me on campus and we talked there, but I didn't return calls or anything like that. They had my numbers.

Robert shared that he didn't feel "attacked" or targeted for recruitment. He perceived the recruitment policy as "spying" and "invasive."

Personally, I didn't feel attacked. I didn't feel targeted.

...it's interesting the information being dispersed for recruiting purposes. That's a bit... you can turn your head on that a little bit. They are spying a little bit. Obviously, I would like my information a little bit more safeguarded... to simply get addresses and the names, yeah that seems a bit invasive.

Shane shared that he felt targeted:

After joining ROTC, yes, because if I was a recruiter, I wouldn't go after a star football player who most definitely had an opportunity to receive a scholarship at the big University downtown.

Duke shared that he felt targeted.

Yes, there was one time. At random, there was a military recruiter that I had never met. Think I may have been a sophomore or junior. They hit me up on Facebook and asked if I was interested in joining the Marine Corp. I chose not to respond because I had no interest in the Marine Corp. Then some recruiters came to high school. They looked at me directly, however, I didn't approach them.

Prince shared that he was not targeted. I asked him if he felt targeted in high school. He replied: “No.”

Broderick did not have any experiences of feeling targeted by military recruiters. His experience stemmed from the experience when he and his friends hung together in school.

Troy shared that recruiters were present, but he did not feel like he was targeted:

No, I didn't. My recruiter was referred by a friend.

We had recruiters come to school often. I wasn't personally approached by any. They would usually come in to speak to the class and then stick around after class if anyone was interested.

Jo shared that recruiters were there, but he did not feel targeted:

No. I didn't feel targeted. Like I said, I definitely feel like they had a number that they had to make, so I don't think that I was being targeted, like particularly myself. I've seen them yea. They would normally set up a table and then might briefly say something to everyone and if someone is interested, they stop to continue the conversation.

Jay was not targeted but understood that the recruiter had a number to meet:

No. I didn't feel targeted. Like I said, I definitely feel like they had a number that they had to make, so I don't think that I was being targeted like particularly myself.

Perception of military recruitment in high school

Core military recruitment in schools is like “predatory recruiting.” Core opted out of using his video, however, I could hear in the tenor of his voice that he was emotionally upset.

It makes me feel like it's predatory recruiting in the sense of... it's very intrusive first of all. For the military to get this information of students...I think that's predatory. I think that's an invasion of privacy that's too intrusive. To give military recruiters all that

information of juniors and seniors in high school...that's ridiculous. That's what I think. So, the military is entitled to all this information they just get it from these kids, and they can just target the kids that they want...the demographics that they want. They just fill their quotas that way. That's sad. This doesn't sit right with me. Ridiculous. I think it's ridiculous.

Robert shared that military recruitment in school made sense:

It makes perfect sense. Especially, in regard to the living conditions, not mostly conditions, but the financial situation that my family was in at the time. I went to [school redacted] and tried to enroll. It was financial issues that kept me from actually attending. Then with my knowledge of student loan debts and student loans in general (my family definitely isn't paying cash for a college education), so the only other route was to get either scholarships and grants, which I was not in that frame of mind nor was my family, you know, in regard to pushing me forward in that avenue. So that was definitely an option to just be a scholar high school student and then achieve that way, but the only other way that I saw to go college was military, and in hindsight, it makes perfect sense mainly because it's free and all you have to do is exchange four years.

Broderick shared that military recruiting in schools was like “drafting” and the only purpose was to “recruit, recruit, recruit.”

Makes me feel like they're drafting almost. Like it makes me feel like if you weren't going to choose the military, there's no way it's not an option now. Like it has to be an option. And entitled to receive the name address and phone numbers, it's almost like the military is gearing up for something... to me. Um so it seems like a very strategic plan to get more numbers into the military for something.

[long pause] It makes me feel like [pause]. It makes me feel like, one, they think college is what people have to do. Two, it makes me feel like this is targeted at the people who are trying but aren't qualified. They just can't do it. Like they don't meet the bar in some form or fashion. So, the military scholarship and education is the way you have to go. [Pauses] It makes me feel like they're just looking at a bunch of numbers and data. I mean how do you do that? Like they don't know that... like how do you know that? Why would you [they] even add it in there? You [they] can talk about how great the opportunity is. Do that, but you [they] don't

have to... "for some of our students?" Now you have to define some.

[my feelings] Recruit, recruit, recruit. And, for those who don't have more aspirations, make sure you recruit them. So, whoever they are, whoever that "some" is make sure you get them 'cause this is the best opportunity they'll have at a college education. So, whoever those "subpar folks" are make sure you grab them too because they're not going to have another shot. You know how society is, they're not going to get another chance so make sure you give them this one and we [military] can use them in some other way.

Shane shared that the military is not the only opportunity, therefore he is

impartial:

I'm kind of impartial, because in some instances this may very well... might just be the case though he says it could be the best opportunity but it's not the only opportunity. I don't have a negative or positive feeling towards it. I kind of feel like it leans towards some truth if you want to talk about a specific type of student. I mean if you have a guy that barely graduated high school who didn't do too well in the SATs... the SATs is only good for receiving scholarships anyway, so if you did not knock if out the park, you can use that good ole GI bill. Well then this probably might be the best opportunity for you to get the GI bill is to become a GI.

Jo did not know about military has access to student's directory

information for the purpose of recruiting for military:

I didn't know about that. And Uhh [pauses]. I don't think that's right like because and when you're in high school you have such a young mind. Alot of the military, if you are not aware, they can influence you a lot. Um I think joining the military should be a choice that you either wanna do. I don't think they should be able to get the name address and telephone numbers of students. Like I don't think that's right. I will say the military is a good opportunity yes, it is. However, I just don't think that they should have that information.

Troy could not offer a response to this question due to technological difficulties caused by his geographical location.

Jay shared that using scholarship opportunities are “spot on” in military recruitment:

I think they are spot on. Like I told you, I never even thought about college at all. The recruiters are good. I mean they talked about education. I would never... I do not see myself going to college without the military, at all. It wasn't even a thought. I don't even know where I would be in life without joining the military and where I'm at now.

Scholarship opportunities

Core shared his recollection of scholarship opportunities:

Nobody told me about scholarship opportunities at all. Not even a single one. They...yeah not a single one during when the recruiter approached me. They want to keep you enlisted. So, they're not sending you to school to get an education and then sending you off to be an officer it's difficult to be an officer after you're enlisted. It's hard. This sounds good right... it's great rhetoric but it's not true. Simply put, like this policy it's a lie... like it's just not true.

[The policy] is targeted to bolster recruiting in the Armed Services that's all it is. But it's couched in a way as in, hey we're here to help you... we're your savior but in essence and in truism it's policy that is targeting minority and underprivileged neighborhoods to bolster participation in Armed Services. Not send black kids to college or black boys to college and [for] better education. Nah, they just want bodies for the Armed Services that's what it is!

Shane was presented with “money” for school after you serve rather than a scholarship:

I know they put at the forefront that you had the opportunity to go to college based off the GI bill because, at the time, it's a recruitment tool so they put education upfront. They told me about it, and they said you have access to it. It wasn't necessarily presented to me as a scholarship. [It was] moreso money that will definitely be guaranteed to you after you serve or while you serve. It's something that you earn, you earn your GI bill. [Now] Whether you use it or not after you signed out in line and go to basic training... job done. They have done their job and the military has you now.

Jo shared that his recruiter “briefly touched on it”:

I know he briefly touched on it, but it wasn't something I was thinking [about]. I told him that hey I'm coming in here for an education. He was explaining how I can do it. I can't remember the name of the program, but I remember he gave me a pamphlet on it and everything just so I could look deeper into it. The college opportunities my recruiter was talking to me about, I can't remember but I know when once I joined, that's when someone told me about the tuition assistance, which is pretty good.

When asked if the recruiter mentioned scholarship opportunities, Prince responded this way:

Um, yeah but in the same sense, I just wanted to be a [redacted]. [But] I'm not doing this just to get some money, I'm doing this because I want to serve my country.

Robert shared that he did not recall getting information about scholarships:

There was zero talk of educational aspirations. Zero talk of educational logistics through the military. Um yeah, but that conversation was probably 5 minutes where I was just saying no...like no pass. My recruiter, he was just by average. I received no over the top information, nothing informative that would have changed my career path. I can't say I remember that conversation happening. I don't remember anything related to scholarships being mentioned.

Jay shared that his recruiter talked about education and he followed up with schooling:

The recruiters are good. I mean they talked about education.

I didn't think I was smart enough to have additional education but passed the ASVAB. I did really well on the ASVAB and so he [white recruiter] was really pushing for me to do the school thing and I did.

Theme Findings 3: The participants had limited knowledge about educational policy that permitted military recruitment in schools.

I collected eight samples of text using a question aimed at perceptions of military recruitment in high school. I compiled the narratives and erected the findings from the following question: After reading the text, how, if at all, would the dominant narrative about Black boys in public schools affect your career choice? Educational aspirations? I provided the context of education reform policy with regard to the military recruitment clause. I then shared the joint letter by Paige and Rumsfeld (Appendix C) on the screen. I gave an overview of the letter and provided time for the participant to read it. During the interview, I added sub questions aimed at the perception and implication of the letter and reform policy with the focus on access and military recruitment in high school.

During each interview, I explained the relevant education reforms NCLB SEC 9528 now ESSA SEC 8528 access to recruiter information (Appendix A and B), and the joint letter from former secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. In short, the letter explains the challenges of military recruiting and justifies the need to receive directory information of “juniors and seniors in high school” for “Armed Forces recruiting.” Based on their surprised reactions, I concluded that none of the participants knew that this policy existed. Surprisingly, the participants did not request to view these policies or documents; they depended on my explanation. Most (7 out of 9) found this information unsettling, especially the military’s access to the student directory. One participant did not provide a response due to technical difficulties.

Critical theorists have long maintained that the curriculum (both in what is taught and what is not taught) of our schools is designed to reinforce the status

quo (Banks,1995:1991, and Gay, 1995). Ira Shor (1992), for example, bemoans the lack of “critical curriculum explicitly posing problems about the status quo” (p. 20). This was certainly true of the schools attended by all nine participants. When the military is granted access to their personal information and allowed to recruit in their school settings, students should be apprised of intentions and encouraged to question and even debate this practice. After all, the government is infiltrating their learning spaces, places where their future is being molded. Instead, the military’s recruitment practices are left unexamined. Shor (1992) would see this omission as thwarting the critical consciousness of individual students and damaging to democracy: “Education can socialize students into critical thought or into dependence on authority” (Shor, 2012, p.13). Simply put, education can promote student’s self-governing, critiquing thought or maintain inert habits of “mindlessness” (Silberman, 1970) waiting to be told what to do, or worst how to think. Freire (2018) would call this “banking concept of education” (p. 12) in which students receive, store, and regurgitate what is told to them. When students know about political structures and institutions, it affects their civic and political behavior. This knowledge is the “key to the strength and stability of democracy” (Levinson, 2012, p. 33). In other words, it is germane to American citizenship.

Three significant examples from Core, Jo, and Broderick are germane to this theme: 1) Core was troubled when he learned that military recruitment is mandated in schools. He opted out of using video, but I could hear his tone change when he responded. Core adamantly stated that he did not know about

such a policy. He perceived military recruitment in high school as predatory and invasive. "I didn't know about this...I believe a lot of parents would miss it though. It makes me feel like it's predatory recruiting. [Pause] I never saw anything like that with all the forms and permission slips my parents got. I think that's predatory. I think that's an invasion of privacy that's too intrusive." From the optics of CRT, Core's reaction to the policy is likely shaped by the disproportionate demographic composition of Black enlistees in the military. Kleykamp (2007) argues, "African American men serve at disproportionate numbers in the military" (p.67). In other words, Black men represent a significant number of the enlisted force (i.e., no college education) depending on the branch of service. It is likely that Core's reaction comes from understanding the differences between Officer (i.e., college educated) and Enlisted service "Officers are the leaders. They are the ones that lead the enlisted into harm's way." Core likely perceived that obtaining students' directory information perpetuates the disproportionate numbers of Black enlistees. Contrary to his perception on military recruitment in high school, Core does not feel like he was targeted because he did not "give any leeway to it." He recalled, "... no not necessarily because I didn't...I really didn't give any leeway to it. I didn't really give an opportunity for that to happen." Arguably, Core was targeted unknowing of the recruiter's purpose and actions which are mandated by law. In line with CRT, Freire might say that Core's responses are symbolic of the oppressed who are not fully aware that they are oppressed. In line with Freire's (2011) perspective, the

oppressed is drenched in their oppression that their reality is impaired. Simply put, Core does not see himself as oppressed while he is in the face of oppression.

2) Jo stated that military recruiters should not have the student's information for the purpose of recruiting them for military service. Although unnerved by the policy, Jo resisted the idea that the policy was racist. He pointed out that the policy does not specifically say Blacks are the target of recruitment.

He responded this way:

Uhhhhh [pauses] I don't think they should be able to get the name address and telephone numbers of students. I don't think that's right...that one part where it says, recruiters are entitled to receive name, address, and telephone listing, I just don't think that's right... just that part I am against.

Jo does not view these actions as primarily focused on Blacks because it does not specifically say so. "If I don't see anything that directly stating that they're doing that then I look at it as a broad general statement to everyone. I would completely read past it and not even think that." Jo then admits that if the policy specifically said it was targeting Black boys, he would not have joined the military. "I probably would've never joined. I feel like if it targeted black boys then I don't...yeah, I would've never joined. I would've never joined because that's something I'm just completely against. I would've never joined, period. I would have found another way around. I would have done something else."

Seen through the lens of CRT, Jo's reaction to the policy was shaped by the insidious and pervasive qualities of racism. Racist policies can become so pervasive that they take on the facade of normal (Lagotte, 2013, Lagotte Wheeler-Bell, 2015; Matsuda et., al, 1993). It is possible, then, that Jo's response was at

least in part due to his underdeveloped “critical consciousness” (Freire, 2011, p. 36).

3) Broderick compared military recruitment in high school to the “draft” system. He felt like the plan is strategic to increase recruitment numbers and leaves the student with limited no options. “Makes me feel like they’re drafting almost. Like it makes me feel like if you weren't going to choose the military, there's no way it's not an option now. Like it has to be an option. And [being] entitled to receive the name, address, and phone numbers, it's almost like the military is gearing up for something... to me. Um so it seems like a very strategic plan to get more numbers into the military for something.” From a CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998) perspective, Broderick’s response was shaped by the discriminatory processes of the draft system in which a vast number of Black men were selected for military service. Many (Adams, 1968) would say that the strategic goal of military infiltration in education policy is to flex its muscles (i.e., military industrial complex) to exert control over unsuspecting Black men to maintain recruit numbers. Broderick’s response is part and parcel of a dominant military strategic goal: war profit and readiness. In line with CRTofEd (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), I view the omission of education policy in the curriculum which directly affects the participants as placing them at a distinct disadvantage. Not one of the participants had been engaged in an exercise of critically examining military recruitment in schools and its relationship to democratic values. As Kozol (1991) puts it, “white schools follow a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, reasoning and logic” (p. 96). Put

another way, many white schools offer an engaging curriculum that facilitates critical thinking. The participants in this study had a different academic trajectory: They were not given the opportunity to critique educational policy that invited military recruiters into their schools. The lack of knowledge and understanding of this policy weakened the participants' ability to question a hidden [neoliberal] agenda, even as it "hides in plain sight (Gair & Mullins, 2001). More generally, high school curricula limit unfiltered deliberate discussions of the military with regard to the meaning and relationship of notions of citizenship, democracy, patriotism, and service (Anderson, 2011). These actions continue to perpetuate racial subordination, oppression, and sustain educational inequity for young Black boys. An uninformed critically unconscious citizen, in fact, is prey (i.e., a target).

Theme 4: Military as a Career Option

I labeled the fourth theme Military as Career Option. Military as a career option focused on the participant's narratives of what motivated them to enlist in the military. This theme incorporates subthemes of preexisting situations and the historical perception of Black servicemen. This theme relates first to their knowledge of the historical perceptions of black servicemen and second to how these perceptions affected their decision to join the military. To elicit responses to historical perceptions of Black servicemen, I displayed the 1925 Army War Report and Memo (AWRM) as shown in Appendix J. The findings became the crux of the study.

Core shared that he did not come from a military family and was repeatedly told not to enlist in the military because the military is racist. Core, however, wanted to “impact people directly”:

Nobody in my family was in the military. In my community, nobody was really in the military besides people who had been in a long time ago. They all told me actually not to go to the military. They said don't go to the military, the military is racist. They said that over and over again.

I wanted to do something that I felt would impact people directly and being an officer, I feel, I'm doing exactly that. I'm leading people into harm's way is my point. I think they can look up to me, they can trust me. I feel like I can relate to them a lot more than the average officer more than anybody else. It's not that I understand but I can empathize. I feel like I can empathize better than many of my counterparts in the service.

The deciding factor was talking to one of the ROTC instructors that was at the school. He kinda broke it down to me and told me how great of an opportunity it was and the good things that come with being a service member...and [he said] you can be an example in the community. I always thought, I wanted to be part of this [type of] community... so I think that's how, ultimately, I made my decision.

Robert shared that financial constraints led him to his decision to enlist:

The happiest time my life was when I was working for myself. In that moment, I realized I could not support a family on it. I had very little options in terms of if something went wrong with my car, I could not fix it. My income was just barely enough to pay the bills, but I was happy with that because I had time [off]. When I joined the military, it wasn't a decision I made lightly. I considered it for about four years.

Broderick had intrinsic reasons for enlisting in the military. He felt an inner need to serve, lead, and connect with people. When I asked Broderick about his motivation to enlist, he simply responded, “Free college.”

I wanted to do something that would serve people at a margin that was bigger than myself. I knew that I was good with people, to the point where I felt I could lead, learn, and continue to connect [with] people to a point where we can be a great team. I think that drive to connect and understand people while serving them and serving the nation was a big factor for me. I've always known I've got a big heart. I've always known that I can kind of take a little bit more weight on my shoulders than others, and I felt this was the best opportunity for me to do it at the time.

Prince's reason to join had more to do with making money, serving everyone, being able to fight, and looking good. Prince proudly showed off his championship sport accomplishments during the interview. Prince shared, "My reasons are we make money, and we serve everyone. I just wanted to fight. I always wanted to join. I just wanted to always look good... have abs...like be [sharp] yeah."

Shane expressed that he was compelled to serve after 9/11. Nothing particularly from K-12 shaped his decision to enlist. Rather, it was conversations he heard from older men who walked the same path:

... [9/11] that was the first time I was scared. I was also sucked in by the media of the big bad terrorist. I know better today from all angles. I understood in that moment, this was going to be my generation's war and I want[ed] to be part of it in some form, some capacity, I wanted to provide service to it. [In] my sophomore year, second semester, I joined ROTC.

Troy shared that his job, at the time, was not something he wanted to do much longer and school was not for him:

School wasn't an option. Most companies tell you they want you to have experience before they hire you. So, the military seemed like my only option.

Duke felt compelled to join the military. Without a backup plan, he felt he had no alternative options. Duke shared that he would have worked harder in school:

I would say it was more of an ultimatum. My dad sat me down and said if you don't get into a Service Academy, don't have a scholarship, you are going to enlist. So, what was going through my mind was to avoid all that together and figure something out. When that didn't happen, and it came time to [enlist], I was just feeling at my lowest point because I felt like I had nothing else to do or nowhere to go. That's not saying that enlisting was a bad thing and that being an Enlisted Sailor is bad because that's completely false. It's just that it was just not the aspirations that I had for myself at the time.

If I wasn't approved...approach by any military aspect, I would probably... I would have studied harder in high school. I probably would have stayed in a sport it's a better my chances of getting into university that was paid for a different way rather than through the military so that I didn't necessarily have to feel like I had to join.

Alternatively, Jo's focus was on education. However, he shared that he wanted to travel get out of a position where he felt "stuck:" Jo shared, "My reasons for serving the military: One is for education. Two was because I was just stuck in a position where I just wanted to break out of. Three was to travel the world and that was really it."

Jay's respect for his grandmother led him to enlist. Jay expressed that he tried to talk her out of her advice to him, but in the end, trusted her judgement:

Mainly, I joined because of my grandmother, and then I wanted a different life. I don't think my grandmother gave me a choice. I tried to talk her out of it and even showed her the money that I was making. Back then, that [the money] was really good money, but she saw my future... something that I was not looking for. Ultimately, that was my decision, I trusted my grandmother tremendously and I knew her choices were genuine.

Preexisting situations

Core shared that being a leader in the classroom helped to pave the way.

He wanted to lead and to excel at leadership:

In the classroom being a leader kind of paved this way... this path. Not fitting in, conforming to this normal stereotype of you on the football team or you're an athlete, or you're and African American we can't go in and take those AP classes, you can't take the AP exam, you can't score well in your SATs...you're not allowed to do that. That's kind of what led me to want to go to the Academy because it's kind of stepping out the box, stepping up to more. Like why can't I do this[lead]? Like I can do this well and I can be great at it.

Broderick shared that he wanted to change the negative perception of those that doubted him by serving everyone:

When they made us feel like criminals, it made us feel like we couldn't be more than that initially. But if I can serve everybody, of course, I can be more than a criminal. So again, it's to show the people who doubted me, wrong[ly], and show the people who knew me well and knew that I was good at heart, good in soul, spirit, and heart. I think being able to do it with a team and someone who's going with a similar goal, which I saw the military as.

Jay described his preexisting conditions as the “jungle” and the “bubble” that he wanted to escape:

When I was living in Baltimore MD, the environment I lived in, I thought it was normal so to see people getting shot up killed, drugs... that was normal to me. In Utah, there was no drugs, there was no killing, most kids were just playing basketball, playing sports and not trying to go out there and get a girl pregnant. So, it's a totally different perspective in Utah to Maryland.

I did not want to be like a lot of my peers, so I really wanted to get out of the jungle [Maryland] is what I called it. Living back in the bubble [Utah] you still don't feel comfortable. I saw the military as an escape.

Robert shared that he frequently questioned himself about other options.

His decision to join was guided by financial stability:

[Conversations] over and over again and thoughts of, "I'm tired of this and is there anything better? I don't want to go to school, and I can't afford school in this state. What are my options right now?" It was more so a necessity that I joined. Financial stability is something I definitely value and historically it's been amazing in the military mainly because your check is pretty much guaranteed. The military offers some amazing benefits and those intangibles... those resources kind of hold people there and draw people here. My main motivation is just to be financially stable.

Duke expressed that because he came from a military household and didn't have a plan by the time he graduated; he had to enlist:

...because I came from a military family...I was on a military base...besides my father or my mom, I was also I was also seeing military personnel going back and forth throughout the base or throughout the neighborhoods, so I felt subconsciously[that] the military was kind of already hatched into me.

Although Jo applied to several other institutions, he didn't hear back from them. When the military called, he chose to join:

I was also putting in applications for EMT, firefighter, and correctional officer. At that time, I wasn't hearing anything back from any of them. I received [the call] that they wanted to start the process for Corrections. At that point, it was either, do I hop on the bus to [the]military or do I just continue with this process? I just chose the military. I get paid every two weeks, the benefits are good, health benefits are always there, and I get free education. Can't go wrong there.

Troy shared he was working at Red Lobster and wanted more for his life.

Troy said, "I was working at Red Lobster, and I knew it wasn't something I wanted to do too much longer."

Shane said he did not have an alternate plan. She shared that he did not have other things situated:

I didn't have a plan B. I didn't have an alternative plan when I stopped playing college football. I wasn't even secure in a few other things that I needed to have secure before I talked to that recruiter, but I just knew, well, this is it.

Historical perceptions

Core stated he believes this “rhetoric” is still alive in the military today:

Just looking at this, it's alarming. I believe the military still has undertones of this rhetoric and this speech to this day. I just shook my head. This makes sense. It sounds bad for me saying this makes sense. It just makes sense, like it...it makes sense as to why the military, I think, is still the way it is.

Does it make me feel good, no of course not, but it does make me think and realize that hey... this is still present. Like this...there's still thinkers...there's still people in Armed Services who believe exactly in this still. And it's still here... it's here.

I felt like something like this existed, so it doesn't come as a surprise to me. If anything, it's kind of motivating me to want to seek higher position[s]... higher authority.

Robert found the historical perceptions alarming. Robert viewed the perception as an observation and opinion by a certain group of people:

It's alarming. It's is definitely interesting, intriguing to read just to view a time period where... honestly, I can't assume that people don't still think like this. There could be a lot of arguments made that this still exists in terms of perception of the Black male.

There are two things I see in this. I see observation, and I see a perception or a conclusion that somebody landed on based on what they evidenced. Most of this could be true in terms of demographics or numbers metrics as far as Black people. This is very interesting, but it won't affect my opinion or my decision making.

It's definitely on the most intriguing document I have ever seen of a military origin. This is unfortunate, honestly, obviously, to read something like this, but the military is still a great resource to a lot of people today. The military as a whole organization has a lot of flaws, a lot of flaws. It is imperfect just like the civilian world, but there are tons of resources that are available.

Prince shared that the historical perceptions are from a certain period and only reflects the perception of the Black male in the Army during that time. He wanted to distance himself from a branch of the military he finds less prestigious. Prince stated, "That right there is talking about the Army. I'm not in the Army. Back then like I probably would still serve but I would have been in the Army. I don't want to be in the Army."

Duke shared he was worried that he would face certain race-related events. He realized, when he got older, what his dad went through in the military:

Sometimes it does make me feel worried because I know that things that I'll be facing however, I feel like my life experience [and] just how I am as a person will help me get through whatever's going on whatever is going to come next.

It wasn't till I got much older that I realize all the things that my father went through when he was in the military. As a kid, he didn't necessarily bring work home, so I didn't really see too much of that aspect.

Broderick shared that although this perception was from a long time ago, he thinks that it's still here in the military today. Broderick stated:

Um, I think. [pauses] Well, I think... knowing this was a long time ago the thoughts behind it...the thoughts that back it up, the character that developed out of it...um we still see in people today that are in the military.

I think and knowing that the majority of the people in the military as a whole are all... then... it lets us know that they are the majority and that their character is still out there. Those thoughts or those perceptions or whatever are still out there, and we see them today. It makes me want to do better. Um makes me feel like—well, one, I can't say I'm surprised. I'm not surprised. I know people think like this.

Shane seemed to have conflicting thoughts. He assigned these perceptions to “the white population of that time,” but went on to admit that the military still has “a lot of racial issues”. Here is what he shared:

...everyone doesn't think this way today. That would be a dream to say, but I know that is not the case...truth be told there's still a lot of racial issues today in today's military.

I know that most definitely this was the thinking and mindset of those white officers or the white population of that time. The military is made up of people from all over the place. But [they] do not necessarily change their mindset because they put the uniform on. I can't understand how [they] can look down upon me who is competing for the same job and opportunities that [they] feel [they] are afforded and should have because [he is] a white male.

Jo shared that the perception of black servicemen was hurtful to him. He wondered if the perception was “passed down:”

[Long pause] ...it makes me feel a way, you know. I can't help but feel a certain way just seeing how they viewed us... viewed us Black men...back then. [long pause] I'm sorry, I'm getting caught up [laughs].

It makes me wonder if there they still view black men like this, you know 'cause the military's something that's hundreds of years old. There are certain traditions that get passed down. I'm pretty sure there's certain perceptions that still get passed down as well, you know. Its hurtful to think that, you know... [pause] If I knew... joining the military would have not been my choice. Joining the military would not have been my choice career at all. It wouldn't have even been a question.

Troy did not offer a response due to technical difficulties.

Jay said that the historical perceptions are not shocking and was part of the life lessons he heard from his uncle, grandfather, and father:

I already knew it existed. I never seen this letter, but then the lessons that my grandfather my father, and my uncle, especially my uncle...what they taught me is this is not just in the military this is in life. It doesn't shock me. My uncle told me about the Army...that they just wanted Black people to take a bullet.

Although it's been cleaned up a lot, it still plays a major factor in why you don't see Blacks in leadership positions as far as commanding officers. This still plays a factor in why you don't see people of color in leadership roles.

I knew that those obstacles were already there, so it did not bother me when I was approached with those things. I kind of looked at it as a mind game and you're not going to get in my mind to win. Racial equalities still exist in the military. It's there. Its just individuals hide it.

If it wasn't for the military, I would not have attended college. I won't say I won't. At that time, in my mindset, college was not... that wasn't an aspiration for me.

Theme Findings 4: Participants joined the military because of extenuating circumstances, not because they aspired to do so. After learning about the historical perceptions of Black servicemen, they became distressed.

I collected eight samples of text using a question aimed at the historical perceptions of Black servicemen. I compiled the narratives and erected the findings from the following question: After reading the text, how, if at all, would the dominant narrative or perceptions about Black[service]men affect your career choice? Educational aspirations?

I prepared the participants to view a sample of historical text that could be disturbing. I first described the short sample of text on page one. I then shared the 1925 Army War report on the screen (Appendix J). During the interview, I added sub questions aimed at eliciting their reason for joining the military, who if anyone or what if anything influenced their decision, their perceptions and feelings with regard to the historical narrative, and what (if any) alternate routes or career choices they would have made. What was unforeseen was witnessing the

visible and audible emotions of the participants toward the historical perceptions of black servicemen. I expound on their reactions later in this section. I was surprised that some of the participants (7 of 9) did not appear to have known about these perceptions existed about Black servicemembers prior to their enlistment.

The participants connected what they know now as servicemen to the historical views of the past. History tells us that the poor and minoritized Black men disproportionately were drafted into the military (Buckley, 2008; Lutz, 2008; De Angelis & Segal, 2012). Black servicemen, particularly, experienced institutional racism during military service (Murray, 1971; Lutz, 2008). Fast forward to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) many argue that institutional racism persists in the military, but in covert ways (Burk & Espinoza, 2012; Harris, 2009). The participants in this study who serve under the AVF had much to say about their reasons for enlisting in the military and the historical perceptions of Black servicemen as members of the institution. Here are three compelling narratives from Core, Joe and Prince that are relevant to this theme:

1) Core's decision to enlist in the military was shaped by his leadership on the football field and leadership in the classroom. "Just leadership. Um on the football team being a leader. In the classroom being a leader kind of paved this way." His reason for serving was the opportunity to be impactful to others. "I wanted to be an example for my family for my nephews...my nieces. I wanted to do something that I felt would impact people directly." Core was "alarmed" at the historical perceptions of Black servicemen and believes the negative "rhetoric" is

still in the military today. “Looking at this, it's alarming, in the sense of, I see why I believe the military still has undertones of this rhetoric and this speech to this day.” Core became quiet, so I asked him to describe his emotions because his camera was off. Core shared that he was “shaking his head.” Core was processing the information:

I just shook my head. It just made me feel...though...this makes sense. It sounds bad for me saying like this makes sense like it just makes sense like it...it makes sense as to why the military, I think, is still the way it is.”

Additionally, Core shared why he thinks this “rhetoric” still exists:

I think it makes sense because the powers that be have built this system to keep minority [inaudible] as pawns. Like they don't... people truly...I still believe people really believe this... obviously they still believe this in the military... as in the negro male is nothing more than a servant.

Although Core seemed unaware that these historical perceptions were documented, he expressed that the perceptions are motivating. “It's kind of motivating me to want to seek higher position[s]...higher authority.”

2) Jo was against the military but later joined to escape his circumstances and to gain access to free college:

I just got stuck doing this... just [the]same job for five years. I wasn't moving anywhere. I was just doing the same thing over and over. I just had to do something different. I didn't see myself doing that for a career, so I just had to get out of there.

As a result, Jo's decision is heavily influenced by the military's incentives to enlist. “I get paid every two weeks [laughs]. I get paid every two weeks, the benefits are good, health benefits are always there. Um yeah, and I get free education. Can't go wrong there.”

Jo was noticeably disturbed by the historical perceptions of Black servicemen during the interview:

It makes me feel a way, you know. I can't help but feel a certain way just seeing how they viewed us... viewed us Black men...back then. [pauses for 8 seconds] I'm sorry, I'm getting caught up [laughs] I'm sorry, can you repeat that question again?

Jo ponders if this perception still exists:

It makes me wonder if there they still view black men like this, you know 'cause the military's something that's hundreds of years old. So, there are certain traditions that get passed down. I'm pretty sure there's certain perception[s] that still gets passed down as well you know.

Jo would have chosen a different career path if he knew about certain historical perceptions. "So it's hurtful to think that, you know [pauses] If I knew... like...if I'm going off of this, then joining the military would have not been my choice."

3) Jay joined the military because of the heavy influence of his grandmother. He was making good money as a fisherman but his grandmother "throws the military at him" once again. He also wanted a different life:

I'm making pretty good money and then although I'm making good money, my grandmother again throws the military. I'm like this must be the direction I need to go. Mainly, I joined the military because of my grandmother and then I wanted a different life.

Jay knew about the perceptions of Black servicemen and he was not shocked that it existed:

I already knew it existed. I never seen this letter, but then the lessons that my grandfather, my father, and my uncle, especially my uncle...what they taught me is this is not just in the military this is in life.

Jay still sees the military as a place that afforded him the opportunity to “go to college.” “I would never... I do not see myself going to college without the military, at all. It wasn't even a thought.”

In line with CRTofEd, the participants encountered military recruiters during high school and became susceptible to the narrative of the benefits that the military affords. They did not receive (unfiltered) education on the U.S military in and of itself. The participants could not then form their own critical understandings and conclusions regarding the U.S military, what the military does, and worst the history of the military toward Black servicemen. The result was that the participants enlisted in the U.S. military as unenlightened young Black men who accepted military service not necessarily for patriotic duty but for financial security (i.e., college money and stability) that was not afforded by any other institution. Prince was the only participant that joined the military because he was compelled by patriotism. “I'm not doing this just to get some money, like I'm doing this because I want to serve my country.” It is likely that Prince wanted to follow in his family lineage. Prince was a few credits shy of completing his bachelor's degree when he joined the military. “I felt like I did everything that I could, but I wasn't doing what I wanted to because my want was to join the [redacted].” Strangely, Prince’s view of the historical perceptions of Black servicemen was that it was directed only to a certain branch of service during that historical time and not broadly representative of the perceptions of all Black servicemen. “That right there is talking about the Army. I'm not in the Army. I'm in the fucking [branch redacted]” From a CRT perspective, Prince’s reaction is

likely shaped by his childhood trauma when he was called n****r and got into physical fights because of it. Sharpe (2016) would call this living in the “Wake [of slavery]” (p. 15). That is, [re] living the history and present forces of brutality (Sharpe, 2016).

Perhaps the crux of this study is the element of surprise in the participants realization of historical perceptions of Black servicemen. For example, Core became very quiet, as if he was reflecting. Because I sensed his visceral reaction to the documents, I asked him to share his thoughts or feelings. After a few seconds, Core responded repeatedly that “it makes sense.” He said, "I just shook my head. It just made me feel...though...this makes sense. It sounds bad for me saying like this makes sense like it just makes sense like it...it makes sense." Prince adamantly rebuked this perception and called the document "bullshit" and stated, "That right there is talking about the Army. I'm not in the Army." Robert called the perceptions alarming. I observed some modification in his body language although he viewed these perceptions as just someone's opinions during that time period. He shared, "It's alarming. It's is definitely interesting, intriguing to read just to view a time period where... honestly, I can't assume that people don't still think like this." I observed Jo's visceral reaction to the document. He appeared visually shocked and uncomfortable. He took a long pause before he responded. He said, " it makes me feel a way, you know. I can't help but feel a certain way just seeing how they viewed us... viewed us Black men...back then. [long pause] I'm sorry, I'm getting caught up [laughs]." I interpreted Jo's laughter as a reaction to disbelief. I could not see Duke, but after he viewed the historical

perceptions, I could hear a modification in his tone as he expressed concern: "Sometimes it does make me feel worried because I know that things that I'll be facing." Although Broderick said that he was not surprised ("I can't say I'm surprised. I'm not surprised. I know people think like this."), I observed a bit of a deflation in his body language. I observed the same body language and voice in Shane's response. Shane, with hesitancy stated, "...Everyone doesn't think this way today. That would be a dream to say, but I know that is not the case...truth be told there's still a lot of racial issues today in today's military." Lastly, Jay expressed that he was not shocked by the perceptions. However, Jay's tone in his voice was different up to this point. Jay was composed and shared, "I already knew it existed." Jay is talking about the historical perceptions of Black servicemen. Jay's family member influence may have softened the shock that the historical perceptions existed, so he was not alarmed.

I have thus far presented the findings of the study. So, how do these findings answer my research questions? In Chapter 5, I interpret these findings in light of my research questions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes my research and expounds upon the findings. In it, I chart the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions and findings. I then answer the research questions in light of the findings and offer recommendations for critical scholars who wish to advance research within a critical theoretical approach.

Summary of Research

A significant impetus of this research is that military recruitment, enabled by ESSA, occurs primarily in large urban schools attended by poor and working-class Black boys (Furumoto, 2005; Robbins, 2008). This practice suggests the military specifically seeks to entice vulnerable students with promises of educational and monetary benefits (e.g., money for college) in exchange for military service. Importantly, Black students who attend these schools demonstrate lower levels of academic success and are particularly vulnerable to military recruitment because of a substandard education (e.g., education lacking the application of critical thought and education that might lead to higher education or upward economic mobility) (Anyon, 2014). Seeking to exploit their economic and educational vulnerabilities, former Secretary of Education (DoE), Rod Paige, and Secretary of Defense (DoD), Donald Rumsfeld, scripted a rationale for military recruitment of junior and seniors in high school: the military offers minority youth free college, free meals, free room and board, and travel (Lagotte, 2013). While Paige and Rumsfeld link military service to increased

educational opportunity, they erase from the dominant narrative around recruitment the deeper problems of inequitable education systems and structural anti-Black racism in U.S. society. Important to remember in this context is that Black male students across all educational levels have poor college enrollment and limited access to financial resources (Schmidt, 2008; Scott, 2013; Fry, 2010; Ma, 2016; Baber, 2015). The DoD in private dialogue with DoE devised a plan *de jure*: “Student directory information will be used specifically for armed services recruiting purposes and for informing young people of scholarship opportunities. For some of our students, this may be the best opportunity they have to get a college education.” (Rumsfeld and Paige Joint letter, 2002). Regardless of the absence of the term *race*, their statement implies that Black boys’ college attainment is best by way of military service. The likely unspoken targets then for military recruitment are Black boys with few options beyond high school which launches their STMP trajectory. The data consistently suggest that certain student groups (i.e., Blacks, Hispanics, poor and working class); and communities are disproportionately affected by military recruitment in schools (Furumoto, 2005; Elder, 2016). CRT (Ladson, Billings, 1998) enabled me to examine Black men’s K-12 lived experiences through a critical lens in the STMP nexus.

The purpose of this research was to examine how Black men perceive institutionalized violence, racism, and discrimination, while striving for equitable social and economic inclusion in education. My research questions were as follows: 1) How might Black men describe the ways in which education policy influenced their trajectory from school-to military service under the auspices of

education reform? 2) How might Black men describe racially-motivated practices that focused recruitment on young Black boys for military service from primarily economically deprived schools and communities?

Nine Black servicemen who attended urban and suburban public schools voluntarily participated in this qualitative study. The research questions were focused on racially motivated experience in K-12, education policy focused on military recruitment in high school, and the historical perceptions of Black servicemen. Four key themes were erected and summarized in table 5. Each theme represents a different dimension within the contours of the participants' lived experiences within the STMP trajectory.

Table 5: Summary of the Themed Findings

<p>Theme Findings 1: Racial Perceptions by Others Participants faced race-related perceptions; they navigated these and other race-related experiences in order to persevere, fit in, and graduate high school.</p> <p>Theme Findings 2: Career and Education Planning Participants received limited teacher support, guidance, and mentorship in pursuing their career or educational aspirations; they did not seek out such guidance on their own.</p> <p>Theme Findings 3: Military Recruitment Interactions The participants had limited knowledge about educational policy that permitted military recruitment in schools.</p> <p>Theme Findings 4: Military as a Career Option Participants joined the military because of extenuating circumstances, not because they aspired to do so. After learning about the historical perceptions of Black servicemen, they became distressed.</p>
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Response to the Research Questions

Shown in Table 6 are how these themes answer the research questions. I first present each question then provide the answer to the question based on the findings of the study. In the next section, I further discuss how these findings answer the research questions.

Table 6: Summary of Participant Responses

<p style="text-align: center;">RESEARCH QUESTIONS</p> <p>Overarching Question: How do Black men, looking back, describe their experiences in racialized education institutions?</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> All nine participants in the study reported that race was a determining factor in their education experiences.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">QUESTION 1</p> <p>How might Black men describe the ways in which education policy influenced their trajectory from school-to military service under the auspices of education reform</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> All nine participants in the study reported that they had limited knowledge of education policy. Eight of nine participants in the study reported limited access to career or educational planning. Eight of nine participants joined the military with limited options, a need for financial stability, and to get a free education because no one else offers such benefits. One participant reported that they only wanted to join the military to serve their country. Three of the nine participants reported that the practice of military recruitment in school is “invasive,” “discriminatory,” or “predatory.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">QUESTION 2</p> <p>How might Black men describe racially-motivated practices that focused recruitment on young Black boys for military service from primarily economically deprived schools and communities?</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> None of the participants reported that they perceived military recruiting in their school as targeting a particular race. Three of nine participants reported that they felt targeted by military recruiters. Seven participants in the study reported that racialized perceptions of Black servicemen may still exist in the military today.</p>
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Conclusions

This study investigated how Black men, looking back, describe their experiences in racialized education institutions. I designed questions to examine supporting guidance and racially motivated experiences. The conclusions are as

follows: 1) A key finding revealed that participants significantly report that race, gender, and class contributed to their school and military enlistment experiences, which was expected. Many contend that race, for Black boys, has been the primary antagonist and the pervasive ways in which their material reality (i.e., suspensions, expulsions, punishment, and damaging perceptions) was shaped, particularly their education experiences (DuBois, 1961; Howard, 2013; Little & Tolbert, 2018; Noguera, 2003). Little & Tolbert (2018) would say this about these findings: “Black boys are forced to endure educational environments that promulgate the stereotype of their supposed intellectual inadequacy.” Simply put, Black boys’ educational experiences are wrought with institutional and pervasive inequities that they face constantly in the light of getting an education.

Nonetheless, I hoped to have erected contrasting educational experiences, but the data did not reveal such. The present findings suggest that race, gender, and class may contribute to the experiences of Black boys in high school who then become the foci of a STMP trajectory. This may have further repercussions post high school in which Black boys face racially motivated experiences in the military.

Another significant finding was that the participants had limited guidance and support, except from family, in their educational or career planning. I expected the participants to convey experiences about family support and influence. Black families (i.e., parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents), in particular, disburse cultural knowledge and expectations among the family. Yosso (2005) would call this a form of cultural wealth; Morris (1999) calls it a “communal bond” within Black families that Black boys bring with them to their

learning spaces. What I found surprising was the lack of support among the education staff. Nurturing and support was severely lacking in the participant's experiences. Bottiani, Bradshaw & Mendelson (2016) claim that commitment to students' academic engagement is lived out through the forging of supportive relationships. Black students, however, perceive less *positive* support from teachers in the classroom (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Although many factors contribute to teacher-student relationships, compared to other groups, Black and low socioeconomic (SES) students, more often, perceive disparate relations with their teachers (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). These findings align with similar literature that a close supportive relationship with a teacher promotes endurance in the face of difficulties and openness to teacher direction and criticism (Maher Ridley, McWilliam, & Oates, 2000; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wentzel, 1999). The finding in this study, however, indicates that limited [and] negative support the participants received set them up for a life of uncertainty post high school. Their lack of preparedness is an indication that the benefits advertised may have enhanced their decision to accept military service.

Building upon the previous finding, the participants had limited knowledge of education policy mandates for military recruitment of junior and seniors in schools. I was surprised that the participants were unaware of such a policy. This policy and military recruitment clause directly impact the trajectory of high school juniors and seniors. I have argued that Black boys in public schools are at risk of military recruitment because they more predominantly fit the dominant narrative shaped by a crisis of academic failure and dismal future

(Giroux, 2003, Harper, 2012). This could indicate why military recruitment is predominantly centralized in schools attended by Black, poor, working class students opposed to schools in wealthier *whiter* areas (Furumoto, 2005; Lagotte, 2016).

I expected an enhanced discussion from their perspective during the interview, but this was not the case. Woodson (2015) argues that there is a “*contentious relationship* in the social studies curriculum and pedagogy in which it fails to contextualize the complex realities and lived experiences of Black students” (p. 57). In other words, Black students are suspicious of the narratives in dated textbooks which serve as the expert source of civil knowledge (Woodson, 2015). Similarly, Levinson, (2007) asserts that Black youth have lower levels of civic knowledge. Given the evolving social and political climate of the U.S society, one might consider current issues impacting students’ learning space as crucial components of any relevant curriculum. Black students, primarily, would benefit from engaged citizenship (Hope & Jagers, 2014) and a clearer understanding of factors that contribute to their trajectory in schools. The findings of the present study indicate that a lack of knowledge in the impact of military recruitment in school inhibited the participants’ ability to expand and act on critical consciousness (Freire, 2011). This could indicate that the civic knowledge of Black students in high school is suppressed by a weak curriculum and passive pedagogy that lacks the facilitation of current and relevant affairs that impact their lives.

Finally, the findings revealed that participants perceived the practice of military recruitment in school as “invasive,” predatory,” and “spying” but the benefits that are offered by the recruiters outweigh having access to directory information. This was the most surprising finding. I was surprised that the participants used strong words to describe the practices of the military in schools. I was not surprised, however, that they did not consider the possible linkages between military recruitment in schools and the broader sociological and political impact. What I mean by this is they did not ask questions that might help to broaden their understanding of the practice and its impact, or what it signified to them. Based on my observation, the participants appeared detached from the reality that these *predatory* practices affected their school trajectory. Hagopian & Barker (2011) would say the practices of the military recruitment in schools is very similar to what “psychologist characterize as predatory grooming” in which the “child is befriended by a would-be abuser to gain the child confidence and trust, thus enabling the would-be abuser to get the child to acquiesce to abusive activity” (p. 21). In other words, the military attracts, with words or actions, the unsuspecting child into conforming to the targeted activity. Hagopian & Barker (2011) contend that some school districts ignore informing students and parents of their privacy rights with regard to military recruitment. This indicates neglect and failure to adequately protect children. As a result, students who look like the participants in this study and attend similar high schools are open and susceptible to unceasing recruitment for military service, as mandated by education policy. Because military recruitment is centrally located in schools with a high

concentration of Black, poor, working class students (Robbins, 2008), the benefits of military service could remain a primary alternative career choice.

The core finding of the study was the surprise and hurt felt by the participants when I revealed the historical perceptions of Black servicemen. Some perceptions of Black servicemen could have bled into today's AVF. The U.S. military, just as the civilian population, still battles with issues of race and inequality. Would Black servicemen's school experiences or school relationships be different if they were armed with the knowledge of the historical perceptions of Black servicemen prior to enlisting in the military? This and other questions might be pursued in a new study.

Do these findings answer the research questions? Yes. Given these points, the findings of the study decisively answer the research questions. Black servicemen specifically describe, looking back, their lived experiences in racialized education institutions as being forged in an antagonistic environment with limited or nonexistent teacher or guidance counselor support, lackluster learning opportunities, undernourished career and education aspirations, and limited discussion of current sociopolitical issues that might affect students that look like them. Black servicemen describe these factors as aiding their decision to join the military because the alternative to military service would have been financial or educational degradation. This work adds to the limited literature on military recruitment in schools and how the STMP is perceived, lived, and narrated.

Limitations of the Research

I wish to note study considerations and directions for future work. This study employed a qualitative narrative approach, and therefore can claim limited generalizability of the findings. For example, nine servicemembers shared their experiences. The small sample is acceptable in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Despite this limitation, the present study highlights the STMP trajectory of the participants such as the influences, the racially motivated experiences, lack of support and career and education preparedness, and ultimately, the enticement of benefits in the military in exchange for service. My findings suggest that Black servicemen perceived their school experiences are typical and not substantially different from their peers.

Future Directions

The current study was implemented as a result of my efforts to examine the gap in the literature. For example, while existing literature reckon with NCLB and the military clause in it, few reconcile with the student's trajectory that it predominantly affects. A review of the literature yielded few research studies intended to analyze the policies and practices within the school-to-military pipeline from a critical theoretical perspective. Part of examining how race, gender, and class intersect to inform racist practices against students, predominantly Black boys, as they face military recruitment in public schools involves what Saskia Sassen calls the "analytics of exogeny" (as cited Anyon, 2008, p. 2). That is, "one cannot understand or explain x by merely describing x. One must look exogenously at non-x—particularly in the context and social

forces in which the object of study is embedded.” Simply put, an analysis that only offers a description of an experience is insufficient to deepen the understanding of the experience. Rather, a deeper understanding demands the background (i.e., environment), social, and political forces that the experience is embedded. Because few research studies address ESSA and the military clause within it, the current research aimed to examine how the school-to-military pipeline shapes Black boys' trajectories and career outcomes. Given these points, the present findings may help interest groups (i.e., parents, teachers, counselors, and policy makers) broaden their understanding of the ways in which social structures and policies affect the lived experiences of Black men.

My recommendation for future research is rooted in critical theoretical thought. A critical theoretical approach can further examine how racial inequities are further perpetuated in the experiences of young Black boys attending public school. Questions that the present research did not address are as follows: How do Black servicemen, looking back, perceive the military contract they signed when they enlisted after high school? This inquiry could be examined in at least two ways: First, how many Black servicemen, prior to enlisting, understood the military contract? A sub inquiry could ask, how they now interpret military service.

By far, critical to the academic success for Black boys is the inclusion of critical examination of military recruitment and education policy in the school curriculum within a CRT lens. Topics might include the construction of race, racial inequality in education, and Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and

Student Recruiting Information, to name a few. Given the current assault on CRT, however, some school districts might lack the political courage to invite such dialogue (George, 2021).

Finally, I recommend sharing these findings with school districts that participate in military recruitment. Indeed, the social studies faculty and curriculum committee might be interested in integrating a critical analysis of the recruitment process into a civics unit.

Final Commentary

As a Black critical scholar, I was excited to embark on this work to uplift the voice of Black servicemen in their trajectory from school toward military service. I have learned that the curriculum [and pedagogy] for Black boys is *still* at risk. The learning pathways with which to engage Black boys in sociopolitical matters that affect their educational trajectory are severely white-washed or hidden. The result is Black boys are discouraged from developing the habits of critical inquiry that would reduce their vulnerability and possibly reduce their willingness to become fodder for war.

I have learned that, indeed, a curriculum and pedagogy suitable for Black boys is *still* an unfulfilled promise. Critically problematic is the way knowledge of social and political matters that affect them are white-washed or non-existent. Thus, their minds become crippled — in a state of socially and politically unconscious bodies — who are then *vulnerable targets processed* for imminent war at home and in service. As a mother to a Black son, I know how essential it is that young Black boys in high school develop what Freire (2011) calls “critical

consciousness” to navigate their lives and career choices with the unfiltered historical facts that they make mindful informed decisions— whether it is military service or a nonmilitary career. I concede that young Black men are “bound by blackness” (Abedi-Anim, 2017), in which they are assigned to the gloom of a constructed identity in U.S society. Fanon (1970) might say Blackness is a threat to the narrative of Western personhood. Historically, the phobic image of the Black man is bound to stereotypes of bruteness and "degeneracy" (p. xii); therefore, he is not seen as possessing identity. Fanon might also assert that the vision of the Black man's identity in U.S. society is intensely disturbed. For this reason, Black boys must confront their world with hard fast critical intellectual consciousness. Likewise, young Black boys, predominantly, should not face racial targeting because they want free college. The military, indeed, is a reflection of society. These are not two different worlds. Rather, they are different cultures that are made of the same people [and types]. All things considered, the military’s primary function is to prepare for war (McManimon et al.,2013)—not the pursuit of an education. Education, in the military’s interest, is training and education based on military ideology. The military must recruit, and recruitment tools will consist of alluring shiny objects to young, poor, working class students in need of a choice if they do not have a plan post high school— but at cost that might include mental trauma or death.

I close with a final word to the historical perceptions of Black boys and [service] men. Here, I adopt the words from Robert Nester (Bob) Marley’s “War” lyrics. It goes as follows: “Until the philosophy that holds one race superior and

another inferior is finally and permanently, discredited and destroyed, everywhere is war.” I indignantly contextualize *war* as the perpetual and fixed discord with society because of *our* race.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SEC. 8528

SEC. 8528. ø20 U.S.C. 7908; ARMED FORCES RECRUITER ACCESS TO STUDENTS AND STUDENT RECRUITING INFORMATION.18

(a) POLICY. —

(1) ACCESS TO STUDENT RECRUITING INFORMATION.

Notwithstanding section 444(a)(5)(B) of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g(a)(5)(B)), each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide, upon a request made by a military recruiter or an institution of higher education, access to the name, address, and telephone listing of each secondary school student served by the local educational agency, unless the parent of such student has submitted the prior consent request under paragraph (2).

(2) CONSENT. —

(A) OPT -OUT PROCESS. —A parent of a secondary school student may submit a written request, to the local educational agency, that the student’s name, address, and telephone listing not be released for purposes of paragraph

(1) without prior written consent of the parent. Upon receiving such request, the local educational agency may not release the student’s name, address, and telephone listing for such purposes without the prior written consent of the parent.

(B) NOTIFICATION OF OPT-OUT PROCESS. Each local educational agency shall notify the parents of the students served by the agency of the option to make a request described in subparagraph (A).

(3) SAME ACCESS TO STUDENTS. Each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide military recruiters the same access to secondary school students as is provided to institutions of higher education or to prospective employers of those students.

(4) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION PROHIBITING OPT-IN PROCESSES.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to allow a local educational agency to withhold access to a student’s name, address, and telephone listing from a military recruiter or institution of higher education by implementing an opt-in process or any other process other than the written consent request process under paragraph (2)(A).

(5) PARENTAL CONSENT. For purposes of this subsection, whenever a student has attained 18 years of age, the permission or consent required of and the rights accorded to the parents of the student shall only be required of and accorded to the student.

(b) NOTIFICATION. The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall, not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act, notify school leaders, school administrators, and other educators about the requirements of this section.

(c) EXCEPTION. The requirements of this section do not apply to a private secondary school that maintains a religious objection to service in the Armed Forces if the objection is verifiable through the corporate or other organizational documents or materials of that school.

APPENDIX B: SEC. 9528

SEC. 9528. ARMED FORCES RECRUITER ACCESS TO STUDENTS AND STUDENT RECRUITING INFORMATION.

(a) POLICY-

(1) ACCESS TO STUDENT RECRUITING INFORMATION-

Notwithstanding section 444(a)(5)(B) of the General Education Provisions Act and except as provided in paragraph (2), each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide, on a request made by military recruiters or an institution of higher education, access to secondary school students names, addresses, and telephone listings.

(2) CONSENT- A secondary school student or the parent of the student may request that the student's name, address, and telephone listing described in paragraph (1) not be released without prior written parental consent, and the local educational agency or private school shall notify parents of the option to make a request and shall comply with any request.

(3) SAME ACCESS TO STUDENTS- Each local educational agency receiving assistance under this Act shall provide military recruiters the same access to secondary school students as is provided generally to post-secondary educational institutions or to prospective employers of those students.

(b) NOTIFICATION- The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall, not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, notify principals, school administrators, and other educators about the requirements of this section.

(c) EXCEPTION- The requirements of this section do not apply to a private secondary school that maintains a religious objection to service in the Armed Forces if the objection is verifiable through the corporate or other organizational documents or materials of that school.

(d) SPECIAL RULE- A local educational agency prohibited by Connecticut State law (either explicitly by statute or through statutory interpretation by the State Supreme Court or State Attorney General) from providing military recruiters with information or access as required by this section shall have until May 31, 2002, to comply with that requirement.

APPENDIX C: Joint Letter

October 9, 2002

Dear Colleague:

For more than 25 years, the Armed Forces of our Nation have been staffed entirely by volunteers. The All-Volunteer Force has come to represent American resolve to defend freedom and protect liberty around the world. Sustaining that heritage requires the active support of public institutions in presenting military opportunities to our young people for their consideration.

Recognizing the challenges faced by military recruiters, Congress recently passed legislation that requires high schools to provide to military recruiters, upon request, access to secondary school students and directory information on those students. Both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 reflect these requirements.

In accordance with those Acts, military recruiters are entitled to receive the name, address, and telephone listing of juniors and seniors in high school. As clarified in the enclosure, providing this information is consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which protects the privacy of student education records. Student directory information will be used specifically for armed services recruiting purposes and for informing young people of scholarship opportunities. For some of our students, this may be the best opportunity they have to get a college education.

The support by our Nation's educational institutions on behalf of the U.S. Armed Forces is critical to the success of the All-Volunteer Force. It can be, and should be, a partnership that benefits everyone. As veterans, and as Cabinet Members serving the President, we can attest to the excellent educational opportunities the military affords, as well as an environment that encourages the development of strong character and leadership skills.

The Department of Education and Department of Defense have worked together to provide you the enclosed guidelines for compliance with these new laws. We encourage you to examine the enclosed information carefully and to work closely with military recruiters as they carry out their important public responsibilities.

Sincerely,

Rod Paige
Secretary of Education

Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense

APPENDIX D: DoD Top Leadership



The photo shows the disproportionately white (and male) top military leadership, consisting of military service chiefs, combatant commanders, and senior Defense Department civilians.

APPENDIX E: Solicitation Email

Subject: Permission to Solicit for Research

Dear [Sir/Ma'am]:

My name is Derece Vanterpool. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Rhode Island/ Rhode Island College in the joint PhD in Education program located in Rhode Island.

Beginning in September 2020, I am conducting a study that involves an analysis of Black/African American men's K-12 race-related experiences leading toward enlistment in the military. Particularly, I aim to explore how Black men perceive their intersecting identities (i.e., race and gender) and racial experiences in K-12 influenced their school to military trajectory.

This study is confidential. Participation in the study is voluntary and open to Black enlisted men (active or separated) in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

I am seeking your permission to recruit participants for my virtual study who may be affiliated with your organization. If permission is granted, I request your assistance in emailing the recruitment flyer to prospective participants to solicit a sample for the study. I will email the flyer to you following your permission to recruit participants for research through your organization.

Please be aware that the Institutional Review Board at Rhode Island College has reviewed and approved my study. My approval number is #20212013

If you have questions regarding the recruitment, you can contact me at [redacted] [*email redacted*]

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

APPENDIX F: Recruitment Flyer

IRB# _____

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

FOR A RACE RELATIONS VIRTUAL RESEARCH STUDY
September 2020

**OUR
VOICE
MATTERS**

DO YOU identify as a Black / African-American male enlisted servicemember between age 30 to 40?

Your participation is requested for an analysis of your K-12 race-related experiences leading toward your enlistment in the military.

Participation is confidential.
All DoD military members are invited.

Signed consent is required to participate in this study. Interviews are approximately 1-hour.

Email dvanterpool@uri.edu to confirm your interest to participate in the study.

No compensation to participate is available at this time.

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

Image credit: departmentofdefense.gov

This research is affiliated with the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College



APPENDIX G: Sample Interview Protocol

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in your K-12 experiences with regard to your school-to-military experiences. You may volunteer as much information as you want. You can decline to answer or pass on to another question. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. In high school, what were your education aspirations? Career aspirations?
2. How, if at all, has racially motivated experiences in school impacted your educational aspirations or career choice?
3. How would you describe a racially motivated experience in K-12, if any, with teachers, school administrators, or school counselors, or community members that influenced your decision to enlist?
4. Describe your reason(s) for serving in the military.
5. After reading the text, how, if at all, would the dominant narrative about Black boys in public schools or perceptions about Black[service]men affect your career choice? Educational aspirations?
6. What alternative route(s), if any, could you have taken to attend college?
7. What alternate career choice, if any, would you have taken after high school?

We are at the end of the study. Do you have any questions about the research project?

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX H: Executive Order 13950

Executive Order 13950 of September 22, 2020 Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act, 40 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.*, and in order to promote economy and efficiency in Federal contracting, to promote unity in the Federal workforce, and to combat offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Purpose. From the battlefield of Gettysburg to the bus boycott in Montgomery and the Selma-to-Montgomery marches, heroic Americans have valiantly risked their lives to ensure that their children would grow up in a Nation living out its creed, expressed in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” It was this belief in the inherent equality of every individual that inspired the Founding generation to risk their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to establish a new Nation, unique among the countries of the world. President Abraham Lincoln understood that this belief is “the electric cord” that “links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving” people, no matter their race or country of origin. It is the belief that inspired the heroic black soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment to defend that same Union at great cost in the Civil War. And it is what inspired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to dream that his children would one day “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Thanks to the courage and sacrifice of our forebears, America has made significant progress toward realization of our national creed, particularly in the 57 years since Dr. King shared his dream with the country.

Today, however, many people are pushing a different vision of America that is grounded in hierarchies based on collective social and political identities rather than in the inherent and equal dignity of every person as an individual. This ideology is rooted in the pernicious and false belief that America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country; that some people, simply on account of their race or sex, are oppressors; and that racial and sexual identities are more important than our common status as human beings and Americans.

This destructive ideology is grounded in misrepresentations of our country’s history and its role in the world. Although presented as new and revolutionary, they resurrect the discredited notions of the nineteenth century’s apologists for slavery who, like President Lincoln’s rival Stephen A. Douglas, maintained that our government “was made on the white basis” “by white men, for the benefit of white men.” Our Founding documents rejected these racialized views of America, which were soundly defeated on the blood-stained battlefields of the Civil War. Yet they are now being repackaged and sold as cutting-edge

insights. They are designed to divide us and to prevent us from uniting as one people in pursuit of one common destiny for our great country.

Unfortunately, this malign ideology is now migrating from the fringes of American society and threatens to infect core institutions of our country. Instructors and materials teaching that men and members of certain races, as well as our most venerable institutions, are inherently sexist and racist are appearing in workplace diversity trainings across the country, even in components of the Federal Government and among Federal contractors. For example, the Department of the Treasury recently held a seminar that pro- moted arguments that “virtually all White people, regardless of how ‘woke’ they are, contribute to racism,” and that instructed small group leaders to encourage employees to avoid “narratives” that Americans should “be more color-blind” or “let people’s skills and personalities be what differentiates them.” Training materials from Argonne National Laboratories, a Federal entity, stated that racism “is interwoven into every fabric of America” and described statements like “color blindness” and the “meritocracy” as “actions of bias.”

Materials from Sandia National Laboratories, also a Federal entity, for non- minority males stated that an emphasis on “rationality over emotionality” was a characteristic of “white male[s],” and asked those present to “acknowledge” their “privilege” to each other. A Smithsonian Institution museum graphic recently claimed that concepts like “[o]bjective, rational linear thinking,” “[h]ard work” being “the key to success,” the “nuclear family,” and belief in a single god are not values that unite Americans of all races but are instead “aspects and assumptions of whiteness.” The museum also stated that “[f]acing your whiteness is hard and can result in feelings of guilt, sadness, confusion, defensiveness, or fear.”

All of this is contrary to the fundamental premises underpinning our Republic: that all individuals are created equal and should be allowed an equal opportunity under the law to pursue happiness and prosper based on individual merit.

Executive departments and agencies (agencies), our Uniformed Services, Federal contractors, and Federal grant recipients should, of course, continue to foster environments devoid of hostility grounded in race, sex, and other federally protected characteristics. Training employees to create an inclusive workplace is appropriate and beneficial. The Federal Government is, and must always be, committed to the fair and equal treatment of all individuals before the law. But training like that discussed above perpetuates racial stereotypes and division and can use subtle coercive pressure to ensure conformity of view- point. Such ideas may be fashionable in the academy, but they have no place in programs and activities supported by Federal taxpayer dollars. Research also suggests that blame-focused diversity training reinforces biases and decreases opportunities for minorities.

Our Federal civil service system is based on merit principles. These principles, codified at 5 U.S.C. 2301, call for all employees to “receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to” race or sex “and with proper regard for their . . . constitutional rights.” Instructing Federal employees that treating individuals on the basis of individual merit is racist or sexist directly undermines our Merit System Principles and impairs the efficiency of the Federal service. Similarly, our Uniformed Services should not teach our heroic men and women in uniform the lie that the country for which they are willing to die is fundamentally racist. Such teachings could directly threaten the cohesion and effectiveness of our Uniformed Services.

Such activities also promote division and inefficiency when carried out by Federal contractors. The Federal Government has long prohibited Federal contractors from engaging in race or sex discrimination and required contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that such discrimination does not occur. The participation of contractors’ employees in training that promotes race or sex stereotyping or scapegoating similarly undermines efficiency in Federal contracting. Such requirements promote divisiveness in the work- place and distract from the pursuit of excellence and collaborative achievements in public administration. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the United States not to promote race or sex stereotyping or scapegoating in the Federal workforce or in the Uni- formed Services, and not to allow grant funds to be used for these purposes. In addition, Federal contractors will not be permitted to inculcate such views in their employees.

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APPENDIX I: Preliminary Codes

1. Uncertainty of future/no alternative plans after HS
2. Following parental/family member/or community member guidance or influence to make life decisions
3. Perceiving limited career or education aspirations during HS years
4. Receiving differential treatment by teachers or peers
5. Managing negative perceptions of Black students by white teachers
6. Having minimal discussion of scholarship opportunities during school and military recruitment
7. Incidents of differential treatment by white teachers
8. Experiencing stereotyping/negative perceptions based on ethnicity from teachers/peers
9. Experiencing a need to be a part of something/acceptance
10. Realizing limited aspirations to make life decisions
11. Managing discouragement by white teachers
12. Contacted/approached by military recruiter
13. Having the desire to serve and help to others/lead
14. Resolving perceptions of the historical perceptions of Black servicemen in early years of service
15. Evaluating incentives to join the military
16. Expressing limited avenues to cultivate interest or talent
17. Acknowledging awareness of family structure and financial limitations
18. Incidents of positive experiences in the interaction with military recruiters
19. Identifies military recruitment in schools as predatory/intrusive
20. Having awareness of the historical racist perception and ideology after enlisting in military service
21. Incidents of feeling targeted for military service
22. Incidents of being criminalized for being Black in HS
23. Having limited good or positive overall interaction with the military recruiter
24. Internalizing feelings about racial comments, jokes, or slurs during HS
25. Incidents of degradation /isolation during HS
26. Perceived invasive or predatory recruitment in HS

COLLAPSED CODES AND MEANINGS

1. **Perceived Future:** Family influence, career or educational planning
2. **Racial Prejudice:** Managing the experiences of differential treatment, negative perceptions, and discouragement by White teachers and peers
3. **Military recruiter interaction:** Incidents of (positive/negative) interaction with a military recruiter
4. **Perceived rewards from military service:** Motivation for serving in the military
5. **Military recruitment in HS:** Perceived predatory involvement

APPENDIX J: Army War Report and Memo (Partial)

Notes on proposed plan for use of negro manpower. (Not a part of the plan)

1. The fundamental conception upon which this plan is based is that the military man power of the United States, white or black, should be assigned to duties in the Army for which it is qualified. Military considerations alone should govern in war.

2. The negro does not perform his share of civil duties in time of peace in proportion to his population. He has no leaders in industrial or commercial life. He takes no part in government. Compared to the white man he is admittedly of inferior mentality. He is inherently weak in character.

3. The negro issue should be met squarely. The War Department had no pre-determined and sound plan for the use of negro troops at the beginning of the World War. It had no adequate defense against political and racial pressure and was forced to organize negro combat divisions and commission unqualified negro officers. The results are well known.

4. The War Department when occasion demands should be able to present this matter frankly to those who make demands or should know the facts.

The negro, particularly the officer, failed in the World War. The door will not be closed against him on this account.

He will be given an opportunity to take part in war in accordance with his qualifications in exactly the same field of activity as are allotted the white man.

He will be accepted for service by the identical standards applied to the white man.

While in the service he will be measured by the standards applied to the white man. This includes, reclassification, elimination, and rewards of promotion and decoration.

He will be given a sound plan of organization, training and leadership.

He will be given tasks he may reasonably be expected to perform.

If he makes good he will have the opportunity eventually to fight in the war with all-negro organizations.

If he fails to qualify to fight as a race he will be limited to such tasks as he can perform under white leadership.

What he accomplishes in War will depend upon the negro.

5. There should be no sentiment about the use of negro troops in war.

It is not sound to contend that he should bear losses in war in proportion to his population relative to white population. The basis of his employment in war should be that applied to white soldiers, viz., qualifications and capabilities for military service.

In the American Expeditionary Forces in France the negro's total share of losses was 1-1/2%.

Footnotes

¹ ESSA is The Every Student Succeeds Act that governs the U. S. K–12 public education policy. The law replaced its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), SEC 8528 of the policy.

² Title I of ESEA legislation allocates monetary subsidies to Local Education Agencies (LEAs). A requirement of Title I of ESEA legislation requires LEAs to maintain five goals. The goals are (1) “to improve the education of disadvantaged children and youth, (2) to acquire school library resources, textbooks, and other instructional materials, (3) to establish supplementary education centers, (4) to stimulate educational research and training, and (5) to strengthen state departments of education” (ESEA of 1965. Public Law S9 -10, p.1).

³ Opt-out under ESSA means that a parent of a secondary school student may submit a written request, to the local educational agency, that the student’s name, address, and telephone listing not be released for purposes of paragraph (1) without prior written consent of the parent. Upon receiving a request, the LEA may not release the student’s name, address, and telephone listing for such purposes without the prior written consent of the parent. Each local educational agency shall notify the parents of the students served by the agency of the option to make a request. (U. S. Department of Education Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)).

⁴ The terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably. I have rendered Black, in this work, in upper case to regard this term as a heritage, an experience, a cultural and personal identity” to constitute a specific group (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 516). Black or African American is a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

⁵ In this work, the term "white" does not constitute a heritage or cultural group. Therefore, it is not capitalized.

⁶ Minoritized suggests that race is a “social construction of underrepresentation and subordination” in which persons are not born into minority status but rather rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of Whiteness. (Harper, 2012, p. ix)

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