

**A FUNCTIONING DYSTOPIA: HOW THE VOICES OF STUDENTS OF COLOR  
EXPOSE THE MORAL DEBT IN A DIVERSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

A Dissertation

by

**KIMBERLY MISHELLE GIBSON-MCCLAIN**

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Chair of Committee,	Lynne M. Walters
Co-Chair of Committee,	Marlon C. James
Committee Members,	Monica Neshyba
	Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan
Head of Department,	Michael De Miranda

December 2019

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Copyright 2019 Kimberly M. Gibson-McClain

## **ABSTRACT**

Student voice in education is a component that is becoming increasingly important to the academic growth and success of students. Studies have indicated that student input is a critical element in sustaining optimal student performance. When students lack a connection with their educational experiences, they often become disconnected from the educational process. The reluctance to actively incorporate student voice, particularly for individuals of color, can be attributed to the historical suppression by European Americans. Subsequently, the inability of individuals of color to have a voice, particularly in an academic setting, that is not reflective of the perspectives of the orator, often diminishes their aspirations to express their viewpoints.

In the past decade, the correlation between understanding the perceptions of students and continuous academic achievement disparities has gained noteworthy attention. Unfortunately, this discourse has done little to improve the academic trajectory of students of color. This study analyzed the research on the achievement gap through specific impacting frames within school systems, the limited inclusion of the voice of students of color, and the misguided practices educational systems have implemented to influence the perceptions of students of color.

This study further sought to analyze the perceptions of students through their lived experiences in a diverse educational environment. Focusing on the voice of the students, the researcher conducted an analysis of campus realities and academic inequalities. Ideally, the purpose of an educational environment is to develop and optimize the learning potential of all students. When an educational system has the appropriate structure: there are academic systems in place, there are accountability measures being utilized, and there are rigorous curriculum foundations. The reality is that while educational systems may proclaim to have these protocols in place, data consistently indicates that not all students are succeeding equally.

In education, multiple components come together to develop an atmosphere that optimizes learning for all students. A perfect educational environment a “*utopia*” would involve highly qualified educators, appropriate materials and resources, and support systems that were available to ensure all students were successful. This research examined the continuation of academic disparities that have developed in an educational environment which claims to ensure academic achievement for all students, but in actuality was riddled with inequalities and academic disparities, in other words, a functioning educational “*dystopia*.”

Through the findings of this study, the researcher constructed an analysis that described the operational status of this targeted educational environment as a *Functioning Dystopia*. This final diminution process of the data produced three relevant themes: *collective perceptions*, *collective discourse*, and *collective dysfunctionality* creating a *Functioning Dystopia*. A *Functioning Dystopia*, for the purpose of this study, portrayed a high functioning academic setting with the appropriate amenities and substantial funding resources, but failed to properly optimize the academic growth for all students, particularly students of color.

## **DEDICATION**

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to my Savior, Jesus Christ, for without Him I would not be where I am today. I am thanking Him for sustaining my strength and belief that all things are possible if we continue to believe in Him. Next, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my husband and my sons, who have seen me through this journey from beginning to end. They have sacrificed their time with me to allow me the time to focus on getting through this process. Their continuous encouragement, support, and understanding even when it required going without me, cannot be measured in mere words, and I can never repay what it meant to me to have them there every step of the way. Finally, a special thanks to my mother, who was there to provide any assistance I needed, whenever I called.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with sincere appreciation that I would like to initially acknowledge Dr. Novella Carter for providing this opportunity for me to step out of my comfort zone and embark upon an educational opportunity of a lifetime. To my current chair, Dr. Lynne Walters, your tireless efforts to get me through the ending stages of this process have been nothing short of amazing. Having your guidance during these last few months, has been such a source of support. Words cannot express how appreciative I am that you were able to find the time to guide, instruct, discuss, and push me through.

To my co-chair Dr. Marlon James, thank you for your willingness to assist in this process by giving of your time and assisting me in finding a focus for an enormous amount of data. It is really easy to become lost at sea when one is paddling through waves and waves of data. Thank you for helping me narrow my focus and maintain my path safely along the data shore.

To Dr. Valarie Hill-Jackson, you probably never knew the impact you had on me, but I am grateful for the opportunity to experience your expertise in the education field. From your articles and books that have assisted me in my study to your emails of encouragement, thanks.

To all my committee members, I extend my deepest gratitude for your patience and understanding as I have survived this process. My time at Texas A&M University will never be forgotten, and I will forever be proud to say that I am an Aggie.

## **CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES**

### **Contributors**

This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Professor Lynne Walters, advisor, of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, Professor Marlon James, co-advisor, of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, Professor Monica Neshyba, committee member, of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, and Professor Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan, committee member, of the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development. All work for this dissertation was completed independently by the student.

### **Funding Sources**

There were no outside funding contributions to acknowledge related to the research and compilation of this document.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Education of Individuals of Color in America .....	1
Pre-Civil War Era .....	3
The Emancipation Era.....	4
The Segregation Era .....	5
The Desegregation Era.....	8
The Civil Rights Movement.....	10
Resegregation.....	11
Tracking .....	12
Origins of Tracking.....	12
Intelligence Testing.....	13
Impact of Tracking.....	14
The Achievement Gap .....	17
Origins of the Achievement Gap .....	17
National Achievement Data.....	20
New Commonwealth Achievement Data.....	21
Closing the Achievement Gap .....	21
National Education Reforms.....	22
No Child Left Behind Act (2001) .....	22
Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) .....	24
New Commonwealth Education Reforms .....	25
Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All New Commonwealth Students (2015).....	26
New Commonwealth State Department of Education Turnaround Framework .....	27
The Voice of Students: A Catalyst for Academic Achievement .....	29
Social Cultural Theories .....	29

Frame Analysis Theory.....	30
Education Debt.....	30
Stereotype Threat Theory .....	31
Statement of the Problem.....	32
Justification for the Study .....	37
Research Questions.....	39
Dissertation Design.....	39
 CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW .....	 40
Frame Analysis Theory.....	40
Framing the Achievement Gap .....	43
The Structure Frame .....	44
The School Frame .....	48
The Student Frame.....	50
Framing the Voice of Students .....	52
Defining Student Voice.....	53
Resisting Student Voice.....	54
Promoting Student Voice.....	55
Education Debt.....	56
Theoretical Framework.....	58
Stereotype Threat .....	59
Perceptions of Students of Color .....	62
Counselor Perceptions of Students of Color.....	63
Educator Perceptions of Students of Color.....	64
Self-Concept .....	66
Student Self-Concept .....	67
Academic Self-Concept .....	67
Self-Efficacy .....	68
Student Self-Efficacy .....	69
Summary.....	71
 CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY .....	 73
Research Design.....	73
Rationale for Research.....	74
Case Study Method.....	74
Participant Selection .....	75
Site Selection .....	79
Data Collection .....	81
Focus Groups .....	82
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	82
Triangulation.....	83
Data Analysis.....	84
Secondary Analysis.....	85
Constant Comparative Analysis.....	85



Coding Structure .....	86
Summary .....	87
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS .....	89
Emergent Themes .....	89
A Functioning Dystopia.....	89
Local School and Community Context.....	93
Collective Perceptions .....	97
How Students Saw Themselves .....	97
Student Perceptions.....	98
Stereotyping .....	100
How Students Saw Their Potential .....	101
Student Expectations.....	101
Student Aspirations.....	102
How student Saw Their Pathways .....	103
Student Transitions .....	104
Student Preparedness .....	106
Collective Discourse .....	107
What Students Say About Themselves .....	108
Student Voice.....	108
Campus Culture .....	109
What Students Say About Staff Members .....	110
Instructional Practices.....	110
Administrative Practices .....	112
Collective Dysfunctionality .....	113
Classroom Dynamics .....	114
Classroom Structures .....	115
Classroom Management.....	115
Discipline Practices.....	117
Curriculum Disparities.....	118
Tracking .....	119
Coursework.....	120
Summary .....	122
CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS.....	125
Discussions .....	125
Limitations .....	135
Implications for Future Research.....	135
REFERENCES .....	137
APPENDIX A.....	177

## LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1	Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017 on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Course Taking ....	34
Figure 2	Matrix of Achievement Paradigm.....	42
Figure 3	A Functioning Dystopia.....	92

**LIST OF TABLES**

		Page
Table 1	The Condition of Education Report 2018: Scale Score Comparison by Ethnicity-Based on 2015 National Data.....	20
Table 2	Participant Descriptions .....	78
Table 3	Winslow High School Demographics for the 2011 and 2012 Student Cohorts.....	96
Table 4	Winslow High School Course Placement Comparisons by Grade and Ethnicity for the 2011 and 2012 Cohorts .....	128

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study examined the voice of students of color in a suburb in northeast United States. This study sought to show how students of color experienced minimal rigorous academic opportunities resulting from their cultural background, historical racial constructs, and stereotypical predeterminations.

Student voice in education is a component that is becoming increasingly important to the academic growth and success of students. Studies have indicated that student input is a critical element in sustaining optimal student performance (Simón, Echeita, & Sandoval, 2018; Gibau, 2015; Harris et al., 2014). When students lack a connection with their educational experiences, they often become disconnected from the education process (Healey, 2014). The reluctance to actively incorporate student voice, particularly for individuals of color, can be attributed to the historical suppression by European Americans (Takaki, 2008). Subsequently, the inability of individuals of color to have a voice, particularly in an academic setting, that is not reflective of the perspectives of the orator, often diminishes their aspirations to express their viewpoints (Takaki, 2008).

In order to understand the necessity of student voice inclusion in the educational arena, it is essential to understand how the discriminatory ideals of European Americans manifested into the depravity of academic growth and creation of achievement disparities for students of color throughout American history.

### **The Education of Individuals of Color in America**

In one of the most globally recognized countries, generations of students of color continue to endure persistent ethnically infused patterns of inequality in American education

(Berry, 2018). Research supports the fact that such inequalities have been ingrained as a systematic structure of American education for more than four centuries (Darby & Rury, 2018). Historically, individuals of color in America have had to endure educational conditions of oppression that were often degrading, deplorable, and dysfunctional of which the residual effects can still be felt today (Rury & Darby, 2016). It is within this painstaking era of subjugation that individuals of color found themselves deprived of the opportunity to have a voice or benefit from educational advancements in the United States (Childs, 2017; National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; Ogbu, 1986).

There are arguably several components that impact the educational attainment of students of color. Ineffective educators, minimal access to rigorous curriculum and resources, and inadequate facilities have been indicated as contributors to sustaining limited academic growth of students of color (Nielsen, 2013). When reviewing suspension data in secondary education, students of color were subjected to exclusionary discipline practices nearly three times more than European Americans (Wright-Edelman, 2017). Research increasingly reflected the inclusion of student voice as an engaging process to potentially resolve educational inequalities (Anderson, 2018). Traditionally, student placements, resources utilized, and career trajectories are often predetermined, particularly for students of color, minimizing their opportunity to have a voice that impacts educational processes and reforms (Minor, 2016).

Educating individuals of color in America has been well documented historically as a quest that has been compromised through legal statutes, but the inability of educational systems to overcome the detrimental actions of the past continue to be a challenge to rectify (Gooden, 2009; Wilson, 2010). Researchers have indicated that education in America continues to be plagued with the perpetual cycle of underachievement for students of color (Kotok, 2017;

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2018). The attainment of a broader perspective on how systematic racial structures impacted the voice of students of color required a historical analysis of the constructs that were formed to hinder the educational development of individuals of color, which started with the institution of slavery and has continued with the onset of resegregation practices (Smrekar & Williams, 2010).

### **Pre-Civil War Era**

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the attainment of an education was an important aspiration for the African American culture (Childs, 2017). The expansion of industries, like cotton in the South, increased the greed of European Americans to impose controlling bondage tactics (Du Bois, 1935). The institution of slavery was a means of ensuring that individuals of color remained uneducated and to maintain the European American suppressive ideologies and sustain their financial growth (Du Bois, 1935). Through the implementation of numerous laws and restrictions, the educational opportunities of African Americans were severely limited (Childs, 2017). These laws dictated that it was illegal for enslaved African Americans to learn to read, have a place of worship, become married, or be considered a citizen in America (Span, 2015). The implementation of these laws, particularly in the South, was based on a fear of slave rebellion and the potential loss of a free workforce for European Americans (Butchart & Roller, 2004).

It should be noted that despite the implementation of these laws, the resilience to acquire knowledge for African Americans remained evident. Sabbath schools, located in both the north and south, were prime examples of how African Americans sought to obtain an education despite their circumstances. These schools operated during the evening and on the weekend and taught basic literacy skills (Span, 2015). This commitment to educational achievement would be

removed from the shadows and to the forefront nationwide through the onset of the American Civil War, which subsequently led to the Emancipation Proclamation.

### **The Emancipation Era**

The act of being emancipated from slavery was only an initial step toward equality, but the resistance to equality both now and then remains present in American society (Hollinger, 2016). In the South, slavery was the prime means of profit for their labor driven industries of cotton, tobacco, corn, and other agriculture economies (Carola, 2017). The North was not as agriculturally inclined as the South, relying more on an industrialized economy, and as such opposed the inhumane system of slavery. The economic divide was too difficult for the North or the South to reconcile, and the American Civil War would be an unavoidable outcome (Carola, 2017).

The end to the Civil War was through the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, which declared all individuals in the United States to be free (The Emancipation Proclamation, 2017). The implementation and recognition of the Emancipation Proclamation would not be solidified until the passing of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment which eradicated slavery and awarded citizenship with equal protection under the law respectively (Brandwein, 2016).

The Reconstruction period followed the American Civil War and provided individuals of color with a positive outlook on their future as Americans, but this optimism would be short-lived (Brandwein, 2016). Even with the passing of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment, followed by the Fifteenth Amendment, which allowed African American males the right to vote in the United States, the concept of equal status as citizens was not readily accepted by opposing forces who sought to circumvent these amendments, particularly in the South (Carrington, 2017). In order to prevent the full implementation of these amendments, *black codes* were enforced by

several states to restrict the Civil Rights of individuals of color (Carson & Bonk, 1999). *Black Codes*, while they varied by state the general intent of these codes was to prevent African Americans from becoming landowners, having access to public transportation, and voting (Carson & Bonk, 1999). These codes directly impacted the civil liberties of individuals of color physically, socially, and educationally according to Randolph-Ward (2010), and eventually evolved into supporting the doctrine of “*separate, but equal*” (Carson & Bonk, 1999).

The Emancipation Era was a mixed period of promise and disappointment for African Americans. Their eagerness to obtain equality, during this period was met with the reluctance of European Americans to implement sustainable equality practices with fidelity (Hucles, 1993).

### **The Segregation Era**

The mistreatment and domination of individuals of color were preserved by methods of racial aggression and injustices socially, financially, and legally (Randolph-Ward, 2010). Through both the court systems and the U.S. Constitution, the disenfranchisement of individuals of color would be solidified for the next seventy years (Knowles, 2007). One of the initial cases that fought against educational injustices during this time was *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849) (Martin, 1998), where the plaintiff’s daughter was denied access to a school closer to their residents based to their race. This case, according to historians, would become the precursor to the landmark case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (Horton & Moresi, 2001; Kantrowitz, 2012; Rathbone, 2010).

There were a number of individual court cases that sought to contest discrimination, but the one case that established the precedent for the legal acceptance of “*separate, but equal*” also referred to as Jim Crow Laws, which were used to replace *Black Codes*, was *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) (Goode, 2010). Jim Crow Laws were a socialized systematic means to continue



European domination for nearly eighty years through the provision of separate accommodations and facilities (Litwack, 1998). These laws would impact every aspect of living for individuals of color, emphasized racial subordination, and were legally upheld in the judicial system within the United States (Feagin, 2012).

*Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was initially based upon the Louisiana statute that mandated equal, but separate traveling accommodations for individuals of color and European Americans on trains within the state. The ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* would subsequently impacted all areas of life for individuals of color, but education in particular. The prolonged institution of Jim Crow Laws generated a lasting legacy for individuals of color, which they have still not recovered from in K-12 education (Randolph-Ward, 2010). The doctrine of “*separate, but equal*” placed individuals of color in educational settings that lacked appropriate resources and materials, were held in substandard facilities and operated under limited to no financial support from the government (Randolph-Ward, 2010).

The educational attainment for individuals of color before segregation was in a dismal, nonexistent state and the onset of the Jim Crow era would further exacerbate any attempt of them obtaining a quality education (Cobb, 2011; Randolph-Ward, 2010). The conditions of education in northern United States were not ideal, but in the South, education for individuals of color was even worse (Cobb, 2011). The availability of public schools for individuals of color was limited and if they did exist the buildings and learning conditions were deplorable (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016). In addition to the below standard facilities, the instructional materials were often outdated and lacked accuracy or presented a European rendition of events and outcomes (Hedges *et al.*, 2016). Through the emergence of activists for individuals of color, the fight for educational equality would gain momentum, for education was

seen as a means of solidifying social and economic success (Carter, Coleman, Greenberg, McNeil, & Smith, 1998). One positive contribution to gaining access to an education during this time was the Rosenwald Schools (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). The development of these schools came through a collaborative effort between Julius Rosenwald, a businessman and philanthropist, and Booker T. Washington, of the Tuskegee Institute (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). This primary goal of these schools were to provide individuals of color in the South with access to an education, and “between 1913 and 1931, [Rosenwald] facilitated the construction of almost 5,000 schoolhouses for southern rural Black children” (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011, p. 823).

Charles Hamilton Houston, a Civil Rights attorney, would be one of the most influential Civil Rights attorneys in American history. Houston was educated at Amherst College and Harvard Law School, where he later served as dean and was the legal counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Carter *et al.*, 1998). Houston made it his primary focus to dismantle the institution of Jim Crow (Carter *et al.*, 1998). Houston who became known as “the man who killed Jim Crow” (Jersey, 2002) developed a legal strategy that challenged the inequalities of the principle “*separate, but equal*” as it related to public educational practices in the United States. The relentless efforts of Charles Houston were manifested in such individuals like Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and other lawyers, who executed Houston’s educational approach to attack discrimination and legally ended the Jim Crow philosophy with the passing of the 1954 landmark court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Jersey & Pollard, 2002).

## **The Desegregation Era**

*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) would be recognized as one of the most instrumental Supreme Court decisions on educational equality and reverse the statutes established during the segregation era (Span & Hobson, 2010). The judgment affirmed that schools that were separate based on race were academically and fundamentally unequal and ordered the immediate integration of public schools in the United States (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 2017).

The *Brown* decision was a momentous victory in American history. However, the ruling to desegregate did not generate an educational environment that was ready to address the needs of individuals of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). School integration had to go beyond integrating ethnic groups, but there had to be an intentional effort to address the academic gaps that were generated from years of disenfranchisement (Ladson-Billings, 2006), which history has indicated was not a process that would be accepted by European Americans, specifically in the South.

The South would be hard-pressed to implement the statutes demanded by the *Brown* decision. A significant challenge for desegregation was from resistant European Americans (Patterson, 2001). The process of Massive Resistance, also known as the Southern Manifesto, was adopted by some southern states who fought under the Confederate flag during the Civil War (Brown-Henderson & Brown, 2016; Epps-Robertson, 2016). The guidelines of the Southern Manifesto included providing funds for student tuition for European Americans who attended segregated schools, a student board that was designed to regulate and monitor segregation implementation, and lastly it allowed the governor the authority to close all public schools who sought to integrate (Brown-Henderson & Brown, 2016; Epps-Robertson, 2016). In order for *Brown* to reach full fruition, it had to overcome local and state governments,

particularly in the South, who had their own interpretations and implementations of the phrase “all deliberate speed” (Epps-Robertson, 2016).

The North, who may not have been as documented as the South, in its resistance to the implementation of the *Brown* decision still showed a reluctance of executing the law to its fullest extent (Steel, 2009). In Boston, the 1972, case of *Morgan v. Hennigan* would be a landmark case of many cases that sought to dismantle the continuation of segregation practices post *Brown* (Abrams, 1975). In this case it was discovered that the Boston School Committee enacted practices such as “student assignments, feeder patterns, open enrollment, utilization of facilities, use of portables, construction of new schools, busing to segregate and faculty discrimination in hiring, assignment and promotion” (Abrams, 1975, p. 7) to maintain a system of racial separation. The final ruling, in this case, found the Boston School Committee guilty of intentional segregation procedures, which led to the desegregation of busing practices in Boston public schools (Delmont & Theoharis, 2017). The implementation of this ruling would be met with direct opposition from European Americans, which led to protest and riots, and ultimately the migration of European Americans out of urban areas to suburban communities (Nutter, 2010; Ramsey, 2017).

The lack of urgency in enforcing the *Brown* ruling, coupled with years of discrimination, according to some scholar has left a legacy of inequality that continues to be a struggle for students of color to overcome (García, 2018; Hunter, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2006). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), while paramount in initiating the path to end the segregation for individuals of color, was only a first step, the full application of the ruling would not be seen for another ten years, with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

## **The Civil Rights Movement**

The Civil Rights Movement has been well documented in research as a discourse of sustaining freedom, equality, and justice in a country that was founded on a principle where all individuals are created equal (Andrews & Jowers, 2018; Bell, 1992; Greene, 2015; The Civil Rights Movement, 2016). The Civil Rights Movement was a movement to demonstrate the civility that can be organized and practiced amid a hostile climate (Hawksworth, 2010). The pursuit of equal rights dates back to the early nineteenth century, but most researchers accredited the start of the modern Civil Rights movement to the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott (Shultziner, 2013). This event would be the first organized collective effort of individuals of color in a non-violent manner to protest the vestiges of discrimination (Hawksworth, 2010). In addition to the bus boycott, another non-violent protest practice were Sit-Ins, as Schmidt (2016), explained was very successful in championing the call for social equality. Schmidt further clarified that while the notoriety of the 1960 Sit-Ins was well publicized, this was a practice that originated in the 1940s, with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) a non-violent interracial group that also focused on dismantling racial inequalities.

The Civil Rights Movement was an opportunity for individuals of color to have their voices heard in an unprecedented manner. The actions of those brave individuals within this movement, which were painstaking at times, culminated in the 1964 signing of the Civil Rights Act, and subsequently the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Hawksworth, 2010). The victories attained from the passing of these key legislative acts cannot be underestimated; however, the current reality of the racial divide in America socially, economically, and educationally remains (Berry, 2018). The United States has seen significant advances in the acceptance of diverse populations, yet the veil of segregation continues to retain the application of its principles in America (Tatum, 2017).

A primary goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to have equality in all aspects of life for individuals of color, but in education in particular (Ramsey, 2017). The Civil Rights Movement would generate the enactment of key civil rights laws that prohibited discrimination in education programs (Office of Civil Rights, 1999). The establishment of these laws were paramount in removing discriminatory barriers that impeded individuals of color, individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and women from obtaining an education or pursuing a career (Office of Civil Rights, 1999).

### **Resegregation**

Although landmark cases have coincided with historical events to dissolve the once legal system of “*separate, but equal*” in education, inequalities, and stereotypical practices continue to regenerate themselves socially and academically (Steffes, 2016). The desegregation era established school integration, but resegregation has become the standard for maintaining racial separation in public education (Donnor & Dixson, 2013). In his study, Wade (2017), described the process of “White flight” whereby European Americans warranted leaving areas populated mainly with individuals of color due to an increase in criminal activity or a decline in property values. While schools were not directly separating students by race, education has been separated by default due to socioeconomic status and geography (Berman, 2013).

One component that served as a driving force for the resurgence of segregation were housing patterns, coupled with zoning laws (Vercelletto, 2018). The characteristics of low-income neighborhoods have been portrayed as areas of high crime, limited resources, and amenities (Jocson & McLoyd, 2015), where the standards of houses met minimal standards. The structure of a neighborhood has a profound impact on educational practices as Erickson and Highsmith (2018) explained:

That African American families were locked out of growing White suburbs via discriminatory lending, exclusionary zoning, and deed restrictions, and poorer families were concentrated in city centers through intentionally segregating public housing policies, which helped to explain how today's schools became highly racially segregated.

(p. 2)

As resegregation of neighborhood was a reality outside of the school, one process within the school that was discussed in this study as a companion to resegregation is the practice of tracking.

### **Tracking**

Tracking practices in educational systems across the United States have generated extensive discussions from both supporters and non-supporters. The development of tracking, also referred to as ability grouping by some educational scholars, dates back to the middle 1900s (Welner & Oakes, 1996). In order to understand academic tracking practices in the United States, it was necessary to know the origins of tracking, the influences of intelligence testing, and the impact of tracking in academic settings.

#### **Origins of Tracking**

The process of grouping students was initially a method used to rapidly promote students who were deemed to have advanced academic skills at the elementary level (Ansalone & Biafora, 2004; Kulik & Kulik, 1982). For some schools, the use of ability grouping formats, was merely to cover-up growing student concerns, outdated organizational structures, and demands from a growing economy (Otto, 1934).

A racially diverse school was more likely to participate in tracking practices (Lucas & Berends, 2007; VanderHart, 2006). In schools with racially diverse student populations, students

of color were targeted to enter lower and less rigorous academic curriculum levels (Lucas & Berends, 2007). Research continues to reveal that students of color demonstrated a lack of college readiness due to minimal placements in advanced courses in secondary education settings (Colgren & Sappington, 2015). Historically, educational opportunities for students of color have been met with great adversity when compared to European Americans, which has rendered them with limited foundational academic skills to support success in advanced course settings (Giersch, Bottie, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016).

### **Intelligence Testing**

During the post-WWII period, the United States experienced an increased rate of births, referred to as the *baby boom period* (Zhao, 2014). This unprecedented period of population growth would affect all aspects of American life (NCES, 1997), particularly in education. There would be an increase in new school construction and teaching positions in order to manage enlarged enrollment surges (NCES, 1997). One way to accommodate the growing student populations in educational systems was the development of a method of separating students academically. The most widely used method of evaluating a student's level of academic readiness and comprehension was by using standardized assessments (Neill, 2016).

During the 1900s, the use of testing instruments that measured a student's level of intellect emerged in educational systems (Oakes & Lipton, 1990). There would be several social scientists who focused their studies on developing a means of determining an individual's level of intelligence. Psychologists, Albert Binet and Theodore Simon, designed an initial intelligence measurement tool in 1905, known as the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale (Peterson, 1925). As interest in the ability of students to learn increased, so did the development of testing instruments. The research conducted in 1912, by William Stern a German psychologist, devised



a means of measuring the intelligence level of a student quantitatively by obtaining an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score (Oakes & Lipton, 1990). According to Dale, Hernández-Finch, McIntosh, Rothlisberg, and Finch (2014) another notable psychologist, Lewis Terman in 1916, expanded upon Binet-Simon's first scale and made it available in the United States where it became known as the Stanford-Binet scale.

The use of intelligence exams and measurement scales generated a means to group students, which created an academic separation in educational systems (Neill, 2016). The use of IQ exam results became a primary means of justifying the placement of students on academic or vocational tracks (Biafora & Ansalone, 2008). The development of such exams was also a means to validate the identification and classification of students into academic achievement levels of high, middle, or low (Oakes, 2005). The process of academically labeling students evolved from terms like high, middle, and low to a more derogatory categorization of above average, average, and below average (Oakes & Lipton, 1990). Academic identification promoted the formation of cultural biases that have resulted in questionable student placements and minimal educational opportunities (Neill, 2016).

Tracking practices in the United States can be traced back over eighty years. Tracking is a practice that relied heavily on the results of testing scores derived from either achievement or IQ assessments (Loveless, 2016). Tracking also was a practice that gave students minimal input and limited their academic course trajectories and preparedness for post-secondary careers.

### **Impact of Tracking**

As indicated earlier, academic tracking placed students on specific curriculum pathways that were often reflective of predetermined academic ability levels, generated from various standardized testing instruments. This predetermination process was important when analyzing

the perceptions of students who were in educational systems that utilized tracking. In a study that included twenty-five secondary schools that operated under a system of tracking, Oakes (2005) centered her research on how students within tracking environments felt about being a part of an educational system that placed students on specific academic trajectories. The findings of Oakes' study reflected that a student's level of self-esteem had a direct correlation to their educational experiences and often impacted their ambitions for the future. Students who were on an advanced academic track maintained a positive or confident self-worth, while those students subjected to remedial or lower tracks had a doubtful view of themselves which reflected a diminishing expectation of their academic outcome (Oakes, 2005).

In secondary education, high school students arguably encounter challenges both academically and socially. A primary concern for educational systems across the United States continues to be increasing the academic growth of underperforming students (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Colgren & Sappington, 2015). Furthermore, research continues to indicate that for high school students in the United States, students of color are repeatedly targeted for courses that require minimal academic rigor, while European American students were targeted for advanced course selections (Duncheon, 2015; Garland & Rapaport, 2017; Oakes, 1983). When students were not exposed to rigorous curriculums and high-level instruction, they often lack the knowledge and skills set required to succeed in taking advanced or college prep courses (Hallett & Venegas, 2011).

In another study, Yonezawa and Jones (2006) evaluated the perceptions of students from twelve high schools to determine their knowledge level on the practices of tracking. These authors quickly realized that the students were familiar with the process of tracking and further revealed that most students believed that a tracked system did not benefit all students in the same

way. The participants in their study were acutely aware of the inequalities embedded in tracked educational systems, for instance, the use of assessment data to determine abilities, curriculum standards that lacked rigor, and educators that utilized marginal teaching practices. Students who started in lower academic tracks rarely transition into higher academic tracks throughout their academic career (Abiola, 2016). The inability of a student in a tracked system to change their status was a flaw that opponents to tracking indicated as a primary restriction (Rubin & Noguera, 2004). In her extensive study on tracking practices Oakes (1985) concluded that in schools with sizably diverse student populations, insufficient preparation and inadequate academic outcomes for students of color were often the result of them being placed in minimally rigorous content courses. Research further supports that schools often utilize forms of grouping practices as an organizational tool for managing student populations and assisting in delivery curriculum objectives in a unified format (Burris & Garrity, 2008; Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Lipton, 1990).

Decreased tracking implementations could positively increase the equality of academic outcomes, particularly for students of color, by exposing them to opportunities to gain knowledge in a non-restrictive or predetermined environment (Ansalone, 2001). In another study, Modica (2015) determined that “academic tracking helps to perpetuate racial boundary keeping among students, influences students’ thinking about the relationship between race and academic success, limits students’ educational opportunities, and creates unbalanced classroom dynamics that stifle learning for all students” (pp. 77-78). Research has recognized the importance of minimizing the process of academically sorting students as a means of reducing achievement disparities between ethnicities (Leicht, 2013). The practice of educational tracking

or ability grouping has impacted the achievement of students particularly in the content area of mathematics and reading as Leicht explained that:

Math achievement variance is highest in countries that practice between-school tracking, lowest in countries with little or no tracking, and in between in countries that practice between-class tracking. The reading achievement variance is higher in countries that practice between-class tracking than in countries with little or no tracking. (p. 1)

### **The Achievement Gap**

The underachievement of students of color has been well documented in academic literature (Dittrich, 2014; Lewis *et al.*, 2008; Snyder & Adelson, 2017; van Batenburg-Eddes & Jolles, 2013). The achievement gap and reform practices in American education were rooted in politically historic rhetoric and are a continued source of considerable controversy in academic literature (Gillborn, Demack, Rollock, & Warmington, 2017). Gillborn *et al.* (2017) carefully analyzed 25 years (1988-2013) of performance disparities between African and European American students during their compulsory schooling years. Their research emphasized that educational policies and reforms that focused on assessments as a measure of academic achievement did not improve the academic growth of students of color, but caused more significant disparities. This study reviewed the origins of the term achievement gap, national and state achievement data, and reform attempts aimed at reducing achievement disparities in educational systems at both the national and state levels.

### **Origins of the Achievement Gap**

The origins of the expression achievement gap dates back to the late 1950s (Jones, 2013). In a published article in the New York Times, gaps in academic performance between African and European Americans were described as “*Negro lag*” (Fine, 1956). The use of the terminology “*Negro lag*,” now referred to as achievement gap, was the manifestation of the 1956

Congressional hearings in Washington DC involving segregationist, who opposed desegregation (Jones, 2013). The primary goal of those hearings was to discredit the ruling of Brown and to postulate that academic achievement of European American students was declining due to the desegregation implementation in school in Washington D. C. (Jones, 2013). *The Coleman Report* was an unprecedented study for its time, and the findings within the study placed the responsibility of academic performance on the student, their families, and their community rather than the educational system, facilities, resources, and educators (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, and York (1966) conducted one of the most extensive studies of its kind entitled the Equality of Educational Opportunity, which studied the equality of educational practices in America. In this study, Coleman et al. (1966) sought to gain a deeper understanding of the academic opportunities in education for all students. The initial results from the report more commonly known as, The Coleman Report, determined that school settings had no impact on student achievement and that a greater impact was sustained from a student's social background and family structure.

Conversely, researchers have increasingly disputed the accuracy of the Coleman Report's findings (Bartz, 2016; Borman & Dowling, 2010; Hanushek, 2016) that implied that social and family experiences were the primary origins of the achievement gap. The Coleman Report at the time of release had a profound effect that "shaped the sociology of education, national education policies, and wider public and scholarly opinions regarding the contributions of schools and schooling to equality and productivity in the United States" (Borman & Dowling, 2010, p. 1202). The information provided in the Coleman Report would set the parameters for how education in American public schools rationalized achievement disparities (Bartz, 2016). The findings within this report provided the foundation for placing the lack of academic growth between student

populations on the student, their family, and their community (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). The implications of this report would impact policies and procedures in American education. When requesting federal funds, the Coleman Report served to weaken the validation for increasing expenditures and shifting the focus from barriers to achievement being within the school to those elements outside of school like “home environments, a student’s background, race, or socioeconomic status” (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, pp. 5-6)

However, Borman and Dowling’s (2010) research, contradicted the Coleman Report, to indicate that the campus environment does undoubtedly make a difference in academic student outcomes. When the results from their sample student population were analyzed, there was nearly a 40% difference in verbal achievement between schools targeted within this study. In contrast to the Coleman Report findings, these Borman and Dowling (2010) disagreed with the Coleman report in their research by indicating that:

The effects of schooling are mediated by processes occurring at multiple levels of school system organization, from within-school processes, like tracking and ability grouping, to the organizational context of the school, to higher level policies imposed by district, state, and federal mandates and decisions. (p. 1204)

Researchers continue to debate the rationale behind the formation of achievement gaps in American education, with each entity citing causes that can be generated from both cultural and structural influences (Morales, 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016; Owens, 2018; Pitre, 2014). While most scholars acknowledge the existence of continuous performance disparities, what is even more perplexing is the most appropriate and effective means of decreasing them (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Goddard, Skrla, & Salloum, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2015).

## National Achievement Data

The *Condition of Education Report 2018* as produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)<sup>1</sup> confirmed enduring academic performance disparities in grade 12 between students of color and European Americans. Table 1 provided a comparison of scale scores by ethnicity based on 2015 national data. In education testing results for a student are often reported through a process of converting their raw score (the number of questions correct) into a score that correlates to a common “scale”, which allows for variances in difficulty to be measured consistently when using multiple forms of an assessment (Tan & Michel, 2011). According to this report, the average scale scores in 2015, showed a decline in mathematics and reading performance between racial groups.

Table 1

*The Condition of Education Report 2018: Scale Score Comparison by Ethnicity-Based on 2015 National Data.* (Adapted from NCES, 2018, pp. 103 & 115)

Ethnicity	Mathematics		Reading	
	Scale Score	Point Difference	Scale Score	Point Difference
African Americans	130	30	266	29
Hispanic Americans	139	21	276	19
European Americans	160	-	295	-

<sup>1</sup> *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)* – is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States.

## **New Commonwealth Achievement Data**

The New Commonwealth (pseudonym) Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN) (2015), analyzed mathematic and reading results from the year 2013, utilizing the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP)<sup>2</sup> data. Their report confirmed that 12<sup>th</sup> graders from the northeastern United States received a high ranking when compared to other participating states. Further review of this data indicated that the ranking was misleading and generated a false impression of overall statewide success. A closer analysis revealed that within that *high-ranking* only six percent of African American students and 12% of Hispanic American students were proficient in mathematics and they both demonstrated only 26% proficiency in reading, which means that about one out of four students of color could read on grade level. Schools in New Commonwealth have also provided students of color with a minimal optimal learning experience, limited rigorous course opportunities, and used reforms to sustain inadequate academic achievement (Orfield & Ee, 2015).

## **Closing the Achievement Gap**

Educational reform practices have failed to prepare students of color in high school for post-secondary educational settings adequately (Boser, Baffour, Vela, & Center for American Progress, 2016). National policymakers and state education agencies continue to express concerns over the current state of education, which has generated numerous viewpoints on the best pathway for education reform. This section will initially review prior and existing legislation that focused on education reforms nationally. Then a review was conducted on key

---

<sup>2</sup> *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)* – is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. Paper-and-pencil assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and in Technology and Engineering Literacy



reforms attempted in New Commonwealth that did not close the academic performance gap for individuals of color.

### **National Education Reforms**

*No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*. After the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, the next significant effort to impact educational practices in the United States would come in 2001 (Husband & Hunt, 2015). The publication of the federal report *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 stated the realistic and brutal truth about the disgracefully bad state of education in America in comparison to the world.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. NCLB sought to structure a restorative academic research-based approach to address the growing concerns about the quality of education in America (NCLB, 2001). NCLB expanded the role of the national government in determining the trajectory of educational practices and procedures in the United States (Husband & Hunt, 2015). According to the guidelines of the NCLB Act of 2001, the primary goals were to reduce the academic performance gaps, ensure that students of color received an appropriate and rigorous education, and improve the academic fortitude of students in American education when compared to students globally.

To achieve these goals, the U. S. Department of Education incorporated an accountability system. In summary, state education agencies were charged under NCLB as follows:

No Child Left Behind was designed to change the culture of America's schools by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works. Under the act's accountability provisions, states

must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. (Ed.gov, 2003, para 1 & 2)

NCLB (2001) also authorized the distribution of funds to support the development of practices that removed such methods as ability grouping or tracking and implemented plans to increase college preparation pathways. Under NCLB states were also required to maintain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward state established proficiency standards for all subpopulations by the year 2014 (Steinberg & Quinn, 2017). NCLB (2001) further required core content areas to establish assessments on academic standards annually that demonstrated schools were engaging in practices that resulted in reducing performance gaps and increasing student knowledge in core content areas.

NCLB was a comprehensive reform that “had far-reaching intended and unintended effects, both positive and negative, on a broad range of educational factors including teacher morale, instructional practices, administrative decisions, and student achievement” (Husband & Hunt, 2015, p. 217). NCLB also required educational systems to incorporate an accountability system on student performance in core courses in order to receive Title I funds (Husband & Hunt, 2015).

A key provision of NCLB included a directive that mandated the hiring of educators that were deemed *highly qualified* (Gamson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015). The assumptions of NCLB according to Gamson *et al.* (2015) was that when educators have the appropriate teaching credentials and instructional abilities a decrease in the academic achievement gaps and an increase in student growth would be the result.

Despite its aims to improve the quality of education in the United States for underperforming students, the written optimism of the act did not transfer in implementation (Husband & Hunt 2015). In theory, the components of NCLB promised a change in education for students of color, but in reality, NCLB generated greater scrutiny of the educational practices in America and necessitated the continuation to seek a reform that could sustain equality in academic attainment (Means & Taylor, 2010).

*Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)*. The most recent attempt to address the continuous achievement disparities in education in the United States came in the fall of 2015. President Barack Obama had an auspicious and historic moment to restructure educational legislation to restore continuity and support in educational systems across the country. To achieve these goals, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. ESSA was the next reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. ESSA was structured to not only reduce educational disparities, but it required schools to incorporate practices that provided all students “not just high achieving students or those in upper-income neighborhood schools” (Darrow, 2016, para. 7), with access to advanced course placement opportunities.

While previous education reforms included marginal input from all stakeholders, ESSA “...required districts to consult with all interested parties, including teachers” (Fennell, 2016, p. 63). Unfortunately, those interested parties did not include the students themselves. Essentially, ESSA initiated the transference of educational power from the national drill down enforcement of NCLB back to state and local agencies (McGuinn, 2016). In a synopsis of ESSA, Whitehouse (2016) indicated that

ESSA empowers state and local decision-makers to develop their own systems for school improvement based on evidence, rather than imposing the cookie-cutter federal solutions set forth in the NCLB act. The greater power given to states and districts is a positive change from the prescriptive federal requirements of the past several years. (p. 16)

The pendulum of federal government involvement in K-12 education has transitioned from one extreme to the other over the past 50 years (Cross & Education Commission, 2015). The historical and unprecedented signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 both generated more federal government involvement that focused on improving all aspects of education in America, with a heightened focus on the quality of academics for students with a low socioeconomic status (Gamson *et al.*, 2015). The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 commenced measures to scale down the involvement of national government in state and local education systems across the United States. ESSA provided states with the malleability to develop interventions that targeted struggling learners and ensured rigorous achievement opportunities for all students (Whitehouse, 2016). Unfortunately, national education reform continues to struggle with constructing an appropriate and sustainable approach to support state and local education agencies in a manner that balances federal subsidiaries and state autonomy.

### **New Commonwealth Education Reforms**

The signing of ESSA returned the majority of the responsibility for ensuring that all students succeed back into the hands of state and local entities. The need for education reform is evident in some aspect in every state in the United States. However, the appropriate process on how to ensure an efficient and effective approach to reform has been postulated in different ways in almost every state, and the state of New Commonwealth (pseudonym) was no exception.

Schools in the northeastern region of the United States have a long educational lineage. The history of educational practices within this region dated back to the 1600s and was accredited with establishing one of the first school systems available to the public (Steiner, 1893). New Commonwealth has evolved from its Puritan history to “immigrant populations, people from low-income families and young people of color” (Desmond & Goldman, 2008, p. 18).

The most appropriate approach to address the academic disparities in educational systems in New Commonwealth has not been discovered. The separation level of educational achievement between low-income students and their affluent counterparts for this region continues to remain an area of concern (Yergin, 2015). To address achievement disparities New Commonwealth in 2011, established the creation of an Achievement Gap Task Force<sup>3</sup>. This task force released a comprehensive strategy in 2014, to concentrate on diminishing gaps in achievement, entitled the *Master Plan to Eliminate the Achievement Gap in New Commonwealth* (Wixom, 2015). The primary components of this plan included improving educational practices within and outside school campuses, increasing higher education opportunities and an overall state goal of eliminating academic gaps in performance by the year 2020 (Wixom, 2015).

In 2015, New Commonwealth in their General Assembly implemented key legislative actions to focus on decreasing academic disparities between prosperous students and economically disadvantaged students. The undertaking of such a daunting commission by the Achievement Gap Task Force generated the enactment of the following two reforms.

***Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All New Commonwealth Students (2015).*** In 2015, the State Board of Education along with the Commissioner of Education, renewed their

---

<sup>3</sup> Achievement Gap Task Force – a group created in 2011 by the state legislators to oversee the implementation of the improvement of schools in the state.

commitment to ensuring excellence and equity for all students in the state of New Commonwealth by outlining a five-year comprehensive reform plan. This was a plan with ambitious goals and far-reaching expectations of improving the academic performance of students in schools with poor academic growth. One of those goals was to expect optimal performance levels from all students through the “implementation of rigorous academic standards to prepare students to graduate ready to succeed in college, careers, and civic life” (CSBE, 2015, p. 7). In addition, it would be the intent of this plan “to ensure that secondary school academic expectations are aligned with postsecondary entrance and success criteria” (CSBE, 2015, p. 7). Other critical components of this reform were to increase the rigor of the curriculum to reflect higher learning standards, employ highly qualified educators, and structure all campuses to reflect an environment that is safe, inviting, and able to accommodate a student population with diverse background and multiple learning styles.

***New Commonwealth State Department of Education Turnaround Framework.***

America’s lowest-performing schools had generated renewed concerns from policymakers, who demanded a “*turnaround*” in the academic growth of these schools (Thompson, Henry, & Preston, 2016). The New Commonwealth Commission on Education Achievement<sup>4</sup> further indicated that at the time of their report, 120 schools were on the federal government’s needing improvement list for more than five years. The practice of turning around a school was defined as a purposeful and detailed strategy to address persistent academic deficiencies (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, Lash, & Mass Insight, 2007). To assist performance challenged schools with academic improvements, the national government offered funding through the U.S. Department of Education’s School Improvement Grants (SIG) (Tanenbaum *et al.*, 2015). The New

---

<sup>4</sup> New Commonwealth Commission on Educational Achievement – is a volunteer group of individuals that were privately funded to analyze the status of education in New Commonwealth.

Commonwealth State Department of Education's 2016 SIG plan included four specific turnaround reform domains: talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations. Under the NCSDE (pseudonym) Turnaround Framework the lowest performing schools in New Commonwealth focused on: (1) talent: by implementing practices that attracted highly qualified educators and retention strategies that ensured longevity of employees (2) academics: through the use of research based coursework that promoted an optimal level of academic achieve for all students to succeed (3) culture and climate: by creating an academic community that focuses on student centered learning through rigorous and engaging practices that included stakeholders both within and outside of the school (4) operations: that utilized procedures and systems that generated an atmosphere of structure and purpose through appropriate time management and use of funding allocations (CSDE, 2016).

ConnCAN (2015) explained in their *Field Guide Report* on the New Commonwealth's Turnaround Framework that while the Commissioner's network:

Promised to start [turning around] the state's low-performing schools, the policy and operational conditions must be overhauled in order to provide these schools with the highest chances of success, and more importantly, to deliver on the promise and investments made when the state passed the law in 2012. (p. 1)

The need for improvement in educational practices in the state of New Commonwealth remains a source of concern. The reality is that "every day, the New Commonwealth system knowingly subjects nearly 40,000 of high school our most vulnerable students to inadequate schools that were not preparing them to succeed" (ConnCAN, 2015, p. 18). They further indicated that improving the quality of education for students in underperforming schools in New Commonwealth would require significant changes in educational laws. While most states

emphasized reforms on paper, the application and implementation of those reforms failed to meet targeted goals of reducing academic performance gaps for the very students the reforms were designed to serve (Tanenbaum *et al.*, 2015).

### **The Voice of Students: A Catalyst for Academic Achievement**

This study will expand upon previous research on a suburban high school in the state of New Commonwealth. The research on the students within this educational environment showed that there was an achievement gap at all grade levels and in core content areas for three consecutive years (James *et al.*, 2013). Previous research further determined that student voice for individuals of color in this educational system was limited (James *et al.*, 2016). Students of color had minimal input on their academic placements and were consistently subjected to limited exposure to advanced level courses (James *et al.*, 2016).

In education, administrators and educators have historically assumed the responsibility of deciding the appropriate academic pathway for students (Bergan, 2003). Education has evolved to the point where the inclusion of student voice is warranted to generate engagement and sustain active participation (Shafter, 2016). The development of reform practices that seek student voice increase learning through the creation of an educational partnership (Shafter, 2016). Student voice, as seen through a social-cultural lens, provides an alternative discourse to account for academic disparities in education for students of color (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

### **Social Cultural Theories**

To explain the different educational outcomes between students of color and European Americans “well-conceptualized social psychological interventions, which focus on individual and socially, constructed beliefs” (Borman, Grigg, & Hanselman, 2016, p. 21) was utilized. The relevant social-cultural theories used to discuss the current status on the use of student voice to



address the achievement gap for this study included the frame analysis theory, education debt, and stereotype threat which will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review.

### **Frame Analysis Theory**

Frames can breakdown broad concepts into smaller compartments (Goffman, 1974).

Benincasa (2017) indicated that

Frames provide answers to that question. In an attempt to work out what exactly is going on, people *frame* events and situations; that is, they attach meaning to them. In addition to operating on this dimension, which we can call cognitive, frames operate at a social level as well because they guide people's actions. (p. 84)

Frame analysis theory is being applied more frequently in educational research (Bannister, 2015; Gray & Williams, 2012; Persson, 2015). Frames assist in establishing principles about a culture that are commonly identified by stakeholders within a given group (Benincasa, 2017). The utilization of frame analysis for this study allowed for the voice of students to be studied in an organizational format. The intent was to analyze the different aspects of an educational environment that impeded the ability of some students to excel academically (Benincasa, 2017).

### **Education Debt**

The notion of categorizing academic disparities as merely 'gaps' has been so ingrained in the educational culture in America that Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) postulated the consideration of a 'debt' owed by school systems to students of color. Researchers continue to emphasize the minimal success of reform efforts that focus primarily on academic and behavioral strategies as the central means of reducing achievement disparities for students of color (Boser, Baffour, Vela, & Center for American Progress, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2014;

Valencia 2010). Reform attempts to close the achievement gap, in theory, may aim to make changes to improve current educational outcomes, but instead, most reforms have made it more feasible for educational systems to stick with the status quo and continue to do what they always have done (Colgren & Sappington, 2015).

The time has come, as Ladson-Billings (2006) indicated, to reevaluate the “wisdom of focusing on the achievement gap as a way of explaining and understanding the persistent inequality that exists (and has always existed) in our nation’s schools” (p. 4). Instead, a new discourse should be considered that emphasizes that performance gaps are a result of societal beliefs, embedded racial structures, and systematic school practices (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

### **Stereotype Threat Theory**

Stereotype threat theory provided a discourse that speaks to the sustained academic disparities of students of color (Borman *et al.*, 2016). Scholars Kellow and Jones (2008) postulated that the limited success students of color have had on standardized assessments could be attributed to stereotype threat theory and not their level of comprehension in a given content. These authors further explained that “certain environmental and cognitive phenomena associated with high-stakes testing” (p. 116) generated intellectually inferior academic settings that weaken the performance level of students of color.

Stereotype threat theory offered a social-psychological approach to analyzing the structure of educational systems and their contributions to restricting the voice of students and limiting positive academic outcomes (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat theory has been defined as a phenomenon that occurred when the possibility of validating a negative stereotype, such as the inability of students of color to sustain academic achievement and growth, that an individual associated with their gender, race, or social identity (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat theory

provided credible research on the underperformance of students of color as an avoidance mechanism of academic recognition (Steele, 1997, 1999). This underperformance phenomenon occurred with students of color even when their abilities were compatible with the academic level of European American students (Steele, 1997, 1999). Utilizing a social psychological paradigm, (Steele, 1997, 1999) explained that when the constructs of stereotype threat theory are applied, the acceptance of effective academic achievement was different for students of color than it was for European American students.

Students of color formulated perceptions of being socially unaccepted for performing at or above the academic level of European American students and being ostracized by their peers of color (Steele, 1997, 1999). When social stigmas become associated with being academically successful, some students of color purposefully underperform to avoid becoming recognized as an overachiever in the eyes of their ethnic and social circles (Steele, 1992). The stereotype threat principle often occurred when students perceive that their abilities will conform to the low expectations that their academic environment project (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Utilizing Steele's platform will allow the researcher to study student voice in a context that incorporated the culture of students as well as their social dynamics. Student voice can be used as a motivational tool to overcome predetermined stereotypical performance attributes for students of color to allow for meaningful engagement in their learning environment (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

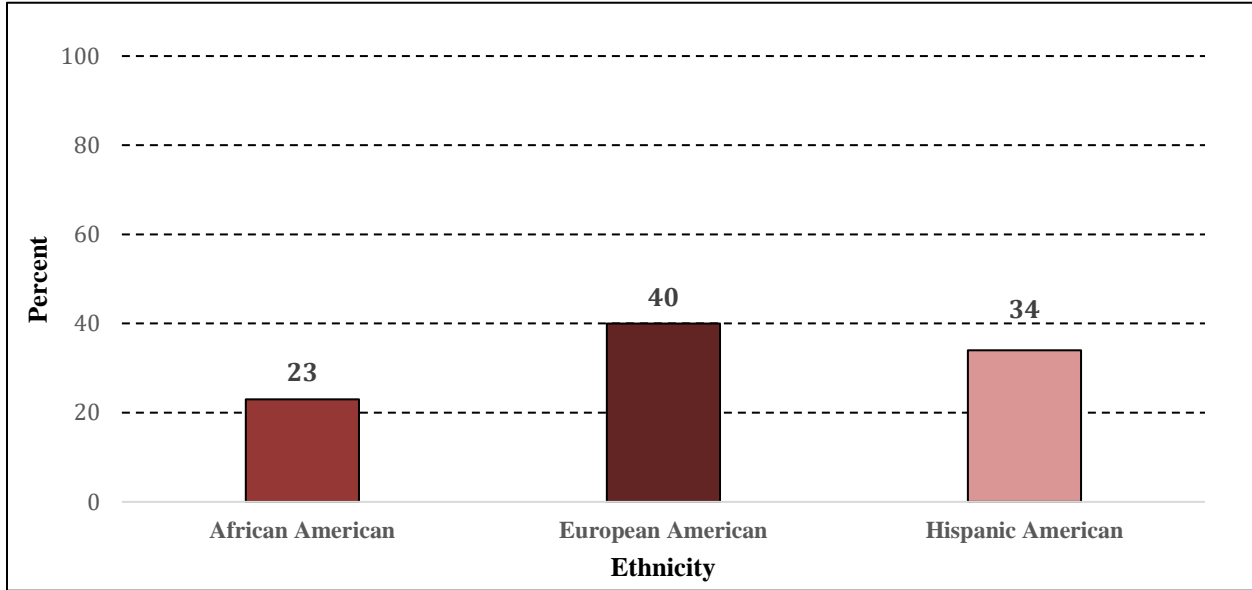
### **Statement of the Problem**

The lagging academic growth of students of color continues to be an area of concern for educational systems in the United States. When analyzing the structure of the academic environment for students of color, more often their curriculum, courses, and classwork have been

predetermined or prescribed without the input of the student (Shafer, 2016). Students of color have been suppressed in educational systems where their voice was forgotten as a result of cultural bias, socioeconomic status, and political deception (Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). Educational reform practices, such as tracking, directly affect students of color by placing them on specific lower level course trajectories (Oakes, 1985).

The pattern of inequitable advanced level course offerings for students of color becomes even more apparent when statistical data from national and state reports were analyzed. For example, the *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017 Report*, produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), published data on students entering high school from 2009 through 2013. Figure 1 represents enrollment percentage trends from a sample of students across the United States that earned any credit in an advanced placement or International Baccalaureate courses. This data reflected a six-percentage point difference between Hispanic and European American student enrollment. On the other hand, the enrollment difference, for African and European Americans, is almost double at 17 percentage points.

Figure 1. Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017 on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Course Taking. (Adapted from NCES, 2017, p. 64).



The disparities in rigorous course enrollment opportunities, as reflected in Figure 1, provided a snapshot of continuous course placement concerns across the United States. While under-enrollment in advanced level courses is a concern nationally, some states demonstrate a higher frequency of this practice than others.

In New Commonwealth, a relatively progressive state, the data on course placement inequalities show significant discrepancies for students of color (James *et al.*, 2013). New Commonwealth was described as a suburban state that is predominately European American (Orfield & Ee, 2015) with the second highest household income average in the nation and a strong educational history. Conversely, New Commonwealth is a state with gross inequalities, where some of America's most underprivileged and prosperous communities were adjoined (Orfield & Ee, 2015).

The New Commonwealth (pseudonym) Coalition for Achievement Now, analyzed mathematics and reading results using the *2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress Report* (NAEP). Their report confirmed that New Commonwealth 12<sup>th</sup> graders received a high ranking in mathematics and reading when compared to other participating states. However, a closer review of the data indicated that the ranking was misleading and conveyed the false impression that students of color were successful statewide. Further analysis revealed that:

Only one in three students in New Commonwealth were proficient in math. However, less than one in ten African American, Hispanic, and low-income students met state standards on average. Despite high score rankings, only half of all twelfth-grade students in New Commonwealth were proficient in reading. Only one in four African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income students met state standards on average. (ConnCAN, p. 3)

The trend of data disparities was also reflected locally on standardized state assessment results. The New Commonwealth (pseudonym) Academic Performance Test (NCAPT) was administered to all 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students. The NCAPT results for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts at the school of focus for this study, revealed a mean score difference of 39 and 42 percentage points in mathematics between African and European American students, and a 31 and 25 percentage points difference between Hispanic and European American students (James *et al.*, 2013). In reading, the results were similar reflecting a 29 and 30 percentage point difference between African and European American students, and a 27 and 13 percentage point difference between Hispanic and European American students (James *et al.*, 2013). New Commonwealth “is one state that has tried to develop mechanisms for raising achievement, but it maintains one of the widest gaps in student academic outcomes” (Yergin, 2015, p. 1569).

The perpetual performance gaps in academic achievement between students of color and European Americans continue to remain at a statistically significant percentage point of separation. Kotok (2017) indicated that:

Despite the fact that the high-achievers have similar math achievement scores when they start 9th grade regardless of race or ethnicity, African American students fall far behind their high-achieving peers by the 12th grade, while high-achieving Asian students expand their aggregate advantage over other groups. (p. 184)

These persistent academic inequalities could be attributed to educational systems that continue to structure achievement reforms around perceived socio-economic status, abilities, goals, intellect, and standardized assessment results of the entire ethnic group (Boykin & Noguera, 2011) without reverence to the individual student's academic interest and potential. The continuous presence of academic achievement disparities necessitates updating the research on the structures and practices that perpetuate the cycle of underachievement for students of color. It also requires that researchers widen this discussion by including new reform practices.

One reform practice postulated in this study was student voice. The concept of student voice is progressively becoming more important in educational settings, particularly when unsuccessful reform attempts of the past were based primarily on educator or administrator perceptions and practices (Hanson, Polik, Cerna, & WestEd, 2017) and have sustained minimal academic gains. The development of most reforms in the past often neglected to incorporate the insights of those who will be the most impacted, the students (Flenbaugh *et al.*, 2017). Through the incorporation of student voice, the silenced young people of color can have the opportunity to be active participants in their education (Mitra, 2014).

## **Justification for the Study**

Studies that examined the relevance and the persistence of the underachievement of students of color continue to reflect minimal success in reducing academic disparities (Goddard, Skrla & Salloum, 2017; Owens, 2018; Valencia, 2010). The continuation of the achievement gap has been highly debated in the academic arena for some time. There are those researchers who have indicated that the public school system must be looked at for its consistent inability to provide a quality education to all students (Boser, Baffour, Vela, & Center for American Progress, 2016; Giersch, Bottia, Mikelson, & Stearns, 2016). Then other scholars have stated that the presence of the achievement gap as reflected in standardized performance assessments have been linked to a student's race (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown, & Conway-Turner, 2016; Valencia, 2015) as well as their socio-economic status.

The achievement gap was one aspect of the education system that has reflected a consistent cycle of failure to successfully prepare all students for the highest level of achievement (Kotok, 2017; Mayer & Tucker, 2010). The policies and practices within the educational system that assume achievement gaps can be corrected through recycled strategies and by merely gathering and analyzing assessment data has to change (White, 2009; Colgren & Sappington, 2015). In order for the achievement gap to decrease there must be a conscious effort to confront racial inequalities that thrive from inside to outside of schools across the United States (White, 2009).

The research on the use of the term achievement gap as an explanation for academic disparities is extensive (Chambers, 2009; Haycock, 2001; Reardon & Robinson-Cimpian, 2007). Students' voiced educational experiences and perceptions, which has seen limited application in



K-12 education, can provide valuable insight into their beliefs about academic opportunities, the practices used in their educational environment, and anticipated life outcomes:

Student perspectives often capture the realities of classroom and school life in vivid detail. Through their eyes, adults can learn about the flaws in the current educational system and the inequitable practices that go on [particularly] within low and high tracked classrooms. (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006, p. 21)

In the past decade, the correlation between understanding the perceptions of students and continuous academic achievement disparities has gained noteworthy attention (Bunner, 2017; Holman, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Williams, 2017; Hurwitz, Bosworth, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, Hendricks, & Rubenstein-Avila, 2015; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). Unfortunately, the inclusion of this discourse has seen limited progress in improving the academic trajectory of students of color. This study analyzed the research on the achievement gap through specific impacting frames within school systems, the limited inclusion of the voice of students of color, and the misguided practices educational systems have implemented to influence the perceptions of students of color.

The inclusion of student voice in education has reached a significant level of interest in the area of academic achievement. (Harris *et al.*, 2014; Seale *et al.*, 2015; Simón, Echeita, & Sandoval, 2018). These researchers further indicated that past reform efforts in education have primarily been adult-generated and often lacked the inclusion of its most important benefactor, the students. A lack of sustained academic growth, the continuation of significant academic performance disparities in K-12 education, and limited student engagement (Boser, Baffour, Vela, & Center for American Progress, 2016) warrant the need to seek a discourse on the inclusion of student voice. Incorporating student voice can stimulate involvement while

reducing course separation distinctions (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006). This study's intent was to further support the necessity of educational environments establishing the use of student voice as a connector between administrators, educators, and students as a viable means of improving the underachievement of students of color.

### **Research Questions**

The emphasis for this research was to determine how imbedded educational frames in a diverse learning environment were perceived through the voice of students. The following questions provided focal areas to assist in guiding this study:

1. How did the collective perceptions of diverse students expose the nature of student's experiences and achievement at Winslow High School?
2. How did the collective discourse among students and staff members influence the school culture and learning environment at Winslow High School?
3. How did students of color describe the impact of inequalities on their shared experiences with classroom management, student discipline, and the quality of curriculum in the various academic tracks?

### **Dissertation Design**

This dissertation has been organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduced the problem, which included a historical overview of education for students of color and targeted research questions. Chapter II entailed a review of the literature that examined how previous research established the appropriate theoretical framework for this research. Chapter III encompassed the methodology and procedures utilized for this study. Chapter IV concentrated on the findings and the significant meanings derived from the outcome of analyzing the data. Chapter V concluded the study through discussions, limitations, and implications for future research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It has been sixty-five years since the court ordered integration ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, and yet the academic achievement for students of color, when compared to European American students, continues to plague educational systems within the United States (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Gaddis & Lauren, 2014; Kotok, 2017). The structure of this literature review initially examined the status of academic achievement by reevaluating the frames of a prior study that focused on those components that have impacted the academic outcome of students of color. Next, it was important to structure an analysis framing the multiple aspects of student voice. Then the concept of education debt discussed the extensive effects of performance disparities as merely achievement gaps. Finally, this research reviewed how the achievement of students of color have been impacted using a social-cultural theoretical lens.

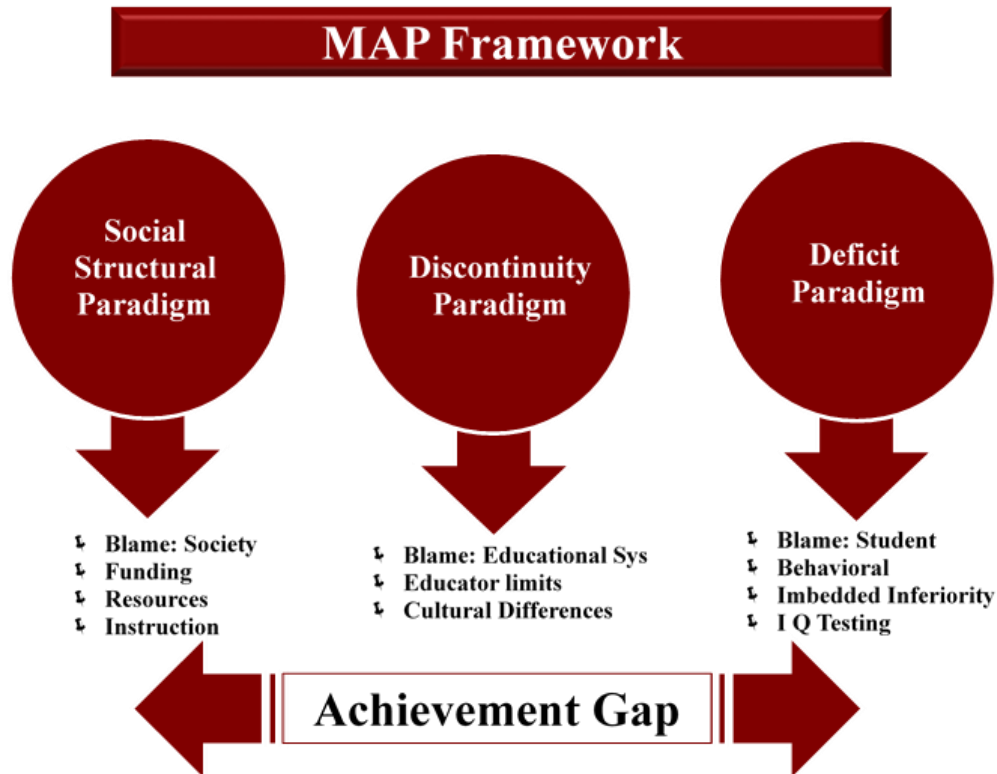
#### **Frame Analysis Theory**

Educational systems are inherently structured in a manner that perpetuated inequalities in academic attainment for students of color (Strickland-Dixon, 2011). These structures can be seen through such practices as tracking or ability grouping (Oakes, 1985) and the administration of standardized assessments (Baker, 2010). In light of the abundance of research on the achievement gap between students of color and European American students, there have not been sustainable positive improvements in the academic growth for students of color (Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008). The current research sought to review new research to determine if the conclusions of the Lewis *et al.*, (2008) study maintained their applicability through a conceptual replication.

In conceptual replications, the population, investigation process, and variables may be different from the initial research (Westfall, Judd, & Kenny, 2015). The process of “conceptual replications are thus ‘replications’ in the sense that they establish the reproducibility of theoretical interpretations” (Westfall *et al.*, 2015, p. 391).

In the Lewis *et al.*, study *Framing African American Students’ Success and Failure in Urban Settings: A Typology for Change* (2009), the authors developed a *Matrix of Achievement Paradigms* (MAP) framework to examine the underachievement of African American students. The Lewis *et al.*, study was grounded in critical race theory and utilized three paradigms: social-structural paradigm, discontinuity paradigm, and deficit paradigm to frame ideological processes that have developed in urban education settings. Figure 2 provides an adaptive visual summarization of the constructs that defined the rationale for each paradigm. The Lewis *et al.*, study explored the existence of the achievement gap for African Americans in urban settings and how their academic progression or regression was impacted through the lens of these paradigms.

Figure 2. Matrix of Achievement Paradigm. (Adapted from Lewis *et al.*, 2008, p. 137)



In this current study, the researcher sought to utilize the paradigms established by the Lewis *et al.*, study to determine their applicability in a diverse learning environment that experienced achievement disparities for students of color.

As a social science construct, frame analysis theory encompassed a number of perceptions and theoretical viewpoints on how realities are described, structured, and comprehended by individuals, groups, or societies (Entman, 2007; Goffman, 1974; Lakoff, 2010). The origin of frame analysis theory was accredited to Erving Goffman and his work entitled *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* published in 1974. Goffman (1974) explained the concept of frames in the following manner:

In dealing with conventional topics, it is usually practical to develop concepts and themes in some sort of logical sequence: nothing coming earlier depends on something coming later, and hopefully, terms developed at any one point are actually used in what comes thereafter. (p. 11)

Frames provide a means for individuals to interpret, “locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Frames are “mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions” (Lakoff, 2014, p. xi-xii). The process of establishing frames allows for substantial issues, such as student voice and academic achievement limitations, to be placed in a smaller context for better concentration and focus of the frame (Lakoff, 2010). In the Lewis *et al.*, (2008) study the researchers determined that the academic achievement of African Americans was impacted by critical components in and around the educational system that each served as a hindrance to them obtaining and sustaining academic growth. Utilizing the frame analysis theory approach allowed this researcher to analyze continued gaps in academic performance and determine if the principles of the paradigms established by Lewis *et al.*, (2008) were still applicable in explaining the progression of performance disparities in an organized framework.

### **Framing the Achievement Gap**

Increasing the academic achievement and reducing performance disparities of students of color in American educational systems continues to serve as a source of concern for many scholars (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Gillborn *et al.*, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Morales, 2016). This study expanded upon previous research on persistent achievement disparities for African American students in urban settings. Prior research

established three framing constructs that categorized potential sources and practices within educational systems that maintained academic inequalities and limited the inclusion of student voice (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). In order to determine if the tenets of the Lewis *et al.*, study remain valid, the researcher analyzed student achievement through the following three frames: the structure frame, the school frame, and the student frame as it related to the diverse suburban learning environment targeted for this study.

***The Structure Frame.*** The structure frame analyzed the social-structural paradigm established by Lewis *et al.*, (2008). The social-structural paradigm generated performance disparities “as an outgrowth of a racialized society” (Lewis *et al.*, 2008, p. 148) and indicated that “the African American community and students have access to education but no control” (p. 148). The structure frame considered recent research on differentiation in education as it relates to available funding and educator preparedness.

The Center for American Progress published its 2014 report entitled *America’s Most Financially Disadvantaged School Districts and How They Got That Way: How State and Local Governance Causes School Funding Disparities Report*. According to this report, the funding disparities in education for the United States has been both enduring and extensive (Baker & Center for American Progress, 2014). According to Baker and Center for American Progress, there are five classifications that have generated funding disadvantages:

Savage inequalities: refers to persistent disparities in local taxable property wealth continues to undermine equity in American education. Stealth inequalities: speaks toward dysfunctional, poorly designed, state school finance formulas fail to correct, and sometimes reinforce, disparities. Local politics: discusses local tax policy and budgeting decisions that may undermine state equity objectives. Not-so-blurred lines: small,

segregated districts embedded in population-dense metropolitan areas reinforce fiscal disparities; and Shift happens: references the changing demography of urban and smaller cities in America that have led to emerging fiscal disadvantages. (Baker & Center for American Progress, 2014, p. 2)

In the structure frame, the primary element that served as a systemic impactor on the achievement of diverse learners both within and outside the educational organization is funding. A positive correlation exists between “measures of per-pupil spending...and improved and/or higher student outcomes” (Baker & Albert Shanker Institute, 2016, p. 18). When funding is insufficient the level of opportunities for an appropriate and prosperous academic experience for students become severely compromised (Verstegen, 2015, p. 13). Funding inequalities trigger an adverse chain reaction in education that influences the performance of students, the availability of instructional resources and materials, and the retention of quality educators (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2016).

Funding inequalities and its impact on student achievement continue to sustain a place in academic literature (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2016; Richwine, 2011; Vaught, 2009). How funds were allocated had a direct impact on sustaining effective student achievement (Baker & Center for American Progress, 2014). For example, a primary way to recruit and sustain quality educators was to offer competitive salaries (Baker & Center for American Progress, 2014). Increasingly, research supports the fact that the salaries made available to educators served a primary determinant on whether or not they sought a career in education (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2016). Unfortunately, balanced funding in school districts across the United States remains unresolved, particularly when analyzing pupil spending and property tax spending variations (Baker *et al.*, 2016).



The connection between high-quality education and sustained achievement growth for diverse learners should not be underestimated and has been well documented (Darling-Hammond, 2011). The data repeatedly reflected campuses continues to have educators with “temporary certifications, with fewer years of teaching experience, and who teach in fields in which they are not necessarily certified” (Rahman, Fox, Ikoma, & Gray, 2017, p. 2).

The 2016 release of data collected by the Office of Civil Rights revealed some interesting information as it related to achievement trends for students of color. Their report discussed that seven percent of African Americans, six percent of Hispanic, Indian, and Alaska Native students attend a school where 20% of the educators were in their first year, compared to only three percent of European American (Office of Civil Rights, 2016). Another key finding from this report was that more than 20% of educators had not completed all certification or license requirements for their respective state (Office of Civil Rights, 2016).

The need for educators has led to legislation that has loosen the standards on educator qualification requirements (Fennell, 2016). Fennell explained that when the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) Public Law 114–95 of 2015 was signed into law new regulations were implemented:

The highly qualified teacher requirements (which stipulated that they must hold at least a bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution, be fully certified or licensed by the state, and demonstrate competence in each core academic subject area in which they teach) were no more. However, teachers and paraprofessionals in Title I schools (those with high rates of poverty) must meet licensure and certification requirements set by the state.

(p. 63)

Under ESSA, the terminology of highly qualified was replaced with *effective*. ESSA defined *effective* as an individual “with a demonstrated record of increasing student academic achievement either as a student teacher or teacher-of-record on an alternative certificate, license, or credential” (ESSA, 2015, p. 1915). The word *effective* under ESSA is ambiguous and can be interpreted and evaluated in a multitude of ways in educational systems across the United States (Saultz, White, McEachin, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2017). Saultz *et al.*, further explained that:

States use value-added models to calculate the average academic growth of students assigned to a specific teacher. Distribution refers to the frequency of highly effective teachers in a school relative to the average at the state and/or district levels. Specifically, ESSA requires SEAs and districts to ensure that poor and underrepresented racial groups of students are not taught at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers. (p. 655)

The effectiveness of socially responsive instruction is extremely important for students in diverse populations. An educator’s “dispositions and social justice are inextricably attached and require mindful inquiry that forces them to reflect on the many ways that their dispositions, how those were thoughts and their actions, can oppress or empower learners” (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010, p. 65). In order to sustain a balance of academics and culture, educators must incorporate culturally responsive teaching, which Gay (2010) defined as:

Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (p. 31)

*The School Frame.* In this frame, it was important to analyze those elements within a school that directly impact the academic trajectory of its students. The organizational structure and those working within the educational system are arguably two essential components that have the most significant impact on its students (DeSimone & Roberts, 2016; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Robinson & Roksa, 2016; Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012). The research of Lewis *et al.*, (2008) associated the necessity of these two components with “the discontinuity paradigm, which places the primary responsibility, not necessarily blame, for achievement and failure on members of the schooling system (i.e., teachers, counselors, and administrators)” (pp. 141-142). The school frame examines the current research on the perpetuation of achievement gaps for students of color in educational settings by analyzing two key components, the cultural misperceptions of educators in the classroom and systematic organizational inequality practices.

When students enter an educational environment, the nucleus of their academic success begins in the classroom. Researchers noted that classroom environments and school climates must be both academically and culturally appropriate (Gay, 2010; van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). Educators are vital participants in the academic success of their students through the methods and mannerism that they use when interacting with them (Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown, & Conway-Turner, 2016). Research has postulated that the educators who students’ encounter in the classroom and the expectations those educators have established can lead directly to the formation of achievement disparities (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016). Educational systems in the United States and globally continue to reflect academic performance differences due to low educator expectations (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010) particularly of students of color. The *Pygmalion Effect*, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), as cited by van den Bergh *et al.*, postulated

that the “shortcomings [of the disadvantaged child] may originate not in their different ethnicities, cultural, and economic background but in the teachers' response to their background” (p.19).

Educational systems ensure the continuation of achievement gaps through inequitable practices like tracking or ability grouping that often give students of color minimal access to rigorous courses at the secondary level to prepare them for post-secondary education opportunities (Bryant & Center for Law and Social Policy, 2015). Tracking is defined as “the process whereby students are divided into categories, so they can be assigned to various kinds of classes based on intellectual ability, that are usually classified as advanced, average, or slow” (Oakes, 1985, p. 3).

To advance the research about student achievement disparities Ladson-Billings (2006) established an alternative discourse that is “concerned about the meaning of our work for the larger public—for real students, teachers, administrators...in real school settings” (p. 3). Educational systems do “not have an achievement gap, [but] an education debt” (Ladson-Billing, 2006, p. 5). Classifying academic disparities as achievement gaps “places the focus of discourse about inequality on individual academic performance isolated in time without considering the various structural inequalities” (English, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2016, p. 30).

Establishing, more importantly sustaining, an academic environment that is conducive to optimal student achievement, particularly for diverse student populations, continues to be a daunting task for educational systems both domestic and abroad (Ford & Moore, 2013; Giersch, Bottia, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013, Kornfeld & Ochs, 2015). The school frame examined research on the functionality of educational systems and their impact on the achievement gap.

This frame emphasized the importance of educators understanding the culturally diverse classes they serve “regardless of the teachers’ own cultural background” (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008, para. 7). While educators have a significant impact on outcomes within the school frame, achievement limitations go beyond the classroom and it has manifested in areas such as district policies and funding allocation that are often based on property values, which generate advantages and disadvantages based on neighborhoods between European and African Americans respectively (Bell, Funk, Joshi, & Valdivia, 2016)

***The Student Frame.*** In education, there must be one primary focal point, which is the successful academic achievement of all students. Research repeatedly reflects minimal academic attainment for American students in general, but for students of color, academic achievement disparities continue to generate a significant level of concern (Butvilofsky, Hopewell, Escamilla, & Sparrow, 2017; Goddard *et al.*, 2017; McKay & Devlin, 2016; Zhao, 2016). In the student frame, the researcher reviewed the research that assigned academic performance disparities to the student. The discourse of placing the blame on students for their achievement shortcoming was constructed from the deficit thinking model (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). Some scholars referred to the deficit thinking model as a place of origin when establishing a rationale for achievement disparities for students of color (Kotok, 2017; Mayer & Tucker, 2010; Snyder & Adelson, 2017). For the student frame, the research was structured on the deficit model of thinking, and how its tenets placed the burden of obtaining academic achievement on the individual or group, it disregards cultural temperaments and utilizes standardized assessments to sustain inferior ideologies (Valencia, 2010).

Victim blaming is a deficit thinking characteristic that is “a person-centered explanation of school failure among individuals as linked to group membership (typically, the combination of

racial minority status and economic disadvantage)” (Valencia, 2010, p. 18). In their international research Clycq, Nouwen-Ward, and Vandenbroucke (2014) indicated that in academic settings there was “the general idea that the (supposedly) meritocratic educational system itself is not to blame and the denial that it (un)consciously hinders social mobility, but instead it is the individual (or specific subgroups) that does not succeed within the system” (p. 798). In other research, scholars stated that “ethnic and racial bias that lead to educational disparities in one generation...due to under education...is likely to be passed to the next generation” (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016, p. 96).

Deficit thinking, has also been promoted through the use of pseudoscientific approaches such as “using scientific methodology and authority in unethical ways” (Sharma, 2018, p. 140) that have managed to sustain the negative thinking by making the assumption that “the results of [standardized assessments] were accurate through the use of a one-size-fits-all approach, which does not offer any differentiated assessment” (p. 141). Those individuals that adhere to pseudoscience ideologies construct their beliefs on “unsound assumptions, use psychometrically weak instruments and/or collect data in a flawed manner” (Valencia, 2010, p.12).

One phenomenon that this research included to support the formation or expansion of achievement gaps for students of color stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat is considered to be a situational dilemma developed by an individual who feels that their mannerisms or behaviors are perceived to coincide with an undesirable stereotype about a group that they were associated with (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat has been increasingly cited in research as an explanation for minimal achievement outcomes in classrooms with diverse student populations (Knigge, Nordstrand, & Walzebug, 2016). When students of color were informed that they were taking an assessment on their abilities, the scores reflected an

underperformance when compared to those students who were unaware of the assessment testing their ability (Pennington, Heim, Levy, & Larkin, 2016; Wasserberg, 2018).

The controversy over the use of standardized assessments to measure intelligence levels continues to serve as a source of heated debates. In American education examples of deficit thinking, meritocracy abound, mainly through the use of standardized assessment data “such as IQ and SAT exams, which have been used to grant or deny access to educational opportunities” (Zhao, 2016, p. 723). IQ assessments in an academic setting served to justify the placement of student “onto different educational tracks, ones that largely perpetuated the existing social order” (Neill, 2016, p. 9) subsequently instilling an inferior mindset for students of color. European American societal beliefs on inferiority particularly that “people of color were either biologically or culturally inferior to Caucasians” (Menchaca, 2012, p. 13) would also be a contributor to the deficit thinking model.

The student frame was driven by a belief that the primary cause of achievement inequalities is due to the nature of the individual. The rationale for deficit thinking postulated that the underachievement of students of color in educational settings is the fault of the students' ethnicity, culture, or socioeconomic status (Valencia, 2010). The use of these elements to define the academic potential of students undermines the performance of students of color and limits their ability to be successful in either a social or an educational setting.

### **Framing the Voice of Students**

This study will expand upon previous research from a suburban high school in Winslow, New Commonwealth. Previous research determined that individuals of color in this educational environment had limited student voice and were consistently subjected to insignificant rigorous course level opportunities (James *et al.*, 2016). In the James *et al.*, (2013) study, research teams

sought to determine achievement separation, which was directly impacted by the implementation of tracking practices that targeted students of color for lower level course settings. The current study extended upon that research to incorporate the perceptions of students within this educational environment.

The origins of the concept of student voice dates back to the late 1890s, through the formation of student governments (Johnson, 1991). Initially student voice was a positive element for educational systems to incorporate; however, as time progressed student voice as an inclusionary tool for sustained academic achievement, soon was seen as merely the voice of opposition and adversity (Fletcher, 2014). This is a mindset that has manifested into the student voice of silence (Fletcher, 2014).

In education, administrators and educators have historically assumed the responsibility of deciding the appropriate academic path for students (Bergan, 2003). Student voice is an aspect in the education schema that is increasingly gaining support on the effect it has on improving student academic outcomes (Flenbaugh *et al.*, 2017; Mitra, 2014). The incorporation of students in the processes and practices in their classrooms as well as being incorporated in significant decisions that impact their learning is greatly improved through the use of student voice (Seale, Gibson, Haynes, & Potter, 2015). In addition, consistently having student involvement in academic and instructional development was found to be a vital component to sustaining positive student engagement and growth (Healey, 2014). In order to properly frame the voice of students in their educational settings, it was important to define their voice, discuss the resistance to their voice, and describe ways to prompt their voice.

***Defining Student Voice.*** The inclusion of student voice is becoming an essential contributor to the progression of decreasing student achievement disparities in education



(Wasserberg, 2018). The allowance of student voice can expand the parameters of student learning by giving them a choice in determining their academic pathways. The concept of voice in an educational setting for students has evolved beyond the traditional student council campaigns and social campus functions to be more inclusive in their academic engagement (Fletcher, 2014). When students can have an open dialog and are engaging partners in all aspects of their learning, the results yield a sustaining and purposeful academic outcome (Quaglia & Corso, 2014). Student voice encompasses both the independent and cooperative aspects of student learning (Quaglia & Corso, 2014), providing them with a forum to articulate thoughts and aspirations. Student voice not only allows for classroom engagement, but can generate participation in campus practices and procedures (Fletcher, 2014).

***Resisting Student Voice.*** Academic achievement in American education continues to be in a state of crisis. In order to keep students involved in education, they should be included in the process of making critical choices and decisions (Steinberg & McCray, 2012). In their study on secondary educational settings, Simón, Echeita, and Sandoval (2018) emphasized the importance of using student voice as a participatory practice for adolescents to build an awareness of their responsibilities and capacity to impact their community. The facilitation of student voice opportunities has to be initiated by educators and administrators who have a willingness to hear the primary stakeholders they serve, their students (Fletcher, 2014). Therefore, it becomes important that students and educators utilize the classroom as a collaborative space to develop meaningful goals and learn key academic objectives (Fielding, 2012).

The reluctance to adhere to the positive student achievement implications of student voice inclusion continues to be a source of concern in current research. Educators continued to

be resistant to establishing parameters in their educational environments that promote an open dialogue to increase their student's commitment to learning (Rautianen & Rähkä, 2012). This reluctance often stems from educators not wanting to relinquish "control" or their classroom or do not have the proper classroom management techniques in place to incorporate student voice appropriately (Pearce & Wood, 2019). In the *School Voice Report of 2016* by the Quaglia Institute for School Voice, only 43% of the participating students believed adults positively internalized their suggestions in education. It is essential that educators give reverence to student experiences and incorporate those occurrences into their instructional practices (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Once an understanding is sustained by educators, administrators, and the educational community that when the voice of students were included and heard student engagement would increase along with student achievement (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

***Promoting Student Voice.*** The current literature firmly supports student voice as a vehicle for change in improving academic achievement outcomes. Advocates that promote student voice insist there must be a connection between students needing their voice received and administrators & educators being receptive to that voice (Meadows *et al.*, 2016; Mitra, 2014; Simón, Echeita, & Sandoval, 2018). Students need to be in an atmosphere that eliminates predetermined academic outcomes, based on stereotypical beliefs (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Students entering high school are at the point where having the ability to make determinations about their academic career becomes paramount, but educational systems often lack the readiness to recognize their capacity to make critical academic decisions (Steinberg & McCray, 2012). The benefits of incorporating student voice into the educational process extends from creating an engaging student environment to decreasing student achievement disparities in an

effort to remove the academic barriers that have developed overtime (Brooman, Darwent, & Pimor, 2015; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

### **Education Debt**

The development of education debt stems from a concept that includes historical educational inequalities that have been allowed to manifest themselves as fundamental hindrances to the academic advancement of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The research of Ladson-Billing was generated from the need to better account for the academic disparities of students of color as more than just achievement gaps. To better establish the scope of education debt Ladson-Billings (2006) formulated an association with the economic term deficit, differentiating between a deficit and a debt in this manner:

A deficit is the amount by which a government's, company's, or individual's spending exceeds income over a particular period of time. Thus, for each budget cycle, the government must determine whether it has a balanced budget, a budget surplus, or a deficit. The debt, however, is the sum of all previously incurred annual federal deficits. Since the deficits were financed by government borrowing, the national debt is equal to all government debt. (p. 4)

Ladson-Billings conducted her research under the context that education debt was the *sum of all, previously incurred* debt, she developed four key aspects to support the education debt discourse: historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral.

The historical debt focused on those aspects and practices in American education that sought to limit or deny the availability of an appropriate public education to all students. The chronicles of the educational inequalities for individuals of color have been well documented (Berry, 2018; García, 2018; Tatum, 2017) from lawful injustices to substandard facilities,

materials and resources. This historical pattern of denial and separation established the foundation for performance disparities that individuals of color have yet to fully overcome (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Economic debt was an extension of historical debt and speaks toward the inequalities that were associated with how schools were funded. The unequal distribution of school funding was not new in scholarly research, the “[m]assive financial discrimination against conveniently segregated African American schools often left Black school children without tax-supported school buildings” (Anderson, 2006, p. 24). These funding disparities resulted in different levels of education and in many cases schools where the majority of the population were students of color, funds were received at a lower rate than nearby educational system where the student population was European American (Anderson, 2006).

Sociopolitical debt was associated with aspects of society that sought to disenfranchise individuals of color through such actions as exclusionary voter practices and being denied access to public social arenas. Even with the passing of key legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voters Right Act of 1965, individuals of color remained dubious about the government’s commitment to practices that would sustain equality (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

To establish a foundation for moral debt, Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to the research conducted by Stanley Cohen, on moral panics. Ladson-Billings explained that according to Cohen moral panic occurs when “people attempt to describe other people, groups of individuals, or events that become defined as threats throughout a society” (2006, p. 8). From Cohen’s research, Ladson-Billings (2006) derived the concept of moral debt, which was more about “...the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do” (p. 8). This generated the need to pursue a discourse on the civil and ethical obligations that individual should have

toward each other (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In other words, for societies in the United States, the consensus has been for individuals to be responsible for their own wellbeing as it relates to behaviors, healthcare, welfare, and education. “However, in democratic nations, that personal responsibility must be coupled with social responsibility” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 8).

These components of education debt generated an alternative discourse to understanding performance disparities as more than achievement differentiations, based on an individual’s ethnicity. Ladson-Billings (2006) insisted that educational inequalities should be rationalized through a broader parameter that encompassed multiple components that have combined to hinder the quality of education for students of color.

Through the research lens of social psychology intergroup dynamics can be used to analyze framing structures in diverse cultural learning environments (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). Social psychology approaches to research have been utilized as they provided a forum for the acceptance of “sociocultural understanding of racial inequalities” (Plaut, 2010, 77). The complexities of diversity ideology and its impact on intergroup relations can be defined in two ways “diversity can be *ignored* in favor of individual characteristics (color blindness) or *rejected* with a focus on the dominant majority group (assimilation) (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). For this study, it was important to focus on a framework from the social psychology perspective that emphasized how diversity in this learning environment has been both *ignored* and *rejected*, subjecting students of color to an academic environment that has failed to improve their quality of learning and achievement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in social psychology and related social and cognitive behaviors that impact the manner in which individuals comprehend the

community, culture, and climate around them (Smith & Mackie, 2000). The researcher examined the current literature on stereotype threat as it relates to student voice. Research on student voice and academic achievement sited stereotype threat as a viable explanation for student performance trepidations (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

### **Stereotype Threat**

The principles of social psychology according to Hewstone and Greenland (2000) provided a theoretical foundation for studies where academic growth was minimized by cultural biases, embedded discrimination, and learning misconceptions. The social psychological perspective was a scientific approach that studied the effects the social and reasoning processes that individuals used to interact with others (Smith & Mackie, 2000). One theory that research associated with the social psychological paradigm as it relates to relational interactions and individual behaviors was stereotype threat.

The research established by Claude Steele, a social psychologist, on stereotype threat focused on the phenomena of understanding why students of color sustained academic performance limitation in their educational environments. Initially, Steele's (1992) research postulated that the underachievement of students of color stemmed from a "*stigma*." A *stigma* was defined as a diminishing expectation African Americans encountered through societal interactions. The introduction of the term stereotype threat was added to a previous study by Steele on student performance disparities (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The exploration of stereotype threat in this research provided an appropriate platform to account for achievement disparities as a result of student's perceptions, limited rigorous academic course and curriculum exposure, and an inferior belief of being able to voice their academic aspirations.

The gap in achievement between students of color and European American students has been well documented in educational research, yet the causes and effects of academic differences in educational attainment continue to be highly debatable (Flaxman, 2003; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). One plausible explanation that this study focused on was stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995) introduced the term stereotype threat and explained that:

It focuses on the social-psychological predicament that can rise from widely-known negative stereotypes about one's group. It is this: the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it, makes the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes. We call this predicament stereotype threat and argue that it is experienced, essentially, as a self-evaluative threat. (p. 797)

Individuals who succumb to stereotype threat adhered to an ideology that when their actions or mannerism were thought to negatively reflect a stereotyped norm within a given social culture somehow it lessened their credibility as a member of that culture (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This manner of thinking often developed into severe stressors and inappropriate behaviors that often had adverse effects on problem-solving abilities, high stake testing results, classroom interactions, and academic trajectories (Steele & Aronson, 1995). For these scholars, an even more astonishing discovery was the likelihood of an individual instinctively invoking the practices of underperforming in their academic capabilities as a protection mechanism against being identified as divergent from the expected norms of their social environment (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

A focal point for Steele's research was to determine a rationale for why a group, who had the necessary skills and appropriate knowledge foundation in a given content, demonstrated

academic underperformance patterns (Steele, 2003). Notably, in situations where a task was overly perplexing in a content, the individual would tend to perform below their abilities in comparison to other groups. Steele expanded upon this principle to indicate that stereotype threat was present even when students were adequately prepared and had similar performance capabilities.

Students, specifically, students of color, are repeatedly subjected to negative assumptions about their aptitude to succeed academically (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). Educational environments often allowed perceived social stereotypes to dictate the quality of curriculum resources and the level of academic opportunities made available to students of color (Oakes, 1985). Underperformance, through a stereotype threat lens, could stem from a psychological belief connected to authenticating a stereotype or a perceived impression of the individual's ability to perform (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). As these researchers have indicated, stereotype threat can impact a student emotionally, motivationally, physically, which ultimately affects their ability to succeed in educational settings.

The journey to diminish the impact of stereotype threat continues to be a debated conversation in various scholarly contexts. Studies have indicated in their findings that when systems were in place that focused on minimizing the effects of stereotype threat in educational settings a positive correlation occurred to promote the expectancy and tenacity for academic growth (Walton & Cohen, 2007; Yeager & Walton, 2011). The formation of these systems for Steele, Spencer, & Aronson (2002) eliminated feelings of "performance disidentification" (pp. 410-411) and inferiority.

As previously stated, stereotype threat was a phenomenon that Claude Steele explored as a means of obtaining insight about the occurrence of an individual exhibiting underperforming



behaviors, based on that individual's fear of conforming to a stereotype that society associated with a group where a person was a member. The manifestation of stereotype threat has merit as a plausible explanation for the decline in academic performance of students of color (Craemer & Orey, 2017; Palumbo & Steele-Johnson, 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995). When students were motivated to explore academics without ridicule, understood that making errors was a part of their learning process, and the need for assistance does not stem from cultural background, they will embrace education as a means of advancement and not a threat (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

***Perceptions of Students of Color.*** Students of color often enter educational environments with historical baggage that immediately places them at a disadvantage academically and socially. Educational personnel were often steadfast in their core rationales on student growth potential or lack thereof, which inherently included stereotypes and misconceptions (Steele, Choi, & Ambady, 2004). In his study, Ferguson (2003) referenced Claude Steele's stereotype threat theory by observing that "when stereotype concerns ability, individuals fear performing in ways that might corroborate the stereotype. They fear that the stereotype might become the basis of other's pejorative judgment, as well as their own self-perceptions" (p. 474). The attributes associated with a given culture were frequently misinterpreted and led to deficit thinking and instructional discrimination (Steele *et al.*, 2004). Unfortunately, although schools may display an outward appearance that emulated diversity, it was merely camouflage (Giersch, Bottia, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016). Inside the classroom revealed that students were regularly placed in "different sections of the same course at different levels of academic rigor" (Giersch *et al.*, 2016, p. 3), or subjected to academic tracking, which was often left unaddressed. The reality of this predicament was that the practice of predetermined academic course placements, based on standardized assessment data,

recommendations by staff members, and school administrators continues, to construct barriers for students of color (Martinez & Welton, 2014).

*Counselor Perceptions of Students of Color.* Historically in American educational systems, the level of rigor of the curriculum for a given student cohort was not only derived from standardized assessment scores, but used in conjunction with educator observations, counselor recommendations, and course availability (Oakes, 2005; Oakes & Lipton, 1990). Counselors and educators most often establish student abilities based on their own perceived social idiosyncrasies or predetermined ethnic academic abilities (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). While high school counselors were not solely responsible for course selections and track preferences they “still serve as gatekeepers in the placement process” (Tyson, 2011, p. 135). Research indicated that high school counselors play a significant role in a student’s education. By having the ability to recommend, advise, and guide students through their course selection process, counselors have a unique privilege of directly impacting the academic destination of students (Tyson, 2011). The problem occurs when these individuals lack the capabilities to handle multicultural and diverse student populations, where diversity has become the demographic norm in elementary and secondary educational environments across the nation (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The level of influence that was entrusted to some counselors was not always administered appropriately or in the best interest of all student populations (Robinson & Roksa, 2016).

There have been studies that disturbingly revealed “counselors differentially encouraged student’s aspirations, and selectively distributed college information based on their assessment of the student’s social class position” (Robinson & Roksa, 2016, p. 848). In analyzing transcribed interviews of students who transferred from their original school to a more affluent school

Welton (2013) explained that students transferred with an expectation of gaining better academic opportunities, but “ultimately, many students of color were resegregated into racially isolating structures that were not very different from their previous low-performing and racially homogenous schools” (p. 34). Even when students with a low socioeconomic status were in the majority, counseling support and post-secondary preparation was limited (Martinez & Welton, 2014).

When individuals were in an influential administrative role, like a counselor, it warrants an understanding that predetermined perceptions have the potential to advance or impair a student’s academic career (Welton, 2013). Being aware of their influence further necessitates counselors to maintain an interactive relationship with all students and provide the appropriate guidance to maximize and excel their educational experience (Kirk-Kuwaye & Sano-Franchin, 2015).

***Educator Perceptions of Students of Color.*** Counselors indeed have an instrumental role in the academic life of students, but the individual that has an even more significant contribution is the educator within the classroom. When predetermined perceptions were formed through stereotypical beliefs by an educator, based on a student’s ethnicity, the abilities of the student to achieve past those set boundaries was often too difficult to overcome (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). A critical component of their research was to emphasize that the perceptions educators had for certain students aligned with their expectations of those students (Gershenson *et al.*, 2016). These authors also discovered that when a “demographic mismatch” (p. 210) was present, educators formed expectations and predispositions that transferred to students in a way that negatively affected the student’s cognitive decision-making abilities.

There are numerous factors that can contribute to the minimal academic success of students of color (Haycock & Jerald, 2002). However, one influential factor was the expectation level of educators and the instructional practices they implemented within the classroom (Haycock & Jerald, 2002). In another study, researchers analyzed the temperament of educators and discovered that “teachers must possess the professional triumvirate of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective” (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010, p. 61) in ensuring that diverse learners were in an enriched academic environment.

There were three ways an educator’s expectations could impact their students (Gershenson *et al.*, 2016). Initially, an educator's low expectations often solidify stereotypes that resulted in an emotional reaction impacting academic outcomes. Next, when a student of color felt ridiculed by an educator, they would display behaviors that confirmed the educator's predisposition. Finally, relational dynamics were often altered when an educator evoked presumed characteristics of students of color, resulting in limited academic success (Gershenson *et al.*, 2016). Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) understood that:

The reason usually given for the poor performance of the disadvantaged child is simply that the child is a member of a disadvantaged group. There may well be another reason. It is that the child does poorly in school because that is what is expected of him. In other words, his shortcomings may originate not in his different ethnic, cultural, and economic background, but in his teachers' response to that background. (p. 19)

There have been and continues to be numerous debates on the factors that hinder the academic preparedness of students of color. A preponderance of the research on academic attainment has placed the most significant impact on the academic stability and growth of a student with the classroom educator (Friedrich, Flunger, Nagengast, Jonkman & Trautwein,

2015; Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010; Stoicescu & Ghinea, 2013). A prosperous educator and student relationship is contingent on establishing a proper level of respect that is grounded in trust and sustained by a belief that all students can achieve (Gershenson *et al.*, 2016).

### **Self-Concept**

A critical component of achieving success is the belief that one has within themselves. The term self-concept is a social construct that can provide an individual with insight into understanding who they were in relation to their culture and environment (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). This research provided an overview of the self-concept canon, then discussed two of its key subcomponents: student self-concept and academic self-concept.

The research on self-concept is closely associated with the studies conducted by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976). Their study provided groundbreaking research into the multifaceted dynamics that were used to outline the hierarchical structure of self-concept. The work of Shavelson *et al.*, (1976) was referenced by Marsh and Shavelson (1985) as they defined self-concept as:

A person's perceptions of him- or herself. These perceptions are formed through experiences with and interpretations of one's environment. They are influenced especially by valuations by significant others, reinforcements, and attributions for one's own behavior. (p. 107)

In their research, Shavelson *et al.*, (1976) discovered that education had a history of “[fluctuating] from emphasis solely on cognitive outcomes to major concerns with social and effective ones” (p. 407). At the start of the twentieth century, the United States recognized educational venues were essential social entities within society (Shavelson *et al.*, 1976). As a result of their study, Shavelson *et al.*, (1976), surmised that when a student had an infrastructure

that supported the optimal development of their self-concept, there was an increase in their academic achievement.

As the Shavelson model evolved an imperfection in the structure occurred. The imperfection was subtle, but from the original model, a revision was needed to incorporate the “...development of [an] internal/external frame of reference...” (Marsh & Yeung, 1998, p. 707). The inclusion of these components allowed the model to generate deeper insight into the methods and the way students processed their academic environments.

***Student Self-Concept.*** One of the most important aspects of adolescence is the feelings one has about themselves and more importantly how others feel about them. Shavelson *et al.*, (1976) discovered two distinct attributes when they defined self-concept as it relates to students:

The within portion of the definition specifies the features of the construct and links them to each other and to observable attributes of the person. The between-portion locates the construct in a conceptual space that includes many other constructs related to or independent of the construct. (p. 410)

Student self-concept was associated with a student’s general belief about their capabilities within a given discipline and not a specified assignment (Troia, Shankland, & Wolbers, 2012).

Tracking practices, which placed students in lower level course settings, were found to influence their self-concept internally through self-comparison of their own abilities or externally through a comparison of their abilities to other students, particularly for students of color (Chiu, Beru, Watley, Wubu, Simson, Kessinger, Rivera, Schmidlein & Wigfield, 2008).

***Academic Self-Concept.*** Academic self-concept is a sub-component of the self-concept cannon that focused on learning (Hardy, 2014). Research has indicated the academic success or failure that students of color encounter is predicated, in large part, on their belief about their

abilities to achieve (Hardy, 2014; Jansen, Scherer & Schroeders, 2015; Preckel & Brunner, 2015).

While Shavelson *et al.*, (1976) provided a hierarchical structure Hardy (2014) explained that the importance of understanding academic self-concept “have led researchers to strive to understand its underlying structure and the process through which academic self-concepts can be raised or lowered” (p. 550). There have been a number of studies that supported the validity of academic self-concept and its connection with student achievement in higher order thinking settings (Preckel & Brunner, 2015; Marsh, 1990). It was important to note that “academic self-concept, interest, and achievement are interrelated...and were found in specific domains such as English and mathematics” (Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller, & Baumert, 2005, p. 397). These resources also indicated that “when self-belief and achievement measures were matched in terms of subject area (e.g., mathematics achievement and math self-concept)” (Marsh *et al.*, 2005, p. 398) a positive academic outcome was achieved.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy originated under the social cognitive theory, and for Albert Bandura (1994), it was a rationale that individuals conceived about their abilities to perform or succeed at a level that generated targeted outcomes. Self-efficacy was not only related to a belief an individual had of themselves, but it looked at the perceptions that they had in their fortitude to prevail over situations that may arise in their life (Bandura, 1994).

Another aspect of social development that self-efficacy can affect were those extrinsic and intrinsic emotional and motivational factors that impacted how individuals feel about a given circumstance (Bandura, 1994). When a student is motivated, they also possess the ability to incorporate both coping mechanisms and learning strategies that can assist in maximizing their

academic growth (Troia, Shankland, & Wolbers, 2012). Incorporating positive motivation characteristics allowed students to problem-solve difficult obstacles coherently and subsequently improve their social and academic achievement level (Troia *et al.*, 2012). When an individual has a strong self-efficacy, they have the mechanisms not to allow their failures to consume them. When individuals “approach threatening situations with the assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produced personal accomplishments, reduced stress and lowered vulnerability to depression” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). On the other hand, Bandura also noted that “when faced with difficult tasks, [individuals] dwelt on their personal deficiencies, or obstacles they will encounter all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrating on how to perform successfully” (p. 71). To reach the appropriate level of self-efficacy required individuals to have a perspective that equaled their ability, while sustaining their motivation to achieve a targeted goal (Bandura, 1994).

The research of Albert Bandura (1994) has allowed for a multifaceted model to emerge on numerous intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of an individual’s life that converge together to produce a holistic viewpoint on self-efficacy. Influences from a person’s family, classmates, educational environment, and life experiences can positively or negatively impact a person’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). In school, students establish “cognitive competencies and acquire the knowledge and problem-solving skills essential for participating effectively in a large society” (Bandura, 1994, p. 78). When an educational environment is designed with the proper classroom structures, resilient educators, and the appropriate academic platforms an optimal level of self-efficacy can flourish (Bandura, 1994).

***Student Self-Efficacy.*** When adolescents were exposed to an appropriate academic environment, it rendered the most significant potential for developing a positive student self-



efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Positive student self-efficacy and academic growth occurs when a student is confident about their capabilities to achieve success, particularly when addressing or conquering an intimidating objective (Bandura, 1994). Student self-efficacy can be impacted by how the academic climate is structured as well as the social nuances of the classroom dynamics. Therefore, it is essential for educational environments to have “staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success, imbued a positive atmosphere for development, and encouraged academic attainments” (Bandura, 1994, p.78). When all staff members in an educational environment agree to reinforce academic growth at all levels all students were the beneficiaries (Bandura, 1994).

Motivation and academic accomplishments directly influence a student's belief in their capability to acquire academic skills and retain content knowledge (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). These scholars also indicated that schools must be prepared to provide the support that allows a student’s self-efficacy to thrive. Bandura (1994) indicated that:

There are a number of school practices that, for the less talented or ill-prepared, tend to convert instructional experiences into education inefficacy. This included...ability groupings, which further diminishes the perceived self-efficacy of those cast in the lower ranks; and competitive practices where many are doomed to failure for the success of a relative few. (p. 78)

The practice of tracking students for Bandura (1994) adversely affected students in lower academic tracks. He further discovered that students in lower tracks, where the educator made it a common practice to make comparisons between students, developed a lower student self-efficacy. In classrooms, however, where the educator differentiated between student achievement levels and offered instruction that was “tailored to a student’s knowledge and skills

enabled all of them to expand their competencies and provided less demoralizing social comparisons” (Bandura, 1994, p. 79). Implementing this process for Bandura allowed for minimal social divergence and held educators accountable for ensuring appropriate learning environments.

## **Summary**

The discourse on performance disparities for students of color has and continues to plague those in the academic arena. Social, systematic, and structural elements have converged to maintain an aseptic academic culture for students of color. In order to view the persistence of performance disparities for students of color and frame this issue in a targeted diverse suburban high school, the researcher reviewed multiple factors connected to student perceptions and them having a voice in their learning. The review of the literature was organized through a social-cultural theoretical lens. There were multiple theories utilized for this study Frame Analysis Theory, Education Debt, and Stereotype Threat Theory.

The use of Frame Analysis Theory in this study allowed the researcher to organize the literature review into two distinct framing structures. One frame of analysis focused on those components that impacted student achievement, which related to the structures within the campus, the school environment, and the students. The second frame of analysis focused on student voice and how it was defined, the resistance to its inclusion in academic settings, and promoting it as a viable discourse to improve student achievement.

Education continues to seek different solutions using the same reform practices and the same rationales for those practices. The Education Debt discourse provided an alternative framework to view achievement disparities in a way that goes beyond just blaming the student to incorporate multiple societal structures and established educational norms.

Stereotype threat theory was utilized in this study to better understand the perceptions of the students, counselors, and educators within a targeted learning environment. Two additional perspectives were discussed as a sub-component of stereotype threat theory: self-concept and self-efficacy. Self-concept has many facets, but for this research, student and academic self-concept were discussed. The examination of self-efficacy from a student's perspective provided further insight into the importance of educational systems including the voices of students and their perceptions about their academic environment.

The school at the focus of this study has experienced multiple years of achievement disparities (James *et al.*, 2013). This current study was interested in analyzing the reason for the continuation of achievement discrepancies for students of color by evaluating what they say about their education using their voices. In order to accomplish this objective, it was important to frame those elements within a learning environment that have hindered the progression of academic success of students of color. The Lewis *et al.*, (2008) study presented three distinctive paradigms for framing how the educational systems perpetuate achievement limitations, and in this current study, the researcher sought to determine the validity of their findings within a diverse suburban setting with continuous academic inconsistencies between ethnicities. The work of Steele (1992) on stereotype threat helped situate the voice of students within a social-cultural context. This was important for this study to understand how students interpret the different established academic structures within their learning environment, how these constructs impacted their course trajectory and their ability to have a voice in determining their outcomes.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

To examine the perceptions of high school students of color and what they say about their educational environment using their voice, the researcher utilized a case study method along with a content analysis using the Dedoose application. Incorporating a case study approach allowed the researcher to generate what Green (2011) referred to as a method of obtaining an understanding of a particular process. As the instrument of this case study, the researcher carefully analyzed the real-world experiences as conveyed through interviews of participants in a tracked system (Green, 2011). The case study approach is most used when seeking to examine “meaningful characteristics of real life events” (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

A case study method was appropriate for this study given that the objective was to determine how students of color perceived tracking and its impact on their academic opportunities in a targeted educational environment that has been previously analyzed. Further, a case study design allowed the researcher to incorporate multiple data sources that included interviews, archival records, and artifacts (Yin, 2014). Case studies support the qualitative research design paradigm by enlisting inductive reasoning skills to analyze sample populations and establish critical themes based on the experiences of the participants from a targeted environment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Again, for this study, the researcher utilized the Dedoose online collaborative platform, which is a “cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, photo, audio, video, and spreadsheet data” (Dedoose, 2016), to cohesively organize, code, and format themes generated from transcribed data.

The focal point of this research was to determine how embedded educational frames in a diverse learning environment were perceived through the voices of students. The questions that provided guidance for this study were:

1. How did the collective perceptions of diverse students expose the nature of student's experiences and achievement at Winslow High School?
2. How did the collective discourse among students and staff members influence the school culture and learning environment at Winslow High School?
3. How did students of color describe the impact of inequalities on their shared experiences with classroom management, student discipline, and the quality of curriculum in the various academic tracks?

### **Rationale for Research**

The purpose of this study was to analyze student accounts of their experiences related to their academic trajectory in a diverse suburban high school setting. The high school of focus for this case study had extensive gaps in academic performances and opportunities for rigorous academic curriculum exposure for students of color (James *et al.*, 2013). The case study research approach allowed for a deeper understanding of a multifaceted social phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Adhering to a case study method, provided structure for this study to analyze student voice in a reform-based academic environment. The use of direct interpretation offered a holistic view of lived experiences obtained through multiple interviews, archival school performance data, and campus profiles.

### **Case Study Method**

The case study method provided a thorough and significant analysis within a “bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). A bounded system is a key characteristic of a case study design particularly when the study is confined to a specified organization (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher analyzed “richly descriptive” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37) data from the participants to provide a detailed representation of this educational system. A case study method allowed the researcher to incorporate multiple data sources that included, but was not limited to, transcribed interviews and archival records (Yin, 2014).

The data used in this study was initially collected through the use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews that were used in a previous study. The researchers in the James *et al.*, (2013) study was interested in determining the origins of achievement disparities between student populations within a diverse suburban high school. The original team consisted of eight culturally diverse individuals from the University of Chicago and the University of Maryland. These individuals established focus groups that included approximately 250 participants. In a case study, it was important that the individuals utilized in the focus groups recognize that were are in a nonjudgmental and open dialog environment (Rosenthal, 2016). The participants were comprised of a racial and gender balanced group of students, which allowed for a diverse representation of the student body from all four grade levels (James *et al.*, 2013).

### **Participant Selection**

This study incorporated a secondary analysis of interviews from the students and staff at a high school in the northeastern United States that were recorded and transcribed by a collaborative research team from two universities. The teams included professors and graduate students. To ensure that participants maintained an open dialog the research teams were composed of members from different ethnicities and genders. Because the research teams were required to maintain the anonymity of the participants, they were not allowed to use demographic information such as race, gender, or ethnicity for purposes of analysis (James *et al.*, 2013).

To investigate student voice at this high school, the researcher randomly selected ten student transcribed focus group interview sessions out of twenty-one student focus groups to analyze that contained the most pertinent information to support this study. In the primary data set the total sample population from all focus groups included 250 participants (James et al., 2013), which translated to about 12 participants on average per student focus group session. Selecting ten student focus groups allowed the researcher to sustain what Hays and Singh (2012) explained as a certain depth and assurance of a quality understanding of a given phenomenon of study. A secondary analysis of these focus groups was conducted with the intent of developing a study that is reflective of meaningful descriptions and new insight (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). The students who participated in the original study were selected randomly from multiple course level pathways (James *et al.*, 2013).

The inclusion of educators, counselors, and administrators was not the original intent of the researcher, as the focus of the study was on student voice. The necessity to include these additional voices in this study was warranted by the responses from the participants, who referenced these individuals frequently as they discussed their experiences on the campus.

Table 2 represented the final focus groups that were selected to be included in this study after an analysis of participant responses was conducted of all focus group sessions. The information provided on the table includes the name of the session, the type of session, course level and participant count. To ensure that the transcribed sessions utilized yielded the most optimal data the researcher narrowed in on those focus group sessions that generated information that supported the focal point of this study. In each focus group, there was a maximum of 12 participants creating a sample size of 120 student participants, which was 48% of the original primary data sample population. In addition to student focus groups, the researcher included an

educator, counselors, and administrators, who participated in individual semi-structured interview sessions. The academic hierarchy in this educational environment meant that college level courses had minimal rigor and often consisted of worksheets and packets. The next levels included honors and high honors courses, where the work for students was more challenging and relevant to college preparation. The final course level was Advanced Placement courses, which was the most demanding and often involved extensive projects and prepared students for post-secondary settings (James *et al.*, 2013).



Table 2

*Participant Descriptions*

Participant Session Name	Session Type	Course Level	Participant Count
Session A1	Focus Group	Honors College	12
Session A2	Focus Group	High Honors	12
Session A9	Focus Group	High Honors	12
Session A10	Focus Group	Honors College	12
Session A11	Focus Group	AP High Honors Honors	12
Session B1	Focus Group	College	12
Session B7	Focus Group	High Honors Honors	12
Session B8	Focus Group	Honors College	12
Session C3	Focus Group	AP High Honors Honors	12
Session C2	Focus Group	Honors College	12
Educator D1	Semi-Structured Interview	NA	1
Counselor 1B	Semi-Structured Interview	NA	1
Counselor 2B	Semi-Structured Interview	NA	1
Administrator D3	Semi-Structured Interview	NA	1
Administrator D6	Semi-Structured Interview	NA	1

## Site Selection

The selection of a site is a crucial component in qualitative research, it is designated at the onset of the study, and the location is distinctive to the case and provided the foundation for the study (Yin, 2009). The site selected for this study was part of a previous study and allowed the researcher access to a diverse academic setting with achievement inconsistencies. The town of Winslow, New Commonwealth (pseudonym) would be the first established English settlement in 1633, but named Winslow in 1637. The development of Winslow's economic base stemmed from the richness and quality of the land (Windsor Historical Society, 2010). Originally, founded by European American settlers during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town flourished industrially through brick and tobacco production. Winslow is a town that has undergone a number of cultural and economic conversions:

Winslow is a town that has experienced a substantial economic transformation in the past century and tremendous demographic transformation in the past few decades. Winslow's population has continued to diversify. Increasing numbers of people moving from Harrison (pseudonym) to the suburbs were members of minority groups. Winslow's African American population increased more than tenfold between 1970 and 2000, reaching to about 27 percent of the town's population. Winslow's Hispanic population made up about 5 percent of the population. (Windsor Historical Society, 2010, para 18)

More recently, the demographics of Winslow according to the United States Census Bureau (2010) indicated that individuals of African American descent had risen to nearly 34 percent reflecting a seven percent population growth for the year 2000. The *2010 Census Report* indicated that the Hispanic population was at 8%, reflecting a 3% increase for the year 2000.

During the time of the primary data collection Winslow, New Commonwealth was considered the second wealthiest county for individuals of color in the country (James *et al.*, 2013).

The high school for this study is located in a suburban school district in the northeastern region of the United States. The *Winslow, New Commonwealth (pseudonym) Strategic School Profile Report* indicated grades nine through twelve were served, with a student population of 1,228 and 1,199 for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts respectively (CSDE, 2011, 2012). The site selected for this study had a diverse student population, was a majority-minority public-high school, and reported the following demographics for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts: 51% and 52% African American; 30% and 29% European American respectively; 13% Hispanic American and four percent Asian American for both years (CSDE, 2011, 2012).

This high school was the site selected for the original study conducted by James *et al.* (2013) based on its failure to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as required under No Child Left Behind (NLCB). This was the educational policy in effect for the time frame that the data was collected. The online district state performance reports revealed substantial performance disparities at this high school. To meet the requirements for AYP both the school and the district as a whole had to have a targeted number of students who were at or above the rating of Proficient, which also included subgroup populations defined by race, English Language Learners, and special needs. According to state assessment data for this high school, the 2012 school year reflected three consecutive years of underperformance in comparison with other comparable schools in the state in mathematics and reading.

Demographics of New Commonwealth's (pseudonym) Academic Performance Test (NCAPT) data was available to disaggregate by ethnicity and indicated that African American students in mathematics and reading had a 42 and 30 points mean scale score differential when

compared to European American students (James *et al.*, 2013). Hispanics students, while their academic disparities were not as wide as African American students, still reflected a 25 and 13 point means scale score differential in mathematics and reading, respectively when compared to European American students (James *et al.*, 2013).

### **Data Collection**

Data collecting techniques in academic research should be directed toward gaining information that could be examined and evaluated holistically. Having the appropriate site selection that contained the characteristics to support a study enriches the data collection and assists in yielding a stronger correlation to the findings (Yin, 2009). The process of collecting data is instrumental in a study and has a direct impact on the findings rendered. The collection of data in qualitative research often is generated from assessments, questionnaires, interviews, and observations (McMillan & Gogia, 2014). The process of collecting data directly impacts the quality of the research in a study (Yin, 2009). Therefore, it was imperative that the data collected from the participants was purposeful and generated information that enriched the focus of this study.

Secondary data is information previously collected and readily available usually in an archival format to be used in an alternative manner or for an objective that is different from its original intent (Bishop, 2011). The use of archival statistics, from the New Commonwealth State Department of Education for this study, has grown to be a norm for research endeavors because it allows researchers with limited time, access to previously transcribed data (Turiano, 2014). The methods of data collection utilized for this study were focus groups, semi-structured interview sessions, and the process of triangulation to ensure data consistency.

## **Focus Groups**

The data collected for this study originated from transcribed interviews previously collected in 2013. The researcher explicitly focused on the level of awareness students articulated in their randomly formed sessions on campus practices and procedures. Structuring focus groups in a case study methodology, according to Austin and Sutton (2014) allowed for an interaction to occur that was unrestricted and open, where conversations can develop in a naturalistic environment. The protocol for the formation of the focus groups was established during the primary data collection to ensure that a holistic representation of the campus environment was achieved (James *et al.*, 2013). The interviewing teams informed participants before starting their sessions that there would be targeted questions, but they had the freedom to speak out openly about their experiences (James *et al.*, 2013). An important distinction under the constant comparative lens for Doody, Slevin, and Taggart (2013) was that:

Focus group data can be analyzed using constant comparative, in particular when there are several focus groups within the same study. As focus group data were analyzed one focus group at a time, the researchers could use multiple groups to assess whether the themes that emerge from one group also emerge from other groups, thereby assisting the researcher in achieving data saturation and/or theoretical saturation. (p. 266)

The original interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed by the primary data research collection teams, but reanalyzed for this study.

## **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews are the most common method of collecting data in qualitative research, and they have multiple formats and styles. The organization of interview formats range from highly structured to unstructured, but the open-ended semi-structured interview format tends to yield a richer verbal exchange in the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Utilizing this

method of interviewing allowed for a deeper level of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, subsequently permitting adaptations during the interview process as warranted by the direction of the conversations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using semi-structured interviews enabled participants to have a voice, which leads to a stronger connection and understanding of the case under study (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The 2011 and 2012 cohort years reflected a student of color population of 70% and 71% respectively as reported in the *Winslow, New Commonwealth (pseudonym) State Strategic School Profile Report (2011, 2012)*. Conversely, the diversity of the student population did not transfer to staff members for the years 2011 and 2012, according to the *Winslow, New commonwealth Educator Race/Ethnicity Report* for 2011-12 and 2012-13, which reflected 14% and 15% non-European Americans respectively, and 85% European Americans for both cohort years (CSDE, 2011, 2012). The focus for the researcher was to explore to what extent student voice was accessed in this diverse academic setting.

### **Triangulation**

The researcher utilized data from student focus group sessions and semi-structured interviews. The triangulation approach to collecting data generated a checks and balances process to sustain the appropriate continuity throughout the research and validated the research by incorporating the practice of “examining a conclusion from more than one vantage point” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 298). Triangulation is obtained when the validity process utilized by the researcher makes a connection from various information sources as a progression toward establishing thoughts and classifications in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study student focus group sessions, educator and administrator semi-structured interviews, and

archived campus records from the New Commonwealth state's website were analyzed as part of a verification process to ensure that all findings were consistent (Yin, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a process in qualitative research that refines research questions and assists with forming a foundation for supporting the discourse of study (Hays & Singh, 2012). The incorporation of this process of analysis provided the researcher with a process of interpreting the voice of the students in a suburban northeastern high school as it related to their ability to communicate their academic aspirations. The data analysis process in qualitative research allowed for specifically collected information to be organized and combined in a structured format to postulate themes and concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, student focus groups and semi-structured interviews were analyzed and coded producing meaningful categories.

The analysis of data in this study supported the setting for the study, provided the appropriate rationale for interaction, influenced a phenomenon developed within the context of the research, and revealed hidden truths (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The practice of data analysis for Leedy and Ormrod (2013) allowed broader interpretations of the data to be generated about larger populations. The benefit of accurately analyzing the data provided the researcher with a systematic manner to categorize and interpret data to reveal specific themes and patterns that the participants encountered within their educational environment (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

To cohesively identify and code the data for this study, the researcher utilized the Dedoose program referred to by Zhao, Li, Ross, and Dennis (2016) as a premier qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) program, it is user-friendly and is growing in popularity as a QDAS. An analysis of the transcribed interviews through the Dedoose platform allowed for the

formation of trend consolidations in a systematic and organized manner (Zhao *et al.*, 2016). The use of electronic data analysis technology has revolutionized the process of coding data, like transcribed interviews, in a more efficient, effective, and exigent manner (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016). Participants' statements were categorized and transferred from codes to cohesive concepts. These concepts were further analyzed to produce distinctive themes, which were used to sustain the findings generated from the data. A secondary analysis, constant comparative analysis, and the appropriate coding structure allowed the data for this study to be examined in a concise manner.

### **Secondary Analysis**

This study is a secondary analysis of research initially conducted by Dr. Marlon James in 2013. Secondary analysis has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the primary data by recognizing critical new phenomenon from a targeted site of selection (Stewart, 2012). Through reanalyzing the primary data, a secondary analysis was implemented to consider new research. The use of archival data provides researchers with extensive data that is easily accessible and ready for use (Turiano, 2014). The data for this study followed Stewart's (2012) indication that secondary data can stem from both recognized public research library databases and restricted data sharing of semi-structured interviews from the primary researchers. Secondary data analysis allows researchers the ability to utilize existing first-hand data that cannot be replicated due to a variety of constraints (Smith, 2008).

### **Constant Comparative Analysis**

A constant comparative analysis provides researchers with the ability to integrate multiple communication formats when collecting data in qualitative studies (Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013). In this study, multiple participant perspectives were analyzed and placed into



categories until a cohesive systematic structure of analysis was formatted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of constant comparative analysis for this research initially compared focus groups to focus groups. Then the data warranted the comparison of focus groups to counselors and administrators. The final comparison examined administrators to counselors. These comparison processes allowed the researcher to develop groupings to clarify, specify, and refine the data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

### **Coding Structure**

In qualitative research, a code could be derived from a single word or phrase “that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 4). The coding process should generate informative data that has been analyzed through the “coding, sorting, and sifting of themes and texts” (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 1136) to produce quality findings. For this study, the researcher selected eighteen transcripts: ten student focus groups, two counselor and two administrator semi-structured interviews, and one educator semi-structured interview from the primary data collection teams.

The researcher reviewed all targeted transcripts and applied one or more codes to participant phrases and comments. From those eighteen transcripts, 965 excerpts were generated, which resulted in 117 total initial codes. The Dedoose program uses a hierarchical structure to assist with the organization of research data. In this study four coding levels were generated from the excerpts: child codes, sub codes, parent codes, and root codes (Appendix A). In the preliminary coding process, the researcher was able to “summarize segments of data” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 236) by merging codes into common focus categories which reduced the 117 overall codes to 25 total codes. The next level of coding, pattern coding, (Saldaña, 2015) was

the process of forming a closed coding structure from the reduced categories. There were two child codes and 13 sub codes. The 13 sub codes formed seven parent codes. Finally, the seven parent codes were separated into three distinctive root codes or themes.

### **Summary**

In Chapter III, it was essential to discuss the qualitative process particularly as it related to using a case study approach in this research. The introduction opened with a discussion on the design of the research, which included a rationale for the study. Then the researcher provided pertinent information as it related to the participants and site selection for the study.

In qualitative research, it was necessary to “purposefully select” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178) the data to be analyzed in order to assist in supporting the focal point of the study. The data collection practices included examining transcripts from focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The data analysis for this research discussed the use of a secondary analysis coupled with a constant comparative analysis. The constant comparative method allowed the researcher to compare and evaluate the data provided by the participants, which generated a focal point of consistency within the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

In the data collection process, it was also important to discuss the use of secondary data along with the process of triangulating data sources. This allowed the researcher to obtain “construct validity” (Yin, 2009, p.116), through the use of multiple sources of evidence about the case under study. The coding structure provided this research with an applicable method of reviewing the data sets in a logical and consistent systematic format.

The ability of an educational system to succeed depends on ensuring that all students acquire and sustain knowledge to the best of their ability (McGregor, Mills, Te Riele, Baroutsis, & Hayes, 2017). According to Varenne & McDermott (1998), educational systems are operating

as “successful failures” in that they are providing an education to all students, but the quality and rigor of that education produces different outcomes, depending on the student’s academic level. In the forthcoming chapter the researcher will detail the emergent framework of a *Functioning Dystopia* featuring the voices and experiences of students.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In education, multiple components should together to develop an atmosphere that optimizes learning for all students. A perfect educational environment a “*utopia*” would involve highly qualified educators, appropriate materials and resources, and support systems that were available to ensure all students were successful (Argenton, 2019). This research examined the continuation of academic disparities that have developed in an educational environment which claims to ensure academic achievement for all students, but in actuality was riddled with inequalities and academic disparities, in other words, a functioning educational “*dystopia*.”

#### **Emergent Themes**

To optimize the information provided in the data sets, the researcher focused on those participant session groups that provided the most optimal data for this study. The selections of these sessions were based on the responses provided by the participants and how that information generated the most applicability to the research questions for this study. This final diminution process produced three relevant themes: *collective perceptions*, *collective discourse*, and *collective dysfunctionality* as illustrated in Figure 3 a *Functioning Dystopia*.

#### **A Functioning Dystopia**

In educational systems across the country students have been subjected to operating schematics that portray the appearance of academic attainment for all students, but in actuality have obtained minimal performance gains among ethnicities (Varenne & McDermott, 1998). In his study on education and schooling Richmond (2018) explain that:

So deep-rooted is the conviction that the proper place for adolescents is the classroom, that any suggestion that school-bound experience was precisely what many of them do not need if they are to fulfill themselves was more often than not brushed aside. (p. 4)

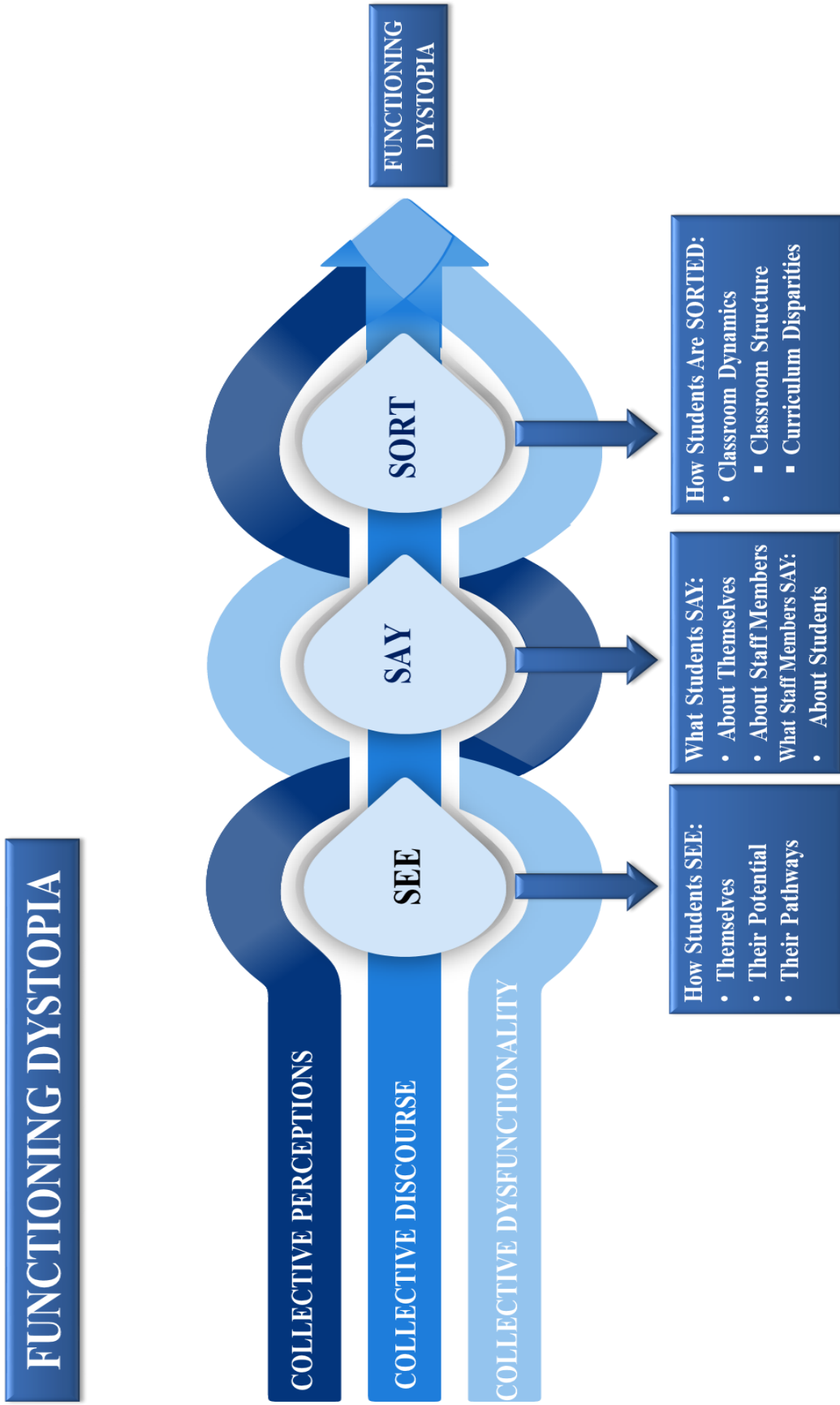
For too long education has maintained the practices of keeping the proverbial academic train moving forward, without ensuring that all its passengers reach a destination of optimal academic achievement or determining what is the most appropriate learning (public, private, or online) setting for the student (Richmond, 2018).

A *Functioning Dystopia* can be defined as an educational K-12 environment that claims to ensure the academic achievement of all students, but in actuality is riddled with inequalities and performance disparities that undermine the potential of students, particularly students of color, to develop academically. To better understand the a *Functioning Dystopia* within this educational setting required analyzing how the participants saw their ability to achieve, what they were saying about their learning environment, and the processes used to sort them academically in a manner that generated academic inequalities.

The forthcoming chapter details the school-based process that animates a *Functioning Dystopia* at Winslow High School. First, the researcher detailed the local context of the school and community, then attention was given to the three school-based processes that emerged from the data analysis. The first process *collective perceptions* described how students saw other students, their abilities to succeed academically, and their perceptions of the educational opportunities that formulated their view of their potential and future goals following high school. For the next process *collective discourse* it was important to analyze what the students in this academic community were saying about their academic outcomes and the impact that educators and administrators had on the attainment of an appropriate and rigorous education. The final

process *collective dysfunctionality* examined those components within this educational environment that maintained an academic culture of disparities. The manner in which students were separated provided an understanding into the systematic practices that assisted in developing performance limitations. Each of these processes were informed by the collective experiences and perceptions of students at Winslow High School and triangulated with antidotes from educators and administrators.

Figure 3. A Functioning Dystopia



## **Local School and Community Context**

Educational systems across the country continue to seek the appropriate solutions for closing academic achievement disparities between students of color and European Americans. The challenge has been to determine the most effective and sustainable approach to ensuring the academic success of all students. The onset of rapidly growing student diversity in suburban academic settings has placed many districts in a state of urgency for developing an approach that addresses performance inequalities among student populations. In education, each student learns to achieve differently. Knowing this, the researcher explored the incorporation of student voice as a viable component to the development of effective school reforms with an aim on improving student achievement.

In the literature, a myriad of components was presented as contributing factors to the achievement disparities among student populations. This research concentrated on the factors generated from the perspective of students that were indicated as contributing to educational inequalities, based on ethnicity, at a suburban high school in Winslow, New Commonwealth. Through analyzing their described lived experiences, the researcher sought to capture the realities of their academic careers obtained from purposeful data by the participants. The intent was to discover potential approaches for improving the educational outcomes of the students served within this targeted learning environment by gaining their input on campus constructs.

The community where this high school was located was described as being an affluent interracial community. A counselor described how the “demographics of the entire area was very interesting. Particularly, how the minority population was economically higher than the European American population in the area.”



This high school offered its students exceptional amenities and facilities, from a state-of-the-art multiple purpose center to a full service restaurant, but the academic growth of individuals of color did not coincide with the rich educational environment portrayed by its outward appearance. A closer look at the structures within this high school revealed that the school system elevated European American students academically, while simultaneously decreasing the academic growth of students of color. Ms. Menefee (pseudonym), an educator on the campus indicated:

There are a lot of students, African American students, who are in the college track here at Winslow High School, but unfortunately, I don't think they are being challenged, and I do not think the educators expect a lot from them. I am thinking to myself, am I the only one seeing this, I do not know, I just do not understand.

Students of color have historically been placed in academic settings that were at a basic level of rigor which has resulted from stereotypical misconceptions of European Americans (Mendoza-Denton, 2014)

The focus of this research was to obtain and analyze data on how embedded educational frames in a diverse learning environment were perceived by students. Students participated in focus groups with parental permission. Transcripts were collected through semi-structured interviews of individual staff members and focus student session groups (James *et al.*, 2013). Participation in the focus groups was voluntary. Each session was conducted by a minimum of two members of the primary research team who were of different ethnicities and genders (James *et al.*, 2013). To ensure that all recordings were correctly transcribed, the primary research team utilized a transcription company with which they had a long-standing relationship. The transcribers were held to strict confidentiality agreements (James *et al.*, 2013).

The focus sessions included in this study had a maximum of twelve participants. The participants were enlisted through their ELA classes, and all interviews were held on campus in a centralized location (James *et al.*, 2013). The formation of each focus group was structured to ensure that all academic levels were represented. The academic hierarchy for this educational environment as previously indicated consisted of college, honors, high honors, and AP course levels (James *et al.*, 2013). In each focus group session, the participants revealed rich insight into their lived experiences within this educational environment.

The demographics for the site selected for this study reflected a diverse student population, as indicated in Table 3. One student participant emphasized that Winslow High School not only had “diverse cultures and nationalities, but there were also different people and personalities that were unique, allowing you to get to know all sorts of individuals.” While the diversity of the campus was expressed by the participants as a positive aspect of the school on a personal level, academically this diversity was not readily seen in course levels and course placements.

Table 3

*Winslow High School Demographics for the 2011 and 2012 Student Cohorts.* (Adapted from James *et al.*, 2013, p. 47). Reprinted with Permission.

Race/Ethnicity	2011 Cohort %	2012 Cohort %
Females		
African American	56%	55%
Asian American	5%	4%
European American	27%	29%
Hispanic American	12%	12%
Males		
African American	57%	56%
Asian American	2%	4%
European American	33%	32%
Hispanic American	9%	8%

Some participants expressed their lived experiences openly within this high school, while others demonstrated a more reserved approach to the group dialog. The data from the focus sessions revealed a desire from the participants to be heard in their educational environment. One participant stated, “I wish our voices were allowed in school. I wish we had a say in more of the things we do on campus.” It had become frustrating for some students to be in an environment that failed to recognize them as important contributors to their educational outcome. This participant explained, “I think when students give suggestions, they are not taken seriously, I have heard comments like, ‘oh they are just students what do they know,’ and ‘I am the teacher, and I know what I am doing’, so they do not take our ideas into consideration.”

The responses provided by the participants allowed for the development of natural and common patterns which generated an overarching theme of a *Functioning Dystopia*. Through

the constant comparative data analysis process, three primary themes developed. The themes produced were *collective perceptions*, *collective discourse*, and *collective dysfunctionality*.

### **Collective Perceptions**

The first school-based process that describes a *functional dystopia* is *collective perceptions*, which is defined as a shared set of internalized negative perspectives that informs students' academic self-concepts. Furthermore, these *collective perceptions* were developed through school-wide processes involving administrators, educators, and students within classrooms, hallways, and other school activities. The concept of *collective perceptions* provides insight into how students perceived the academic ability of their peers, their own potential to succeed academically, and their perceptions of how the educational opportunities afforded to them impacted their academic goals following high school. To better understand the theme of *collective perceptions*, the following supporting sub-themes were developed: (1) how students saw themselves, (2) how students saw their pathways, and (3) how students saw their potential.

#### **How Students Saw Themselves**

Students typically are very observant of their learning environments. Through the structures and processes within an educational system, students can see themselves conforming to or being transformed by their academic setting. The participants within this study provided insight into how they saw themselves achieving within their learning environment. Research has indicated that the academic success or failure that students encounter, first and foremost, hinges on their belief about their abilities to achieve (Preckel & Brunner, 2015). To understand how students saw themselves, it was important to discuss the students' perceptions and the impact of stereotyping practices.

***Student Perceptions.*** The students within this learning community were able to articulate their beliefs about themselves in a meaningful manner that reflected their experiences. In an academic environment that utilized the practice of tracking, the students were very perceptive about differentiations in curriculum rigor and student expectations. As indicated previously the course hierarchy placed students at levels called college, honors, high honors, or Advanced Placement. The use of the term “college” as a label for a course gave the perception that the academic level would be high and the course content very rigorous, but in this academic setting that assumption would be false. The students in this academic setting were able to ascertain that the academic rigor in college level courses was substantially lower than those at the honors level or above.

Research has suggested that educators are often not engaged in assuring that students in lower academic tracks, like the college level at this campus, received an optimal learning experience (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006) or that all students were encouraged to take more challenging courses. One student of color said her teacher discouraged her from taking higher level courses. “The teacher told me you can take a course at a level higher than college” the student explained, “but she was very condescending, and the teacher was not very supportive or confident in my ability to succeed at that level.” Research has shown that proper educator support allows students to become more engaged in their learning and improve their academic outcomes (Tennant, Demaray, Malecki, Terry, Clary, & Elzingak, 2015). The appropriate motivation in academic accomplishments directly influences a student's belief in their capability to acquire academic skills and retain content knowledge (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996). Therefore, schools must be prepared to provide support that can allow a student’s self-efficacy to flourish (Bandura *et al.*, 1996).

The development of a positive self-efficacy occurs when individuals have an inner belief that it is possible for them to sustain growth and attain goals (Bandura, 1994). Bandura further explained that self-efficacy can affect both extrinsic and intrinsic emotional and motivational factors that impact how individuals feel about a given circumstance (Bandura, 1994). In the classroom setting educators must be aware of their ability to promote or demote a student's engagement in their education as expressed by this participant who was displaying a research poster:

The teacher approached my poster, and was not supportive, she made me feel so bad after that. Then Ms. Bamberg (pseudonym) said 'oh, she probably did not say anything because you are Black' I was like well then Ms. Bamberg, that makes it ok?

Another participant stated that this particular educator was often thought of as a racist and spoke to students of color in an unacceptable manner. Still another participant explained the frustration they had experienced when interacting with this same educator:

That teacher is ignorant. She often says things that are very offensive to some students. She offended me several times and my friends would also tell how she made comments that were inappropriate to them. As an educator, why would someone do that? I do not think it is right.

When students are motivated, they also possess the ability to incorporate both coping mechanisms and learning strategies that can assist in maximizing their academic growth (Troia, Shankland, & Wolbers, 2012). This encouragement allowed students to problem-solve difficult obstacles coherently, and subsequently improve their social and academic achievement levels (Troia *et al.*, 2012)

***Stereotyping.*** Students indicated they were stereotyped by their educators, who had established predispositions on the abilities of the students they served. One participant said:

I do not like the way some educators treat college level students. I feel there is a stereotypical belief from educators about the academic ability of students in college level courses. An individual will live up to expectations, meaning the academic expectations for students in college level courses was not to complete their work, so they did not do the work.

This participant expressed their dislike of the way some students were treated based on who they were, rather than what they could become, “I do not like the way those students in college courses are treated, because I feel like there is this huge stereotype, and I am for the underdog”

The participants were very cognizant of the racial differentiation among academic course levels.

In these comments, the participant discussed their assumptions on the course placements of students of color:

When I arrived at this school, coming from a Catholic school, I immediately saw different students in certain classes, with the majority of the European American students in high honors classes. Understand that there were not a lot of African American students that went to my previous school. So, I just assumed that with such a diverse student population at this school, there would be more students of color in the high honors classes.

The presence of stereotyping in the classroom often impacts educational outcomes and sustain inequalities (Stroessner & Good, 2009). Educators have a primary role of facilitating or dismantling the academic growth of the students they serve. In this exchange, this student of color was disheartened by their educator’s lack of support in their ambitions to be an educator:

The teacher initially stated that the project could be anything we wanted. So, I decided that I would focus on the teaching profession because I have always aspired to be a teacher. After hearing my project topic, the teacher told me I would not be able to do it because I was not teacher material. Despite her lack of support, I completed the project and received a good grade; however, it made me realize that I did not want to be a part of the teaching profession.

The existence of stereotyping and the threat it imposes has been well documented about African Americans (Steele, 1997) and Hispanic Americans (Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002). In this learning environment, the presence of stereotyping was perceived by the participants as they described the lack of academic support from educators and the inability of educators to see their potential regardless of their course levels.

### **How Students Saw Their Potential**

The student is the most important individual within the educational community. In order to flourish and achieve, he or she must be in an educational environment that allows them to see their growth and potential. In analyzing the data from the focus group participants, two key elements emerged: student expectations and student aspirations. Both influenced how they saw their potential within their educational environment.

*Student Expectations.* The development of appropriate expectations in an academic setting can provide students with clear directions about targeted goals (Khattab, 2015). One participant explained that at the college level, class assignments were simplistic and academic expectations were low:

The teacher will give me easy work as if I do not have the capabilities to complete harder assignments, just because I am in a college course. I could have taken honors classes, but



I decided to select the college level, because I felt I was not ready for honors, but do not treat me like I am stupid.

Those participants who were scheduled in both college and honors courses also expressed their dislike about the low academic expectations in college level courses:

The expectations in college classes are not that high. If you are on different levels, there are different expectations. For instance, in high honors classes it is harder to get an A, but an A in a college level class required less work and minimal academic proficiency.

The participants who were only in college courses had a more complacent attitude, it was as if they did not know what they were missing, and therefore, did not realize that they were receiving only a marginal education. In contrast, those participants who had some college and honors courses were able to observe the differences in academic rigor:

It is the teacher's expectations that set the tone for learning, because if you were told every day that you are completing easy work or busy work, where the answers are all in your textbook, who would want to do that, that is not challenging.

Research indicates that when students' expectations are not positively reinforced, their academic achievement and aspirations decrease significantly (Khattab, 2015).

***Student Aspirations.*** A primary focus of this study was to hear the voice of students within a diverse learning environment on their aspirations to achieve an optimal academic experience. At the college or basic level, students often expressed minimal career aspirations as indicated by this participant. When asked what he would like to do upon graduating, the student stated, "be alive," and when asked for a more definitive response he reiterated that he would like to "be alive, and if that does not happen, I will not be alone." Another college level student stated that he would be interested in a blue-collar occupation, like a garbage worker. In order for

students to have an optimistic view of their future, it becomes paramount for educational systems to promote academic attainment that propels them beyond their academic aspirations which can lead to high functioning employment opportunities (Irvin, Byun, Meece, Reed, & Farmer, 2016).

In contrast, those students in high honors courses had a more positive and affirming response to questions about their aspirations. This participant indicated that she would “graduate in 2016, was in mostly honors classes, and would like to be a detective.” While other high honors students said, they were aiming for professions, such as a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, physical therapist, or marine biologist.

The high honor participants were all aware that these occupations all would require high levels of mathematics and science, which for some participants lead to stressful situations. This high honors student emphasized that “there is a lot of pressure and it is not only from parents but from teachers. My AP teacher was like college, college, college, college, college. That is really stressful. It freaked me out.” The development of an adolescent’s aspirations, coupled with social and emotional components, have a direct impact on the pathways he or she will choose to pursue in life.

### **How Students Saw Their Pathways**

All individuals have a uniqueness within themselves and seek to honor it by finding their purpose and place in society. The attainment of these life aspects is often established during a student’s high school years. The participants within this high school, based on district middle school attendance zones practices, were placed on distinct school academic pathways, which in large measure, were drawn along racial boundaries. This perceived differentiation impacted how students saw certain schools and their level of academic preparedness:

Moderator: What I am hearing is that RSK and Carver (pseudonyms) are considered the

worse, correct?

Student: Well yeah. These elementary schools were purposed to have more students of color.

In reviewing the participant's perceptions within this educational setting, the manner in which students transitioned from elementary school and the academic preparation that they received for high school influenced the academic track (college, honors, high honors, or AP) to which they were assigned. This subsequently impacted their level of achievement. In determining how students saw their pathways the researcher focused on their perceptions on transition patterns and their level of preparedness.

***Student Transitions.*** In this academic setting, it was important to understand the voice of students on how they transitioned into their current academic pathways, as it was evident that differentiations were occurring depending on a student's course level. Student pathways were impacted by the processes the school district used to transition students through school feeder patterns and within the high school itself.

The participants were able to recall how certain elementary schools had specific student characteristics and the impact those attributes had on the level of courses students were exposed to, which depended largely on the elementary school they attended. This participant recalled how "a lot of the [students of color] came from RSK, like me and we are not in high honors classes. Nor are we in honors classes."

Implications were being made by the participants that how well students were prepared for high school depended on the elementary school they attended. A participant noted that "Providence (pseudonym) Elementary was near the richer part of town and European Americans lived in that area." In their explanation, this participant explained that:

In my mind, I always thought the characteristics and demographics of Olympia (pseudonym) and Providence Elementary were the same, and the characteristics and demographics of Carver and RSK were the same. At Carver and RSK students are considered lower to middle-lower class.

As participants progressed to high school, they associated course placements with how well they performed in middle school. This participant explained that “it depended on how you were doing during the year before, I was in the eighth-grade last year, and I guess they asked our teachers from last year about what course to assign students.” One interesting discovery within the school that was revealed from the data was the limited knowledge that some students had about how their courses were assigned. In this exchange, the participant indicated that he was not aware of the process:

Moderator: So, you were just given your course schedule, and you said, okay, I will take these classes because that is what they recommended? Is that basically how it happened?

Student: Yeah.

Moderator: Did anyone explain to you why you were being assigned to the courses you received?

Student: No.

Then there were other participants who were more aware of the process of selecting courses, they felt that their voice was not being heard regarding course choices or academic goals. “I think counselors should actually listen to us.” Another participant said, “Ms. Givens (pseudonym) acts like my mother because she tries to dictate all the courses I take.”

The ability of students to transition from one academic level to another was an aspect that also generated different outcomes depending on the students’ academic level. For students who

were in honors or high honors courses transitioning between levels was not One focus group participant was asked, ““So, some of your classes were not high honors and you were allowed to move into those?”” a problem. “Yes,” was the response, “you can move both ways, but it is easier to move down into honors or college.”

The process of transitioning generated different responses for different individuals depending on the course levels to which they were assigned this had a direct correlation to how academically prepared students were in their educational environment.

*Student Preparedness.* Research consistently emphasizes how students are not ready for postsecondary educational settings due to inadequate academic preparation in K-12 education (Duncheon, 2015; Orange & Murakami-Ramalho, 2013). While the continuation of minimal preparedness was evident for students in general, for students of color, there was an even greater level of under-preparedness. This has limited the ability of students of color to succeed in higher education settings (Duncheon, 2015). The goal of K-12 educational systems should be to ensure that all students achieve an optimal education that provides them with the appropriate skills, tools, and knowledge set to succeed in post-secondary settings and beyond. The participants were asked if they felt that the courses that they were taking prepared them for college. The majority of the participants who were in college level course responded that they were not being prepared. One focus group participant said, “college courses are lower than honors courses; therefore, we are only getting the basics.”

One participant from a high honors course discussed a different view of being prepared for college by indicating that:

I know that I want to be an anesthesiologist and the students in my honors and high honors classes are going to be doing similar careers and making the same amount of

money, but it is not the same at the college level. There is a division and it should not be, but there is.

Interestingly, in discussing academic pathways, one participant from a high honors class recognized that “I see a lot of [students of color] in my elective classes, like band and physical education, but [students of color] are not in the academic classes I take at the honors or high honors level.” This student’s response indicated that students of color were seen to be only good enough to compete with their European American peers in electives, but not in academic courses.

In this learning environment, the participants recognized that college level courses, lacked the academic rigor to properly prepare them for education beyond high school. The appropriate academic pathway should provide students with an optimal learning experience that prepares them academically for post high school educational environments.

### **Collective Discourse**

In an educational setting, there are a number of voices that are seeking to be heard. For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to hear what the students were saying about their learning environment in their own words. The necessity to include the voices of students has become accepted in the academic arena (Public Agenda Foundation & WestEd, 2012). Through a social cultural perspective, the achievements and defeats experienced in education could be attributed to the “quality of educational dialogue (discourse is another term used by many linguists)” (Yang, 2016, p. 194), occurring between students and educators. Within this context the second school-based process that describes *a functional dystopia is collective discourse*, which is defined as covert and overt verbal messages conveyed by students, educators, and administrators that animates the negative deficit-oriented school culture and learning environment. There is a complex relationship between *collective perceptions* and *collective*

*discourse*, such that they mutually reinforce one another. How students perceived themselves impacted how they spoke to one another and their internal dialogue, which in turn influenced their academic sense of self and how educators and administrators perceived students individually and collectively.

### **What Students Say About Themselves**

One of the most efficient ways to understand the climate of an educational environment is by communicating directly with the students. Research is increasingly reporting the benefits of the inclusion of student voice as a practical approach to improving the academic outcomes of students (Anderson, 2018; Davis, 2018; Mayes, 2018).

***Student Voice.*** Student voice refers to the ideas, thoughts, principles, and perspectives of students both individually and collectively (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). Student voice focuses on alternative instructional methods and techniques that emphasize the inclusion of “student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, para 1).

As previously discussed, the presence of student voice in education places students in an active role in determining their educational outcomes. The students at Winslow High School often felt restricted in their ability to express their aspirations. “They (educators, counselors, and administrators) will not listen. They only believe in what they believe, with no regard to anyone else’s opinion.” This participant expressed their frustration while interacting with the staff and administration on the campus and their reluctance to allow students to have a voice on aspects within the campus.

Ms. Menefee was one educator who conveyed concerns about students not being by explaining that “the administration does not listen; they do not listen to the students. The

students I am referring to are those that I mentor. Some of them have behavioral issues, but those are the students that required a greater support systems.” The role of student voice is increasing in educational environments, particularly when discussing the campus culture.

***Campus Culture.*** The culture of a campus involves “perceptions, relationships, and written and unwritten rules,” as well as “the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity,” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, para 1). In discussing their campus environment focus group participants expressed areas of both contentment and discontent. “We have everything from basic level classes to AP level classes and the student body is a very diverse student body, and that is what I like a lot about this school.” Other participants also discussed the diversity at Winslow by indicating:

Going back to what she said about the different type of people at this school, it is not just diverse cultures and nationalities, but it is also different personalities. You can get to know all sorts of people; there are a lot of stereotyped groups associated with high school, that become your friends. I have friends in every single group and that just kind of says a lot about this school.

From this participant’s perspective, interacting with their peers is a seamless process that allows the incorporation of all facets of the campus culture. Another participant indicated that “there were a lot of resources at Winslow.” She added, “Winslow provides students with culinary opportunities, technological advancements, and has an excellent fine arts department.”

Other participants viewed the campus culture from a different perspective. When asked about racism within the school this participant stated, “it depends because there are some individuals that you can just tell that they are racist.” In this participant's response, students who



were assigned to college level courses experienced more instances of racial isolation and limited exposure to campus resources:

The high honors classes are not as diverse, and I am being very honest. It is very separated, meaning there are not a lot of African Americans in high honors classes. If there are any, they are the same five African American and/or Asian American students.

There were educators that even the administration indicated had a lack of willingness to establish a culture of learning to ensure effective academic growth for all students. “Some teachers were just completely toxic to the learning environment, and those are the teachers who are ruining the school.” The campus culture is a component within education that establishes the appropriate tone for learning and develops an appropriate relationship between students and their learning environment.

### **What Students Say About Staff Members**

One of the most important relationships in an academic setting is between educational staff and students (Rebrean, 2017). The development of these relationships has a direct impact on how students succeed academically (Rebrean, 2017). For this study, two critical areas raised by the focus group participants were instructional and administrative practices.

*Instructional Practices.* One key component to understanding the perceptions of the students was to determine how they described the instructional practices implemented within their school. The participants provided varied opinions about the educators and administrators, but there was a consistency in their perception about how they impacted academic outcomes. When asked about the quality of instruction the responses generated ranged from frustration to admiration depending on the course level. This college level participant stated, “one of my teachers can be very rude.” Then an honors level student who had the same educator indicated

that “she is a really nice person and I understand the assignments we are doing in class.” It was interesting how two students had the same educator, were on different academic levels, and explained their instructional encounters from the opposite sides of the spectrum of good and bad.

Analyzing the transcripts from the various levels revealed a distinct differentiation in the manner in which instructional practices were administered. In this college level course, a participant explained that the educator “does not help at all, and when you ask him a question, he just walks away. Not a lot of people like his class because he is boring and does not care about educating students.” In contrast, a student in honor and high honors courses stated that, “Ms. Reese (pseudonym), is a hard teacher, but fair. She tries to work with you about missing grades and keeps students informed on what is going to happen if they do not complete their assignments.”

It is essential that educators develop a collaborative atmosphere when working with students. This allows students to be recognized for their efforts, but when that dialog has a negative undertone, it can leave students reluctant to interact and engage in their classroom setting (Saphier, 2017). The following excerpt provided an example of an exchange between an educator and a student and the impression it left with the student:

One time I complained to, my Science teacher because one day she asked me what was wrong. I explained to her that I do all this work, but do not receive a grade. I even let her know that I was willing to stay after school to improve my grade, but she answered and said, ‘oh, Anita (pseudonym), I’m sorry I do not collect late work, and I do not have time to stay after school,’ I was very discouraged because as a teacher, they are supposed to assist students.

The impact of an educator's expectation of a student's potential to succeed academically must not be underestimated (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). This participant stated, "teachers need to really respect students. Some teachers really need to think about what they say before they say it, because their comments can be really rude and disrespectful." The participants emphasized the importance of educators exhibiting attributes that promoted an engaged learning environment regardless of their academic level.

***Administrative Practices.*** The administration of a school sets the tone of the organization (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Pendola, 2017). In reality, most performance-challenged schools have minimal access to effective educators as a result of ineffective school leadership (Fuller *et al.*, 2017). The perceptions of the students within this educational setting exposed some contradictions about the level of administrative assistance available to students at various academic levels.

While other administrators impacted the students within this school, the role of the school counselor, was universally essential to ensuring that all students had an appropriate opportunity to rigorous academic course trajectories. The data indicated that students' access to the counselor depended on their academic level. In one focus group session the students expressed that they had no problems getting an appointment to see their guidance counselor, and if needed, they were able to see a counselor throughout the day without an appointment. "We normally just walk into their office, the receptionist would ask, when your study hall was, and give you a time to come in. Now, there were many times that the counselors if were available, you could see them right away," one high honors participant explained.

Interestingly, not all the participants experienced the same level of service as previously described. Participants in college and some honors levels made acute observations of the realities they encountered when wanting guidance from their counselor:

It often takes too long to get an appointment, particularly if you never have a study hall.

The one thing that I did not understand was, what if I was dealing with a situation, for instance, depression or something like that, they want me to wait three weeks to talk to someone.

The administrative practices implemented within this school were not constructed to assist all students equally. In their study, Robinson and Roksa (2016) revealed that counselors provided differentiated academic guidance pathways, discouraged certain student ambitions, and exposed targeted students to college materials based on a student's social status. The students often expressed having limited access to academic guidance, depending on their academic level. When students feel that they are not being heard or their concerns taken seriously, they become discouraged and place limited trust in the education system (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Pendola, 2017).

### **Collective Dysfunctionality**

Education policy makers continues to seek the appropriate practices and procedures to reduce the dysfunctionality of academic environments (Annamma & Morrison, 2018). In their study of students of color Annamma and Morrison (2018), "believe that many education settings are dysfunctional education ecologies, wherein multiple-marginalized students of color are not imagined as valuable natural resources" (p. 114).

The final school-based process that describes a functional dystopia at Winslow High School is *collective dysfunctionality*, which is defined as institutionalized inequalities that

informs the quality of classroom dynamics (classroom management & student discipline), and curriculum disparities. Moreover, Winslow High School implemented and justified curriculum disparities in the form of race-based academic track placements that relegated the vast major of students of color to “basic level” academic coursework, which was deceptively labeled as “college level” courses in this district.

### **Classroom Dynamics**

The nucleus of an educational environment is the classroom. Student disengagement in the classroom was described as a component of the educational structure that could be controlled by educators through quality instructional practices (Shernoff, Ruzek, & Sinha, 2017). The design of the classroom becomes a crucial element that impacts how students learn and sustain engagement (Phillips, 2014). Therefore, developing an educational climate that encourages student participation and engagement, rather than one that practices student isolation and emphasizes standardized assessment instruction methods becomes paramount (Murphy, 2016).

The participants were asked about the differences between the students they encountered in college courses and those within higher level course settings. This participant explained that “in honors and high honors courses, students actually care about their grade, but students in college classes, they do not really care about their grades.” Another participant disagreed. “It is not that students in college classes do not care, in my opinion, it is just that they struggle academically, so their work is at a lower level.” The dynamics of a classroom provide students with a particular mindset, depending on the course level they are assigned (Phillips, 2014).

In this exchange, participants in a college level focus group were asked to provide insight into how they experienced learning in their classes. “In this one teacher’s class, the pattern is we do worksheets, he will then talk for ten minutes, and then he will give us more paperwork

that he will probably not even grade.” Research supports that when worksheet usage was overused, inappropriately designed, and lack academic rigor, student learning is significantly impacted (Lee, 2014).

A participant responded in annoyance to the organization of a college level course that they were previously enrolled compared to the honors course that they were currently enrolled:

I had a college class last year, and it was the worst class of my life. The teacher was great, but the students, oh my God. I cannot even get into it, but oh my God. So that class was bad, but now that I have all honors classes and only two college classes. In my math class, there is not a lot of college students, so it is not that bad.

It was interesting to note that some participants felt some of their college courses were not easy, but the majority of the participants stated that the content was not challenging.

The appropriate classroom dynamics means developing an academic environment that promotes positive interactions between students and educators (Murphy, 2016). An optimal way of ensuring that this occurs is through appropriate classroom structures.

*Classroom Structures.* The primary purpose of the classroom is to provide an academic space that promotes optimal learning. This type of positive school structure included both the physical attributes and instructional engagement practices that can sustain learning while managing behaviors (Wang & Degol, 2016). Structuring the classroom to produce an environment that generates optimal academic growth is critical for the educators and the students they serve (Benn, 2018). Ensuring that the structure of the classroom is conducive to learning requires excellent classroom management and sound discipline practices.

*Classroom Management.* The topic of classroom management has been well documented in research as an essential component of the academic success of students (Benn, 2018). In

college level classes, a participant explained that their classroom often lacked the stability to ensure that all students have an opportunity to learn:

My Spanish class is like a zoo. The teacher does not know how to control the class and it is a very uncomfortable environment. The students in my Spanish class are *those kids* at the college level, and I felt bad because I would not be able to work in that type of environment.

This participant was very conscious of the difficulties an educator can face, the complexities that encompass a classroom environment, and associated behaviors with a particular group of students. This reinforces the fact that “the most salient negative stereotype may be the myth of intellectual inferiority,” (Craemer & Orey, 2017). Other participants described how students do not respect their teachers particularly, in college level courses. Students often have a short engagement window, and it is imperative for educators to be prepared to teach as this participant stated:

Teachers should know what they are doing. If someone decided to become a teacher, but did not want to do anything, did not want to help students, then they selected the wrong job. This would cause students to get an attitude and misbehave.

The data from those participants that were primarily in honors and high honors courses showed that they felt the need to express their disdain for how some educators behaved toward students. “One of my teacher told me that college level courses were very different, and that students in college courses do not know what they are doing, and this is why they were in college level courses.” Another participant elaborated further about college level courses by stating that “college classes are honestly a joke, they are supposed to work at a slower pace, but the teacher allows them to get by with anything.” Participants further indicated that some of their courses

lacked organization and classroom management to sustain an optimal learning environment due to disciplinary concerns.

*Discipline Practices.* This sub-theme generated a number of contradictions from the participants. In all participant sessions, discipline was discussed, but the responses to how disciplinary infractions were processed produced multiple levels of interpretations. The primary concern from the participants centered around the fairness of the disciplinary practices enforced throughout the campus.

Participants explained that some students received minimal, if any consequences for their actions, while other students received maximum penalties for what the participants deemed as minor infractions. “The discipline practices for the students on this campus is not fair, I do not agree with their practices, because in a minor situation, in my opinion, some will automatically get suspended.” Another participant noted that, depending on who you are, the administrators would “take it to the max.” This participant observed that:

Discipline varied from person to person, for instance, a person who just comes to school and is not in any activities, and when they get in trouble they immediately get ISS (In School Suspension). Really? They pick their favorites. If they know you, they will let you slide.

Another participant was very adamant about the special treatment being given to certain students and not others:

Sports stars, teachers’ kids, or if a student does a lot for the school, then they will not throw the book at you. However, if you are just a normal student, that they do not know, well it is like oh just throw the book at them. What? That is not fair.



In some instances, discipline was discussed as it related to understanding coursework, and, rather than address the student's academic concern, the educator chose to place the student outside of the classroom:

If you do nothing, they ask you to step outside. There was one time I called the teacher over and asked for help with a problem, and he said, try something, and I really did not know how to do it, so I kept asking him, and he finally just told me to step outside.

Rather than assist the student with their academic issue, the educator chose to make it a discipline concern, which often leads to students missing class time and learning opportunities. It was interesting how participants described disciplinary differentiations based on course level enrollment:

It depends on the teacher. I have teachers who will put up with a lot and just do not really discipline anyone and then other teachers are always on top of it. They are strict, they're really discipline oriented. It is high honors; so, the students have probably never been in ISS when I make that assumption.

Inequitable disciplinary measures for students of color have been deeply woven in educational systems (DeMatthews, 2016) and requires from both administrators and educators an acknowledgment of the connection between disciplinary practices and the culture of the student served. In all focus sessions, students indicated concerns about the disciplinary practices and how some students received minimal repercussions for their inappropriate behaviors, while other students were handled more severely.

***Curriculum Disparities.*** The participants within these focus sessions discussed how students were identified at certain academic levels, the meaning of those levels, and the differentiation in the curriculum. In this section, students discussed their perceptions of their

classroom environment within the school as it related to course placement practices and coursework they were assigned.

*Tracking.* Exposure to the appropriate courses provide students with the proper tools in preparation for post-secondary education. This participant emphasized that “the whole tracking thing is messed up,” but believes that the process is useful in this learning environment as it “helps to separate students into appropriate academic levels.” Racially diverse schools provide students with alternative learning environments, through tracking practices, which often result in achievement disparities (Giersch, Bottia, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016).

For students at the college level, the process of changing an academic track generated a different perspective as this participant discusses a classmate:

I have a friend that would like to be in honors courses, she gets straight A’s, but the administrators told her they would not recommend her for honors. I do not think that is really nice because it is harder to move up than it is to move down.

In each focus session, there was a distinct tone set by the participants that reflected their knowledge of how they were assigned to certain course levels. Some students were very forthcoming and knowledgeable as they discussed knowing different course tracks, while other students appeared to have limited knowledge of course distinctions. In addition, it was evident that the participants were aware that learning environments were different based on the course and the track to which they were assigned.

There was a clear distinction conveyed by the participants about course tracks. The students in the college track were thought of as lower achieving students, and the quality of coursework was remedial and lacked the academic rigor of higher-level courses. In some instances, participants stated that course track decisions were made while they were in middle

school for incoming ninth graders, based on the recommendations of their teachers. When asked to confirm their knowledge of the course placement process students on the college track were generally unsure and indicated that they did not know, they assumed that counselors “used what you did in the previous year.” These participants’ responses reflected that they had a limited to no voice in developing their course schedule and were often provided with no rationale on how their courses were assigned.

The availability of courses was misleading for some participants. The students on a college track described their ability to change their current academic status as “near impossible.” This participant stated, “Once you’re in a college class, you’re stuck at the college level, you cannot move up.” One participant also described how educators hindered or discouraged students who wanted to pursue higher levels of education “teachers can also stop you from changing from a college track, they think that you should always stay in college classes and they will not let you try to be better.”

Research indicates that through academic tracking practices, in some educational settings, students were offered the same courses, but at different levels of “academic rigor” (Giersch, Bottia, Mickelson, & Stearns, 2016, p. 3). The use of tracking practices for this learning community limited the opportunities for targeted students to learn in an advanced academic setting and only exposed them to basic level coursework.

*Coursework.* In the focus sessions, students’ perceptions of the materials and resources utilized at various course levels became a reoccurring concern. One of the most profound studies on the academic achievement of students was the Coleman Report of 1966. In this study, (Coleman *et al.*, 1966), determined that curriculum materials and academic resources utilized within an educational system had a minimal effects on student performance. The Coleman

Report was a study that established a legitimacy for many of the practices seen implemented in schools today. In recent research, scholars have contradicted the accuracy of the Coleman Report, insisting that the resources and materials available for students do affect achievement (Bartz, 2016; Borman & Dowling, 2010; Hanushek, 2016).

There were students at the college level who did not fully understand the limited academic rigor of their classroom environments. When some participants in the college focus session were asked why they felt the courses to which they were assigned were called “college” some students indicated that they were not sure. Then there were other students who were able to understand course differentiations. This participant explained how she felt misinformed about the course level she was assigned. She explained, “when I first heard I was going to be in college courses I thought it was going to be the hardest thing, but it was not.” A perceptive high honors participant explained coursework differentiation by stating that “they only changed the name of the lower level courses and started calling them college. So, actually what is called college courses now, used to be known as basic courses.”

This college level student provided rich insight on coursework differentiations as it related to their academic level:

We watched movies the entire class, then the teacher gave us worksheets, I feel like I do work for no reason, and it is not getting graded and like she is not a good teacher at all. Another participant further expressed their disappointment in their level of coursework because they were only given “worksheet after worksheet after worksheet on things we already know how to do. I want to learn something I have never learned before.” Providing students with resources and coursework that is appropriate for their academic achievement is essential to ensuring that gaps in performance are being reduced (Kotok, 2017).

## Summary

Conducting a secondary analysis of ten student focus groups and five semi-structured interview sessions allowed the researcher to obtain significant data on the participant's perceptions of the facets of their educational environment. The constant comparative approach was an effective process as it allowed the researcher to review multiple focus groups to determine the consistency of emerging themes from one group to the next (Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013).

Through granted access to the raw data sets the researcher was able to decipher the academic levels of each focus group based on the content of the transcribed interviews (Johnston, 2014). It was essential to ensure that detailed descriptions were provided so the readers would have the ability to determine shared characteristics of the data (Creswell, 2009).

The focus group participants provided unique perspectives on the organizational structures of their academic environment. To some degree, all groups expressed the necessity for improving academic practices to generate a learning culture that could meet the needs of all students. Some participants, generally those in honors course or higher, were well informed of the academic processes and protocols available at the school, while others had limited knowledge.

In developing a cohesive format to explain the findings, three themes were generated from analyzing the data on *collective perceptions*, *collective discourse*, and *collective dysfunctionality*, which formed the foundation for a *Functioning Dystopia*. From these primary themes emerged subsequent supporting topics that provided additional organization of the findings.

According to the participant's responses, the theme of the *collective perception* was connected with the information students shared about how they viewed themselves, their potential, and their pathways. The perceptions of the participants were mixed depending on their course level. Those students at the college level often found themselves unaware or unsure of the academic processes and procedures within their learning environment. Those students in honors or higher level course settings were perceived to have more knowledge of campus practices and greater flexibility to manage their academic outcomes.

*Collective Discourse* was another theme that was identified from analyzing the data. This was a theme that produced responses from the participants that focused on what student said about themselves and staff members within their learning environment. The participants emphasized these two components as having an instrumental role in the organization of the campus and the practices that were allowed to proceed as hindrances to the academic growth of all students. The participants emphasized the limitations they encountered when attempting to have a voice in their academic outcomes or aspirations, particularly those students at the college level. The culture of the campus was one of separation as this staff member observed:

When you walk into a hallway, and you see a group of African American males, you see a group of African American females, you see a group of European American males and a group of European American females. What would be your perceptions when you walk in?

In this diverse academic environment, there was a culture of separation and isolation developed by race, and administration would rather ignore this reality rather than address the situation as reflected by this staff member:

If the leaders within the district were not willing to discuss race, then how are we supposed to bring that into the schools in which we work? A discussion about race separations never made it past the administration of the school. This means it never filtered down to the teachers.

Failure to address practices of racial separations and inequalities set the stage for a dysfunctional learning environment.

The remaining theme that emerged from the data analysis was *collective dysfunctionality*. This theme would include the classroom dynamics and curriculum disparities within the schools. The participants often associated classroom dynamics with an academic level, meaning that in college level courses, which consisted mostly of students of color, the educators had limited to no classroom management. Participants made comments stating, “it is like crazy in his class, he has no way of controlling his students.” Research has well documented the correlation between an optimal learning environment and appropriate classroom dynamics (Back, Polk, Keys, & McMahon, 2016), which include classroom management and discipline practices. The majority of the participants agreed that the disciplinary practices within this environment lacked consistency and appropriateness.

The participants were also expressive about the tracking practices and lack of rigorous coursework that was required within different course settings. An education that is conducive to learning requires the establishment of systems and practices that support the learning of all students. When school systems are riddled with inappropriate classroom structures and curriculum expectations that perpetuates achievement disparities (Annamma & Morrison, 2018) performance outcome disparities will abound. While this school is operating there remains a separation racially and academically generating a *Functioning Dystopia*.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Discussions**

This study sought to analyze the perceptions of students through their lived experiences in a diverse educational environment. Focusing on the voice of the students, the researcher conducted an analysis of campus realities and academic inequalities. Ideally, the purpose of an educational environment is to develop and optimize the learning potential of all students. When an educational system has the appropriate structure: there are academic systems in place, there are accountability measures being utilized, and there are rigorous curriculum foundations. The reality is that while educational systems may proclaim to have these protocols in place, data consistently indicates that not all students are succeeding equally.

Through the findings of this study, the researcher constructed a discourse that described the operational status of this targeted educational environment as a *Functioning Dystopia*. A *Functioning Dystopia*, for the purpose of this study, portrayed a high functioning academic setting with the appropriate amenities and substantial funding resources, but failed to properly optimize the academic growth for all students, particularly students of color.

The educational setting for this study, while they had academic systems that were functioning, they were not successful in sustaining an academic environment that had the fortitude to ensure the academic attainment for all students. One conclusion drawn from the findings to further understand the concept of a *Functioning Dystopia*, in this targeted educational setting was education debt.

The practice of labeling academic inequalities or the underachievement of students of color as merely achievement gaps has become the norm for academic systems in this country



(Ladson-Billings, 2006), with an emphasis on placing the blame on students and educators rather than the educational system. The practice of blaming the student for their academic deficiencies, particularly students of color, has manifested itself through idealistic comparisons to European Americans (Chambers, 2009). Through her research, Ladson-Billings (2006) structured an argument that delved past the misconceptions formed through the use of the term achievement gaps to generate a more cohesive rationale for education disparities between ethnicities. Ladson-Billings referred to gaps in achievement as an education debt that was sustained through “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society” (p. 5). An analysis of academic disparities through the context of education debt generated a more in-depth discovery of systemic causes for learning gaps that remain in educational systems across the country (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The principles of education debt “takes into account broader cultural practices and discourses which have worked to reframe the role and purpose of public education” (Means & Taylor, 2010, p. 49). The education debt discourse emphasized that “gaps in educational attainment and achievement are in turn correlated with gaps in students’ attainment of other important life outcomes, such as income and wealth, meaningful employment, job status, leisure, health, and longevity” (Schouten, 2012, p. 231). While there are multiple components of education debt, this discussion focused on the moral debt component of education debt.

Education debt reflects years of academic inequalities that have negatively influenced the experiences and outcomes of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As previously stated, moral debt is about “...the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do” (p. 8). In this context, the *right* thing to do was to ensure all students receive an optimal education; however, in *actuality*, what has been happening in educational systems in America has not

successfully decreased performance gaps. “So, we must address the education debt because it has implications for the kinds of lives we can live and the kind of education the society can expect for most of its children,” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 9).

It was clear that the academic practices at Winslow High School resulted in contrasting educational outcomes for its student populations. This contrast became evident as the participants expressed their perceptions on academic limitations within this academic setting that were generated through strategic academic course placement practices. While students of color were demographically the largest student population at Winslow High School, Table 4 reflected that they were underrepresented in courses at the honors level or above and overrepresented in the courses at the college level.

Table 4

*Winslow High School Course Placement Comparisons by Grade and Ethnicity for the 2011 and 2012 Cohorts.* (Adapted from James *et al.*, 2013, pp. 71-74). Reprinted with Permission.

Grade	2011 Cohort		2012 Cohort	
	African American	European American	African American	European American
	n	n	n	n
College				
9th	189	72	156	52
10th	157	58	135	35
11th	154	56	103	33
12th	115	54	101	34
Total	615	240	495	154
Honors				
9th	3	7	2	8
10th	5	16	4	16
11th	16	21	24	22
12th	20	13	22	22
Total	44	57	52	68
High Honors				
9th	0	5	1	13
10th	0	2	0	2
11th	0	0	0	0
12th	0	0	0	0
Total	0	7	1	15
Advance Placement (3 or more)				
9th	NA	NA	NA	NA
10th	0	0	0	0
11th	5	10	1	5
12th	10	23	0	20
Total	15	33	1	25

There were three essential questions utilized to guide this study. The first question asked: how did the collective perceptions of diverse students expose the nature of student's experiences

and achievement at Winslow High School? This was a campus that yielded characteristics of both understanding and limited cultural awareness. When this participant discussed appropriate educator behaviors, they referred to some educators who established a culture of learning that made them step out of their academic comfort zone as this high honors student explained:

I did not like poetry, and my English teacher forced me to do it, but then I realized that I was good at reciting and started to enjoy it. The poetry assignment was a good learning experience, I was one of the successful ones, and it boosted my confidence of being in front of a lot of people because the first time it was frightening.

On the other hand, having an academic environment connected with unprofessionalism can have a detrimental effect on the students who have to secure knowledge in such a setting. For example, this participant even started to question the work ethics of her own race “I do not know, I feel like “*we*” do not work hard, but I guess educators feel European Americans work harder.” When students have an inferiority about learning based on their race, the aspects of moral debt can be seen.

There were specific methods and practices evident within the district that were influenced by race, as indicated by this staff member:

The district administration faced several issues and concerns regarding race.

Unfortunately, nobody really wanted to discuss race. I can recall an argument that I had with someone who said, ‘look at the underachievement of the young African American males in the district.’ This one statement started other individuals pointing out how other individuals of color were not achieving academically. The academic achievement for student populations was a concern, and I wanted to discuss the problem this district had

about racial inconsistencies, because there was a problem, but no one really wanted to discuss it.

The need for cultural awareness has a direct connection to the moral debt that has developed at Winslow High School. Cultural awareness has a vital part in ensuring academic equality (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Winslow, as previously stated, had a staff population that was predominantly European American and a student of color population that was greater than fifty-five percent. It was highly likely that students of color would encounter educators who lacked the appropriate cultural awareness to optimized learning for all students “which affects their perceptions of students’ school connectedness,” (Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown, & Conway-Turner, 2016). Therefore, it was imperative that educators remain culturally cognizant with an “ability to teach culturally responsively” (Lewis, James, Hancock, & Hill-Jackson, 2008, p. 142), to develop a classroom environment that generates an atmosphere of learning for all students, particularly for students of color (Lewis *et al.*, 2008).

The next research question asked was: how did the collective discourse among students and staff members influence the school culture and learning environment at Winslow High School? The manner in which students discuss their educational environment ultimately impacts their academic outcomes (Hanson, Polik, Cerna, & WestEd, 2017). In this learning setting, the participants discussed an educational community that yielded different academic outcomes for different student populations and practices that perpetuated an environment of inequality.

The participants described their experiences in contradictory terms depending on the academic pathway (college, honors, high honors, or AP) to which they were assigned. In this

observation, this participant discussed their perceptions of the different levels offered at this campus and the level of rigor associated with the various academic levels:

I think everybody has the same potential, but when students choose to do honors, they choose to do more work. Then there are those students that want to do basic work. It all depends upon the individual and the expectations they have for themselves. In AP courses, students actually want to try, but in basic and college, I feel that the students do not care. They just come to school, take a seat, do not engage in the class, and they just do not care.

In this student's perspective there was an assumption that reflected a more understanding rationalization to the performance capacity of certain students in college courses. "I do not feel that it is because they do not care, it is probably too much for *them*. I believe that college students do not want to do more than they are supposed to do."

In response to this research question, the concept of moral debt was manifested through stereotypical ideals. For instance, this participant reflected on the different approaches an educator implemented with certain classes. "I have seen differences in my teachers; it is like there are stereotypes, particularly for those students in college level courses." One honors student that was previously enrolled in college courses noted that "college level course educators do not expect much from their students, it is like whatever. On the other hand, since I have been in honors courses, more work was expected."

From the perspective of moral debt, Winslow High School failed to ensure that all students had an optimal learning experience. The inconsistencies between curriculum standards resulted in limited exposure to advance level course opportunities as this participant explained:

The way that the school is set-up, it really excludes some individuals. In this school system, the focus is on like one type of intelligence, and this is not fair. I have a number of friends that have a lot of potential, but are low performing. They are genuinely smart individuals, but the school does not recognize it, because they focus too much on things like test results on standardized assessments.

This was an academic environment where the voice of students reflected the perspective of educators and administrators. Those students that were in college level courses spoke through a voice of unsureness and described their classes as mediocre as reflected in this exchange:

Moderator: Describe to me what happens in your college level course. Is the content easy?

Student: I do not know, well the classwork was from last year or the previous year.

Moderator: So, you are telling me that you are doing the same math that you did for the last couple of years?

Student: Yeah.

Moderator: Okay. Do you feel like you are learning anything new?

Student: No, nothing that I do not already know how to do.

While those students that were in high honors or above classes had a voice that was more discerning and confident, particularly as they discussed career aspirations. One participant stated: “yeah, I am going to go to college. It is important to try to succeed and not let the system hold me back and stuff like that.” Another participant indicated similar sentiments, “I want to go to college and see where that leads me. I want to be a successful man, have a family, which includes raising kids.” The perceptions of these students provided insight into how this school

interacts and constructs systems that sustain academic barriers that marginalize the level of growth for all students.

The final research question focused on: how did students of color describe the impact of inequalities on their shared experiences with classroom management, student discipline, and the quality of curriculum in the various academic tracks? Moral debt provided a context to the hindrances participants discussed in relation to academic equality through campus dynamics and disparities. One counselor even indicated that “there were fewer Black students in advanced courses than White students. This does not represent the student population at all.” This reflected the lack of awareness some college level students had about their limited exposure to high course settings. In this high school all students were not equally aware of the proper procedures for changing their level of academics, which limited their ability to seek higher academic platforms. This one high honors participant was well aware of the process for course changes when asked about making schedule adjustments from college to honors or high honors classes:

Student: When you receive your schedule, it indicates the course you should take, but you can definitely override it.

Moderator: How did you know that you could override what was on your schedule?

Student: Well, my sister is an upperclassmen and I was able to find out about high level courses that were available through her. I started with honors geometry and moved up from there.

This was a practice that was not made known to everyone, as some students assigned to college classes had no knowledge of being able to change their academic level.



Students, particularly those in college level settings, often felt their voice was limited in determining the academic pathways that they could pursue through the utilization of such practices as tracking. They also had the perception that their pathways were predetermined with no ability to make adjustments. The participants were aware that tracking practices were occurring in the district and discussed mixed opinions about its implementation:

In my opinion, the use of tracking students' needs to be revisited. Now, I do feel that it is a process that is needed because there are some classrooms that I do not want to be in because of the type of academic level it is. So, in some respects tracking is necessary.

This was an important aspect of the campus dysfunctionality as it spoke toward the inconsistencies that certain students experienced in an effort to improve their academic trajectory. To properly address the moral debt in this learning environment requires a restructuring format to specifically address the academic achievement of students of color while minimizing inequalities.

Another point of discussion was campus discipline. Inappropriate student behaviors are not exclusive to this campus, but the perception in the minds of the students was that, depending on who you were the consequences were not as severe as it was for others. The findings indicated that the participants were concerned about the differentiation in disciplinary practices implemented on the campus:

To be honest, I do not think the discipline practices were fair because I feel like the administration is extremely strict on students in college level classes, but in high honors classes, it is different. The administrative staff will only give them a warning.

Research also informs us that students often use behavior as an escape mechanism to avoid academic challenges (Skiba & Losen, 2016). Consideration should be given to determine

if campus procedures and practices are increasing the probabilities of discipline infractions rather than addressing student academic limitations as a root cause of inappropriate behaviors.

Schools have to recognize that academic empowerment has to be equally afforded to all students. Furthermore, through the enlistment of student voice, the scope of academic attainment can be sustained. While it can be seen that historical influences of American society have had a significant impact on the development of a moral debt it remains to be seen how to restore the moral debt owed to a whole culture (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

### **Limitations**

This qualitative study focused on a select high school in a northeastern suburb of the United States. The limitations of utilizing one high school from one geographical area of the country could restrict the use of generalizations to speak toward larger populations (Creswell, 2009). This researcher was bound to the perceptions of the students attending this targeted high school. Subsequently, the perceptions of the students could be limited by the fact that they were enrolled at the school and they may have certain hidden reservations about expressing concerns and practices. A final limitation was that the data collected was through a secondary data analysis; therefore, direct observations of the environment, body language of the participants, and visual images of the school climate and culture were not a part of the context of this research (Smith, 2008; Stewart, 2012).

### **Implications for Future Research**

Moving forward in the area of study on the perceptions of students of color and the inclusion of their voice in academic settings more research is needed to address: (1) the lack of established collaborative learning environments between students of color and educators (2) educational system that fail to allow students of color to have a greater participatory role in

determining their academic pathways (3) the inability of academic settings involving students of color in campus interventions and structures.

The education of an adolescent opens the gateway to endless possibilities in their lives and yet as Ladson-Billings (2009) emphasized:

No challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of [individuals of color]. Burdened with a history that includes the denial of education, separate and unequal education, and relegation to unsafe, sub-standard inner-city schools, the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream. (p. vx)

This study analyzed the perceptions of students of color in a diverse learning environment. Their voice gave us a new data source to enable us to understand the effectiveness, fairness, and transparency of established campus practices (Healey, 2014; Simón, Echeita, & Sandoval, 2018). The inclusion of student voice in research is becoming a more viable form of school reform aimed at improving student achievement disparities in American educational settings.

## REFERENCES

- Aaronson, D. & Mazumder, B. (2011). The impact of Rosenwald schools on Black achievement. *Journal of Political Economy*, 119(5), 821. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/10.1086/662962>
- Abiola, O. (2016). Perspectives and trends of tracking among students' abilities on academic. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal*, 24(2), 156-164.
- Abrams, R. (1975). Not one judge's opinion: Morgan v. Hennigan and the Boston schools. *Harvard Educational Review*, 45(1), pp. 5-16.
- Argenton, G. (2019). Utopian spaces and the promise of education: A conceptual analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51(3), 310-321.
- Annamma, S. & Morrison, D. (2018). Identifying dysfunctional education ecologies: A discredited analysis of bias in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 51(2), 114-131.
- Anderson, J. (2006). A tale of two "Browns": Constitutional equality and unequal education. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 105(2), 14-35.
- Anderson, M. (2018). A seat at the table: African American youth's perceptions of K-12 education. *Education Digest*, 84(4), 14. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=133267855&site=eds-live>
- Andrews, K. & Jowers, K. (2018). Lawyers and embedded legal activity in the southern Civil Rights Movement. *Law & Policy*, 40(1), 10–32. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/10.1111/lapo.12096>
- Ansalone, G. (2001). Schooling, tracking, and inequality. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 9(1), 33-47.

- Ansalone, G. & Biafora, F. (2004). Elementary school teachers' perceptions and attitudes to the educational structure of tracking. *Education, 125*(2), 249-258.
- Austin, Z. & Sutton, J. (2014). Qualitative research: getting started. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy, 67*(6), 436-440.
- Back, L., Polk, E., Keys, C. & McMahon, S. (2016). Classroom management, school staff relations, school climate, and academic achievement: Testing a model with urban high schools. *Learning Environments Research, 19*(3), 397-410.
- Baker, R. (2010). Standardized testing. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (pp. 602-604). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Baker, B. & Center for American Progress. (2014). *America's Most Financially Disadvantaged School Districts and How They Got That Way: How State and Local Governance Causes School Funding Disparities*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.srvproxy1.library.tamu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED561094&site=eds-live>
- Baker, B. & Albert Shanker Institute. (2016). *Does Money Matter in Education?* Second Edition. Albert Shanker Institute. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED563793&site=eds-live>.
- Baker, B., Farrie, D. & Sciarra, D. (2016). Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps. Policy Information Report. ETS RR-16-15. *ETS Research Report Series*. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1124843&site=eds-live>

- Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (pp. 71-81). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development*, 67(3), 1206-1222.
- Bannister, N. (2015). Reframing practice: Teacher learning through interactions in a collaborative group, *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 24(3), 347-372, doi:10.1080/10508406.2014.999196
- Bartz, D. (2016). Revisiting James Coleman's epic study entitled equality of educational opportunity. *National Forum of Educational Administration & Supervision Journal*, 34(4), 1-10.
- Benn, G. (2018). Relationships and rapport: " You don't know me like that!" *Educational Leadership*, 76(1), 20-25.
- Bell, D. (1992). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review*, 24(2), 363–379. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lgs&AN=502287349&site=eds-live>
- Bell, L., Funk, M., Joshi, K. & Valdivia, M. (2016). Racism and White privilege. In Maurianne Adams & Lee Anne Be II (Eds.), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (pp. 5p-598e). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/detail.action?docID=4355263>
- Benincasa, L. (2017). Word problems and make-believe: Using frame analysis and ethnomethodology to explore aspects of the culture of schooling. *Journal of Pedagogy / Pedagogický Casopis*, 8(2), 77-99. doi:10.1515/jped-2017-0010

- Bergan, S. (2003). Student participation in higher education governance. Retrieved from [https://www.coe.int/T/dg4/HigherEducation/Governance/SB\\_student\\_participation\\_EN.pdf](https://www.coe.int/T/dg4/HigherEducation/Governance/SB_student_participation_EN.pdf)
- Berman, S. (2013). The resegregation of America's schools. *School Administrator*, 11(70), 14-21.
- Berry, M. (2018). Still separate & unequal. *Crisis (15591573)*, 125(1), 12–17. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rkh&AN=128897906&site=eds-live>
- Biafora, F. & Ansalone, G. (2008). Perceptions and attitudes of school principals toward school tracking: Structural considerations of personal beliefs. *Education*, 128(4), 588-602.
- Bishop, L. (2011). *What is Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data?* [Streaming video]. Retrieved from <http://methods.sagepub.com.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/video/what-is-secondary-analysis-of-qualitative-data>
- Borman, G. & Dowling, M. (2010). Schools and inequality: A multilevel analysis of Coleman's equality of educational opportunity data. *Teachers College Record*, 112(5), 1201-1246.
- Borman, G., Grigg, J. & Hanselman, P. (2016). An effort to close achievement gaps at scale through self-affirmation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(1), 21-42. doi:10.3102/0162373715581709
- Boser, U., Baffour, P., Vela, S. & Center for American Progress. (2016). *A Look at the Education Crisis: Tests, standards, and the future of American education*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED567864>

- Boykin, A. & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn: Moving from research to practice to close the achievement gap*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Brandwein, P. (2016). A lost jurisprudence of the reconstruction amendments. *Journal of Supreme Court History*, 41(3), 329–346. Retrieved from <http://heinonline.org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jspcth41&div=34>
- Brooman, S., Darwent, S. & Pimor, A. (2015). The student voice in higher education curriculum design: Is there value in listening? *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 52(6), 663-674.
- Brown-Henderson, C. & Brown, S. (2016). The southern manifesto: A doctrine of resistance 60 years later. *Journal of School Choice*, 10(4), 412. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/10.1080/15582159.2016.1238732>
- Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483, 74 S. Ct. 686, 98 L. Ed. 873 (1954). Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=12120372216939101759&q=brown+v.+board+of+education+1954&hl=en&as\\_sdt=6,44&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=12120372216939101759&q=brown+v.+board+of+education+1954&hl=en&as_sdt=6,44&as_vis=1)
- Bryant, R. & Center for Law and Social Policy. (2015). College preparation for African American students: Gaps in the high school educational experience. Retrieved from <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/83649/CollegePreparationAfricanAmerican.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Bunner, T. (2017). When we listen: Using student voices to design culturally responsive and just schools. *Knowledge Quest*, 45(3), 39-45.
- Burris, C. & Garrity, D. (2008). *Detracking for excellence and equity*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



- Butchart, R. & Rolleri, A. (2004). Secondary education and emancipation: Secondary schools for freed slaves in the American south, 1862-1875. *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, 40(1), 157–181. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ748423&site=eds-live>
- Butvilofsky, S., Hopewell, S., Escamilla, K. & Sparrow, W. (2017). Shifting deficit paradigms of Latino emerging bilingual students' literacy achievement: Documenting biliterate trajectories. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 16(2), 85-97.  
doi:10.1080/15348431.2016.1205987
- Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., Lash, D. & Mass Insight. (2007). The turnaround challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools. *Mass Insight Education & Research Institute*, (NJ1). Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538298>
- Carola, C. (2017). AP Explains: What was behind the American civil war? *Canadian Press*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=MYO127418921017&site=eds-live>
- Carrington, A. (2017). Running the robed gauntlet: Southern state courts' interpretation of The Emancipation Proclamation. *American Journal of Legal History*, 57(4), 556–584.
- Carson, T. & Bonk, M. (1999). Black Codes. In T. Carson & M. Bonk (Eds.), *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*, (p. 98). Detroit, MI: Gale. Retrieved from <http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/apps/doc/CX3406400099/GVRL?u=txshracd2898&sid=GVRL&xid=867ff724>

- Carter, R., Coleman Jr, W., Greenberg, J., McNeil, G. & Smith Jr, J. (1998). In Tribute: Charles Hamilton Houston. *Harvard Law Review*, 111(8), 2149-2179.
- Chambers, T. (2009). The 'reivement gap': School tracking policies and the fallacy of the 'achievement gap'. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 78(4). 417-431.
- Childs, D. (2017). African American education and social studies: Teaching the history of African American education within a critical pedagogy framework. *Ohio Social Studies Review*, 54(1), 44–50. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=125259391&site=eds-live>
- Chiu, D., Beru, Y., Watley, E., Wubu, S., Simson, E., Kessinger, R., Rivera, A., Schmidlein, P. & Wigfield, A. (2008). Influences of math tracking on seventh-grade students' self-beliefs and social comparisons. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(2), 125-135. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.27548272&site=eds-live>
- Cholewa, B. & West-Olatunji, C. (2008). Exploring the relationship among cultural discontinuity, psychological distress, and academic outcomes with low-income, culturally diverse students. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(1), 54-61.
- Chowdhury, M. (2015). Coding, sorting and sifting of qualitative data analysis: Debates and discussion. *Quality & Quantity*, 49(3), 1135–1143. doi: 10.1007/s11135-014-0039-2
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241. Retrieved from <https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Civil%20Rights%20Act%20Of%201964.pdf>

- Clycq, N., Ward-Nouwen, M. & Vandenbroucke, A. (2014). Meritocracy, deficit thinking and the invisibility of the system: Discourses on educational success and failure. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(5), 796-819.
- Cobb, C. (2011). Freedom's struggle and freedom schools. *Monthly Review*, 63(3), 104–113.
- Coleman, J., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfeld, D. & York, R. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Colgren, C. & Sappington, N. (2015). Closing the achievement gap means transformation. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, 2(1), 24-33.
- Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now, (ConnCAN). (2015). Field guide to education in Connecticut 2015. Retrieved from <https://conncan.org/research-showcase/2015-field-guide-to-education-in-connecticut/>
- Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE). (2015). Ensuring equity and excellence for all Connecticut students. Retrieved from [https://ctserc.org/documents/news/2016-07-08-five\\_year\\_comprehensive\\_plan\\_for\\_education.pdf](https://ctserc.org/documents/news/2016-07-08-five_year_comprehensive_plan_for_education.pdf)
- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). (2011). *Educator race/ethnicity report for 2011-12*. Retrieved from <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>
- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). (2012). *Educator race/ethnicity report for 2012-13*. Retrieved from <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>
- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). (2016). CSDE turnaround framework. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Turnaround/Turnaround-Office>
- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). *Strategic school profile 2011-12 report*. Retrieved from <http://edsight.ct.gov/ssp/2011-2012/164-61.pdf>.

- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). *Strategic school profile 2012-13 report*. Retrieved from <http://edsight.ct.gov/ssp/2012-2013/164-61.pdf>.
- Craemer, T. & Orey, D. (2017). Implicit Black identification and stereotype threat among African American students. *Social Science Research*, 65(2017), 163-180.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Creswell, J. & Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Cross, C. & Education Commission. (2015). The shaping of federal education policy over time. *The Progress of Education Reform*, 16(2), 1-6.
- Dale, B., Hernandez-Finch, M., Mcintosh, D., Rothlisberg, B. & Finch, W. (2014). Utility of the Stanford-Binet intelligence scales, fifth-edition with ethnically diverse preschoolers. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(6), 581-590.
- Darby, D. & Rury, J. (2018). *The color of mind: Why the origins of the achievement gap matter for justice*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/reader.action?docID=5049327>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2011). Soaring systems: High flyers all have equitable funding, shared curriculum, and quality teaching. *American Educator*, 34(4), 20.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). Closing the achievement gap: A Systemic View. In: Clark J. (Ed.), *Closing the Achievement Gap from an International Perspective* (pp. 7-20). Springer, Dordrecht. doi: 10.1007/978-94-007-4357-1\_2
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Want to close the achievement gap? Close the teaching gap. *American Educator*, 38(4), 14-18.

Darrow, A. (2016). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). *General Music Today*, 30(1), 41.

doi:10.1177/1048371316658327

Davis, M. (2018). Raising student “voice and choice” is the mantra: But is it a good

idea? *Education Week*, 38(12), 19.

Dedoose (2016). [Software platform]. Dedoose: Great research made easy. Retrieved from

<https://dedoose.com>

Delmont, M. & Theoharis, J. (2017). Introduction: Rethinking the Boston “busing

crisis.” *Journal of Urban History*, 43(2), 191–203. Retrieved from [https://doi-org.srv-](https://doi-org.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/10.1177/0096144216688276)

[proxy1.library.tamu.edu/10.1177/0096144216688276](https://doi-org.srv-proxy1.library.tamu.edu/10.1177/0096144216688276)

DeMatthews, D. (2016). Effective leadership is not enough: Critical approaches to closing the

racial discipline gap. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues*

*and Ideas*, 89(1), 7-13.

DeSimone, J. & Roberts, L. (2016). Fostering collaboration between preservice

educational leadership and school counseling graduate candidates. *Journal of Counselor*

*Preparation & Supervision*, 8(2), 12-27. doi:10.7729/82.1081

Desmond, C. & Goldman, E. (2008). Talking about a revolution: Looking to the past to save

our future. *New England Journal of Higher Education*, 22(5), 18-19.

Dittrich, E. (2014). Underachievement leading to downgrading at the highest level of

secondary education in the Netherlands: A longitudinal case study. *Roeper Review*, 36(2),

104-113.

Donnor, J. & Dixson, A. (Eds). (2013). *The resegregation of schools: Education and race in the*

*twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Doody, O., Slevin, E & Taggart, L. (2013). Focus group interviews part 3: Analysis. *British Journal of Nursing*, 22(5), 266-269.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1935). *Black reconstruction: An essay toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Co.
- Duncheon, J. (2015). The Problem of college readiness. In W. Tierney & J. Duncheon (Eds.), *The problem of college readiness* (pp. 3-44). Suny Press. Albany, NY.
- English, D., Lambert, S. & Ialongo, N. (2016). Adding to the education debt: Depressive symptoms mediate the association between racial discrimination and academic performance in African Americans. *Journal of School Psychology*, 57(2016) 29-40.
- Entman, R. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 163-173. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00336
- Epps-Robertson, C. (2016). The race to erase Brown v. Board of Education: The Virginia way and the rhetoric of massive resistance. *Rhetoric Review*, 35(2), 108–120.  
doi: [10.1080/07350198.2016.1142812](https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2016.1142812). Retrieved from  
<http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2016872072&site=eds-live>
- Erickson, A. & Highsmith, A. (2018). The neighborhood unit: Schools, segregation, and the shaping of the modern metropolitan landscape. *Teachers College Record*, 120(3), 1-36.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). (2015). U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.htm>

- Feagin, J. (2012). *White party, White government: Race, class, and U.S. politics*. New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/detail.action?docID=958064>
- Fennell, M. (2016). What educators need to know about ESSA. *Educational Leadership*, 73(9), 62.
- Ferguson, R. (2003). Teachers' perceptions and expectations and the Black-White test score gap. *Urban education*, 38(4), 460-507.
- Fielding, M. (2012). Beyond student voice: Patterns of partnership and the demand of deep democracy. *Revista de Education*, 359, 45-65. doi: 10-4438/1988-592X-RE-2012-359-195
- Fine, B. (1956, Sep 23). Negro lag is linked to inferior schools: Negro lag linked to poor schools Whites near norm misinterpretation feared. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/113583077?accountid=7082>
- Flaxman, E. (2003). Closing the achievement gap: Two views from current research. ERIC Digest. 1-6. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED482919&site=eds-live>
- Flenbaugh, T., Howard, T., Malone, M., Tunstall, J., Keetin, N. & Chirapuntu, T. (2017). Authoring student voices on college preparedness: A case study. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(2), 209-221.
- Fletcher, A. (2014). *The guide to meaningful student involvement*. Olympia, WA: SoundOut. Retrieved from <https://soundout.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-Guide-to-Meaningful-Student-Involvement.pdf>

- Ford, D. & Moore, J. (2013). Understanding and reversing underachievement, low achievement, and achievement gaps among high-ability African American males in urban school contexts. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 45(4), 399-415.
- Friedrich, A., Flunger, B., Nagengast, B., Jonkmann, K. & Trautwein, U. (2015). Pygmalion effects in the classroom: Teacher expectancy effects on students' math achievement. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41(2015), 1–12. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2014.10.006>
- Fuller, E., Hollingworth, L. & Pendola, A. (2017). The every student succeeds act, state efforts to improve access to effective educators, and the importance of school leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(5), 727-756.
- Gaddis, S. & Lauen, D. (2014). School accountability and the Black–White test score gap. *Social Science Research*, 44(2014), 15-31.
- Gall, M., Gall, J. & Borg, W. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gamson, D., McDermott, K. & Reed, D. (2015). The elementary and secondary education act at fifty: Aspirations, effects, and limitations. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(3), 1-29. doi:10.7758/rsf.2015.1.3.01
- García, D. (2018). *Strategies of segregation: Race, residence, and the struggle for educational equality*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Garland, M. & Rapaport, A. (2017). Advanced course offerings and completion in science, technology, engineering, and math in Texas public high schools. *Regional Educational Laboratory, REL 2018-276*.



- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY. Teachers College Press.
- Gershenson, S., Holt, S. & Papageorge, N. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student–teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, 52(2016), 209–224.
- Gibau, G. (2015). Considering student voices: Examining the experiences of underrepresented students in intervention programs. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, 14(3), 1-12.
- Giersch, J., Bottia, M., Mickelson, R. & Stearns, E. (2016). Exposure to school and classroom racial segregation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg high schools and students' college achievement. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(32), 1-24.
- Gillborn, D., Demack, S., Rollock, N. & Warmington, P. (2017). Moving the goalposts: Education policy and 25 Years of the Black-White achievement gap. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(5), 848-874.
- Glossary of Education Reform (2013, November, 25). School Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.edglossary.org/school-culture/>
- Glossary of Education Reform (2013, December, 20). Student Voice. Retrieved from <https://www.edglossary.org/student-voice/>
- Goddard, R, Skrla, L. & Salloum, S. (2017). The role of collective efficacy in closing student achievement gaps: A mixed methods study of school leadership for excellence and equity. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 22(4), 220-236.  
doi:10.1080/10824669.2017.1348900
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.

- Goode, V. (2010). Plessy v. Ferguson. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (pp. 512-516). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Gooden, M. (2009). Race, law, and leadership: Exploring the interest-convergence dilemma. In L. Tillman (Ed.) *The SAGE handbook of African American education* (pp. 237-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Gray, D. & Williams, S. (2012). Facilitating educational leadership: Using frames to increase action. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 33(6), 583-593.  
doi:10.1108/01437731211253037
- Green, R. (2011). *Case study research: A program evaluation guide for librarians*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Libraries Unlimited.
- Greene, R. (2015). South Carolina and the legacy of the civil rights movement. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 49(5), 486–501. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/10.1080/0031322X.2015.1103445>
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. & Noguera, P. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59-68.
- Gonzales, P., Blanton, H. & Williams, K. (2002). The effects of stereotype threat and double-minority Status on the test performance of Latino women. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(5), 659–670.
- Hallett, R. & Venegas, K. (2011). Is increased access enough? Advanced placement courses, quality, and success in low-income urban schools. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34(3), 468–487.

- Hanson, T., Polik, J., Cerna, R. & WestEd. (2017). Short-term impacts of student listening circles on student perceptions of school climate and of their own competencies. *Regional Educational Laboratory West, REL 2017-210*.
- Hanushek, E. (2016). What matters for student achievement: Updating Coleman on the influence of families and schools. *Education Next, 16*(2), 18-26.
- Hardy, G. (2014). Academic self-concept: Modeling and measuring for science. *Research In Science Education, 44*(4), 549-579. doi:10.1007/s11165-013-9393-7
- Harris, J., Davidson, L., Hayes, B., Humphreys, K., LaMarca, P., Berliner, B. & Regional Educational Laboratory West. (2014). Speak Out, Listen Up! Tools for Using Student Perspectives and Local Data for School Improvement. *Regional Educational Laboratory West, REL 2014-035*.
- Hawksworth, R. (2010). The Civil Rights Movement [Digital Video file]. Media Rich. Retrieved from <https://www.kanopy.com/product/civil-rights-movement>
- Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership, 58*(6), 6-11.
- Haycock, K. & Jerald, C. (2002). Closing the achievement gap. *Principal 82*(2), 20-23
- Hays, D. & Singh, A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. New York, NY. Guilford Press. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/detail.action?docID=759921>
- Healey, M. (2014). Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. In *Workshop Presented at University College Cork, 12*, 1-8.
- Hedges, L., Pigott, T., Polanin, J., Ryan, A., Tocci, C. & Williams, R. (2016). The question of school resources and student achievement: A history and reconsideration. *Review of Research in Education, 40*(1), 143-168.

- Hewstone, M. & Greenland, K. (2000). Intergroup Conflict. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35(2), 136-144. doi:10.1080/002075900399439
- Hill-Jackson, V. & Lewis, C. (2010). Dispositions matter: Advancing habits of the mind for social justice. In V. Hill-Jackson & C Lewis (Eds.) *Transforming teacher education: What went wrong with teacher training and how we can fix it* (pp. 61-92). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Hollinger, M. (Editor). (2016, June 16-22). President Obama's statement on Juneteenth 2015. *South Florida Times*, (p. 4A). Retrieved from <http://www.sfltimes.com/news/president-obamas-statement-on-juneteenth-2015>
- Holman, A., Kupczynski, L., Mundy, M. & Williams, R. (2017). CTE students' perceptions of preparedness for post-secondary opportunities. *The CTE Journal*, 5(2), 8-21.
- Horton, J. & Moresi, M. (2001). "Roberts, Plessy," and "Brown:" The long hard struggle against segregation. *OAH Magazine of History*, 15(2), 14-16.
- Hucles, M. (1993). Emancipation's impact on African-American education in Norfolk, Virginia, 1862-1880. *OAH Magazine of History*, 7(4), 32-35.
- Hunter, R. (2015). The problems of implementation of educational reform initiatives after Brown and their impact on African American children and their community. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 24(4), 376-385.
- Hurwitz, J., Bosworth, K., Deil-Amen, R., Rios-Aguilar, C., Hendricks, J. & Rubenstein-Avila, E. (2015). Students' perceptions of academic efficacy and school supports: A mismatch with school demographics. *Current Issues in Education*, 18(3), 1-23.

- Husband, T. & Hunt, C. (2015). A review of the empirical literature on no child left behind from 2001 to 2010. *Planning & Changing*, 46(1/2), 212-254.
- Irvin, M., Byun, S., Meece, J., Reed, K. & Farmer, T. (2016). School characteristics and experiences of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American youth in rural communities: Relation to educational aspirations. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 91(2), 176-202.
- James, M., Levy, C., Ewune, E., Kelly, D., Smith, W., Simmons, R., McCullough, L. & Walker, D. (2013). *Excellence and equity: The impact of racial inopportunity on student development and achievement at Windsor High School*. [Research Report]. Connecticut State Department of Education: Windsor Alliance Grant.
- James, M., Nichols, J., Nichols, W., Rupley, W., Franks, A., Rasinski, T. & Paige, D. (2016). Tracking exposed: The potential for undermining urban high school students' academic success through course placement practices. *Journal of Research & Methods in Education*, 6(3). doi: 10.9790/7388-0603XXXX
- Jansen, M., Scherer, R. & Schroeders, U. (2015). Students' self-concept and self-efficacy in the sciences: Differential relations to antecedents and educational outcomes. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41(2015), 13-24.
- Jersey, B. (Director). (2002). Don't Shout Too Soon (1917 - 1940) [Newsreel]. Retrieved from <https://www.kanopy.com/product/dont-shout-too-soon-1917-1940>
- Jersey, B. & Pollard, S. (Director). (2002). Promises Betrayed (1865 - 1896) [Newsreel]. Retrieved from <https://www.kanopy.com/product/promises-betrayed-1865-1896>

- Jocson, R. & McLoyd, V. (2015). Neighborhood and housing disorder, parenting, and youth adjustment in low-income urban families. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*(3/4), 304–313.
- Johnson, J. (1991). Student voice: Motivating students through empowerment. *OSSC Bulletin, 35*(2), 1-25.
- Johnston, M. (2014). Secondary data analysis: A method of which the time has come. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries, 3*(3), 619-626.
- Jones, L. (2013). Minding the gap: A rhetorical history of the achievement gap. (Doctoral Dissertations). Retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations/3633](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/3633)
- Kalogrides, D. & Loeb, S. (2013). Different teachers, different peers: The magnitude of student sorting within schools. *Educational Researcher, 42*(6), 304-316.
- Kantrowitz, S. (2012). *More than freedom: Fighting for Black citizenship in a white republic, 1829-1889*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.
- Kellow, J. & Jones, B. (2008). The effects of stereotypes on the achievement gap: Reexamining the academic performance of African American high school students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 34*(1), 94-120.
- Kelly, S. & Carbonaro, W. (2012). Curriculum tracking and teacher expectations: Evidence from discrepant course taking models. *Social Psychology of Education, 15*(3), 271-294.
- Khattab, N. (2015). Students' aspirations, expectations and school achievement: What really matters? *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(5), 731-748.

- Kirk-Kuwaye M. & Sano-Franchini, D. (2015). Why do I have to take this course? How academic advisers can help students find personal meaning and purpose in general education. *The Journal of General Education*, 64 (2), 99-105.  
doi:10.5325/jgeneeduc.64.2.0099
- Kirshner, B. & Pozzoboni K. (2011). Student interpretations of a school closure: Implications for student voice in equity-based school reform. *Teachers College Record*, 113(8), 1633–1667.
- Knigge, M., Nordstrand, V. & Walzebug, A. (2016). Do teacher stereotypes about school tracks function as expectations at the collective level and do they relate to the perception of obstacles in the classroom and to teachers' self-efficacy beliefs? *Journal for Educational Research Online*, 8(2), 158-191.
- Knowles, H. (2007). The constitution and slavery: A special relationship. *Slavery & Abolition*, 28(3), 309–328. doi:10.1080/01440390701685514.
- Kornfeld, M. & Ochs, C. (2015). Teachers' versus parental choice and the tracking distribution of students: a natural experiment. *Applied Economics*, 47(60), 6529-6542.
- Kotok, S. (2017). Unfulfilled potential: High-achieving minority students and the high school achievement gap in math. *High School Journal*, 100(3), 183-202.
- Kulik, C. & Kulik, J. (1982). Effects of ability grouping on secondary school students: A meta-analysis of evaluation findings. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19(3). 415-428.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). The meaning of "Brown"... for now. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 105(2), 298-315.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. California: Jossey-Bass.
- Lakoff, G. (2010). Why it matters how we frame the environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70-81. doi:10.1080/17524030903529749
- Lakoff, G. (2014). *The all new don't think of an elephant!: Know your values and frame the debate*. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Lee, C. (2014). Worksheet usage, reading achievement, classes' lack of readiness, and science achievement: A cross-country comparison. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics Science and Technology*, 2(2), 95-106.
- Leedy, P. & Ormrod, J. (2013). *Practical research: Planning and design*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Leicht, E. (2013). Effects of different types of educational tracking on achievement and achievement variance. *Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal*, 9, 1–20.
- Lewis, C., James, M., Hancock, S. & Hill-Jackson, V. (2008). Framing African American students' success and failure in urban settings: A typology for change. *Urban Education*, 43(2), 127-153.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Litwack, L. (1998). *Trouble in mind: Black southerners in the age of Jim Crow*. New York: Vintage.
- Loveless, T. (2016). *The 2016 Brown Center report on American education: How well are American students learning?* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.



- Lucas, S. & Berends, M. (2007). Race and track location in U.S. public schools. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 25(2007), 169-187.
- Mahatmya, D., Lohman, B., Brown, E. & Conway-Turner, J. (2016). The role of race and teachers' cultural awareness in predicting low-income, Black and Hispanic students' perceptions of educational attainment. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 19(2), 427-449.
- Marsh, H. (1990). The structure of academic self-concept: The Marsh/Shavelson model. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(4), 623-636.
- Marsh, H. & Shavelson, R. (1985). A multifaceted academic self-concept: Its hierarchical structure and its relation to academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(3), 366-380.
- Marsh, H., Trautwein, U., Lüdtke, O., Köller, O., & Baumert, J. (2005). Academic self-concept, interest, grades, and standardized test scores: Reciprocal effects models of causal ordering. *Child development*, 76(2), 397-416.
- Marsh, H. & Yeung, A. (1998). Longitudinal structural equation models of academic self-concept and achievement: Gender differences in the development of math and English constructs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35(4), 705-738.
- Martin, W. (1998). *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849). In W. Martin (Ed) *Brown v. Board of Education. The Bedford Series in History and Culture* (pp. 42-60). Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY. doi: 10.1007/978-1-137-07126-2
- Martinez, M. & Welton, A. (2014). Examining college opportunity structures for students of color at high-"minority," high-poverty secondary schools in Texas. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24(5), 800-841.

- Mayer, A. & Tucker, S. (2010). Cultivating students of color: Strategies for ensuring high academic achievement in middle and secondary schools. *Journal of School Leadership, 20*(4), 470-490.
- Mayes, E. (2018). Student voice in school reform? Desiring simultaneous critique and affirmation. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 1-17*.  
doi: 10.1080/01596306.2018.1492517
- McGregor, G., Mills, M., Te Riele, K., Baroutsis, A. & Hayes, D. (2017). *Re-imagining Schooling for Education: Socially Just Alternatives*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- McGuinn, P. (2016). From No Child Left behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the education legacy of the Obama administration. *Publius, 46*(3), 392-415.  
doi:10.1093/publius/pjw014
- McKay, J. & Devlin, M. (2016). Low income doesn't mean stupid and destined for failure: Challenging the deficit discourse around students from low SES backgrounds in higher education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 20*(4), 347-363.  
doi:10.1080/13603116.2015.1079273
- McMillan, J. & Gogia, L. (2014). *Data Collection in Educational Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/OBO/9780199756810-0087
- Meadows, C., Soper, K., Cullen, R., Wasiuk, C., McAllister-Gibson, C. & Danby, P. (2016). Shaping the future of learning using the student voice: We're listening but are we hearing clearly? *Research in Learning Technology, 24*(30146).
- Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/detail.action?docID=2089475>

- Means, A. & Taylor, K. (2010). Assessing the debt: George W. Bush's legacy and the future of public education under Barack Obama. *Policy Futures in Education*, 8(1), 48-60.
- Menchaca, M. (2012). Early racist discourses: Roots of deficit thinking. In R. R. Valencia (Ed.) *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*, (pp 13-40).  
Adingdon, Oxon: Routledge Falmer.
- Mendoza-Denton, R. (2014). A social psychological perspective on the achievement gap in standardized test performance between White and minority students: Implications for assessment. *Journal of Negro Education*, 83(4), 465-484.
- Minor, E. (2016). Racial differences in mathematics test scores for advanced mathematics students. *High School Journal*, 99(3), 193-210.
- Mitra, D. (2014). *Student voice in school reform: Building youth-adult partnerships that strengthen schools and empower youth*. Suny Press. Albany, NY.
- Modica, M. (2015). My skin color stops me from leading: Tracking, identity, and student dynamics in a racially mixed school. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 17(3), 76-90.
- Morales, E. (2016). Prospective teachers from urban environments examine causes of the achievement gap in the United States. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 5(2), 101-112.
- Morris, E. & Perry, B. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems*, 63(1), 68-86.
- Murphy, J. (2016). The evolution of the high school in America. *Teachers College Record*, 118(13), 1-18.

- National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968). Report of the National Advisory Commission on civil disorders: Summary of report. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/8073NCJRS.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (1997). The impact of the baby boom echo on U.S. public school enrollments. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/web/98039.asp>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2017). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2017. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017051.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2018). The condition of education 2018. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018144>
- Neill, M. (2016). The Testing Resistance and Reform Movement. *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*, 67(10), 8. doi:10.14452/MR-067-10-2016-03\_2
- Nielsen, N. (2013). Education, equity, and the big picture. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 29(3), 76-82.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (2001). U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/guide/index.html>.
- Nutter, K. (2010). Militant mothers: Boston, busing, and the bicentennial of 1976. *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 38(2), 52–75.
- Oakes, J. (1983). Tracking and Ability Grouping in American Schools: Some Constitutional Questions. *Teachers College Record*, 84(4), 801-819.
- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press.

- Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press.
- Oakes, J. & Lipton, M. (1990). *Making the best of schools: A handbook for parents, teachers, and policymakers*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press.
- Office of Civil Rights. (1999). Impact of the Civil Rights Laws. U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/impact.html>
- Office of Civil Rights. (2016). 2013–2014 Civil rights data collection: A first look. U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>
- Ogbu, J. (1986). The consequences of the American caste system. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children: New perspectives* (pp. 19-56). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Orange, C. & Murakami-Ramalho, E. (2013). Reducing the need for postsecondary remediation using self-efficacy to identify underprepared African-American and Hispanic adolescents. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 11(1), 51-74.
- Orfield, G. & Ee, J. (2015). Connecticut school integration: Moving forward as the northeast retreats. *Civil Rights Project*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED558556>
- Orfield, G., Ee, J., Frankenberg, E. & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2016). “Brown” at 62: School segregation by race, poverty and state. *Civil Rights Project*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565900>
- Otto, H. (1934). *Elementary-school organization and administration*. New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

- Owens, A. (2018). Income segregation between school districts and inequality in students' achievement. *Sociology of Education*, *91*(1), 1-27. doi:10.1177/0038040717741180
- Palumbo, M. & Steele-Johnson, D. (2016). Do test perceptions influence test performance? Exploring stereotype threat theory. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *16*(1), 1-12.
- Patterson, J. (2001). *Brown v. Board of Education: A civil rights milestone and its troubled legacy*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Pearce, T. & Wood, B. (2019). Education for transformation: An evaluative framework to guide student voice work in schools. *Critical Studies in Education*, *60*(1), 113–130.
- Pennington, C., Heim, D., Levy, A. & Larkin, D. (2016). Twenty years of stereotype threat research: A review of psychological mediators. *PloS One*, *11*(1), 1–25.
- Persson, A. (2015). Framed School – frame factors, frames and the dynamics of social interaction in school. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *59*(5), 499-514.
- Peterson, J. (1925). The historical background of the Binet-Simon tests. In J. Peterson (Ed.), *Early conceptions and tests of intelligence* (pp. 117-135). Yonkers, NY: US World Book Company. doi:10.1037/11569-007
- Peterson, E., Rubie-Davies, C., Osborne, D. & Sibley, C. (2016). Teachers' explicit expectations and implicit prejudiced attitudes to educational achievement: Relations with student achievement and the ethnic achievement gap. *Learning and Instruction*, *42*(2016), 123-140.
- Phillips, M. (2014, May 20). A place for learning: The physical environment of classrooms. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/the-physical-environment-of-classrooms-mark-phillips>

- Pitre, C. (2014). Improving African American student outcomes: Understanding educational achievement and strategies to close opportunity gaps. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 38(4), 209-217.
- Plaut, V. (2010). Diversity Science: Why and How Difference Makes a difference. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21(2), 77–99. doi: 1080/10478401003676501
- Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 16 S. Ct. 1138, 41 L. Ed. 256 (1896). Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=16038751515555215717&q=plessy+v.+ferguson+\(1896\)&hl=en&as\\_sdt=6,44&as\\_vis=1](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=16038751515555215717&q=plessy+v.+ferguson+(1896)&hl=en&as_sdt=6,44&as_vis=1)
- Preckel, F. & Brunner, M. (2015). Academic self-concept, achievement goals, and achievement: Is their relation the same for academic achievers and underachievers? *Gifted & Talented International*, 30(1/2), 68-84.
- Public Agenda Foundation & WestEd (Organization). (2012). Student voices on the higher education pathway: Preliminary insights and stakeholder engagement considerations. Retrieved from [http://www.publicagenda.org/files/student\\_voices.pdf](http://www.publicagenda.org/files/student_voices.pdf)
- Quaglia R. (2016). *School Voice Report 2016*. Retrieved from <http://quagliainstitute.org/qisa/library/view.do?id=844>
- Quaglia, R. & Corso, M. (2014). *Student voice: The instrument of change*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Quintana, S. & Mahgoub, L. (2016). Ethnic and racial disparities in education: Psychology's role in understanding and reducing disparities. *Theory into Practice*, 55(2), 94-103.

- Rahman, T., Fox, M., Ikoma, S. & Gray, L. (2017). *Certification Status and Experience of U.S. Public School Teachers: Variations across Student Subgroups*. (NCES 2017-056). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017056.pdf>
- Ramsey, S. (2017, February 8). The troubled history of American education after the Brown decision. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.processhistory.org/american-education-after-brown/>
- Randolph-Ward, A. (2010). Jim Crow. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (pp. 365-367). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rathbone, M. (2010). School Segregation in the USA. *History Review*, (68), 1-6. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f6h&AN=55724485&site=eds-live>
- Rautianen, M. & R ih a, P. (2012). Education for democracy: A paper promise? The democratic deficit in Finnish educational culture. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 11(2) 8-23.
- Reardon, S. & Robinson-Cimpian, J. (2007). Patterns and trends in racial/ethnic and socioeconomic academic achievement gaps. In H. Ladd & E. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy* (pp. 497-516). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Rebrean, L. (2017). The effects of teacher-student relationships on academic Achievement: A college survey. *Annals of Philosophy, Social & Human Disciplines*, 23(1), 39–51.



- Richmond, W. (2018). *Education and schooling*. London: Routledge.
- Richwine, J. (2011). The Myth of Racial Disparities in Public School Funding. *The Backgrounder*, (2548) 1-6. Retrieved from <http://report.heritage.org/bg2548>
- Robinson, K. & Roksa, J. (2016). Counselors, information, and high school college-going culture: Inequalities in the college application process. *Research in Higher Education*, 57(7), 845-868. doi:10.1007/s11162-016-9406-2
- Rosenthal, M. (2016). Qualitative research methods: Why, when, and how to conduct interviews and focus groups in pharmacy research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching & Learning*, 8(4), 509-516.
- Rosenthal, R. & Jacobson, L. (1968). Pygmalion in the classroom. *The Urban Review*, 3(1), 16-20.
- Rubin, B. & Noguera, P. (2004). Tracking detracking: Sorting through the dilemmas and possibilities of detracking in practice. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 37(1), 92-101.
- Rury, J. & Darby, D. (2016). War and education in the United States: Racial ideology and inequality in three historical episodes. *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, 52(1), 8–24.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Salmona, M. & Kaczynski, D. (2016). Don't blame the software: Using qualitative data analysis software successfully in doctoral research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 17(3), 42-64.
- Saphier, J. (2017). Getting students to believe in themselves. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 98(5), 48.

- Saultz, A., White, R., McEachin, A., Fusarelli, L. & Fussarelli, B. (2017). Teacher quality, distribution, and equity in ESSA. *Journal of School Leadership*, 27(5), 652-674.
- Schmidt, C. (2016). Why the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins worked: A case study of law and social movement mobilization. *Indiana Journal of Law and Social Equality*, 5(2), 281-300.
- Schouten, G. (2012). Educational justice: Closing gaps or paying debts? *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 29(3), 231-242.
- Schwandt, T. (2007). *The sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Seale, J., Gibson, S., Haynes, J. & Potter, A. (2015). Power and resistance: Reflections on the rhetoric and reality of using participatory methods to promote student voice and engagement in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39(4), 534-552.
- Shafter, L. (2016, January 5). Giving students a voice five ways to welcome student input and bolster your school's success [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/08/giving-students-voice>
- Sharma, M. (2018). Seeing deficit thinking assumptions maintain the neoliberal education agenda: Exploring three conceptual frameworks of deficit thinking in inner-city schools. *Education & Urban Society*, 50(2), 136-154.
- Shavelson, R., Hubner, J. & Stanton, G. (1976). Self-concept: Validation of construct interpretations. *Review of Educational Research*, 46(3), 407-441.

- Shernoff, D. J., Ruzek, E. A. & Sinha, S. (2017). The influence of the high school classroom environment on learning as mediated by student engagement. *School Psychology International, 38*(2), 201-218.
- Shultziner, D. (2013). The social-psychological origins of the Montgomery bus boycott: Social interaction and humiliation in the emergence of social movements. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly, 18*(2), 117-142.
- Simón, C., Echeita, G. & Sandoval, M. (2018). Incorporating students' voices in the 'lesson study' as a teacher-training and improvement strategy for inclusion. *Cultura y Educacion, 30*(1), 205-225. doi:10.1080/11356405.2017.1416741
- Skiba, R. & Losen, D. (2016). From reaction to prevention: Turning the page on school discipline. *American Educator, 39*(4), 4-11 & 44.
- Sleeter, C. & Grant, C. (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, and gender*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Smith, E. (2008). Pitfalls and promises: The use of secondary data analysis in educational research. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 56*(3), 323-339.
- Smith, E. & Mackie, D. (2000). *Social psychology*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Smrekar, C. & Williams, S. (2010). Resegregation. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American education* (pp. 542-543). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Snyder, K. & Adelson, J. (2017). The development and validation of the perceived academic underachievement scale. *Journal of Experimental Education, 85*(4), 614-628.

- Span, C. (2015). Post-slavery? Post-segregation? Post-racial? A history of the impact of slavery, segregation, and racism on the education of African Americans. *Teachers College Record*, 117(14), 53-74.
- Span, C. & Hobson, M. (2010). Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas (and Brown II). In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (pp. 116-122). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Steel, L. (2009, January 8). Jim Crow in the north: A new history examines the struggle to integrate above the Mason-Dixon Line. *In These Times*. Retrieved from [http://inthesetimes.com/article/4124/jim\\_crow\\_in\\_the\\_north](http://inthesetimes.com/article/4124/jim_crow_in_the_north)
- Steele, C. (1992). Race and the schooling of Black Americans. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 269(4), 68-78.
- Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613-629. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613
- Steele, C. (1999). Thin ice: 'Stereotype threat' and Black college students. *The Atlantic Monthly*, (2), 44-54.
- Steele, C. (2003). Through the back door to theory. *Psychological Inquiry*, 14(3/4), 314-317.
- Steele, C. & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797-811.
- Steele, C., Spencer, S. & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social identity threat, advances in experimental social psychology. *Academic Press*, 34(2002), 379-440.

- Steele, J., Choi, Y. & Ambady, N. (2004). Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination: The effects of group-based expectations on moral functioning. In T. Thorkildsen & H. Walberg (Eds.) *Nurturing Morality*, (pp. 77-97). Boston, MA: Springer Publications.
- Steffes, T. (2016). Managing school integration and White flight. *Journal of Urban History*, 42(4), 709–732.
- Steinberg, M. & McCray, E. (2012). Listening to their voices: Middle schoolers' perspectives of life in middle school. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(34), 1-14.
- Steinberg, M. & Quinn, R. (2017). Education reform in the post-NCLB era: Lessons learned for transforming urban public education. *Journal of Policy Development and Research*, 19(1), 191-216
- Steiner, B. (1893). *The history of education in Connecticut*. U. S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
- Stewart, D. (2012). Secondary analysis and archival research: Using data collected by others. In H. Cooper, P. Camic, D. Long, A. Panter, D. Rindskopf, K. Sher, ...K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology, 3: Data analysis and research publication* (pp. 473-484). Washington, DC.: US American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/13621-024
- Stoicescu, S. & Ghinea, V. (2013). Pygmalion teaching style is there a need for it? *Management & Marketing*, 8(4), 699-722.
- Strickland-Dixon, K. (2011). Curriculum construction: Conflicts and constraints that promote the underachievement of African American students in urban schools. *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy*, 8(2), 112-116. doi:10.1080/15505170.2011.624032

- Stroessner, S. & Good, C. (2009). Stereotype threat: An overview excerpts and adaptations from reducing stereotype threat in the classroom. Retrieved from [https://diversity.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/stereotype\\_threat\\_overview.pdf](https://diversity.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/stereotype_threat_overview.pdf)
- Takaki, R. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. New York: Back Bay Books/Little Brown, and Co.
- Tan, X. & Michel, R. (2011). Why do standardized testing programs report scaled scores? Why not just report the raw or percent-correct scores? *ETS R & D Connections*, 16, 1-6. Retrieved from [https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RD\\_Connections16.pdf](https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RD_Connections16.pdf)
- Tanenbaum C., Boyle A., Graczewski C., James-Burdunt, S., Dragoset, L. & Hallgren, K. (2015). State Capacity to Support School Turnaround (NCEE Brief No. 2015-4012). Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20154012/pdf/20154012.pdf>
- Tatum, B. (2017). Why are all the Black kids still sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race in the twenty-first century. *Liberal Education*, 103(3/4), 46-55.
- Tennant, J., Demaray, M., Malecki, C., Terry, M., Clary, M. & Elzinga, N. (2015). Students' ratings of teacher support and academic and social-emotional well-being. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 30(4), 494-512.
- Terman, L. (1916). *The Measurement of Intelligence: An Explanation of and a Complete Guide for the Use of the Stanford Revision and Extension of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale*. Boston, MA: US Houghton, Mifflin and Co.
- The Civil Rights Movement. (2016). [Newsreel] Kanopy Streaming. Retrieved from <https://texasam.kanopy.com/product/civil-rights-movement>

- The Emancipation Proclamation. (2017). *Emancipation Proclamation (Primary Source Document)*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pwh&AN=21213401&site=eds-live>
- Thompson, C., Henry, G. & Preston, C. (2016). School turnaround through scaffolded craftsmanship. *Teachers College Record*, 118(13), 1-26.
- Toshalis, E. & Nakkula, M. (2012). *Motivation, engagement, and student voice*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.
- Troia, G., Shankland, R. & Wolbers, K. (2012). Motivation research in writing: Theoretical and empirical considerations. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 28(1), 5-28.
- Turiano, N. (2014). Archival data analysis introduction. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 79(4), 323-325.
- Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, Black students, and acting White after*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- U. S. Census Bureau (2010). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ct>
- U.S. Department of Education (Ed.gov) (2003). NCLB: Stronger accountability. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/index.html>
- Valencia, R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Valencia, R. (2015). *Students of color and the achievement gap: Systematic challenges, systematic transformations*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- van Batenburg-Eddes, T. & Jolles, J. (2013). How does emotional wellbeing relate to underachievement in a general population sample of young adolescents: A neurocognitive perspective? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4(673) 1-10.
- van den Bergh, L., Denessen, E., Hornstra, L., Voeten, M. & Holland, R. (2010). The implicit prejudiced attitudes of teachers: Relations to teacher expectations and the ethnic achievement gap. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), 497-527.
- VanderHart, P. (2006). Why do some schools group by ability? Some evidence from the NAEP. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 65(2). 435-462.
- Varenne, H. & McDermott, R. (1998). *Successful failure: The school America builds*. New York, NY: Westview Press.
- Vaught, S. (2009). The color of money school funding and the commodification of Black children. *Urban Education*, 44(5), 545-570.
- Vercelletto, C. (2018, June 4). As school resegregation persists, experts say true fix is elusive. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://www.educationdive.com/news/as-school-resegregation-persists-experts-say-true-fix-is-elusive/524816/>
- Verkuyten, M. & Yogeewaran, K. (2017). The social psychology of intergroup toleration: A roadmap for theory and research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 21(1), 72-96. doi:10.1177/1088868316640974
- Verstegen, D. (2015). On doing an analysis of equity and closing the opportunity gap. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(41), 1-17.
- Voting Rights Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437. Retrieved from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg437.pdf>



- Wasserberg, M. (2018). We're just scanning through to find the answers: African American elementary student voice in a test-centered school environment. *The Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 179-195. doi:10.1086/700267
- Wade, O. (2017). White flight and the endless cycle of poverty for urban people of color in America. *European Journal of Academic Essays*, 4(4), 141-145.
- Walton, G. & Cohen, G. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82-96.
- Wang, M. & Degol, J. (2016). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(2), 315-352.
- Welner, K. & Oakes, J. (1996). Ability grouping: The new susceptibility of school tracking systems to legal challenges. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(3), 451-471.
- Welton, A. (2013). Even more racially isolated than before: Problematizing the vision for “diversity” in a racially mixed high school. *Teachers College Record*, 115(11), 1-42.
- Westfall, J., Judd, C. & Kenny, D. (2015). Replicating studies in which samples of participants respond to samples of stimuli. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(3), 390-399. doi:10.1177/1745691614564879
- White, H. (2009). Increasing the achievement of African American males. *Report from the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment*, 3, 1-23. Retrieved from <https://cbma-files.storage.googleapis.com/downloads/aamalebrieffinalamarch.pdf>
- Whitehouse, E. (2016). Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act. *Capitol Ideas*, 59(2), 16.
- Wilson, A. (2010). Education for African Americans. *Handbook of Texas Online*. Retrieved from <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/kde02>

- Windsor Historical Society. (2010). Windsor History. Retrieved from <https://windsorhistoricalsociety.org/home/visit-us/windsor-history/>
- Winkle-Wagner, R. (2010). Coleman report. In K. Lomotey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (pp. 163-166). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Wixom, M. (2015). Closing the achievement gap: Four states' efforts. *Education Commission of the States*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED561914>
- Wright-Edelman, M. (2017). The State of America's Children 2017. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund. Retrieved from <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2017-soac.pdf>
- Yang, X. (2016). An analysis of discourses in CLT from sociocultural theory perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(1), 194-198.
- Yeager, D. & Walton, G. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education they're not magic. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 267-301.
- Yergin, R. (2015). Rethinking public education litigation strategy: A duty-based approach to reform. *Columbia Law Review*, 115(6), 1563-1604.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yonezawa, S. & Jones, M. (2006). Students' perspectives on tracking and detracking. *Theory into Practice*, 45(1), 15-23.
- Zhao, K. (2014). War finance and the baby boom. *Review of Economic Dynamics*, 17(3), 459–473.

Zhao, P., Li, P., Ross, K. & Dennis, B. (2016). Methodological tool or methodology?

Beyond instrumentality and efficiency with qualitative data analysis software. *Forum:*

*Qualitative Social Research*, 17(2), 1-21.

Zhao, Y. (2016). From deficiency to strength: Shifting the mindset about education

inequality. *Journal of Social Issues*, 72(4), 720-739.

**APPENDIX A**

**DEDOOSE CLOSED CODING TREE**

<b>Counts</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Codes</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Root Code</b>	<b>COLLECTIVE PERCEPTIONS</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Parent Code</b>	<b>How students saw themselves</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Sub Code</b>	<b>Student Perceptions</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Stereotyping</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>How students saw their potential</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Student Expectations</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Student Aspirations</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>How students saw their academic pathways</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Student Transitions</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Student Preparedness</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Root Code</b>	<b>COLLECTIVE DISCOURSE</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Parent Code</b>	<b>What students say about themselves</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Sub Code</b>	<b>Student Voice</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Campus Culture</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>What students say about staff members</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Instructional Practices</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Administrative Practices</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Root Code</b>	<b>COLLECTIVE DYSFUNCTIONALITY</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Parent Code</b>	<b>Classroom Dynamics</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Sub Code</b>	<b>Classroom Structure</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Child Code</b>	<b>Classroom Management</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Discipline Practices</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Curriculum Disparities</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Tracking</b>
<b>1</b>		<b>Coursework</b>
<b>CODING SUMMARY</b>		
<b>965</b>	<b>Excerpts</b>	<b>3 Root Codes 14 Student Focus Groups</b>
		<b>7 Parent Codes 2 Counselor Semi-Structured Interviews</b>
<b>3270</b>	<b>Code Applications</b>	<b>13 Sub Codes 2 Leader Semi-Structured Interviews</b>
		<b>2 Child Codes 1 Educator Semi-Structured Interviews</b>
		<b>25 Total Codes 18 Total Transcripts</b>