

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM  
IN EDUCATION AS SELF-PERPETUATING AND  
CAUSAL OF RACIAL DISPARITIES FOR  
AFRICAN AMERICANS

By

ABDULLAH R. MUHAMMAD

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Delaware State University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Ed.D. in Educational Leadership  
in the Department of Education

DOVER, DELAWARE  
May 2018

This comparative case study analysis is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Review Committee.

Dr. Richard D. Phillips, Chairperson of the Committee, Education Department, Delaware State University

Dr. Patricia Carlson, Committee Member, Education Department, Delaware State University

Dr. Alexa Silver, Committee Member, History Department, Delaware State University

Dr. Steven Newton, Committee Member, History Department, Delaware State University

Dr. M. A. Muqtedar Khan, Committee Member, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Delaware

© Abdullah R. Muhammad

All Rights Reserved

## DEDICATION

*“Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith.”* Authentic Hadith from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

I dedicate this degree to my mother, Evelyn B. Sessions. She is no longer with us; however, it was due to her teaching of challenging what I know to be wrong, that inspired me to address this topic involving education. As a Muslim, it is my duty to change the course of evil and wrong doings from spreading and consuming the innocent. Yet, it was at my mother’s urging that I left the financial benefits of the insurance industry to return to my love of teaching and writing. Her constant reminders of what I could have accomplished had I stayed a teacher, merged with her constant reminders of what needs to change in the schools, has lead me to this appointed moment in my life.

From the urgings of my mother to the consistency of my faith, I have been led, as if along a path, to find such satisfaction in what I challenge in this study. My mother, like my faith, has always been there for me, and for that I am eternally grateful. My mother passed away exactly one week following a successful defense of my Proposal. It was always her yearning to have a doctor in the family, so when I told her I was going to receive my doctorate, she simply smiled and said, “so, we finally have a doctor in the family. That’s good, that’s very good”. With her health failing rapidly, I never thought she would make it to my ceremony. Nevertheless, it was very fulfilling for me to know that she died knowing that one of her children had become a doctor.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Every long journey starts with that first step; the more difficult the journey, the more important that the first step. I am so honored and pleased to have taken that first step with Dr. Patricia Carlson, who was my first professor in my doctoral program. She had just the right mixture of flexibility, humor, patience, knowledge, and professionalism. After two courses with her, I felt I was ready for anything. Added to that experience was my second professor, Dr. Richard D. Phillips, who was more than just a professor. He became a friend, a confidant, a cheerleader, a sounding-board, and finally, Chair of my Dissertation Committee. With his guidance and his knowledge of the way things work, he showed me how to successfully complete this program and to finish on time.

Next, I want to acknowledge the help and assistance of a long-time friend and fellow author, Dr. Sharon L. Burton. Dr. Burton helped me at the start of my program to understand proper formatting, use of scholarly language, staying on point, and selecting appropriate journal articles. Midway through this program, I was given a tremendous boost of confidence from Dr. Joseph Falodun. I want to acknowledge how much his feedback from my last exam with him

# COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN EDUCATION AS SLF-PERPETUATING AND CAUSAL OF RACIAL DISPARITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Abdullah R. Muhammad

Committee Chair: Dr. Richard D. Phillips

## **ABSTRACT**

This comparative case study analysis examined the social impact of racial, social and political discrimination against African Americans in three major areas of education--special education, classroom education and school discipline. This analysis has provided historical data to show that white Americans had no intention of providing any type of education for Africans brought to this country to provide a much-needed slave labor force. The data in this study showed that white Americans had no intentions of providing a high-standard education for African American children to be on par with white children, nor did they intend for education that was preemptively provided to African Americans to be on par with what was being provided to white Americans. In fact, the literature and data that have been examined have provided very valid reasons to conclude that America's creation and perpetuation of systemic racism in the educational system was deliberate and by design.

Findings from this study have shown that racial disparities have manifested disproportionalities in various academic programs, discipline related outcomes, and have impeded the overall academic potential for African American males. The case studies analyzed in this study have helped to unravel and provide empirical evidence to support numerous claims by researchers that systemic racism is a present and conscious impediment to the education of African American students. Furthermore, this study concluded that educators, policy makers,

researchers, or maintainers of this system cannot begin to remediate the problem of systemic racism in education until they stop ignoring and marginalizing its existence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>                                  | <b>x</b>  |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>                                   | <b>xi</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .....</b>                          | <b>1</b>  |
| Background of the Problem .....                               | 2         |
| Purpose of the Study .....                                    | 5         |
| Need for the Study .....                                      | 5         |
| Theoretical Framework .....                                   | 7         |
| Research Questions .....                                      | 8         |
| Limitations .....   | 9         |
| Definition of Terms.....                                      | 10        |
| Summary .....   | 13        |
| <b>CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>                    | <b>14</b> |
| Historical Background .....                                   | 14        |
| The Birth of the Racial Divide.....                           | 14        |
| White Racism.....   | 16        |
| Systemic and institutionalized Racism in Education .....      | 22        |
| Institutional Racism .....                                    | 22        |
| Racist Ideology in Education.....                             | 24        |
| Racial Profiling: Its Effect on Education and Employment..... | 27        |
| Economics of Racial Discrimination in Employment .....        | 32        |
| Relevance to Educational Leadership .....                     | 38        |
| Theories Guiding the Study .....                              | 40        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Summary .....  | 42        |
| <b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....</b>  | <b>44</b> |
| Case Study One: DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN<br>AMERICANS IN SPECIAL ED..... | 46        |
| Research Design.....   | 47        |
| Study Participants .....   | 47        |
| Data Collection .....  | 47        |
| Data Analysis .....  | 48        |
| Significance of the Study .....  | 50        |
| Summary Findings.....  | 51        |
| Case Study Two: CHALLENGING THE SYSTEMIC RACISM THAT FOSTERS<br>LOW EXPECTATIONS.....      | 52        |
| Research Design.....   | 52        |
| Study Participants .....   | 53        |
| Data Collection .....  | 53        |
| Data Analysis .....  | 54        |
| Significance of the Study .....  | 55        |
| Summary Findings.....  | 56        |
| Case Study Three: RACIAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE .....                            | 57        |
| Research Design.....   | 58        |
| Study Participants .....   | 58        |
| Data Collection .....  | 59        |
| Data Analysis .....  | 60        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Significance of the Study .....  | 60        |
| Summary Findings.....  | 61        |
| Summary .....  | 62        |
| Ethical Issues .....   | 63        |
| <b>CHAPTER IV: RESULTS .....</b>   | <b>64</b> |
| Introduction .....   | 64        |
| White America’s Culpability to Systemic Racism .....   | 67        |
| Systemic Racism in Education .....   | 68        |
| Case Study I – Blanchett (2006) .....  | 69        |
| Case Study II – Shana Nelson (2014) .....  | 73        |
| Case Study III – Nathaniel Williams (2015) .....   | 75        |
| Disproportionate Placement into Inferior Educational Environments .....  | 76        |
| Cross-Case Analysis of Themes .....  | 80        |
| Systemic Racism’s Link to Racial Disparities for African Americans .....   | 81        |
| Retraining of Educators .....  | 83        |
| Placement of African Americans in Inferior Programs and Schools .....  | 84        |
| Research Question #1 – Why does systemic racism persist? .....   | 85        |
| Research Question #2 – How does systemic racism contribute to racial<br>disparities for African American students? ..... | 85        |
| Summary .....  | 86        |
| <b>CHAPTER V – DISCUSSIONS, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND<br/>CONCLUSION .....</b>                                       | <b>88</b> |
| Discussions .....  | 88        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Imprecise Data Collection .....                                      | 88        |
| Academic and Disciplinary Gaps .....                                 | 89        |
| Findings .....   | 90        |
| Systemic Racism’s Link to Racial Disparities for African Americans.. | 90        |
| Educators and Researchers Reluctance .....                           | 91        |
| Retraining of Teachers .....   | 91        |
| Recommendations .....  | 92        |
| First Recommendation .....   | 93        |
| Second Recommendation .....  | 93        |
| Third Recommendation .....   | 94        |
| Conclusion .....   | 95        |
| <b>REFERENCES .....</b>  | <b>98</b> |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Figure 4.1:</b> Snapshot of the coding process in ATLAS.ti software .....   | 66 |
| <b>Figure 4.2:</b> Graphic illustration of systemic racism’s effect on the education of African<br>American students ..... | 69 |

## **List of Tables**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Table 4.1:</b> Emerging themes from Case Study 1 .....                            | 70 |
| <b>Table 4.2:</b> Emerging themes in Case Study II .....                             | 73 |
| <b>Table 4.3:</b> Emerging themes in Case Study II .....                             | 75 |
| <b>Table 4.4:</b> Prominent codes resulting from cross-case analysis of themes ..... | 81 |

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This comparative case study analysis will examine the social impact of racial, social and political discrimination against African Americans, with specific focus on underserved Delawareans in the areas of education and employment since the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. Initially, the research for this study focused on a qualitative study of Delaware's race relations to determine the degree of social harmony existing within Delaware institutions. After an extensive search for literature on that topic, no convincing documented evidence was found to support the existence of noticeable social harmony within Delaware institutions. Instead, case studies showed prominent centuries-old discriminatory practices against African American citizens throughout America and in Delaware in the field of education and employment (Donner & Shockley, 2010; Miller, 2017). Those discriminatory practices are embedded within the core of American and Delaware institutions as well as the very fabric of American society (House, 1999). Those factors and variables that influence the role of education on employment will be analyzed and explained. A key factor in those analyses will be the role of racial discrimination in education (House, 1999; Colin, 2010).

What is widely known and accepted in nearly every community on earth is the vital role education has on employment opportunities and one's standard of living. In a published article written by John Assan (2012), he qualifies that fact in the following statement:

It is a substantiated fact that the key to career advancement and development is education and on the job trainings and, employment also greatly contributes to this development. Education in general should model children through kindergarten to higher education with all its associated benefits including employment. In other words, one will need to continue to learn and grow in order to succeed through working (Assan, 2012, p. 1).

Continuing that thought, he stated:

We all know as a fact that education opens doors to brilliant career opportunities; it creates better prospects in career and growth –financially, emotionally, socially and intellectually. It enables the progress of a nation and enriches society and family; it facilitates advanced pragmatic thinking. So, education becomes an eligibility criterion for employment” (Assan, 2012, p. 1).

Numerous studies “have found that, on average, African American, Latino, and Native American children begin school with lower levels of oral language, pre-reading, and pre-mathematics skills, as well as lesser general knowledge, than that possessed by White and Asian American children” (Farkas, 2003, p. 1119). Additionally, the behavior of these minority children is less befitting the school’s learning environment (Farkas, 2003); as such, this study will examine the role of institutionalized racism in the education of minority children (with emphasis on African American children) and its role in joblessness and marginalized job opportunities for African Americans, especially those in Delaware. The broader topic of the impact of education on employment, unemployment, and re-employment will be examined quantitatively; as will the negative impact of discrimination on both education and employment. Key to the analyses of these studies is the need to clearly acknowledge the overall impact on lost employment opportunities resulting from marginalized academic school work and placement (Donnor & Shockley, 2010).

### **Background of the Problem**

Delaware’s current political and socio-economic statuses in Wilmington (Delaware’s largest city), in concert with areas with significant populations of minorities, particularly African American Delawareans, have been historically underserved educationally, economically, and politically (Miller, 2017, p. 3). The educational and employment disproportionality between minorities and their white and Asian counterparts formed the foundation for institutional

practices that restricted the advancement of African Americans, both in and outside of Delaware (Nihed, 2015). Even though African Americans have made substantial gains in educational achievement since *separate but equal in education* was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, racial disparities between African American and White students in educational test scores, attainment and outcomes undermines the significance of those achievements (Walters, 2001; Diamond, 2006; "40 Years: The State of African American America", 2016; Hannah-Jones, 2014).

At the heart of the educational disproportionality and under-performance of African Americans is the “eligibility criterion for employment” (Assan, 2012, p. 1). Prevailing knowledge maintains that every employer of today wants and needs “well-educated” prospective employees (Assan, 2012; Miller, 2017). Consequently, if the groups of African Americans and other minorities continue to be victimized by the widening of the achievement gap between the groups of White and Asian students (which is a consequence of the original design for education in this country), they will, undoubtedly, be deficient in career opportunities and unprepared for higher-paying jobs (Associated Press, 2009; Looney & Greenstone, 2012). These factors, along with high numbers of resegregated minority schools, have led to a cycle of poverty, low-income neighborhoods, and an eventuality of poorly-educated future generations of African American and Latino students (Orfield & Lee, 2005; Reardon, Grewal, Kalogrides & Greenberg, 2012).

One of the common misconceptions over the issue of resegregation of schools is that many people treat it as simply a change in the skin color of the students in a school. If skin color were not systematically linked to other forms of inequality, it would, of course, be of little significance for educational policy. Unfortunately, that is not and never has been the nature of our society. Socioeconomic segregation is a stubborn, multi-dimensional and deeply important cause of educational inequality. U.S. schools are now 41 percent nonwhite and the great majority of the nonwhite students attend schools

which now show substantial segregation. Levels of segregation for [African American] and Latino students have been steadily increasing since the 1980s (Orfield & Lee, 2005, p. 5).

This denial of rights and full recognition of citizenship provided by the United States Constitution for African American residents of Delaware (most of whom were freemen) during the Reconstruction Period, set the foundation for Delaware's segregated education policies between its African American and white residents. From that moment forward, Delaware's General Assembly inculcated the bureaucracy and indoctrinated the population with a doctrine of white superiority and African American inferiority. This malicious doctrine came in the form of *Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, segregation and discrimination rules and policies*, all built upon a system of ingrained racism (Collins, 2006; Essah, 1996; Hayman, 2009; Hoffecker, 1983; Newton, 1997; Law.com, 2015; Ryan, 2015).

By the turn of the century, when Delaware legislators were poised to finally pass the *Reconstruction Amendments* (due to a significant Republican victory and ascendancy in Delaware politics), this state's indoctrinated society no longer debated the controversy of its passage (Collins, 2006; Essah, 1996; Hayman, 2009; Hoffecker, 1983; Newton, 1999). In fact, Delaware's Democratic legislators posed absolutely no opposition to passing those Amendments. In the words of Patience Essah (1996), "certain amendments to the Constitution of the United States" were passed *unanimously* by a Delaware legislature that made no direct mention of those "certain amendments" as being the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (better known as the *Reconstruction Amendments*) (p. 186). After a century of opposing *legislated abolition* and the legality of slavery, Delaware's Democratic legislators quietly acquiesced to the law of the land that was being championed by the new Republican majority.

After Delaware legislators gave their long-delayed approval to the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments on February 12, 1901 (Hoff, 2015; Muhammad, 2007), life for Delaware African American residents realized no beneficial improvement. Ironically, the state that proudly carried the title of “First State” for being the *first* of the 13 colonies to ratify a national Constitution that ushered in freedom, justice, and domestic tranquility; became the *last* of the nonseceded states to ratify the same rights to its African American residents (Essah, 1996). Consequently, it was no surprise when the state that *constitutionalized* segregated schools, became the launching pad for the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case and the subsequent school desegregation decision (Gadsden, 2006). Plainly speaking, Delaware’s General Assembly took 36 years to legally acknowledge that African Americans were no longer slaves, deserved all the rights of full citizenship, and the right to vote. Despite those Constitutional rights afforded African Americans and the legal victories to end segregation in schools, the state continues to deny African Americans equal access to quality public education and employment (Miller, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis is to examine the degree to which poor educational training, resulting from systemic and institutionalized racism in education, has diminished and marginalized educational and employment opportunities for African Americans throughout America.

### **Need for the Study**

History has shown us that improvements in education and employment opportunities for African Americans generally materialized after significant protests, which generated laws, ordinances, and special urban renewal programs that facilitated needed improvements (Collins, 2000; Hoffecker, 1983). Despite those improvements, America remains a country of *separate*

*and unequal*, with a “growing gap between rich and poor children, and between African American, white, and Latino children” (Edelman & Jones, 2004, p.134). A closer examination of racial bias and discriminatory practices in schools and workplaces is needed to highlight large-scale inequalities and inequities that are deeply-rooted in school districts and workplaces throughout America (Brayboy, Constagno & Maughan, 2007).

Compounding that reality is the failure of school districts to expose students of all races to integrated educational settings, which perpetuates incidents of racial bias and bigotry (Orfield & Lee, 2005). If students of all races, especially White students, were more routinely exposed to a diverse population of students in school, they would feel much more comfortable about their ability to live and work among people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Orfield & Lee, 2005, pp. 40-41). That change in the school environment would help mitigate racial bias and discriminatory practices in areas where white people tend to have supervisory and managerial roles over African Americans and Latinos (Orfield & Lee, 2005, p. 41).

Studies of the racial impact on education routinely show the data that reflect the gaping demographic schism that continues to grow between minority and white students (Edelman & Jones, 2004). However, what is not routine or a norm in many studies are the glaring statistics that show the long-term damage to the socio-economic situation of minorities, particularly African Americans (Brayboy, Constagno & Maughan, 2007). What has been lacking in the literature since the mid-century landmark decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case is the goal of a just society, where “schooling and economic successes and opportunities look the same for all groups of children” (Brayboy, Constagno & Maughan, 2007, pp. 159-160). Therefore, what is conspicuously missing from our body of knowledge is a fresh analysis of the current

situation of systemic and institutionalized racism in education and employment for African Americans.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A quote from John Rawls (1971) provides the basic rationale for the theoretical framework this study will use to conduct the research:

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust (Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1122).

The literature provided strong evidence of social justice as a valid theoretical framework for discussions of race, particularly oppressive racial practices of racism, discrimination and segregation. At the heart of that discussion is the question of treating others fairly and with dignity and respect (Jost & Kay, 2010). Social justice is a concept of fair and just treatment that has been a part of social discourses for centuries (Rawls, 1971). The great philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates—all spoke of a just relationship between the individual and society (Johnston, 2011).

The focus of this study is the examination of social injustices perpetrated against African Americans over an extended period and in a way that makes that treatment appear as a norm of societal life. The theory of social justice is an integral part of social psychology, which seeks to understand and find ways to “diagnose and ultimately defeat prejudice, intolerance, and other apparent obstacles to social justice” (Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1123). Each of the great philosophers labeled their concept of that relationship in different ways: Plato called it *The Republic* based on an individual’s responsibility to society, Aristotle referred to this relationship as *Distributive Justice* where each individual would receive goods and assets based on their merit, and Socrates

envisioned that relationship as a *social contract* whereby individuals agreed to follow the rules of society in return for the benefits society affords them. Each of those doctrines was based on a premise of fairness.

According to Jost and Kay (2010), social researchers such as Allport (1945), Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford (1950) all searched for means to employ theories and methods capable of finding answers, remedies, and/or shields against the devastating effects of social injustices. Their research focused on issues of prejudice and authoritarianism covered by themes of conscience, crime and punishment, determinants of revolution, propaganda, war and peace (p. 1123). Jost and Kay (2010) have suggested that many in the field of psychology, on more than a few occasions, have hinted that Adolph Hitler had the greatest influence over the development of social psychology for the 20<sup>th</sup> century; just as racism, discrimination, and segregation in America have shaped the tenets of the Civil Rights movement.

The theory of social justice addresses all angles of racial injustices, especially institutionalized racism purportedly at the heart of the issue concerning the lack of advancement in education and employment for African Americans throughout America. Alan Greenblatt (2003) has stated that “discrimination, whether due to institutional habits or deliberate prejudice, prevents [African-Americans] from attaining jobs and homes equal to those enjoyed by whites” (p.1). John Rawls’ quote, where he stated that “laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust” (Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1122), represents a necessary course of action to be considered and explored during this research.

### **Research Questions**

This comparative case study analysis will use the research from three case studies that address the following research questions:

- 1) Why does systemic racism persist?
- 2) How does systemic racism contribute to racial disparities for African American students?

These questions are central to the discussion of the theories of social justice and critical race theory. Each of these theories, in their own way, addresses very distinct aspects of systemic racism and the by-product of discrimination that dramatically affect how African Americans are educated.

The ultimate focus of this study is the examination of social injustices perpetrated against African American Delawareans over an extended period and in a way that appeared as a norm of societal life. This investigator came across countless references to Delaware's infamous bipolar social responses to racial issues, which are at the heart of Delaware's de jure segregation policies. These references were products of Delaware's industrialized identity as a Northern state and its slave identity as a Southern slave state. Also prompting that bipolar persona were the Quaker influence from the North and the large plantation owner influence from the South. Each of those influences contributed to the contentious and polarized legislature that failed, repeatedly, to acknowledge the human and Constitutional rights of African American Delawareans or to address the legality of slavery (Essah, 1996). Amid the legislative in-fighting between the polarized factions in the General Assembly, the education of African American Delawareans was overlooked and forgotten.

### **Limitations**

Creswell (2009) maintains that all studies have limitations due to inherent shortcomings and weaknesses. This study has the following limitations:

- It is not generalizable;
- It is non-experimental;

- There is a potential for researcher bias;
- The nature and sensitivity of the subject matter may be exaggerated and, at times, skew some of the data.

Quite notable as a limitation is the methodology of a comparative case study analysis. According to Creswell (2009) and Yin (2009), the nature of a case study is that of an empirical inquiry. During the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, boundaries between phenomenon and real-life context can be distorted. The selection of these case studies and the researcher's reliance on the data and sources provided in each of these case studies represent possible limitations.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Racial Achievement Gap** - In the United States, it is an observed and persistent disparity in measures of educational performance between non-white and white U.S. students, especially groups defined as African American, Latino, Native American and Alaska Natives.

**Black Codes** – Laws passed by newly-elected Southern legislatures to keep newly-freed slaves subordinate to whites (Roark, Johnson, Cohen, Stage & Hartmann, 2012, p. 466). Laws passed by the Delaware General Assembly that restricted the rights and freedoms of African American Delawareans by restricting voting rights, preventing them from holding public office or serving on juries, and limiting their employment options to menial occupations was essential to maintaining racial segregation and subjugation of African Americans (Ryan, 2015).

**Cultural Racism** – Social norms, rituals, roles, language, music and art that reinforce the belief that European (white) culture is superior to other cultures (Bell, Funk, Joshi & Valdivia, 2016, p. 135).

**De facto racial discrimination and segregation** – Discriminatory and segregating practices that were not sanctioned or initiated by law, however, are based on official practice (Fowler, 2009).

**De jure segregation** – Segregation policies based on laws and statutes (Fowler, 2009).

**Institutional Racism** - A complex of embedded, systemic practices that disadvantage racial and ethnic minority groups and is not recognized by those participating in it because the way the institutions function seems normal to those growing up in them (House, 1999; Seabrook & Wyatt-Nichol, 2016). A pattern of social institutions—such as governmental organizations, schools, banks, and courts of law—giving negative treatment to a group of people based on their race (Institutional Racism Lesson, n.d.; Williams, 2015).

**Jim Crow Laws** – A series of punitive laws enacted in the South for the sole purpose of restricting the newly-acquired legislative rights given to African Americans during the period of Reconstruction. These laws restricted African American citizens to a system of racial segregation in all aspects of public life, which included separate restrooms, water fountains, railroad cars, waiting rooms, dining areas, and schools (Roark et al., 2012; Laws.com, 2015)

**Racial Profiling** - Government or police activity that involves using people's racial and cultural characteristics to identify people to investigate (Colin, 2010).

**Racism** - An ideology of racial superiority and inferiority, based upon pigmentation, which was created by Euro-Americans and is perpetuated by them for their sociocultural benefit: social, educational, political and economic (Colin, 2010, p. 8); additionally, “[an] individual, structural, political, economic, or social force that serve to discriminate against and disadvantage people of color on the basis of their race for the purpose of maintaining White dominance and power” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24).

**Re-segregation** - Renewal of segregation, as in a school system, after a period of desegregation.

According to a clip from *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver (HBO, 2016), re-segregation comes down to racist parents who go to extreme lengths to keep their children in homogeneous schools. Re-segregation of schools began in earnest in the 1990s, when “hundreds of school districts [were] released from court-ordered desegregation plans, making way for renewed divisions by race and class” (Brown, 2016).

**Systemic (Institutional) Racism** - A complex of embedded, systemic practices that disadvantage racial and ethnic minority groups; a theoretical concept and reality that is composed of intersecting, overlapping, and codependent racist institutions, policies, practices, ideas, and behaviors that give an unjust amount of resources, rights, and power to white people while denying them to people of color (Seabrook & Wyatt-Nichol, 2016; Cole, 2018).

**White-culture Deficit Model** – Also described as “The Blame Game,” blames the students themselves for their underachievement by latching on and referring to negative stereotypes often affiliated with the population. The school itself is not held accountable and is “absolved from their responsibilities to educate appropriately, and this charge is shifted almost entirely to students and families” (Irizarry, 2009).

**White Privilege** - The ability for Whites to maintain an elevated status in society that masks racial inequality (Anderson, Taylor & Logio, 2014, p. 424). Specifically, it is an institutional set of unearned benefits granted to White people (Dressel, Kerr & Stevens, 2010); additionally, it aids to privilege Whites while subjugating people of color and endorsing White supremacy (Blanchett, 2006).

**White Racism** – Racism created by White Americans and perpetuated by them to dominate over people of color, specifically African Americans (House, 1999; Colin, 2010, p. 8); differs from racism that discriminates and disadvantages people of color.

### **Summary**

The most significant aspect of this research will be to show how the persistent presence of institutionalized racism in education since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision continues to minimize and marginalize the progress for African Americans in many areas of education and employment. This Chapter gave a brief overview of this proposal. Chapter two will give an in-depth examination of the literature that not only defines racism and all its far-reaching consequences, but also shows the profound and lasting effect it has had on American society.

In addition, this comparative case study analysis will show the heavy social cost suffered by African Americans in areas that facilitate social upward mobility, personal independence and success. Horace Mann (1848), great education reformist and father of the Common School, has stated that “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery” (Mathis, 2016), which is the most common way for a person to improve his or her socio-economic position in life.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

What has always been a very difficult topic to discuss in America has been the existence of racism. To an even greater extent has been the unwilling admission that America is a racist country and that racism is deeply embedded within the institutions and policies of American society (House, 1999). The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: 1) to give a historical account of how and why America is viewed by many as a racist country, 2) to expose the tactics used to embed racism within the educational system, thereby forming a superiority versus inferiority ethos in American culture, and 3) to describe the heavy burden borne by African Americans, who have been plagued by systemic racism in education.

### **Historical Background**

#### **The Birth of the Racial Divide**

This investigator's study is based upon the historical beginning of racial hardening that was initiated in the latter part of the 1670s. During that period, a racial and socio-economic distinction between British citizens and African slaves was deemed necessary and opportunistic to secure the future socio-political order of the colonies and its subjects (Franklin, 1967; Essah, 1996; Whitman, 2007; Roark, Johnson, Cohen, Stage & Hartmann, 2012; Muhammad, 2013). Never in recorded history had a civilized society ordered its subjects to identify themselves along a skin-color line (Whitman, 2007; Franklin & Higginbotham, 1967 & 2011). The examination of prevailing literature and colonial history will detail this tense period of racial division in Delaware and throughout the colonies.

During Delaware's early settlement period, 75% of the state—from what is now Claymont to Lewes—was fractionalized by multiple ethnic cultures (i.e., Dutch, English, Finns, Germans, Lenape, Swedes, and Nanticoke) (Munroe, 1978; Muhammad, 2013; Weslager, 1988).

In the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after the English conquest of Dutch-held territories, the cultural and ethnical divide was reduced to only two major groups (Essah, 1996; Williams, 1996; Whitman, 2007; Muhammad, 2013).

According to Williams (1996), the English conquest marked not only a new era in slavery, but also in the African experience in Delaware and most of the colonies (p. 10). Those two major groups were the privileged class (government officials, company officials and large English landowners) and the under-privileged class (small landowners, craftsmen, freemen—Africans and Europeans, indentured servants, Native Americans, and slaves—Africans, Native Americans and poor whites) (Roark, Johnson, Cohen, Stage & Hartmann, 2012; Muhammad, 2013, p.74). The privileged class had the wealth and power; therefore, they controlled the economy. What is true today being also true at that time, the under-privileged class (workers and small farmers) was the largest segment of the population in colonial America (Southern Colonies) with no *real power* (Franklin, 1967; Muhammad, 2013).

The socio-economic dominance of the region was no longer shared among many ethnic cultures; instead, it became polarized between the privileged and underprivileged. This paradigm shift in the society created a significant dilemma for the ruling elite, whose wealth and power were totally dependent on the colony's multi-cultural labor force (Franklin, 1967; Essah, 1996; Williams, 1996; Muhammad, 2013). By the late 1670s, tensions had mounted between the two major groups to the point of armed rebellion in Virginia. An historic coalition of servant workers and underprivileged freemen led by a small farmer, Nathaniel Bacon, nearly defeated the ruling class of privileged colonists. Fearing that another such uprising could arise, the ruling elite acted swiftly to harden racial lines associated with slavery and granted several privileges to

poor whites, to dissolve the coalition between poor whites, Africans, and Native Americans (Essah, 1996; Roark et al., 2012; Muhammad, 2013, p. 70).

Realizing the strength of the coalition that revolted against them, colonial leaders vowed never to allow those groups to coalesce in the future (Essah, 1996; Roark et al., 2012; Muhammad, 2013). Therefore, the impact of that rebellion forever changed the social interactions of whites from Europe and African Americans from Africa and the West Indies. The historic significance of that event gave birth to racial slavery and the precedence for racial segregation that hardened in the Southern Colonies and existed throughout the rest of the colonies. This study brings to light the long-term impact of that precedent-setting event and its 20<sup>th</sup> century impact on educational and employment opportunities in Delaware and across the country.

### **White Racism**

After instituting several changes to the conditions that bound white indentured servants, colonial lawmakers, backed by large and small white landowners who feared for their safety when African slaves and African indentured servants revolted in the late 1600s, imposed severe restrictions on the rights of both enslaved Africans and free Africans (Whitman, 2007; Carson, Lapsansky-Werner & Nash, 2011). Several historians have documented the drastic change in the treatment of white servants that differed significantly from the harsh treatment of African servants and slaves (Franklin, 1967; Essah, 1996; Williams, 1996; Whitman, 2007; Carson et al., 2011; Roark et al., 2012; Muhammad, 2013). Even if a white servant committed the same offense as an African servant, the punishment for the African servant would be much more severe (Franklin, 1967; Essah, 1996; Williams, 1996; Whitman, 2007; Carson et al., 2011; Roark et al., 2012; Muhammad, 2013).

For a less ambiguous discussion in this study, the term *racial divide* that was discussed in the beginning of this chapter, must be identified in more precise terms. Pertinent to this research study, the term *racial divide* is a euphemism for *racism*, which shall be understood as the social construct created and instituted in the colonies by Europeans (mostly Anglo-Saxons who viewed themselves as superior to other races) (House, 1999, p. 3). The premise for this study is tied to that social construct that positioned Europeans as asserting and maintaining superiority over Africans, who were viewed as inferior (Bell, Funk, Joshi & Valdivia, 2016, p. 133). The inferiority of Africans was not based upon a proven or biological certainty; instead, it was based on skin color, which was used as a socio-economic convenience and justification to other Europeans for accepting the concept of enslaving Africans (Bell et al., 2016, p. 133).

To legalize the inferiority of Africans in the colonies, colonial lawmakers throughout the Colonies established laws and codes that severely restricted the freedom, liberty, rights, and movement of slaves, African indentured servants, and free Africans (Carson et al., 2011). The authors of *Racism and White Privilege* in the book “*Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*” (2016), have asserted that *white racism*, as opposed to the simple term of *racism*, identifies those who benefit from the advantages of a racial superiority system (p. 138). The authors acknowledged that racism is rarely discussed in terms of who benefits from a racial social hierarchy; instead, the discussion of racism is characteristically focused on those most affected by the harmful effects of asserted social superiority versus powerless members of inferiority status (Bell et al., 2016, p. 137).

A qualitative study by Ernest House (1999), entitled *Race and Policy*, explained in detailed terms the existence and persistence of racism in American society. House claimed that *white racism* is “deeply embedded within the national identity itself, built into the American

character by history and experience” (p. 3). He further asserted that the English, who largely outnumbered other European colonists, constructed this notion of *whiteness* and *freedom* to clearly contrast their oppressed and impoverished living conditions in their homeland:

Early colonial Americans defined themselves as "white" and "free" in contrast to those who were not, especially slaves and Native Americans. As early settlers escaped the class systems of Europe, they redefined themselves along racial lines, yet another hierarchy of human worth. The first colonists were mostly English, and they held strong beliefs of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, beliefs that the English displayed throughout their world colonies (House, 1999, p. 3).

Essentially, the need for European immigrants, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, to identify with *whiteness* was to contrast themselves in all aspects from the inferiority of non-white Africans:

In fact, the reason all these immigrants were considered white ultimately was that they were contrasted to Africans, who were never considered white. The immigrants gained whiteness by Africans being excluded. And it was to the advantage of immigrants to adopt beliefs and positions which were overtly racist in order to contrast themselves to Africans. Hence, the racist dichotomy enabled the ethnics to become "Americanized" at the cost and through the exclusion of others. What was conceived literally as many separate races early in American history was reduced to a white-black dichotomy in the 20th century, complicated by a large influx of Latinos (House, 1999, p. 4).

House's (1999) study questioned the very existence of racism, as well as its influence over Institutional policy. His two research questions maintained the focus of his study and allowed for meaningful extrapolation of data from various literature sources. The research questions were: 1) why does racism persist? and 2) how do race and policy affect each other? (p. 2). The guiding purpose of his study was to understand the purposefulness of racism and its far-reaching effect on policy, particularly educational policy, which was essential to the maintenance of a racial superiority dictum.

Through his literature search, House (1999) found a reasonable connection between the beliefs and images of racism that was built into the National identity with the establishment of

educational policies. There was an undeniable link between the beliefs and images of racism and the educational policies that kept African American students separate from White students, relegated African Americans to an education of inferior status, denied African Americans control of their educational destinies, limited investment into resources and infrastructure needs to African American majority schools, and held all these actions to a conformity standard that appeared on the surface as being fair.

To illustrate the *real-life* examples of those themes enumerated above, House (1999) cited in detail the following examples: 1) the education of African Americans in the South after the Civil War, 2) desegregation in Chicago in 1967, and 3) retention ("failing" grades) in Chicago in 1998 (p. 7). Each of these examples gave details that were completely consistent with the underlying racial inferiority beliefs Whites held toward African Americans. According to House, what is known, and has been known for centuries, regarding the education of African Americans is the undeniable fact that African Americans do not control educational policy. Therefore, they cannot effectuate educational policy changes to alter the status quo.

White Americans were reportedly reassured that African Americans could not change the status quo, because they were effectively disenfranchised from a system of political power. Based on House's research, all that changed in 1964 during the presidential election between Johnson and Goldwater. During that election, race became a major issue separating the political parties of Democrats and Republicans. The overriding covert issue was whether the federal government should be involved in the issue of ameliorating racial problems.

In addressing the concern of racial problems in education, House (1999) had this to say:

It would be amazing if such deep-seated beliefs did not affect education policy. In fact, I believe that education policy has been profoundly shaped by these beliefs. Americans have defined their educational system in such a way as to ensure that African Americans (and often other minorities) are treated in an exclusionary way—which is to say that they

are saddled with an education which is inferior, and this inferior education contributes to whites seeing them as having undesirable attributes and as being unable to govern themselves (p. 10).

What House uncovered in his study opened the door for concerted and targeted research to find plausible ways to ameliorate racial problems that could directly affect the implementation of a common curricula, much more equitable funding, and central distribution of resources. Despite an overall improvement in minority rights, advancements in education for African Americans, and a lessening of racial tensions nationwide, House maintains that basic racial beliefs remain steadfast in many communities. This study was completed 18 years ago and the literature still reflects educators and researchers unwilling to admit that systemic racism plays a role in the continued disparities and racial injustices that plague African Americans and burden them with an inferior education, which they do not control.

The information retrieved from House's (1999) study has added great depth and credibility to a topic left on the fringes of empirical research. The goal of this comparative case study analysis is to pick up where House left off; looking to further research to find ways to re-energize the collective urgency of purpose in finding ways to eradicate systemic racism from America's educational system.

In House's study, he stated that the term "white" was bestowed upon other European ethnic groups as entrance into the American mainstream that was a forecast for social and economic advantages to come (House, 1999, p. 3). These social and economic advantages were the rewards to those adhering to a doctrine of *White racism* that favored Whites and disadvantaged African Americans and other minorities. Soon, *White racism* gave rise to *white privilege* (or *white skin privilege*), which became the standard-bearer for what it meant to be *Americanized* (House, 1999; Anderson, Taylor & Logio, 2015; Bell et al., 2016). According to

Lawrence, Sutton, Kubisch, Susi & Fulbright-Anderson (2004, p.17), as cited by Bell et al. (2016), Europeans (considered “whites” in *race conscious America*) acknowledge race as a valuable social, political and economic resource that gave them power and additional resources and protected them from negative prejudices based solely on physical features, language, and other ethnic or cultural factors (p. 137).

In stark contrast to that social concept was the social concept of inclusion based upon renunciation of *white privilege* to gain full citizenship in the new Haitian society after Toussaint Louverture’s successful revolution, 1791-1804 (Baptist, 2014). In other words, even a European considered “white” could become a “black” citizen of Haiti as noted in the following quote:

Although the country’s history would be marked by massacre, civil war, dictatorship, and disaster, and although white nations have always found ways to exclude Haiti from [the] international community, independent Haiti’s first constitution created a radical new concept of citizenship: only black people could be citizens of Haiti. And who was black? All who would say they rejected both France and slavery and would accept the fact that black folks ruled Haiti. Thus, even a “white” person could become a “black” citizen of Haiti, as long as he or she rejected the assumption that whites should rule and Africans serve. (Baptist, 2014, p. 47)

At nearly any point in America’s slave history, a rejection of *white privilege* could have been instilled within the social consciousness of America.

The unearned advantages of *white privilege* enjoyed by *whites* enable them to benefit psychologically and materially from accumulated advantage, whether they want it or not (Bell et al., 2016, pp. 137). It is by no stretch of the imagination that many white supremacists have concluded that African Americans are not Americans, because they are not white. Consequently, in today’s social climate, white Americans are willing to believe that we live in a *meritocracy* that, despite one’s race or station in life, anyone willing to work hard can improve their social and economic circumstances. That flawed logic brings us to the discussion of racism on an

institutional level, which includes education, government, religion, the law and criminal justice system, health care, the media, and business/employment (Bell et al., 2016, pp. 135).

### **Systemic and Institutionalized Racism in Education**

In the discussion of *white racism*, several references were made to the *long-term* practice of white superiority and *white privilege*. According to Webster and WorldWeb, when a practice has been accepted as a social norm, it takes on the character of an institution or is incorporated into a structured and well-established system. Racial superiority by white Americans has been a part of the American ethos since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. What is discussed in this study stems from the consequence of institutional oppression of African Americans from the very beginning of American history. Every aspect of life in America has been affected by it. The most damaging effect of institutional racism has been to the educational system of America, which is the focus of discussion in the next section.

### **Institutional Racism**

Ernest R. House (1999) has described institutional racism as “racism not recognized by those participating in it because the way the institutions function seems normal to those growing up in them” (p. 2). Scipio Colin, III (2010) further defines institutional racism as “racism [that] permeates the roots of American society and is reflected in all its societal institutions, and that racism was created by White Americans and is perpetuated by them” (p. 8). Essentially, according to Bell et al. (2016), institutional racism “is exemplified in the structured inequality of a school funding system based on property taxes that unfairly benefits wealthier (whiter) communities at the expense of poorer (brown and African American) communities” (Bell et al., 2016, p. 135). Unfortunately, this reality is reflected too often in contemporary literature and current discussions on the topic of resegregation of schools. Bell et al. (2016) have

declared that “racism at the institutional level is reflected in the policies, laws, rules, norms and customs enacted by organizations and social institutions that advantages whites as a group and disadvantage groups of color” (p. 135). Furthermore, Michele Alexander (2010), civil-rights-lawyer-turned-legal-scholar, has spoken to the very heart of America’s racial legacy in her *New York Times* bestselling book, *The New Jim Crow*, which tells a truth about entrenched racism White America has been reluctant to face. She explains white America’s concept of racism in this way:

When we think of racism we think of Governor Wallace of Alabama blocking the schoolhouse door; we think of water hoses, lynchings, racial epithets, and "whites only" signs. These images make it easy to forget that many wonderful, goodhearted white people who were generous to others, respectful of their neighbors, and even kind to their black maids, gardeners, or shoe shiners--and wished them well--nevertheless went to the polls and voted for racial segregation... Our understanding of racism is therefore shaped by the most extreme expressions of individual bigotry, not by the way in which it functions naturally, almost invisibly (and sometimes with genuinely benign intent), when it is embedded in the structure of a social system. (Alexander, 2010, p. 178)

Based on these and other ingrained acceptance of life in a *white America*, white Americans have gone to great lengths to institutionalize their racism to remove the racial overtones of their actions. Plainly speaking, the stigma of being racist is disguised by policies that appear non-racial, because they adhere to seemingly fair and democratic guidelines (House, 1999, p. 2). Sociologists have posited that average white Americans do not think of themselves as being racist; yet, they will not knowingly support policies or programs they believe will primarily benefit minorities (House, 1999, p. 2). However, they will support policies that are harmful to minorities, even though they would not accept those policies being applied to the rest of the population.

This inescapable truth is well-documented in the literature, which not only confirms the existence of institutional racism in education, but also establishes how it is self-perpetuating. The vast majority of educators, parents, school and district administrators, and school community stake-holders unconsciously perpetuate institutional racism by promoting and accepting written rules, policies, laws, norms and customs. Seldom are these written rules, policies, laws, norms and customs questioned by white parents, educators, school or district administrators, because they are there to advantage white students. Conversely, when those same written rules, policies, etc. are questioned by African American parents, educators, school or district administrators, they are labeled as trouble-makers or worse (House, 1999; Brayboy et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2016). They are ridiculed for not wanting to follow the rules and policies that have been established for the benefit of all students. Yet, a closer examination of those rules clearly illustrates an intent to “severely disadvantage minorities” (House, 1999, p. 2).

Institutional racism in education allows for harmful policies to plague minorities. These policies include such rules as forced retention, how schools are financed and organized, the use of standardized tests, placement of students, allocation of academic resources, etc. (House, 1999, p. 3). This long and detailed list is the reason large numbers of minority students are frustrated and discouraged from being successful in school. For decades, education policy has been reflective of *cultural racism*, which propagated the belief that European or white culture was superior to all other cultures (Bell et al., 2016, pp. 135). This cultural superiority belief gave rise to a racist ideology in education, which is our next discussion.

### **Racist Ideology in Education**

According to Ernest R. House (1999), “The structure of our entire educational system has been strongly influenced by the beliefs that people hold about minorities, particularly about

African Americans” (p. 11). Let us examine “the beliefs that people hold about minorities”, especially African Americans. Dating back to the days of forced slavery, White Americans have characterized minorities, regardless of their station in life, with very negative character traits (e.g., lack of skills, lack of self-discipline, impoverished culture, low natural intelligence—and most certainly lack of ability to govern themselves) (House, 1999, p. 4).

Beginning with the early days of slavery, white colonists overwhelmingly supported the position of slave masters and government officials to deny any type of education for slaves (Love, 2004). Based on Barbara Love’s research (2004) “colonists developed extraordinary measures to insure [ensure] that Africans had no access to literacy. In the minds of the colonists, if Africans could be kept illiterate, they could be kept in a condition of involuntary servitude” (p. 235). With little to no exceptions, even teaching African American people to read was a crime; for those being taught, as well as those doing the teaching. The mainstream justification for those actions was based solely on an unsubstantiated theory that Africans lacked the civilization and intelligence to learn to read. Frankly speaking, white colonists manufactured myths about Africans to continue their dominance and subjugation of them:

In order to protect the myth of the intellectual inferiority of Africans, the colonists developed extraordinary and sometimes draconian measures to eliminate any possibility of literacy among Africans. Literacy among Africans was made illegal by colonial statutes and efforts to gain literacy were subject to punishment up to and including dismemberment and death (Lincoln, 1967). As Henry Berry of the Virginia House of Congress declared, ‘We have closed every avenue through which light may enter their minds. If we could only extinguish the capacity to see the light, our work would be complete’ (cited by Horsman, 1981, p. 101). Maintaining the achievement gap was high on the priority list of the colonists. (Love, 2004, p. 236)

The disturbing fact that confirms a “racist ideology in education” is the prolonged history of segregated schools, which were declared “unconstitutional” by the United States Supreme

Court in 1954, yet exist more segregated today, than before that *landmark* ruling (Shum, 2014).

Brenda Shum, director of the Educational Opportunities Project at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (2014), has written in the American Bar Association publication that:

Our public students are more racially isolated today than before *Brown v. Board of Education*. According to a 2012 report by the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, as of 2010 over 74 percent of [African American] students and almost 80 percent of Latino students attended majority-minority schools. In fact, 15 percent of [African American] students and 14 percent of Latino students attend what many refer to as "apartheid schools," where white students constitute less than 1 percent of the overall student enrollment. At the same time, white students are increasingly educated in less racially diverse settings. More disturbing, many racially isolated schools are also overwhelmingly high-poverty schools challenged to provide their students with the quality education necessary for them to succeed in modern society. (Vol. 40, No. 1, para. 1&2)

It is shameful that white America continues to deny the very justice in the ruling by the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States of America some 63 years ago "that in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Love, 2004, p, 227).

What continues to be a perplexing conundrum for researchers is the negative views of African Americans maintained by white Americans that can be easily improved if African Americans and other unfortunate minorities were given the same resources, facilities, and educational opportunities afforded to white Americans. The history of denying educational opportunities to African Americans, resisting court-ordered adjustment of *separate and inherently unequal* facilities, and then reverting to an educational system that continues to deny those basic educational rights, equates to a racist ideology in education (House, 1999; Love, 2004; Brayboy et al., 2007; Lund & Colin, 2010).

## **Racial Profiling: Its Effect on Education and Employment**

African American students are specifically targeted for educational placement and programs that often result in academic failure and continued social disenfranchisement (Brayboy et al., 2007, p. 165; Lund & Colin, 2010; Nelson, 2014). A few of those programs include academic tracking practices, inadequately trained teachers, and unacceptable student-to-counselor ratios (p. 165). African American students are targeted disproportionately for remedial Special Education programs and classes, remedial reading and math classes, retention, harsh in-school discipline (such as after-school detention), harsh out-of-school discipline—suspensions and expulsions—and low-achieving class placements (House, 1999; Love, 2004; Blanchett, 2006; Brayboy et al., 2007; Nelson, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Williams, 2015).

In inner-city schools, where the student population is overwhelmingly African American or Latino, racial profiling is open and overt. District officials single out these schools to receive fewer resources, second-hand and outdated text books, poorly-trained teachers with minimum certification credentials, poorly-maintained buildings and facilities that produce and perpetuate an inferior student with minimum work skills (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Lewis and Diamond (2015) highlighted in their book, *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*, the role of racial profiling by revealing what occurs to African American students who receive the same resources, facilities, and opportunities afforded White students in a highly-funded, diverse suburban school. Even though African American students at the school were benefitting from the same environment as White students, they were, however, less successful. Their failures were not due to their cognitive inferiority ...their failures were due to racial profiling of students in academic placement and school discipline. Despite the diverse, middle-class community of this highly-funded school, the ethos of the school catered to *white privilege*

(pp. 88, 99-100). Additionally, the authors revealed that, “one school employee says that she never sees white students brought before a disciplinary review board, while the principal says that she sees white students at review boards and comments on how vigorously their parents defend them” (p. 75). This verbal admission appears symptomatic of racial inequalities which exist and are noticeable at the school.

In a qualitative study conducted by Susan Iverson and Dametraus Jagers (2015), entitled *Racial Profiling as Institutional Practice: Theorizing the Experiences of Black Male Undergraduates*, racial profiling of African American males was examined at one Midwestern public university. This research study reviewed racial profiling literature to investigate significant disparities that exist in institutions of higher learning in America. These disparities concerned the access, persistence, and graduation rates of racial minorities, with particular attention on African American males, at predominately White institutions (PWIs). For this study, researchers Iverson and Jagers made use of a succinct definition for racial profiling adopted from Cross (2001): “racial profiling is when ‘People of Color are targeted, put under surveillance, and treated unfairly and unjustly based on race by those frequently considered well-intentioned cultural/social agents’” (p. 39).

Iverson and Jagers (2015) acknowledged the agreement among scholars that disparities do exist in higher education; however, there is no common agreement on the cause or an explanation of those disparities. Explanations from scholars included African American males’ disinterest in education, educator apathy, and ethnocentric pedagogy. Other explanations and rationales for disparities, “especially inquiry that explores environmental and cultural (versus individual) factors, generally fail to consider how privilege and racism operate at organizational, structural, and institutional levels to nourish individual behaviors and environmental factors”

(Ferber, 2012; Harper, 2009; Harper & Davis, 2012; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Singer, 2005) (Iverson & Jagers, 2015, p. 38).

To fully understand the daily experiences of African American male students, the researchers (Iverson & Jagers, 2015) utilized a focus group method to gain insights of their beliefs, values and understanding of their circumstances. They recruited 23 undergraduate African American males who were committed to 20 different majors. All study participants were actively involved in campus life. The participants were divided into three focus groups which met for at least 90 minutes discussing open-ended cues. The researchers were interested in their experiences in the classrooms, residence halls, social events, as well as personal interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. Although the researchers did not indicate that the focus group sessions were audio recorded, it became apparent that the sessions were recorded, because it was indicated that the audiotapes were transcribed for analysis.

The authors (Iverson & Jagers, 2015) used several steps of deductive analysis to code transcribed text that helped reveal the core principles of racial profiling--deficit-thinking, stereotyping, surveillance, and comparative racialization. After completing the deductive analysis independently, the authors came together to compare notes and to make sense of the data. What they found is what was theorized that African American males at PWIs will encounter academic difficulties due to a lack of resources, relationships, and knowledge, which could aid their academic and social integration on campus.

Iverson and Jagers (2015) recognized that racial profiling is an unnervingly common concept; however, the literature showed that the commonplace occurrence of racial profiling in the K-12 education system extends to the personal experiences of African American males who enroll into the higher education system. According to Cross (2001), African American males

and other minorities are subjected to various forms of racial inequities that deny them place, security, privacy, identity, and control over their daily life. Other researchers with whom the authors aligned addressed the issue of racial profiling from the vantage point of individual bias acting as a motivator for racial profiling, and further conceptualizing racial profiling as an institutionalized bias that is tacitly accepted, and probably even encouraged, by members of an organization (Harris, 2002) (Iverson & Jagers, 2015, p. 40). The similarity between institutional racism and racial profiling as defined in this study further supports the supposition that systemic racism is self-perpetuating and causal to racial disparities. Furthermore, Iverson and Jagers (2015) maintain that “the presence of racial profiling... impacts the ways in which students interact with peers and administrators; it creates an unbalanced learning environment and a gap in the achievement and engagement between Students of Color and White students” (Iverson & Jagers, 2015, p. 40).

The authors (Iverson & Jagers, 2015) attempt to determine the impact of racial profiling on the lives of all students in higher education was not useful, due to the “racelessness” of the data. By using an analytical lens approach to racial profiling, they successfully proposed a theoretical explanation for the disparities African American males encounter at PWIs. The theoretical explanation revealed an unwillingness among administrators and educators to acknowledge the pattern of racial profiling. In fact, administrators at these institutions who are dismissive of racial profiling allegations by African American males did not want to admit to the institutionalized pattern that existed, which will not initiate a meaningful change. With many incidents of racial profiling occurring very subtly and covertly, detection is often questionable or ambiguous. Nevertheless, the frequency of the occurrences leaves little doubt as to their origin.

The challenge to prove, identify or document the presence of racial profiling due to covert or subtle discriminatory practices is not a new challenge for dealing with racial discrimination. Even in the earlier days of *Jim Crow*, when racial discrimination and segregation were overt and very public (African American voter suppression, separate public facilities, public denial to stores, restaurants, hotels, schools, etc.), white Americans (Southern Democrats) were still able to manipulate the rules, laws and policies to maneuver around nearly all the legal challenges initiated by Republicans at the state and federal levels to keep them from electing Republican candidates (Essah, 1996). In her research, Patience Essah detailed the persistence of Republicans to dismantle every devious act by Southern Democrats to disenfranchise African American male voters; however, Democrats continued to find obscure and questionable ways to derail African American voters in order to maintain their political power (p.188).

Even during that dark period, maintainers of white supremacy and white privilege were successfully masking the obvious. Currently, institutional racism is deeply embedded in American society due to its early entrenchment in the American education system. In today's environment, very meticulous research would be needed to separate *white racism* from *institutional racism*. More precisely, the literature has shown the two to be virtually one in the same. Basically, each of them strives for the same goals—maintaining white privilege.

Today, most problems with racial profiling in employment occur more unconsciously, as opposed to conscious overt acts of discrimination or bigotry (Bell et al., 2016). According to Bell et al., white Americans who insist that anyone can succeed in life if they work hard, have dismissed and/or have refused to acknowledge the reality of racist barriers that stifle the *hard work merits* of the average African American. Whites with those socially naïve opinions suffer from what Bell et al. define as *internalized dominance*, which occur when members of a

dominant group (in this case, white Americans) “take their group’s social advantage status as normal and deserved, rather than recognizing how it has been conferred through a racialized system of inequalities” (Bell et al., 2016, p. 137). For African Americans, they receive a *double-barrel* shot of discrimination in their quest for quality employment, due to the conscious and unconscious acts of racial profiling due primarily to *internalized dominance*. Furthermore, the social cost of those forms of racial profiling need to be considered, which is discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **Economics of Racial Discrimination in Employment**

In 1978, William Julius Wilson published his renown discourse on African American America, titled *The Declining Significance of Race*, wherein he claimed *race* was no longer the determinant factor in the socio-economic progress of African Americans. Instead, he claimed it was issues of poverty, education, and employment opportunities (Pager, 2007, p, 107). The visceral reaction from white America induced an almost immediate decline in scholarly discussions and research relating to the problems of racial discrimination. Consequently, during the next 30 years, more and more studies were focused on reporting the improvements by African Americans in all areas of educational measurements and employment opportunities once dominated by white Americans (Pager, 2007).

An exception to those studies that reveled in the pretext that racism was no longer a *determinant factor* in the socio-economic progress of African Americans is a research study by Devah Pager (2007) entitled *The Use of Field Experiments for Studies of Employment Discrimination: Contributions, Critiques, and Directions for the Future*. In this mixed-method study, the researcher opted for a research methodology that could gather rigorous empirical evidence necessary in gaining an understanding of the nature of race and racial discrimination in

labor markets. Pager was motivated by the constant debates that questioned the present-day relevance of discrimination, which was becoming more arduous to prove. The literature was indicating the difficulty of identifying, measuring, and documenting the presence or absence of racial discrimination in all but extreme cases.

To address the dilemma regarding the presence or absence of racial discrimination, Pager posed the following research questions: 1) have we conquered the problems of racial discrimination, or 2) have acts of discrimination become too subtle and covert for detection (Pager, 2007, p. 104)? Her decision to use field experiments (or data studies) method to unravel the difficulty of identifying, measuring, and documenting the presence or absence of racial discrimination was explained in this way: “Field experiments blend experimental methods with field-based research, relaxing certain controls over environmental influences to better simulate real-world interactions” (p. 109).

In this study, Pager (2007) used the correspondence test approach to gather study participants. Her researchers mailed/faxed fictitious resumes to more than 1300 employers in Chicago and Boston, targeting job ads for clerical and customer services positions, sales, and administrative support. These resumes were paired with similar educational background, job skills, and experience, however, with noticeably white-sounding and black-sounding names. The racially-cued resumes were sent to different sets of employers to avoid any noticeable correlation between intended white versus African American applicants. Data from in-person audits, which involved matched pairs of individuals called testers who visit job sites, were compared to the results from the correspondence tests to measure frequency of a callback or job offer. In both testing methods, the results for whites receiving callbacks were 1.5 to 5 times that of equally qualified African American applicants.

Naturally, each of those test methods come with noticeable limitations; more limitations are associated with the correspondence test method versus that of the in-person audit. The correspondence test lacks the high reliability that all target information of applicants will be understood correctly by the employer, sometimes socio-economic rather than race factors are interpreted from certain racially distinctive names. In short, having to rely totally on written information as opposed to physical appearance complicates the task of detecting racial discrimination. Additionally, most jobs with a high-degree of racial preference will not accept resumes or mail/fax applications. The in-person audit is best-suited for entry-level jobs; however, the high cost, the time involved, and the delays that can occur in meeting with prospective employers are limitations to the overall effectiveness of this method (Pager, 2007).

By utilizing both methods and combining the data from each, the researcher can achieve more favorable results. In this study, the researcher (Pager, 2007) clearly indicated a preference for in-person audits, which explains her use of field experiments to study employment discrimination. No matter the method of data collection, most employers have found very subtle and covert selection processes to circumvent the social and legal proscriptions against discrimination in the job market. According to Pager (2007), the task of unmasking employers' "discriminatory actions behind nonracial justifications" becomes harder to resolve each day (p. 105).

With the use of the two design methodologies, Pager could distinguish speculation from measurable evidence of employer bias and racial discrimination. The data revealed in this study support several contentions that African American males are deselected long before they can be considered for a face-to-face interview or an opportunity to demonstrate their work skills, due to their racial distinction: "...we come to the conclusion that race has large effects on employment

opportunities, with a black job seeker anywhere between 50 and 500 percent less likely to be considered by employers as an equally qualified white job applicant” (p. 114). Even the aid of several federal Acts, laws, and policy improvements for African Americans are not enough to withstand the reality of institutional racism, as noted by Pager:

Despite visible improvements, however, [African Americans] continue to lag behind whites on key dimensions of inequality. Particularly among those at the bottom half of the distribution, rapid gains beginning in the 1960s slowed, and in some cases reversed, during the 1980s and 1990s. Even at the high point of economic expansion in the late 1990s when unemployment rates were dropping steadily for all groups, [African American] men were still more than twice as likely to be unemployed relative to their white counterparts. Over time [African Americans], and young [African American] men in particular, have become increasingly likely to drop out of the labor market altogether when faced with the prospect of long-term unemployment or marginal employment opportunities (As cited in Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005). (Pager, 2007, p, 107)

What has become very difficult to prove, yet *not* very difficult to detect, is the existence of racial discrimination in employment (Pager, 2007; Reardon et al., 2012). The effort to accurately measure the extent of racial discrimination in the job market is complicated by the struggle to detect individual acts of discrimination (Strauss, 1991). The pungent and overt racism practiced principally in the South (Strauss, 1991, p. 1619) is not the tenor of the racism practiced among companies of today. Today’s white preferences in the labor market are very subtle and covert (Strauss, 1991; Pager, 2007).

Taking a quick flash-back to a study conducted in 1956 by Jerome Holland, president of Delaware State College, more than 50 years of data concluded that the employment status of African American Delawareans had remained almost identical to the employment patterns of 1890 (Hayman & Ware, 2009, p. 62). With all the legal victories and landmark Civil Rights legislation protecting and guaranteeing equal rights to all African Americans, African American Delawareans are still facing modern-day *Jim Crow* issues in education and in employment. And,

according to Robert Hayman (2009), “*Jim Crow Delaware* combined the worst of the northern and southern racial experience” (p.62). Jim Crow laws, issues, policies, etc., refer specifically to a period in American history (1877 to 1950) wherein white state and local government officials imposed harsh, discriminating rules and regulations on African American citizens to deny their constitutional rights and to enforce the policy of racial segregation and white supremacy (Miller, 2017).

With that historical study as a backdrop, let us examine the current employment status of African American Delawareans, with a focus on African American males. According to July, 2017 data from the Delaware Department of Labor, the percentage of African American males unemployed compared to those who are employed is significantly higher than the percentage of white males unemployed compared to those who are employed. Additionally, the report stipulated that the median length of time African American males are unemployed is 50% longer than the overall average. What is even more disturbing about African American male unemployment in Delaware, which is endemic across America, is the substantial difference in the number of men able to work—with whites far outnumbering African Americans by 3-1 (Cherry, 2016; Cherry, 2017; Delaware Department of Labor, 2017). Even more devastating to the economic stability of the African American community, both in Delaware and nationally, is the alarming data that the unemployment rate among African American males is at least twice that of white males (Cherry, 2016).

Racial discrimination in all its varying degrees of intensity victimizes members of the African American community in very real economic terms, which are not readily transferable to dollars and cents figures. The literature showed that the degree of economic instability and loss of income is exacerbated by high unemployment and underemployment, longer than average

periods of being unemployed, lower-paying jobs, lack of job security, and the dilemma of “last to be hired and the first to be fired” (Cherry, 2016). The combination of these problems has stigmatized the African American community with a cycle of poverty, family instability, poor schools, uncontrollable crime and violence, homelessness, dramatic loss of economic stability, and a growing sense of hopelessness (Cherry, 2017).

Robert Cherry, in his article *Race and Opportunity* (2017), describes a very dismal situation for underserved and disadvantaged African American men and women throughout this country. In spite of that, he advocates for incremental change that can be genuinely realized if African American people refuse to allow victimization to rule their reality. When considering the harsh reality of white superiority that promotes white privilege in every facet of American life, incrementalization needs to begin in earnest in the educational system of America’s public schools.

According to a study by Jamel Donnor and Kmt Shockley (2010), “the education system’s ability to adequately serve African American males is worsening” (p. 43). A dramatic reversal of the low academic achievement by African American males is key to the economic stability of the entire African American community. Donnor and Shockley presented the link between low academic achievement and deterrents to a thriving and economically stable African American community as: 1) wide-spread and repeated incarceration, and 2) failing to acquire skills needed for productive participation in the global economy (Cherry, 2017, pp. 43-44). This study and the mention of several others bring us “full-circle” to the essential discussion of systemic and institutionalized racism in education. In the study by Ernest House (1999), it was emphasized that the social construct of race and racial superiority was created and instituted by white Americans; therefore, it is their responsibility to remove it. The literature cited in this

study has presented very convincing examples showing how African Americans are systematically victimized by the oppressive and irrational racist white-African American dichotomy of superiority versus inferiority. Further examination of that harmful dichotomy on the educational and socio-economic consequences for African Americans will be discussed and summarized in Chapter III.

### **Relevance to Educational Leadership**

In the study conducted by Brayboy et al. (2007) that focused on race in educational scholarship, it was convincingly stated that any discussion of vocational training, IQ, poverty, cultural difference, remedial education, school readiness, achievement gaps, accountability, and standardization cannot be adequately considered or discussed without showing their intimate connection to race and racism. Even though many educational leaders may reject the notion of his or her school district or school having racial overtones, the reality and prominence of institutional racism will negate any concerted efforts of educational reform without including race in the conversation. The very foundation of American public education is based upon a social construct of white racism, which is the basis for separation and inequality (House, 1999; Brayboy et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2010; Diamond & Lewis, 2015).

Contemporary discourse that exposes the social ills of separation and inequality in education has its roots in the need for equality and equity, which form the basis for a just society. If America considers itself a *just* society, then it must embrace the concept of equality, which is the long-term goal of a just society. In such a society, children (regardless of race, gender, socio-economic class, or sexual orientation) should be provided the same educational resources and opportunity outcomes (Brayboy et al., 2007). In the Brayboy et al. study, the authors have suggested “that the future of race scholarship in education needs to be centered not on equality

but rather on equity and justice” (Brayboy et al., 2007, p. 159). Consequently, for educational leaders to begin a concerted effort to restructure the educational system to provide for equity and “justice for all”, they must start with a focus on the concept of social justice.

The concept of social justice in education is an inescapable reality for educational leaders. In a world laced with pervasive forms of bias, bigotry, discrimination and prejudices, school leaders are forced to confront those harsh social inequalities for the sake of awareness, if for nothing else (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016). The responsibility of school leaders, particularly in K-12, is to recognize these forms of *oppression* and provide the tools for examining how these forms of oppression operate in social institutions, as well as in the personal lives of individuals most affected by them. The goal of all school communities should be to achieve the highest level of diversity, which will allow all members of that community to feel valued and respected. Providing the tools to vulnerable individuals that are necessary in understanding the fundamental structures of harsh social inequalities must be combined with tools necessary to enable individuals to change and fight against those inequalities. Thus, it becomes a moral and integral part of educational leadership to prevent various forms of bias, bigotry, discrimination, and prejudices from becoming an embedded part of the institutional fabric of the school community, as well as a constant fight to maintain principles of equity, fairness, self-recognition and inclusion (p. 4).

In the realm of higher education, educational leaders must remain constantly vigilant over matters of affirmative action and race-based challenges to their admissions policies by keeping the focus on the benefits of campus diversity and the higher goals of academic pursuits (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). The constant challenge to school administrators at every level of education is the reality of institutionalized racism, bias, and bigotry. Years of racial segregation

and de facto racial segregation and discrimination, which were at their height during the 1950s and 1960s, will take years of aggressive action to mitigate and eliminate. The real fear from years of racism and discrimination for many educators is the way many in society have become, or will become, unconscious participants or indifferent (Rosado, n.d.). For African American Delawareans and educational leaders in Delaware, those years of de jure and de facto racial segregation and discrimination have led to complacency, indifference, and unconscious participants (Greenblatt, 2003; Newton, 1999). Worst of all has been the unconscious acceptance of this flawed social reality as an acceptable social norm.

### **Theories Guiding the Study**

There are two prominent theories that guide this study—Social Justice Theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Both theories address over-arching concerns that target the persistent lack of equality and equity in the educational opportunities for African American students versus their white peers, as well as the dominance of white superiority versus African American inferiority. Creswell and Poth (2015) explained that the critical race theory “focuses theoretical attention on ‘studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism and power’” (p. 30). William Tate (1997) expounded further on what he understood to be a fundamental analysis of race and the politics of education by citing John Calmore (1992) in his chapter on *Critical Race Theory and Education: History, Theory, and Implications*:

As a form of oppositional scholarship, critical race theory challenges the universality of white experience/judgement as the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively directs, controls, and regulates the terms of proper thought, expression, presentation, and behavior. As represented by legal scholars, critical race theory challenges the dominant discourses on race and racism as they relate to law. The task is to identify values and norms that have been disguised and subordinated in the law. As critical race scholars, we thus seek to demonstrate that our experiences as people of color are legitimate, appropriate, and effective bases for analyzing the legal system and racial subordination. This process is vital to our transformative vision. This theory-practice

approach, a praxis, if you will, finds a variety of emphases among those who follow it....  
(Tate, 1997, pp. 196-197)

Even though each theory's approach to the problem of racial injustice, inequalities and inequities is different, their goals are consistent in challenging the status quo of authoritative standards that do not reflect a just and fair sharing of power (Tate, 1997; Jost & Kay, 2010). Social justice and CRT are situated in this study to analyze and expose social issues and policies that work to undermine the legitimate rights African Americans have to an uncompromised quality of education and quality of life guaranteed to them in the U.S. Constitution. Furthermore, both theories are directly tied to educational and social activist goals that are rooted in the social missions and struggles of the 1960s (Tate, 1997).

In the Introduction to this study, a theoretical framework was presented and explained. That framework provided the structure for discussion of demoralizing and demeaning policies initiated by systemic racism. The cases analyzed in Chapter III will present a broader and more multi-dimensional perspective in answer to the research questions in this study. The theories of social justice and critical race help to focus the needed attention on the social malignancy of racism that, like a cancer, must be removed if there is to be any change in future employment opportunities for African Americans (Pager, 2007). What will become quite discernible in this study is the undeniable fact that African Americans, having more rights and making marginal gains in education and high-salaried positions, remain relegated and burdened by the dichotomy of a racially distinct Black-White society—a society of two socially distinct groups based entirely on skin color (House, 1999). Furthermore, this is a society of the privileged, unwilling to forego those privileges for fear of losing their place of superiority in the society (House, 1999; Bell et al., 2010; Diamond & Lewis, 2015).

## Summary

This chapter began by outlining a detailed history of the emergence of racial slavery that morphed into the ensconced social construct of racism. During its evolution over the centuries, racism took on a life of its own becoming embedded into the social fabric and institutions of everything American (House, 1999; Blanchett, 2006; Colin, 2010; Bell et al., 2016; Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol, 2016). Consequently, America is viewed as a racist country due to its black-white dichotomy of race, which has become nearly an unapproachable topic of public discussion.

Plainly speaking, racism *is*, and is becoming even more so, a very complex and obscure topic to discuss as well as research (Bell et al., 2016). Principally, this is due to white America's unwillingness to openly admit that they or their country is racist (House, 1999, p. 3). By believing that overt practices of racism no longer constitute the norm behavior of white America, white Americans are unaware of covert and obscure practices of institutionalized racism that continually construct policy for all Americans.

The legacy of America's national identity is secured in its educational system, the policies of which has been profoundly constituted by America's white superiority versus black inferiority dichotomy. What John C. Calhoun and other Southern leaders of the 1800s called "our peculiar institution" (Williams, 2016, p. 42) formed the racial ethos for all Americans and the manner in which all Americans have been taught. This chapter has unveiled the origin and processes of racism in establishing white privilege and fostering racial disparities against African Americans. The three case studies selected for this study will render more details of how the problem of racial disparities against African Americans in education is supported by systemic racism that provides an inequitable structure of power that advantages Whites and disadvantages African Americans. The following chapter will outline and describe the methodology used to

illustrate racial disparities against African Americans in the three case studies that comprise this comparative case study analysis. In addition, Atlas.TI software will be used to analyze the data from the studies to scientifically address the concern of systemic racism in education.

### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

This comparative case study analysis will examine the historical, as well as current empirical research on systemic racism in education that produces a series of racial imbalances for African Americans. This comparative case study analysis has two purposes. The first purpose is to assess why racism remains embedded in the very fabric of American society. The second purpose is to expose the devious process of systemic racism that denies African Americans equitable access to a quality education.

This section of the comparative case study analysis will present a stronger argument to explain how racism has permeated all aspects of institutional life in America. The selected case studies will give a detailed examination of racial disparities that directly affect the ability of African Americans to be successful in education and employment that, ultimately, determine their quality of life. This research design method is best suited for this discussion, according to Robert Yin (2009), who has stated that, “Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a “case” within its “real-life” context” (p. 1).

Case study one, “Disproportionate Representation of African Americans in Special Education”, focuses on the problem of disproportionate representation of African American students in special education (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24). This case study examines the extensive effect of racism and White privilege that exist in American society based on factors that contribute and maintain this disproportionate representation. Central to that discussion is the need to discuss how inappropriate curriculum and pedagogies, the allocation of educational resources, and the inadequate preparation of teachers have contributed to the problem. This study extends the existing literature by

indicating how the problem is not just a problem in education, but also a problem that exists in the society in general. In her discussion of this phenomenon, the author acknowledges the laxity of researchers and school leaders to affix the problem of White privilege and racism as significant contributing factors to this continuing disproportionality.

Case study two, “Challenging the Systemic Racism That Fosters Low Expectations” (Nelson, 2014, p. i), examined the problem of systemic racism promoting an ethos of low expectations for African American males in public schools. The research for this study has applied social justice and critical race theories to analyze how systemic racism robs African American males of their academic potential. Additionally, this study addressed the need for educators to participate in learning opportunities that identify and challenge their race-based assumptions/stereotypes, cultural competencies, professional practices, develop their racial consciousness, and recognize, interrupt, and address systemic racism.

Case study three, “Racial Disparities in School Discipline” (Williams, 2015, p. i), focuses on the causal agents of racial disparities in school discipline-related outcomes that result from systemic racism. In this study, the author asked the question that focused attention on the educators in the schools directly involved with the day-to-day discipline of African American students. The author further contends that the answer to that question is deeply rooted in the racial biases of educators. From his vantage point, the issue of discipline disproportionality has been a focus of research for several decades; however, connecting systemic racism and educators’ racial bias to racial disparities has been missing in the literature. The research in this study investigated the connection

between systemic racism and discipline-related outcomes, which is mediated through educators' dispositions.

The content of this chapter will consist of thorough examinations of three studies and how they address the variables and research questions of this study. The description of each case will include the methodology, study participants/population, data collection, data analysis, significance, and discussions. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the three cases, with recommendations from the authors on countering the most harmful effects of systemic racism in education.

**Case Study One:** Blanchett, W. J. (2006). *Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education: Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism*

In this study, Blanchett (2006) asserts that White privilege and racism have given rise to at least four sub-systems of American public schooling altogether, with the fourth educational subsystem devoted solely to disproportionate African American children with disabilities. She explains her assertion by citing the data from studies in 2002 that show that African American students between the ages of 6-21 measured 14.8% of the entire student population, yet they accounted for 20% of the special education population with all disabilities included. What is at issue in this study are the ways in which White privilege and racism create and maintain disproportionality in special education, specifically, yet, are not recognized as factors that contribute to disproportionality, in general. The author of this study, Blanchett, is guided by this probing question:

1. Research Question: How do “White privilege and racism contribute to and maintain disproportionality in special education?” (p. 24).

The data she uncovered in the literature not only provided answers for that question, but also proposed how to develop suitable strategies and interventions to eliminate those practices at all levels within education and throughout the society.

### **Research Design**

Blanchett (2006) conducted this literature review with the intent of extending the existing literature to illustrate the macro-social problem associated with inequitable representation of African Americans in special education. She posited that the disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education must be viewed in the context of the White privilege and racism that exist in American society (Blanchett, 2006).

### **Study Participants/Population**

The discussion of disproportionality in special education reviews the literature that examines the entire American educational system, citing sources such as the U.S. Department of Education, National Research Council, The Civil Rights Project, and other national agencies. The literature used in this study scrutinizes and investigates these incidents in various urban and suburban areas throughout the United States. The targeted population, without exception, are African American students, with special examination of African American students who have been placed in special education programs or specific special education categories (Blanchett, 2006).

### **Data Collection**

In this study, Blanchett (2006) used the data that was collected in the literature she reviewed.

## **Data Analysis**

This problem-based literature review did not conduct independent data analysis. The existing literature included all data analysis relevant to its topic. The literature reviewed in this study helped elucidate the answers provided by the author. The answers to the research question proposed by Blanchett (2006) included: “(a) insufficiently funding schools attended primarily by African American and poor children; (b) employing culturally inappropriate and unresponsive curricula; and (c) inadequately preparing educators to effectively teach African American learners and other students of color” (p. 24).

Using data provided by two research studies, Blanchett (2006) established the empirical rationale for presenting the problem of disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. The data cited earlier in this discussion highlighted the racial imbalance between the number of African American students in the student population versus the number of African American students in special education. Based on an imbalance of those percentages and the pattern of those percentages repeated throughout the United States, the Civil Rights Project (2001) concluded that “For many African American and some poor students, special education has become a form of segregation from the mainstream” (p. 25). In fact, Losen & Orfield (2002) further asserted that “special education has become a mechanism for keeping many African American students from receiving an equitable education in the general education environment” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 25).

From that premise, the author (Blanchett, 2006) presented the literature that highlighted the need to reform school funding systems. According to studies by Kozol (2004) and Robinson and Grant-Thomas (2004), school funding systems do not “ensure that all students have access to high-quality learning experiences in general education environments prior to being referred and

placed in special education” (p. 25). Blanchett argued that the reform needed for school funding systems should permit states to develop a differential system of school funding. An equitable system that empowers schools to develop suitable supports for students, regardless of their race or socio-economic status, to enable them to receive needed assistance before they fail. It should not be a system that requires students of color to fail, then using that failure to refer them to special education where they can receive needed assistance. In the minds of some scholars, this practice is viewed as a “legalized form of structural segregation and racism” (p. 25).

Furthermore, the National Research Council (2002) supports the idea of increasing the funding to schools with majority African American students. For those students, increased funding is a way to improve the quality of general education, which may decrease the chances of African American students being placed in special education in the future.

Blanchett points out that one significant improvement to the quality of general education for African American students must be the removal of “inappropriate and culturally unresponsive curriculum and pedagogy” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 26), which are strategically implemented to sustain White supremacy over curriculum content presented to African American students. Despite the assertions by researchers Apple (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1999) that pedagogical practices in use in American schools (the main-stream curriculum) are inappropriate and demoralizing to African American learners, little has changed. The literature indicated that Critical Race Theory (CRT) has referred to this racial dominance of the curriculum as “Master Scripting” (p. 26). Master Scripting is another permutation of systemic racism that allows for White privilege and racism to determine the essential content of the mainstream curriculum. Essentially, Master Scripting allows for the omission of significant individuals and events in African American history, while allowing for racist distortions and stereotypes. This intentional

manipulation of curriculum content not only undermined the rigor and accuracy of the curriculum, but also diluted any emphasis on critical thinking, reasoning, and logic. Without these essential skills in educating African American children, this is a recipe for failure or, at minimum, referral to racially inferior special education classes.

There is a definite correlation between insufficiently-funded schools and inappropriate and culturally unresponsive curriculum and pedagogy; however, there is a missing link as well. That missing link is inadequately prepared educators. Adequately funded schools and appropriate and culturally responsive curriculum can still fall victim to poorly prepared teachers and administrators who have not been trained to address the needs of African American students. Educator and researcher Darling-Hammond (2004) believes that teachers who can provide culturally responsive instruction to African American students may increase student learning as well as lessen special education referrals (Blanchett, 2006, p. 27). Even though that condition is not a certainty, teacher preparation programs that continue to graduate and credential teachers who have negative perceptions of African American students and of their "Blackness" will continue to be a defining factor in poorly educated African American students who are disproportionately referred to special education programs.

### **Significance of the Study**

The overwhelming role that a quality education plays in a child's life cannot be, and should not be, undermined. The discussion of special education disproportionality in this study unveiled a concerted effort by the dominant society to effectually undermine the education of African American students by detouring a disproportionate number of them out of majority White general education classrooms to segregated special education classrooms, which are majority African American and willfully inferior. The literature unapologetically presented the

role of structural systems of White privilege and racism that benefit Whites while oppressing African American and other students of color. This study showed the subtle and covert manner in which White privilege and racism operated within the system to convince Whites that the process was just a normal way of life (Blanchett, 2006, p. 25).

### **Summary Findings**

THOSE who exert the first influence upon the mind, have the greatest power. They have power, not only to regulate the action of given faculties, but they can enlarge or belittle the faculties themselves. Hence, favoring or adverse circumstances in the early culture of mind, though imperceptible at the time, will at last work out broadly into beauty or deformity. (Horace Mann, 1867, p. 10)

This quote from Horace Mann emphasizes the vital role of education as it pertains to the topic of this study. The “adverse circumstances in the early culture of mind” stated by Horace Mann is the heart of this study’s discussion. Blanchett (2006) is not only discussing a problem with disproportionate representation of African American students in special education, but also the dynamics of White privilege and racism’s influence on the American social structure. The essence of her argument concerning disproportionality in special education is based upon the acceptability and legitimacy afforded the institution of white supremacy that dominates the structure of policy for all American institutions. The institution under consideration in this discussion is the American educational system. It is this institution that “cultures the mind” in a manner that will “work out broadly into beauty or deformity” (p. 10) as stated by Horace Mann back in 1867. From what has been presented in this study, we are faced with a deformity of mind for African American students.

Blanchett (2006) has warned that educational deformity will be the future for scores of African American children unless additional research is undertaken to document the subtle and insidious ways White privilege and racism create and maintain disproportionality at every stage

of academic training within the American educational system. Additionally, institutions that ill-prepare educators for the task and responsibility of educating African American and students of color allow for the perpetuation of this form of systemic racism. The urgency for additional research and scrutiny is not shared by those who benefit from the current system; however, the author maintains a position that is consistent with prevailing literature that calls for purging of those racially motivated practices. Furthermore, her call for more research is based on finding solutions not finding fault or assessing blame:

Finally, additional research is needed to develop research, policy, and practice interventions that are designed to address issues of adequate allocation of educational resources, employment of appropriate and culturally unresponsive curricula, and inadequate teacher preparation, and to examine their impact on the problem of disproportionality over time and in a variety of settings. (Blanchett, 2006, p. 27)

**Case Study Two:** Nelson, S. D. (2014). *Are You My Brother's Keeper: Challenging the Systemic Racism That Fosters Low Expectations for Black Males in Public Schools*

The author of this study, Nelson (2014), has undertaken a qualitative investigation of a cultural problem as old as the institution of education itself—the culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools created and perpetuated by systemic racism. Her approach to this problem of practice is summated in the following statement:

After developing a thorough understanding of this problem, naming it, framing it, and learning more about it through systematic and intentional inquiry, it is clear that successfully addressing this problem will yield great educational improvements and help to produce a greater level of equity in schools. (Nelson, 2014, p. 62).

## **Research Design**

Nelson (2014) has used the case study methodology to develop her exploratory qualitative study of a genuine problem of practice. In her effort to find significant answers that

would improve the educational success for African American males, Nelson has implemented three supplemental research approaches: 1) scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), 2) design-based research, and 3) improvement science (ProDEL, 2012). These three methodologies aimed at producing learning opportunities, altering practice, and creating improvements to schools, establishes the design of this study.

### **Study Participants**

In this case study (Nelson, 2014), the researcher selected the student body, staff and school leadership of one local school, Pittsburgh King Pre-K to 8, of the Pittsburgh Public School District.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher utilized six different key initiatives of the school to focus the inquiry for the case study of this school community. These initiatives are referred to as designs, which took place during the school years 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014. These designs encompassed the following: 1) Inquiring, 2) Beyond Diversity Training, 3) the Formation of Journey Partners, 4) Equity Team Development, 5) Collaborative Action Research for Equity, and 6) the Construction of Equity Focused Evaluation Tools (Nelson, 2014).

Data for the six designs were collected using 16 formatted interview questions, which were presented in various formats including face-to-face conversations, phone interviews, e-mail exchanges, and focus groups (Nelson, 2014). Additional qualitative data were collected using a three-part observation protocol between teacher and focal student that included a pre-conference, observation, and debrief. In addition to the qualitative data collected, quantitative data were collected from each focal student that included academic data, aspirations, behavioral data, strengths and areas of growth, home life information, personal interests, self and peer

perceptions, and barriers to success. The process for collecting these data was not specified by the researcher.

## **Data Analysis**

After receiving the qualitative data from the formatted interview questions and the quantitative data on each focal student, the School Leadership Team used the data to guide instruction and improve student learning. A non-traditional student achievement data analysis was completed for each student to avoid the risk of merely reinforcing teacher racial biases. The procedure for completing the data analysis was not specified by the researcher.

Much of the data that were analyzed by the researcher (Nelson, 2014) have been summarized as key learning points ascertained from the six designs outlined in the Data Collection section, along with non-definitive answers to the research questions. The questions and answers are as follows:

*1. In what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males?* [The study] highlighted the presence of racism is reflected in the curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, staffing, discipline practices, and educational programming at the school... It recognized that all stakeholders, ... play a role in perpetuating systemic racism through beliefs and actions. It showed Black [male] students can experience differential treatment and differential access to learning opportunities while in the same classrooms with students of other races and genders. This occurs through the commission and/or omission of specific actions in the classroom.

*2. How do Black male students experience systemic racism in school?* [They] expressed feeling they don't belong in certain classes and/or are disliked by certain teachers who look for reasons to put them out, [they] shared scenarios of being treated that they were not as smart or gifted as other students, and [they] shared that they were blamed for doing things wrong that they didn't do and that teachers and administrators over react to the things that they do that are wrong.

*3. What is the role of the school leader in creating designs for improvement to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for Black male students?* a) the school leader must position him/herself as a learner first and then create opportunities for others to learn in a safe and supportive culture that recruits

others to the cause of racial equity and allows for multiple perspectives, b) [he/she] must model leadership for racial equity and help to raise the racial consciousness of those working with the students in the school as well as those in positions to make decisions about the students in the school, c) [they] must have a racial lens that can be applied to every aspect of their role as a principal and they must possess the courage and tools to utilize the lens to advocate for Black male students and hold staff members and district leaders accountable for their work, d) [he/she] must formalize the vision, structures, and processes in a school context to support equitable learning opportunities for students and build a team to implement a plan recognizing it can't be done alone, and e) [he/she] should help to equip school staff with tools to understand and discuss race and racism, challenge beliefs and assumptions, foster reflection, and produce changes in practice.

*4. How do teachers' racialized beliefs concerning student abilities influence teachers' behavior?* a) some teachers acknowledged that their beliefs about Black male students' behaviors often caused them to limit what Black males were permitted to do in the classroom, b) a pattern of lowering the rigor of questions posed to Black males and/or shortening the wait time provided to them based on a belief that they didn't know the information needed to address the question was identified, c) the desire of some teachers to avoid conflict with Black males in the classroom caused them to allow Black males to opt out of learning or engaging in challenging tasks or it caused them to refer students out of the room, and d) differences were noted in the lack of feedback provided to Black male students, which some teachers attributed to not wanting to push students beyond what they were able to do or not wanting to embarrass students in front of their peers. (Nelson, 2014, pp. 108-112).

As mentioned earlier, these responses represent a significant portion of the researcher's attempt to address the key proposition of this study, "challenging the systemic racism that fosters a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools" (Nelson, 2014). A significant portion of the data analysis reflected key findings as opposed to definite answers to the research questions presented in this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This multi-level exploratory approach to understanding the problem of how systemic racism hinders the academic potential, as well as progress of African American male students provides the reader a broader understanding of the problem, while providing designs for

improvements to the problem. In response to President Obama's establishment of *My Brother's Keeper Task Force*, this study was initiated to conduct an empirical examination of the role of educational leaders in designing improvements in the system to support African American males victimized by an ensconced system of racism. This research (Nelson, 2014) reaffirmed the strategic importance of school leaders and their ability to compose effective leadership teams and set realistic goals for improvement.

This study has presented viable alternatives and improvements in supporting and empowering African American males from the ills of systemic racism, which continually robs these students of their academic potential. The focus of improving and supporting the educational programming for African American males began with the school leader, who in turn provided teachers opportunities to learn and improve their practice. The improvement of teacher practices is a significant factor in changing a system that inherently oppresses African American students. The designs for action in this study were key to creating opportunities for teachers to learn, reflect, and improve their practice. Discussion of the implementation of the designs for action "offers what has been learned from what has been done" (Nelson, 2014, p. 97).

### **Summary Findings**

This research identified how systemic racism victimizes African American students and robs them of their academic potential. More importantly, it revealed the lack of urgency and commitment from other researchers to investigate the presence of systemic racism in school systems and to recognize how it creates and perpetuates educational disparities for African American students, particularly African American males. The author of this study calls upon responsible educators and researchers to come to grips with the true cause of the academic deficit among African American males which is systemic racism and not the multitude of factors cited

in the White-culture deficit model. Nelson urges educators to find ways to ‘fix the system’ rather than how to ‘fix the student’ “so that they can be better served by a system that was never built to serve them” (Nelson, 2014, pp. 27-28).

What is apparent in this study is the acknowledgement that systemic racism cannot be ignored as a causal factor in the low expectations of African American males in schools. There are educators and researchers who discount the influence of racism as a causal factor in racial disparities in education based on their post-racial societal beliefs. Nevertheless, viewed through the lens of the social justice theorist, racial predictability of achievement data, dropout statistics, prison rates, unemployment and underemployment percentages, and wage reports, are all evidence that racism is still a dominant factor in this society. As such, to dismiss the dominance of racism in our society and in our schools is to deny the reality of racism (Nelson, 2014). This study and others with similar discourse are designed to remediate a problem that has been ignored and marginalized for far too long.

**Case Study Three:** Williams, N. A. (2015). *Are the Racial Disparities in School Discipline the Result of or a Function of Systemic Racism Mediated by Educators’ Dispositions?*

This study is a collaborative effort extending from part of a larger study led by the IU Equity Project located in Bloomington, Indiana. There are two phases to this study—the first phase conducted by the IU Equity Project was quantitative in design, and the second phase conducted by Nathaniel Williams (2015) was qualitative in design, consisting of interviews, classroom observations, and data analysis. The researcher chose a multiple case method to produce stronger results and evidence.

## **Research Design**

This is an exploratory study comprised of two phases of a larger multi-year and multi-site case study. The first phase studied statewide data through quantitative analysis to detail the complex quality of disproportionality and differences in its connection with urban and suburban settings in a Midwestern state. Phase two utilized the analytical results from phase one to take a qualitative approach of an embedded multi-case study of four middle schools. Williams (2015) used this method to generate more persuasive evidence by focusing incisively on the educators' dispositions and differences regarding different individuals and school sites. The inquiry feature of this method provided for several subsets that included "classroom dynamics, the disposition of educators, discipline techniques, referral process, rate of referrals, racialized subtext, and overall discipline policy" (Williams, 2015, p. 62).

The emerging themes from the literature and colorblind racism (domains) will be used to complete an analysis. The exploratory feature of this study (Williams, 2015) was designed to begin composing future scholarship to possibly answer the guiding question. More precisely, the selected variables within the domain will support the aim of this study, which is to determine if discipline-related outcomes are the consequence of systemic racism that is facilitated by educators' dispositions.

## **Study Participants**

A multi-step purposive sampling methodology was used to select the schools, a selected student population, and the identified students from that population. The researcher selected one large Midwestern city to base his research. The school selection focused intentionally on the study of a mix of urban and suburban middle schools. The rationale for using middle schools was twofold: 1) the use of exclusionary discipline was found to peak at that level, and 2)

disciplinary disproportionality was consistently recognized at that educational level (Williams, 2015). A Site Selection Matrix (Table 1) was included in this selection process.

There were 27 primary study participants, which included 11 principals and 16 teachers who were interviewed from each of the selected middle schools. Table 3, which detailed the *Number of Participating Educators by Gender and Race*, was included in this section. Financial incentives were given to interviewed principals and teachers for their participation, as indicated in this statement: “All interviewed and observed principals and teachers at each school had a small financial incentive, one hundred dollars, deposited in a school account for purchasing supplies for their classroom or school” (Williams, 2015, p. 65). Customarily, financial incentives are given to participants of medical studies. In this case study, the researcher did not discuss the need or rationale for the incentive.

### **Data Collection**

Statistical data regarding school selection, details of student population from selected schools, and the degree of racial/ethnic disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions were collected by the project team from IU Equity Project during the first phase of this multi-year research project (Williams, 2015). The author of this study supervised data collection from each school during the second phase of this study employing three primary methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and school-level quantitative disciplinary and enrollment data.

Interviews were conducted in private locations at the schools, either before school, during a teacher’s preparation period, or after school. Except for teachers at one school, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for content analysis. At the school where audio recording did not occur, interviewers took notes, which were transcribed and reviewed by the interviewees

before they were finalized. Following the completion of the interviews, classroom observations were conducted. The format for these observations was not detailed in this study (Williams, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher (Williams, 2015) employed codes and points of analysis gained from emerging themes in school discipline literature and literature on systemic racism. Codes consistent with the research question of the study were developed. The software used for the coding was Dedoose. Coding was completed in pairs; however, research teams met to review codes to ensure reliability.

To ensure the dependability and trustworthiness of this qualitative study, an extensive audit trail was produced to document each step of the research process. Transcriptions were provided to all interviewees to check for inaccuracies. Data were analyzed using a three-step process: 1) subunits were selected from the larger dataset, 2) cross-analysis was conducted on the subunits gathered using the Four Domains and then used to examine interviews from all 27 participants, and 3) the rate of referral for teachers was cross-analyzed on the domains and subunits to examine if differences existed among high and low referring teachers (Williams, 2015, p. 77).

### **Significance of the Study**

This research study (Williams, 2015) examined the relationship between systemic racism, educator disposition, and discipline-related outcomes. Uncovered in this study were teacher behaviors that were consistent with the belief that high-referring teachers had a high degree of *racial bias* and *power through dominance* that motivated their decisions to refer for discipline. Use of the four domains that were discussed under Data Analysis helped to support some

connection among systemic racism, disposition of higher referring teachers, and discipline related outcomes. Surprising to the researcher was the high degree of agreement between high-referring teachers and systemic racism. Based on that finding, the researcher considered the necessity to reexamine how teacher disposition is viewed in teacher preparation programs. Williams wonders how critical teacher disposition is in the fundamentals of teaching. Based upon the findings in his research, teacher disposition is a critical factor in the fundamentals of teaching; therefore, teacher preparation programs must address the question, “Should disposition determine if someone should be allowed into the teacher profession?” (Williams, 2015, p. 120). On the surface, this question merits full legitimacy; however, upon closer examination, his question raises far more intrinsic and fundamental concerns for teaching.

According to Williams (2015), that question and the subsequent *ripple effect questions* presented significant concerns for his own career and future research, as well as for other educators. The crux of his concern was where to draw the line? Who defines and decides what characteristics best enables teacher candidates? Supported by the findings in his research and the literature, teacher disposition has substantial influence on a teacher’s classroom management and his or her philosophy of discipline. As such, when a teacher’s discipline philosophy and classroom management style is tainted with racial bias, then discipline-related consequences can result in disproportionately negative outcomes for Black students.

### **Summary Findings**

Findings from this study (Williams, 2015) suggest a need for greater emphasis in teacher preparation programs on classroom management, discipline philosophy, and diversity training. That suggestion comes amid the definitive relationship between teacher disposition, influenced by systemic racism, that led to disproportionate negative discipline-related consequences for

African American students. To consider the scope of that relationship between teacher disposition and systemic racism calls for more research and further investigation into the way systemic racism effects negative discipline outcomes.

Not surprising was Williams' (2015) admission that the study uncovered more questions than conclusive answers to the research question and those raised within the four domains. Even though the four domains were applied to capture data that could support the researcher's hypothesis concerning the linkage between high referring teacher disposition, systemic racism and discipline-related outcomes, it showed evidence in each of the domains, but not the extent of that linkage. Further investigation would be needed to determine the exacting degree of linkage. The purposeful exploratory design of this study was intended to lead to future research and dialogue. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2017), case study research is intended to "gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved" (p. 10).

## **Summary**

The three case studies examined in this chapter were selected to provide convincing arguments and qualitative data to support the claim of this comparative case study analysis. Each selected case presented a different perspective on how systemic racism is perpetuated within the educational system and how it contributes to racial disparities for African Americans. The examination of the three case studies has presented a clear alignment with their discussions of systemic racism, racial disparities, and the need for improved teacher training practices, which were emerging themes from each.

The two exploratory studies and one literature review have articulated comparative views concerning the reluctance of educators and researchers to acknowledge the connection between systemic racism and racial disparities that negatively affect African American students. Each

study has provided a variety of answers to the research questions posed in this comparative case study analysis. Even though the areas of educational examinations were different for each study, the discussions concerning systemic racism were aligned and parallel. An in-depth discussion and analysis of the results and findings, as well as methodology of each case study, will be presented in the next chapter. Atlas.TI software was used to code and theme the variables from each study to form a viable and reliable comparative analysis leading to a more complete answer to the research questions.

### **Ethical Issues**

This study will not involve interactions with human subjects, which will not require approval and oversight from the Institutional Review Board (IRB); however, an IRB exemption is being requested. The IRB “is a committee established to review and approve research involving human subjects. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that all human subject research can be conducted in accordance with all federal, institutional, and ethical guidelines” (Institutional Review Board, n.d.). The process “is designed to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects” (IRB Guidebook Chapter III: Basic IRB Review, n.d.). All steps will be taken to abide by the guidelines and requirements of the IRB.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### Introduction

This comparative case study analysis focuses on the historical, as well as current, empirical research of three intentionally selected case studies that investigated the impact of systemic racism in the education of African American students. Each of the selected studies highlighted a specific racial disparity that resulted from systemic and institutionalized racism. Those disparities were uncovered in three main segments of educational training for students—special education, overall classroom teacher-student academic interactions, and school discipline. Case Study I (Blanchett, 2006) highlighted the racial disparity of disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. Case Study II (Nelson, 2014) highlighted the racial disparity that fostered a culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools. Case Study III (Williams, 2015) highlighted the racial disparity of school discipline outcomes for African American students.

The common theme in each of those studies was the presence of racial disparities that continue to result from ensconced and systemic racism endemic to American culture. Systemic racism is not an axiom unto itself. Systemic racism is the result of centuries of racial slavery, followed by decades of white supremacy and white privilege dictums. Understanding why and how systemic racism remains prominent in American society is key to finding ways to mitigate and eliminate this unwelcomed equity *distorter* from the norm of social interactions in America.

A comparative case study methodology, which involves a process of analyzing and synthesizing similarities, differences and patterns that exist across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal (Goodrick, 2014), was chosen to help understand and explain the complexity and overlapping nature of systemic racism over time, as well as within and across

contexts. The context for this study is the American educational system. Gaining an understanding of the various features that are influenced by systemic racism within the American educational system is the primary goal of this analysis.

Each case study was purposefully selected to examine and highlight fundamental ways in which systemic racism is not only a causal factor for racial disparities, but also a factor for perpetuating racial disparities within the educational system of America. The key focus of this study has centered on finding a link between systemic racism and poor educational training for African American students that result in diminished educational and employment opportunities. The comparative case study analysis completed in this chapter will help answer the following research questions:

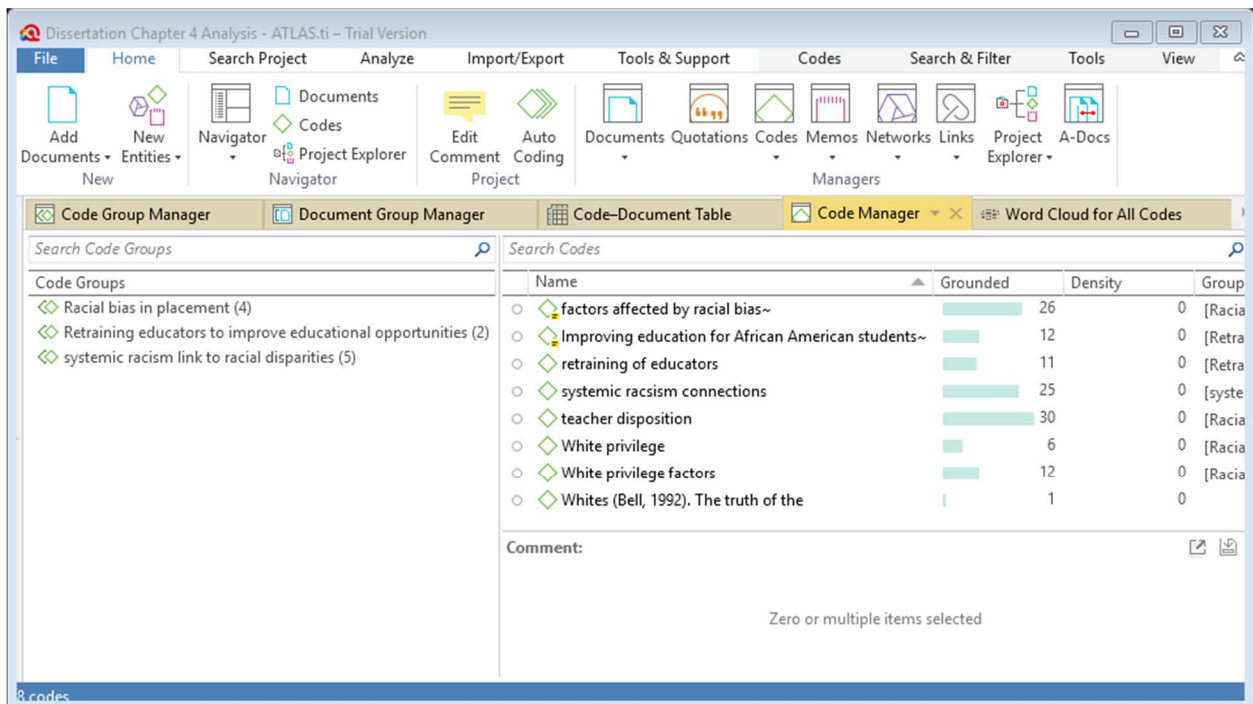
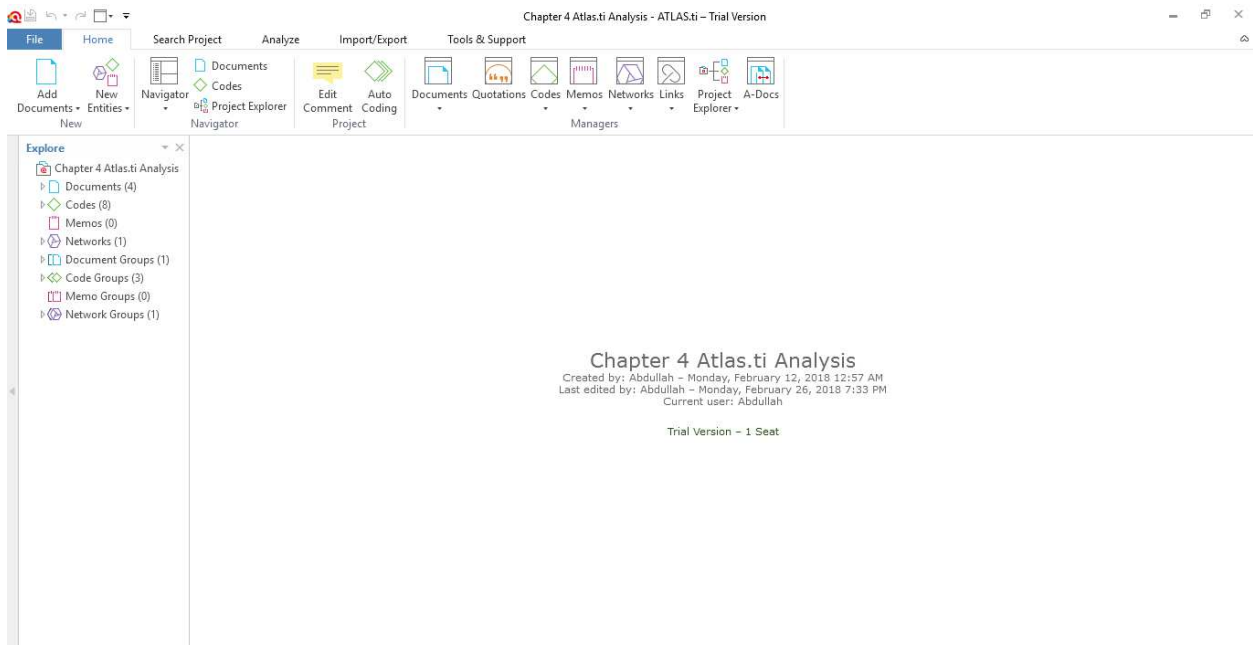
- 1) Why does systemic racism persist?
- 2) How does systemic racism contribute to racial disparities for African American students?

Commonalities in the research questions and their answers, along with an analysis of the findings using Atlas Qualitative Data Analysis software, will provide answers to those questions, as well as add to the body of knowledge. In the meantime, central to this research has been the background discussion of racism. A report conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council addressed the issue of racism in America: “Racism and racial discrimination have profoundly and lastingly marked and structured American society. . . the historical, cultural and human depth of racism still permeates all dimensions of life of American society” (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2009, p. 24, as cited in Colin, 2010, p. 11).

The effort to find common themes rightly begins with a within-case analysis of each study design, findings and discussions of the social phenomenon—systemic racism, which drives

the research and discussion in this comparative case study. A cross-case analysis of the findings and discussions was collected by the researcher and ATLAS.ti software was used to provide a statistical parallel to the qualitative analysis.

**Figure 4.1** – Snapshot of the coding process in ATLAS.ti software used



## **White America's Culpability to Systemic Racism**

The key to enabling researchers, educational leaders, managers and supervisors in business to change their entrenched prejudices toward people of color (particularly African American males) is to change America's racial superiority ethos. Each case study examined in the last chapter revealed overriding discussions of the influence exerted by deep-seated White privilege views, as well as numerous negative beliefs that people hold about minorities, particularly about African Americans (House, 1999; Colin, 2010; Lund & Colin, 2010). These entrenched views and beliefs, which continue to be barriers for achieving meaningful and lasting changes in the educational and employment opportunities available to African Americans (particularly African American males), cannot be changed by those victimized.

According to several scholars (House, 1999; Blanchett, 2006; Colin, 2010; Lund & Colin, 2010; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015; Bell et al., 2016), White privilege is not a social construct that can be changed or mitigated by any group other than white Americans. Since it is the creation of white America, it is, therefore, white America's responsibility to invalidate and eliminate the *social Frankenstein* they have unleashed on the rest of the American society.

Even more disturbing are the revelations in those case studies that America's educational system was never designed to teach and train African American children to be on par with their white peers (Walters, 2001; Blanchett, 2006; Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Nelson, 2014). Several sources openly declared that fact, albeit in different ways. Each of the studies examined in this comparative case study analysis detailed the ways in which systemic racism negatively affected various core academic training features of a child's educational life. These studies exposed the ways in which African American and Latino children were victims of racial disparities perpetrated upon them by educational policies that bore no obvious racial bias; however, racial

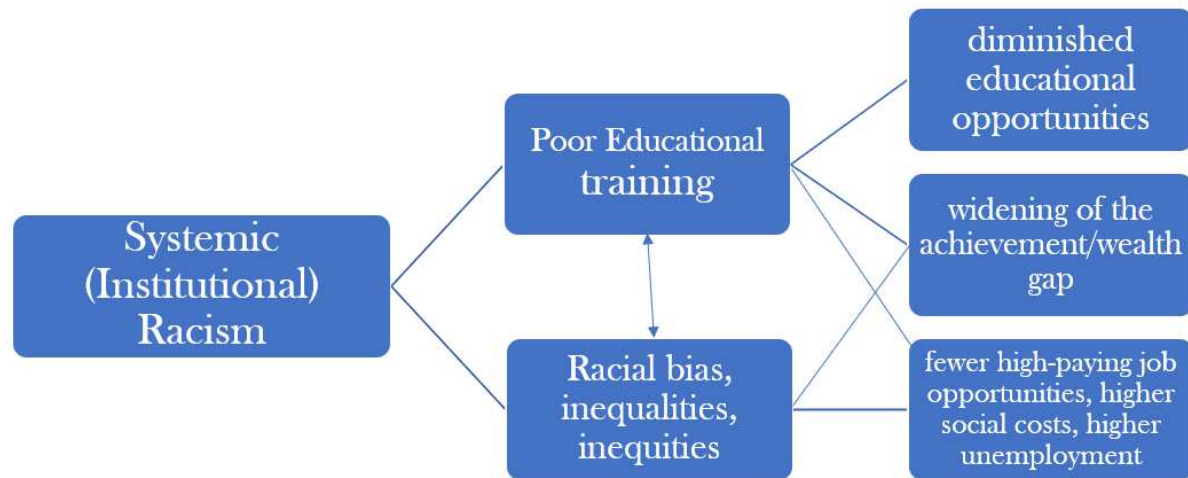
bias was the precursor for the policies, which now appear invisible or disguised as nonracial (House, 1999; Blanchett, 2006; Lund & Colin, 2010; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015; Bell et al., 2016).

In the ATLAS.ti software, five of the eight codes produced links between systemic racism and racial disparities in education for African Americans. Of those five codes, teacher disposition (teacher racial bias toward African American students) occurred more often, which indicated a high degree of *groundedness*—the number of times a code is referred to in the text. A significant aspect of teacher disposition is its subjective nature that dictates teacher actions, which have been greatly influenced by a racially-biased society—a society that does not see African Americans as their equals (Blanchett, 2006; Lund & Colin, 2010).

### **Systemic Racism in Education**

Feagin (2010) has theorized that systemic racism shapes every key part of a white and black person's life. According to the literature, systemic racism works to protect and maintain whiteness, which has become a behavioral and social normalization of racism in all discipline practices (Lund & Colin, 2010; Williams, 2015). In fact, Lund and Colin (2010) have stated explicitly that many white adult educators, either consciously or unconsciously, regularly make decisions that privilege white students at the expense of non-white students. Furthermore, *Whiteness* or white-skinned superiority has been socially embedded into the everyday life of every American, either consciously or unconsciously, with little to no exception.

**Figure 4.2** – Graphic illustration of systemic racism’s effect on the education of African American students:



### Case Study I – Blanchett (2006)

The first case study, *Disproportionate Representation of African American Students in Special Education: Acknowledging the Role of White Privilege and Racism* (2006), utilized a literature review method to detail the ways in which the attributes of systemic racism, White privilege and White supremacy, contributed to, and maintained, disproportionality in special education in ways that obfuscated racial bias. Blanchett’s goal was to find answers to her primary research question:

*How do White privilege and racism contribute to and maintain disproportionality in special education?* (p. 24)

Blanchett posited that inadequately preparing educators to effectively teach African American and Latino students, insufficiently funding schools attended by a majority of African American and poor children and engaging culturally inappropriate and unresponsive curricula in schools attended primarily by African American and underprivileged minority students were by no

means a coincidence. Instead, those actions resulted from school district strategic plans that were systematic and calculated. The manner in which African American students are taught, their schools and programs funded, and the curriculum they are forced to follow compared to what is given to White students is how White privilege and racism contribute to and maintain disproportionality in special education.

Blanchett's (2006) use of a literature review draws attention to the research that has been completed on this issue and the research that needs to be done to alleviate the issue of disproportionate representation of African American students in *dead-end* special education programs.

**Table 4.1 – Emerging themes from Case Study 1**

| Theme # | Theme  |
|---------|--|
| 1       | Systemic racism, white privilege and white supremacy practices enact racial biases that contribute to and maintain disproportionality in special education   |
| 2       | Inadequately prepared administrators and teachers to effectively teach African American students   |
| 3       | Culturally inappropriate and unresponsive curricula in schools with majority African American population   |
| 4       | Subjective referrals and eligibility determination process lacking district-wide uniformity  |
| 5       | High percentage of unsuccessful outcomes for African American students, leading to segregated special education placements, limited access to general education classrooms and peers without disabilities, high dropout rates, low academic performance, and substandard/watered-down curriculum |
| 6       | Disconnect between professional ideology (the practitioners) and practice (educational policy)   |

Citing the literature, Blanchett (2006) called attention to the disproportionate number of African American students in special education by comparing the percentage of African American students enrolled in the general population of 6-to-21-year-old students (14.8%), to their percentage in the special education population across all disabilities (20%) (Losen & Orfield, 2002, as cited in Blanchett, 2006, p. 24). Furthermore, she cited figures from Klingner

et al. (2005) that showed African American students “are 2.41 times more likely than White students to be identified as having mental retardation, 1.13 times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled, and 1.68 times as likely to be found to have an emotional or behavioral disorder” (p.24). The data support the literature that showed minority children beginning school with lower levels of oral language, pre-reading, and pre-mathematics skills, as well as lesser general knowledge, than that possessed by white students. Those academic delays resulted, largely, from generations of parents of American-born minorities subjected to the institutional effect of systemic racism in education. Here lies a partial answer to the research question that the author refers to as “complex and persistent” (Blanchett, 2006, p. 27).

In her study, Blanchett (2006) describes the placement of African American students in high-incidence categories of special education—mental retardation, emotional or behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002, as cited in Blanchett, 2006)—as a diversionary tactic for exercising White privilege and racism (p. 24). The goal of this tactic was to remove large numbers of African American students from general education classes (which contained a clear majority of white students) to more segregated, “self-contained settings with little or absolutely no exposure or access to their nondisabled peers or to the general education curriculum” (Fierros & Conroy, 2002, as cited in Blanchett, 2006, p. 24). The most noticeable indication that systemic racism was negatively affecting the educational outcomes of African American students in special education was the very small number of positive outcomes, compared to the overwhelming positive outcomes for White students in similar special education programs (Blanchett, 2006).

Further investigation of those special education referrals showed that they were not random or computer-generated from an input of collected data. Instead, they were very

subjective referrals that relied upon a non-uniform eligibility determination process that varied from district to district. In other words, those special education referrals were determined by school personnel, many of whom had been greatly influenced by a racially-biased society—a society that did not see African Americans as their equals (Blanchett, 2006).

According to Blanchett (2006), many of those referrals resulted in misdiagnoses and a disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. In theory, those students should have received much-needed educational support that was not being provided in general education for students with disabilities. After receiving the much-needed educational support and having their needs met and/or appropriate strategies or modifications implemented, those students should have been re-integrated into general education settings. Instead, for African American students, special education had become a form of segregation from the mainstream (The Civil Rights Project, 2001, as cited by Blanchett, 2006). In short, the initial concept of the field of special education was not to establish it as a *dumping ground* for undesirable African American students; however, there continues to exist a disconnect between professional ideology and practice, as well as the desires and expectations of those benefitting from special education services—children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities and their families (Blanchett, 2006; Brantlinger, 2006; Donnor & Shockley, 2010). The disconnect between professional ideology (the practitioners) and practice (educational policy) is the impact of systemic racism in the American educational system that dictates policy for school districts across this nation (Brantlinger, 2006). Blanchett (2006) further acknowledged that special education had become an instrument for keeping many African American students from receiving an equitable education in the general education environment (Losen & Orfield, 2002, as cited by Blanchett, 2006). Her literature further supported a claim that several scholars had

referred to special education programs as a new legalized form of structural segregation and racism (Blanchett, 2006).

### **Case Study II – Shana Nelson (2014)**

Shana Nelson (2014) has approached the problem of systemic racism fostering a culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools by framing it as a matter of social justice and employing Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine how it robs African American males of their academic potential. Nelson undertook this problem with a clear sense that it is a problem; therefore, the aim in the study was to investigate ways to produce learning opportunities, alter existing practices, and create improvements to school-wide equity efforts as means to rectifying the problem.

**Table 4.2 – Emerging themes in Case Study II**

| <b>Theme #</b> | <b>Theme</b>  |
|----------------|---|
| 1              | Systemic racism’s impact on the education of African American males       |
| 2              | African American males’ perspective on race bias placement in schools     |
| 3              | Racial sensitivity and awareness training for educators                   |
| 4              | Curriculum and programming changes to address culture of low-expectations |

To focus on the problem of African American males’ declining academic potential in schools, the following research questions were formed to help guide the lived experiences and day-to-day challenges inherent to that problem.

- 1. In what ways does systemic racism permeate schools causing inequitable access to quality teaching and learning experiences for Black males?*
- 2. How do Black male students experience systemic racism in school?*
- 3. What is the role of the school leader in creating designs for improvement to address the problem of systemic racism creating a culture of low expectations for*

*Black male students?*

*4. How do teachers' racialized beliefs concerning student abilities influence teachers' behavior?* (Nelson, 2014, p. 62)

During her investigation, she uncovered the disturbing reality that researchers and educators lacked a sense of urgency and commitment to recognize and investigate the presence of systemic racism in school systems and how it creates and perpetuates educational disparities for African American students, particularly African American males. This failure, as interpreted by Nelson, focused more on finding fault with the students, rather than finding fault within the system of American public education. With that being the case, Nelson urged educators to find ways to 'fix the system' rather than how to 'fix the student', "so that they can be better served by a system that was never built to serve them" (Nelson, 2014, pp. 27-28).

Also problematic for Nelson is the overwhelming attitude by researchers and educators that systemic racism is not a causal factor in the low expectations of African American males in schools. This placated belief stems from a pacified acceptance that we live in a post-racialized society, which is a belief shared almost exclusively by those benefitting from White privilege. However, anyone viewing the plight of African Americans through the lens of a social justice theorist, racial predictability of achievement data, dropout statistics, prison rates, unemployment and underemployment percentages, and wage reports, sees evidence that racism is still a dominant factor in this society. Additionally, by employing the theoretical lens of CRT as a tool, researchers would be better informed and could critically understand, use, critique, and deconstruct the body of work and life experiences of African Americans from their vantage point versus that of the White culture (Nelson, 2014). By doing so, researchers will be able to examine the ways in which racism and White privilege operate to dominate institutions and systems beyond the context of law (Lund & Colin, 2010; Gooden, 2012, as cited by Nelson, 2014). By

and large, to dismiss the dominance of racism in our society and in our schools is to deny the reality of racism (Lund & Colin, 2010, Nelson, 2014). According to Nelson, we cannot begin to remediate the problem of systemic racism in education until we stop ignoring and marginalizing its existence.

### **Case Study III – Nathaniel Williams (2015)**

Nathaniel Williams (2015) analyzed over 40 years of well-documented issues of racial disparities in school discipline, to determine that the causal agents all centered on cultural differences and/or racial prejudices held by educators. His mixed-method exploratory study sought to conceptualize how educators’ dispositions possibly channeled systemic racism, causing and creating the environment for racial disparities in discipline-related outcomes (Williams, 2015). His research question is the title and guiding focus of his study:

*Are the racial disparities in school discipline the result of or a function of systemic racism mediated by educators’ dispositions?* (p. 10)

**Table 4.3 – Emerging themes in Case Study III**

| Theme # | Theme  |
|---------|--|
| 1       | Systemic racism affecting educators’ dispositions, creating environment for racial disparities |
| 2       | Retraining for classroom teachers  |
| 3       | Reassessing school discipline policies toward African American males                           |
| 4       | Cultural differences and/or racial prejudices held by educators                                |

This study revealed that there was no way for educators to escape the prevailing influence of society’s negative racial bias toward African Americans. Additionally, the study revealed that a teaching force consisting predominantly of white females was more likely to use harsher forms

of punishment, such as suspensions, in-school suspensions, removal of privileges, and detentions against African American males than with any other population of students.

Their analysis concluded that Black enrollment was the strongest statistically significant predictor for punitive disciplinary practices within schools. They found that the focal independent measure of racial composition is the most powerful predictor for both zero tolerance and extreme punitive disciplinary response for all students in schools with greater Black enrollment (>30%). Also they determined that the only significant predictor of the degree to which schools use a zero tolerance policy is racial composition (p. 56).

The examination of the relationship between systemic racism, educator disposition, and discipline-related outcomes, which were uncovered in this study, revealed teacher behaviors that were consistent with the belief that high-referring teachers had a high degree of *racial bias* and *power through dominance* that motivated their decisions to refer for discipline (Williams, 2015). Here, we find systemic racism influencing educator disposition, which in turn led to higher-than-normal discipline related outcomes. In addition, the quantitative portion of this study showed the high degree of agreement between high-referring teachers and systemic racism. That noteworthy finding suggested a need to reexamine how teacher disposition is viewed in teacher preparation programs. After all, the one-to-one relationship between teacher and student is overwhelmingly subjective and prone to the emotional and social biases of the one who is dominant in any given situation.

### **Disproportionate Placement into Inferior Educational Environments**

A primary outcome from systemic racism in education for African American students has been a disproportionate placement in inferior and under-funded educational environments. It would be of the greatest naivety to accept that those situations were purely coincidental. In fact, such an implication would render decisions of school management as capricious and arbitrary. Realizing that every major societal institution has a purpose and a mission, it is inconceivable to

assume that anything of that nature happens merely by accident. Therefore, the following discussion will proceed within the accepted reality that educational decisions are *planned and expected outcomes* have been predicted.

According to Barbara Love (2010), white colonists' grand design for the perpetual involuntary servitude of Africans at the emergence of slavery in the colonies was based on keeping them illiterate. Those sentiments still ripple through our modern-day society among contemporary political and business leaders. In today's environment, "the colonists" are a majority of Americans who do very little to advance the educational opportunities sought by the African American community, and very little to stop prevailing educational policies that stifle and hinder educational progress by African American students. In more stark terms, today's white Americans are systematically perpetuating a constant underclass of African Americans.

In a study by Ernest House (1999), he described the "do nothing or very little" attitude of Americans toward "advancing educational opportunities sought for African Americans", as well as the societal proclivity to "stifle and hinder" advances helpful to African American students in this way:

Americans will support policies that are harmful to minorities that they would not tolerate if those same policies were applied to majority populations. In education, for example, Americans are strongly in favor of retention—retaining students at the same grade level for another year—even though the research evidence overwhelmingly shows strong negative effects on the students retained. Retention programs are applied massively to minorities in large cities, but not to majority populations. Yet retention does not appear on the surface to have racial implications. Other education policies that appear to have little to do with race also severely disadvantage minorities, including how schools are financed, how schools are organized, how standardized tests are used, and how students are grouped. In other words, we have organized ourselves educationally in ways to disadvantage minorities, even while maintaining appearances of equality in such matters. (p. 2)

Fueled by the necessity to sustain an under-class workforce, education for African Americans, especially African American males, was designed to produce an unsuccessful student with inferior prospects for future employment (Walters, 2001). A study by Donnor and Shockley (2010) included a report by the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2004) that showed 70% of African American males entering the ninth grade would not graduate with their cohort (p. 43).

These facts are critical to discussing why African Americans are disproportionately placed in inferior educational environments. The Donnor and Shockley study concluded that, despite very modest gains and improvements in the educational success of small segments of African American students (proportionally), the educational system's ability to adequately serve these students is failing. In fact, the American public education system's ability to effectively serve African American males is weakening (Donnor & Shockley, 2010).

In the first of the three studies examined in the last chapter, the researcher (Blanchett, 2006) began her study with the historical discussion of the formation of the field of special education, which occurred during a period between the *Brown vs Board of Education* decision and the dawning of the *Civil Rights Movement*. Blanchett described that initial concept of the field of special education as supportive and needed. However, the policies within certain school districts quickly transformed that concept into one of segregated classrooms for African American students that were under-staffed and poorly equipped. Consequently, the degree to which disproportionality in special education occurred for African American students varied between states, since individual states dictate educational policy (Seabrook & Wyatt-Nichols, 2016; Federal Role in Education, 2018).

In the next study, Shana Nelson (2014) discussed the overall intrusion of systemic racism as a primary factor in producing the culture of low expectations for African American males in

public schools. The failure of educational leader, leading researchers in the field of education, and academics to acknowledge the problem of systemic racism adds to, and perpetuates, a culture of low-expectations for African Americans. Those in a position to create opportunities for others to learn in a safe and supportive culture that recruits others to the cause of racial equity and allows for multiple perspectives are silenced by the voices of those falsely and erroneously proclaiming this to be a post-racial society.

According to Nelson (2014), disproportionality for African Americans in inferior programs and schools begins at the state level with preferential school policies sent to school districts. Those policies are used to initiate funding distortions, inappropriate curriculum and pedagogy, unrealistic assessments, and poorly-supervised programming for African American children. In the classroom, district mandates and allocations lead to higher-than-normal discipline problems, poor and culturally inappropriate instruction, negative and inappropriate characterization of students, and white-culture programming forced on non-white students.

African American students side-by-side with White students in the same classroom, same school are not buffered from being subjected to inferior programming, unfair discipline practices, unfair referral practices, or culturally inappropriate instruction. Essentially, *acknowledging* the problem of systemic racism in education must become the first step toward minimizing and eradicating the culture of low expectations for African Americans students.

The ever-present issue of school discipline is at the forefront in the third study conducted by Nathaniel Williams (2015). His study was able to dramatize the disproportionality of discipline related outcomes among African Americans by data collection, thematic coding analysis, conducting interviews, focus group sessions, and surveys. Even though his research focused on teacher disposition, it revealed the high-degree of racial biases that followed African

American students no matter the school environment. In fact, part of his study was conducted quantitatively, which outlined a pattern of harsher discipline meted out more often to African Americans in minority majority schools. Harsher discipline often resulted in African American students being placed in restrictive and inferior school programs that provided no *real* plan for a successful return to their normal setting (House, 1999; Blanchett, Mumford & Beachum, 2005; Williams, 2015).

In some cases, African American students were placed in school environments more inferior than those where the discipline was dispensed, leading to more harsh treatment and even dismissal from school entirely. Furthermore, repeated and disproportionate harsh discipline for African American students resulted in student failures, dropouts, and even violent behavior (House, 1999; Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015). Racialized views held by teachers that contributed to disproportionately harsh discipline outcomes for African American students was shown to be connected to systemic racism in educational settings. The next section of this Chapter will focus on the cross-case analysis of the themes from each study, along with the coding and theming analysis from the ATLAS.ti software. In addition to the answers to the research questions given after each study, an analysis of the themes of the three studies examined will address those questions with a cross-section of data and overlapping themes.

### **Cross-Case Analysis of Themes**

In this study, emerging themes were highlighted from each study to show how they overlap and draw attention to racial disparities resulting from years of systemic racism. Three of the most common themes were:

- 1) link between systemic racism and racial disparities for African Americans in education,
- 2) retraining of educators responsible for the educational training of African American students,
- 3) racial bias in the placement of African Americans in inferior programs and schools.

These themes were coded into three code groups in ATLAS.ti. The first of these themes—systemic racism link to racial disparities—used the largest number of codes to show how common this theme was among the three studies. Racial bias in the placement of African American students in inferior programs and schools was the next most common, followed by the retraining of educators to improve education. Essentially, the ATLAS software corroborates the finding that those were common themes between the three studies. Furthermore, there were eight codes that were prominent among the three studies, one of which confirms the racially-biased views and dispositions of teachers as occurring most often and having the most impact on the perpetuation of systemic racism.

**Table 4.4** – Prominent codes resulting from cross-case analysis of themes

| <b>Code</b>                                       | <b>Grounded</b> |
|---|-----------------|
| Factors affected by racial bias                   | 26              |
| Improving education for African American students | 12              |
| Retraining of educators                           | 11              |
| Systemic racism connections                       | 25              |
| Teacher disposition                               | 30              |
| White privilege                                   | 6               |
| White privilege factors                           | 12              |

### **Systemic Racism’s Link to Racial Disparities for African Americans**

The most prominent theme in all the studies was the link between systemic racism and racial disparities for African American students. Each of the studies began their discussions with descriptive narratives of systemic racism and its derivatives—white privilege, white supremacy,

racial bigotry, etc. In Case Study I (Blanchett, 2006), the author aggressively pursued the link between the racial views of American society with the problem of disproportionate representation of African Americans in special education. Several studies and researchers were cited throughout her literature review to corroborate her asserted position.

In Case Study II, Nelson (2014) addressed the problem of her study as a problem of practice that recognized that systemic racism not only creates, but also perpetuates, a culture of low expectations for Black males in public schools. The task that she pursued was to clearly identify the problem so that it was well understood, and then frame the problem in terms of workable parts that could be examined and diagnosed. After that time, reasonable solutions to the problem could be recommended, as well as provide for future research into finding more effective teaching and learning solutions to aid in the eradication of a culture of low expectations for African American males in public school.

Williams (2015) Case Study III provided ample discussion about racial biases held by educators that greatly influenced their dispositions for discipline-related outcomes for African American students. Williams made assertions throughout his study to indicate valid reasons to link systemic racism to educators' disposition responsible for unfavorable discipline-related outcomes for African American students, especially male students. Referring to the moral schemas outlined by renowned education reformers such as Dewey, Kohlberg, and Rest, Williams noted that teachers' disposition is shaped more by their exacting adherence to policy than by an abiding sense of personal morality (Williams, 2015). Hence, Williams associated teachers' adherence to stated policy more than to a flexible understanding of right and wrong as maintaining a very rigid and authoritarian view of order within the school, which was designed to protect white students and staff members.

## **Retraining of Educators**

In Case Study I, the author, Blanchett (2006), argued that the disproportionate placement of African American students in special education programs was due largely to an arbitrary and subjective referral process conducted by educators. These educators—administrators and teachers—have been greatly influenced by racism and White privilege that exist in American society and in the educational system. Blanchett cites several studies and researchers who have concluded that a primary focus for reversing that trend must start with better preparation of teachers in teacher preparation programs to address the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse students.

In Case Study II, Nelson (2014) began her discussion of the problem of systemic racism fostering a culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools as being a well-defined problem. For this investigator, it is a *problem of practice* that must be addressed by those intimately involved—teachers and administrators. For educators, specifically teachers, efforts must be made to increase awareness, challenge recognized beliefs and assumptions, foster reflection, and improve instruction to meet the needs of African American students, specifically male students. Her strategies, as well as those discussed in the other two studies, call for a change in the status quo of teaching practices and the approach used to instill best-practice pedagogy for teachers in teacher preparation programs.

In Case Study III, Williams (2015), argued that a reexamination of teacher preparation programs is not only needed, but also long overdue. Data from his study were able to reveal that there was no way for educators to escape the prevailing influence of society's negative racial bias toward African Americans. As such, a reexamination of how teacher disposition is viewed and conducted in teacher preparation programs must consider a teacher's disposition regarding

care, love, and academic expectations of culturally diverse students. Additionally, teacher preparation programs must find a way to measure a teacher's unconscious process of racial stereotyping that has been documented as leading to potential causalities for racial disparities.

### **Placement of African Americans in Inferior Programs and Schools**

An extensive discussion of this theme has been presented earlier in this chapter; therefore, only a few overlapping themes from competing studies will be presented in this section. Blanchett (2006) and Nelson (2014) both cited numerous studies, researchers, scholars, interviews, focus group discussions, and personal narratives to emphasize the serious problem of academic placement for African American students in inferior programs based on deeply-rooted policies and attitudes of White privilege and racism. Blanchett's discussion of the disproportionality in special education was not unique from other academic programs offered to African American students, because research showed that disproportionality occurs whenever the targeted student population "exceeds their proportional enrollment in a school's general population" (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24).

In Nelson's study, her data collection and the research from several other scholars showed that African American students are often disproportionately placed in programs that school districts consider inferior or harmful to the educational future of a student (House, 1999; Walters, 2001; Ponder, 2004; Brantlinger, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015; Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Not surprisingly, literature showed that a main factor in the resegregation of schools has been the conscious denial of preferred academic programming to African American and Latino students (Reardon, Grewal, Kalogrides & Greenberg, 2012; Brown, 2016).

Common to all three studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) were compiled data from literature reviews, interviews, narratives, surveys, focus groups, and other

sources that established a link between systemic racism, disproportionality in special education, racialized discipline-related outcomes mediated by educators' dispositions, and a culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools. Additionally, each study showed racialized educators' bias as a contributing factor to the maintenance and perpetuation of systemic institutional racism in education.

### **Research Question #1 – Why does systemic racism persist?**

All three case studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) presented collected data which unveiled that educational policies which bore no obvious racial bias and deeply-rooted educator biases were the primary means for perpetuating systemic racism, and white privilege was the rationale for its existence. Each study acknowledged the looming burden of whiteness, white privilege and white supremacy practices in the general society as the overall problem for the persistence of systemic racism. Each study helped answer this question by exposing the reluctance of educators and researchers to acknowledge that systemic racism is a clear and present problem. Furthermore, the often undetectable racially-biased views and dispositions of teachers revealed that there was no way for educators to escape the prevailing influence of society's negative racial bias toward African Americans. This failure to acknowledge the subtle existence of such a pervasive factor in creating and maintaining racial disparities against African American students allows the problem of systemic racism to persist.

### **Research Question #2 – How does systemic racism contribute to racial disparities for African American students?**

Each study presented very specific answers to this question, based on the main segment of educational training it was examining. For instance, the answer from Case Study I (Blanchett, 2006) that addressed special education programs addressed the question by acknowledging the

role of white privilege and racism (both derivatives of systemic racism) as serving to privilege Whites while oppressing, discriminating against, and disadvantaging people of color, explicitly African Americans. In the other two studies (Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015), the racialized views of educators were shown to contribute and maintain disproportionality in school discipline, as well as educational programming resulting from society's negative racial bias toward African Americans.

Even though the wording in these studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) did not state in specific terms the generational effect of systemic racism on racial disparities of today, the language was indicative of it being a continual problem. Referring to this problem as being *embedded, complex and persistent*, calling for solutions that are *generative and sustaining* are indications of a generational problem. The historical references that traced back to the earliest periods of formal education in America are also references to this as a generational problem.

## **Summary**

Even though the results and findings in this chapter, which were collected and analyzed by the researcher and ATLAS.ti 8 software, provided a somewhat difficult and arduous task of lessening systemic racism's impact on education, it has provided a pathway forward. The coding process and results displayed in the ATLAS.ti 8 software highlighted areas of concern that must be addressed in order to curtail continued abrogation of quality educational options for African American students. Quite frankly, the most important *first task* should be to acknowledge the existence of systemic racism and all its derivatives that quietly undermine the quality of education available to the average African American student.

In the next chapter, a comprehensive discussion of the findings and conclusions from the analysis of the three studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) will be presented, along with recommendations for future research. In addition, this researcher shall advocate for a new testing instrument that can help expose and greatly minimize racialized teacher biases that subject students of non-white communities (especially African Americans) to unjustified racial disparities. Changing the socially negative apparatuses and practices found in the educational system of America will go a long way in changing the ensconced racial views of average Americans. Sometimes you must start *small* to go *big*!

## CHAPTER V – DISCUSSIONS, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### Discussions

America's educational system was tasked with fulfilling a mission it was never designed to complete—providing a high-standard education for African American children to be on par with white children. This comparative case study analysis has provided historical data to show that white Americans had no intention of providing any type of education for Africans brought to this country to provide a much-needed slave labor force. Nor did they intend for the education that was preemptively provided to be on par with education being provided to white children. In fact, the literature and studies that have been examined here have provided very valid reasons to conclude that America's creation and perpetuation of systemic racism in the educational system was *deliberate* and *by design*.

The cross-examination and analysis of the three studies helped to reveal the common theme that systemic institutional racism is culpable for racial disparities that disrupt and impede normal academic progress for African American students in the areas of special education, school discipline, and classroom education. Findings from these studies have shown that racial disparities have manifested disproportionalities in various academic programs, discipline related outcomes, and have impeded the overall academic potential for African American males. What the investigator found most interesting in those findings, however, was a lack of consistency in the measurement of the population affected.

**Imprecise Data Collection.** Even though each of the studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson 2014) examined, except for Case Study III, a mixed method study (Williams, 2015), applied a qualitative methodology to present its research and lay out its findings, the data collection

process that was cited in each study did not ascribe to a uniform description for the term *minority* or *African American students*. Often, it was difficult to distinguish which minority sub-group was being described or best served by the cited data. The authors of these studies should have disaggregated the data by race and gender to relate and visualize the problem areas more distinctly. Case in point, each of the studies referred to data that quantified African American or Black students as a group; however, each based its strongest arguments on the plight of Black or African American males. This is a weakness in the strength of these studies because the target population is not clearly defined; nevertheless, it underscores the need for future research to gather its own data and determine specific findings based solely on those data. Furthermore, future research with a target population of African American males would help to validate the premise that the school-to-prison pipeline begins early in the life of African American male students. They are disproportionately referred to and placed in ineffective special education categories and programs, and they are disproportionately targeted for harsh discipline outcomes that result in suspensions, expulsion or even arrest for minor offenses.

**Academic and Disciplinary Gaps.** Another point that warrants further discussion is the often *obscure* reference to differences between what African American students (mostly the male students) are not able to achieve or avoid, compared to white students. This pertains to what these students can achieve academically or avoid disciplinarily. Even though the term *achievement gap* appears only once in Case Study I (Blanchett, 2006), the entire study was descriptive of what was not being achieved by African American students in special education, compared to what *was* being achieved by white students. That discussion qualified as an *achievement gap* between black and white students.

Again, in Case Study III (Williams, 2015), the term *achievement gap* is never mentioned; yet, nearly all the data collected quantitatively and qualitatively specified the discipline-related outcomes for Black male students in stark contrast to white students. The empirical data used to describe the inequitable discipline treatment of black students that resulted from educators' disposition was a discussion that certainly involved a gap. The investigator raises this point to spotlight the need for an informed discussion of differences that exist between the educational and discipline related outcomes for black students versus white students. Future research should focus greater attention on the "gap" that exists between black and white students throughout America's educational system that has resulted from a much larger problem than can be corrected by changing the nationwide academic focus in schools and/or the curriculum.

Future research must focus on changing and/or neutralizing the racialized biases embedded in educators' pedagogy. Changes in the pedagogy will prompt needed changes to school policies, which will slowly, but surely, weaken systemic racism's impact on educational opportunities for African American students. Quite frankly, this is an overly simplified attempt to *level the playing field* between students who have been oppressed, damaged, and disadvantaged by systemic racism and those who have been greatly rewarded and protected by that same institution of racism.

## **Findings**

**Systemic Racism's Link to Racial Disparities for African Americans.** The examination of the three studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) helped to provide empirical evidence to support the fact that systemic racism is a very real phenomenon that is self-perpetuating and causal of racial disparities for African Americans in at least three major areas of education, as evidenced by those studies. Additionally, the data revealed three

major themes that the ATLAS.ti 8 software confirmed as definitive links to systemic racism, which has been strategically marinated into American educational policies that advantages white students, while disadvantaging and oppressing African American students.

**Educators and Researchers Reluctance.** The ATLAS.ti 8 software not only confirmed the three major cross-case analysis themes, but also highlighted its repetitive discussions and quotes. Several of those discussions and quotes presented a very bleak and dismal picture of what education for African American students, especially male students, has been, and continues to be, in this country. In spite of that reality, a discerning fact that resonated with each study, though not discussed in-depth, was educators' and researchers' reluctance to fully acknowledge the real and present impact of systemic racism on the dichotomous educational outcomes for African American students versus white students. Two of the case studies (Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) characterized that reluctance as a placated belief, which stemmed from a pacified acceptance that we live in a post-racialized society—a society that was not marred by decades of torture and unimaginable violent deaths of innocent African Americans at the hands of racist white Americans. White America's decades of unforgiveable crimes against innocent African Americans for simply being *black* cannot be ignored as a non-factor in determining educational policy in a contemporary America. The detailed discussions presented in these studies are far too many to allow them to be excused as an over-reaction to isolated incidents of racial bias.

**Retraining of Teachers.** A surprising finding in this study was the overwhelming call for retraining teachers: 1) to lessen and/or neutralize teacher racial bias, 2) to address the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse students, and 3) to provide culturally responsive instruction to African American students to improve their learning potential. All educators, especially

teachers, are on the front line when it comes to affecting the educational outcomes and life-long learning experiences for African American students, especially male students. In fact, all students, regardless of ethnic or racial background, are greatly influenced by the actions and attitudes of teachers. Perhaps, for that reason alone, each study called for a change in teacher preparation programs to address teacher perceptions of “blackness”, their racial prejudices and biases, their classroom management skills, and their overall ability to provide a culturally-responsive education to any group of diverse students.

The findings in the three studies examined revealed three common themes, which were corroborated by use of ATLAS.ti 8 software. The details within those themes elaborated on the how systemic racism is perpetuated, as well as how it is linked to various forms of racial disparities that impede and disadvantage African American students. With little room for doubt, the findings from these studies clearly answered research questions one and two of this study.

### **Recommendations**

During the early days of chattel slavery, as well as the latter days of legalized slavery, enslaved Africans were kept from being educated to keep them obedient to their masters and content with captivity. Even free Africans who were educated were restricted from being educated and often taunted, ridiculed, and treated harshly by white Americans. Even after slaves were freed and given Constitutional legal status as Americans, racist white America still denied them the right to a free and accessible education.

So, for decades after the rights of citizenship was given to America’s former slaves, equity in educational opportunities remained elusive to nearly all African Americans. During those years of building the educational system for this country, white privilege policies were put in place to advantage and support white students and to disadvantage and oppress African American students. Yet, in contemporary America, some liberated educators and researchers

wish to deliberately ignore all that history and proclaim that America has moved beyond its racial past and is now a post-racialized society. According to that group, today's research, policy changes, and recommended curriculum changes should not consider systemic racism as a factor in those decisions. It has been, precisely, that attitude and mind-set that has allowed systemic racism to persist in the educational policies of America. And, to no small degree, that fact is a primary reason for explaining the perpetuation of systemic racism in answer to the first research question.

**First Recommendation.** Before any real, sustaining policy or programming changes can be effectuated in the educational system of America that would promote true educational equity for African American students, a clear and unequivocal acknowledgement of systemic racism in education must be declared. Upon that declaration, a clear and decisive plan must be designed to systematically remove all vestiges of systemic racism. While that action is occurring, other planned actions will be taking place simultaneously to achieve this historic transformation. To echo the sentiments of one researcher, we cannot begin to remediate the problem of systemic racism in education until we stop ignoring and marginalizing its existence (Nelson, 2014).

**Second Recommendation.** While leading educators, researchers, and politicians work concertedly to eradicate all vestiges of systemic racism from America's educational system, principal educators at teacher preparation programs need to redesign the curriculum for new teachers, as well as seasoned teachers, in order to: 1) lessen and/or neutralize teacher racial bias, 2) address the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse students, and 3) provide culturally-responsive instruction to African American students to improve their learning potential. More importantly, all teachers will be tested for their perceptions of "blackness", their racial prejudices

and biases, their classroom management skills, and their overall ability to provide a culturally-responsive education to culturally diverse students.

To help facilitate that testing process, this investigator will develop a testing instrument that will test for several aspects of a teacher's disposition, social and cultural perceptions of under-achieving minority students, and classroom management skills. This test will rate a teacher's ability to teach culturally and racially diverse groups of students in varying school environments. This type of testing instrument is needed, because studies show that school teachers (mostly, white middle class females) consciously and unconsciously telegraph their biases and prejudices. In fact, some researchers believe African American and white children in the same classroom effectively receive different educations (Test Yourself for Hidden Bias, 2017). Additionally, an aggressive search and training program for African American teachers should be instituted to offset the disproportionate amount of white, middle class, suburban females graduating from teacher preparation programs.

**Third Recommendation.** While program changes to educational policies and curriculum are taking place, future research should focus on targeted populations of varying compositions of student-teacher school environments. Specifically, future research should examine the discipline related outcomes and the special education academic outcomes for African American males in contrast to white American males in the same school, majority minority schools, and schools that are rated as high-achieving. Using the same mixture of schools, future research should examine the academic potential and scholarship for African American males in public schools with a keen focus on average reading and math test scores, drop-out and graduation rates, and post-graduation work-school success rates.

This study, as well as several other studies, have acknowledged the educational gains and improvements made by many African American students during the past thirty years. Future research should parallel those gains with the overall gains in education to extrapolate numbers which can measure positive or negative gains compared to gains by white students. Essentially, researchers should be concerned with gains and improvements that resulted in spite of court and government interventions, because gains initiated by those interventions are not considered long-term or sustainable. Educators and researchers should concern themselves with long-term and sustainable changes that are embodied in the culture and philosophy of educational policy.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the entirety of this study, this investigator has addressed the presence and impact of systemic racism in education. To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which poor educational training, resulting from systemic and institutionalized racism in education, has diminished and marginalized educational and employment opportunities for African Americans throughout America. The data from the three case studies (Blanchett, 2006; Nelson, 2014; Williams, 2015) have shown that academic difficulties, disproportionate representation in special education settings, disproportionate discipline related outcomes, and the permeation and existence of a culture of low expectations for African American males in public schools are historically and systemically linked to America's racial consciousness. The three major themes extracted from the cross-case analysis, as well as the corroborating codes from the ATLAS.ti 8 software, all point to a phenomenon that is inextricably linked to a social construct that benefits, advantages and supports white Americans, while oppressing, disadvantaging, and marginalizing African Americans.

The discussions in this study that contrasted the educational results for white students versus African American students sounded as though they were of two entirely different

educational systems. A pragmatic person is left to wonder how such differences could exist without the designers, shapers, and leaders of this system not cognizant and alarmed. Sadly, it could only exist and prevail if that *was* its intent. The studies that were examined, the literature that was reviewed, and the data that were collected were not from a recent period. We are talking about collected information that span a very long period, with little to no change in outcomes that have been previously discussed.

Over a century ago, two of America's greatest education reformers, Horace Mann (1848) and John Dewey (1916), gave very sanguine prescriptions for solving America's educational dilemma, which both saw as inextricably tied to the social ethos of American society. The dilemma was to provide enough qualified workers to manage and operate an expanding industrial complex. Many of their reforms were adopted into schools for white children, but not for the entire school-age population. This failure to implement the educational reforms of Mann and Dewey system-wide and for all children resulted in an educational imbalance which still exists.

This comparative case study analysis has examined, helped to unravel and provided empirical evidence to support numerous claims by researchers that systemic racism is a present and conscious impediment to the education of African American students. Furthermore, its existence is by design and cannot be eradicated until policy makers and maintainers of this system clearly and unequivocally declare its existence and work deliberately to eradicate it. In the paraphrased words of Shana Nelson (2014), we cannot begin to remediate the problem of systemic racism in education until we stop ignoring and marginalizing its existence. This investigator would like to believe that "the trumpets have been sounded" to launch a new wave

of research that will bring an end to the perpetuation of systemic racism that is causal of racial disparities for African Americans in education.

## REFERENCES

- 40 Years: The State of African American America. (2016). *State of African American America: Education, Jobs & Justice*, 12-15. NY, NY: The National Urban League.
- Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Goodman, D. J., & Joshi, K. Y. (1997/2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow*. New York, NY: The New Press
- Andersen, M., Taylor, H. and Logio, K. (2015). *Sociology: The essentials (8th ed.)*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
- Assan, J. N. (2012). *The impact of education on employment and the unemployment situation*. GhanaWeb News. Retrieved August 10, 2017, from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/The-Impact-of-Education-on-Employment-and-the-Unemployment-Situation-239835>.
- Associated Press. (2009). *African American-white student achievement gap persists*. *msnbc.com*. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31911075/ns/us\\_news-education/t/AfricanAmerican-white-student-achievement-gap-persists/#.WZyQ\\_CiGPIU](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31911075/ns/us_news-education/t/AfricanAmerican-white-student-achievement-gap-persists/#.WZyQ_CiGPIU).
- Baptist, E. E. (2014). *The half has never been told: Slavery and the making of American capitalism*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group
- Bell, L., Funk, M., Joshi, K. & Valdivia, M. (2016). Racism and white privilege. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, D. J. Goodman, & K. Y. Joshi (Eds.). *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook* (pp. 133-154). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bittle, M. (2015). African American leaders claim ‘culture of racism’ flourishes in Delaware government. *Delaware State News*. Retrieved March 3, 2016, from <http://delawarestate>

news.net/government/African-American-leaders-claim-culture-of-racism-flourishes-in-delaware-government/

- Blanchett, W. J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American students in special education: Acknowledging the role of white privilege and racism. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 24-28. JSTOR. Retrieved August 25, 2017, from [http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876750?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876750?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Boyer, W. W. (2000). *Governing Delaware: Policy problems in the first state*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses
- Brantlinger, E. A. (Ed.). (2006). *Who benefits from special education?: Remediating (fixing) other people's children*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Brayboy, B., Castagno, A., & Maughan, E. (2007). Chapter 6: Equality and justice for all? Examining race in education scholarship. *Review of Research in Education*, 31(1), 159-194. Retrieved August 31, 2017, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0091732x07300045>
- Brown, E. (2016). *On the anniversary of Brown v. Board, new evidence that U.S. schools are resegregating*. *Washington Post*. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/05/17/on-the-anniversary-of-brown-v-board-new-evidence-that-u-s-schools-are-resegregating/?utm\\_term=.3c6b3a531f27](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/05/17/on-the-anniversary-of-brown-v-board-new-evidence-that-u-s-schools-are-resegregating/?utm_term=.3c6b3a531f27).
- Brown, K. D. & Brown, A. L. (2011). Teaching K-8 students about race: African Americans, racism, & the struggle for social justice in the U.S. *Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 9-13. Retrieved September 24, 2017, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1243038888/fulltextPDF/DDF41298E8C840D3PQ/1?accountid=10458>.
- Brown, T. F. (2006). *Measuring the black-white achievement gap in racially isolated schools*. (Doctoral Dissertation) ProQuest. Retrieved September 23, 2017, from <https://search->

proquest-com.desu.idm.oclc.org/docview/305347770?pq-origsite=summon&https://  
search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal

Brown v. Board at Fifty: “With an even hand”: A century of racial segregation, 1849-1950  
(n.d.). Retrieved July 16, 2016, from <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-segregation.html>.

Buchot, E. (n.d.). *History of Delaware: Race relations*. Retrieved July 16, 2016, from [http://www.voyagesphotosmanu.com/race\\_relations\\_delaware.html](http://www.voyagesphotosmanu.com/race_relations_delaware.html).

Carter, R. L. (2007). Brown’s legacy: Fulfilling the promise of equal education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 76(3):240-249, 521.

Carson, C., Lapsansky-Werner, E. J. & Nash, G. B. (2011). *Struggle for freedom: A history of African Americans, Vol. I*. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Publishing.

Cherry, R. (2017). Race and opportunity. *National Affairs*, 32, 66-80. Retrieved September 18, 2017, from <http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/race-and-opportunity>.

Cherry, R. (2016). The jobless rate for young African American men is a national disgrace. *RealClearPolicy*. Retrieved September 18, 2017, from [http://www.realclearpolicy.com/blog/2016/09/02/the\\_jobless\\_rate\\_for\\_young\\_AfricanAmerican\\_men\\_is\\_a\\_national\\_disgrace.html](http://www.realclearpolicy.com/blog/2016/09/02/the_jobless_rate_for_young_AfricanAmerican_men_is_a_national_disgrace.html).

Civil Rights Act of 1964 Explained. (2015). Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://civil.laws.com/civil-rights-act-of-1964>

Cole, N. L. (2018, January 26). *Understanding systemic racism*. Retrieved February 12, 2018, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/systemic-racism-3026565>.

Collins, W. J. (Winter, 2006). Race and twentieth-century American economic history. Retrieved July 19, 2016, from <http://www.nber.org/reporter/winter06/collins.html>

- Colin, S. A. J., III (2010). White racist ideology and the myth of a postracial society. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 125, 7-13. Retrieved August 30, 2017, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ887776>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Craig, M. A., Richeson, J. A. (2014). On the precipice of a “majority-minority” America: Perceived status threat from the racial demographic shift affects white Americans’ political ideology. *Psychological Science*, 1-9. Retrieved September 16, 2017, from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797614527113>.
- Cross, B. (2001). Introduction: A time for action. In T. Johnson, J. E. Boyden, & W. J. Pittz (Eds.). *Racial profiling and punishment in U.S. public schools: How zero tolerance policies and high stakes testing subvert academic excellence and racial equity*. Research report (pp. 5–8). Oakland, CA: ERASE Initiative, Applied Research Center.
- Davis, T. (2014, May 9). Racial disparities in Delaware’s public schools require attention and action. DiversityUS. Retrieved July 21, 2016, from <http://sites.udel.edu/csd/2014/05/09/racial-disparities-in-delaware-public-schools/>.
- Delaware Department of Labor (August, 2017). *Monthly Commentary*. Monthly Labor Review, May 2017. Dover, DE: Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information (OOLMI). Retrieved September 18, 2017, from <https://lmi.delawareworks.com/Content/Publications/Library/Monthly%20Labor%20Review.php?Checkout=2017-05>.

- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishers.
- Diamond, J. B. (2006). Still separate and unequal: Examining race, opportunity, and school achievement in "integrated" suburbs. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 75(3), 495-505.
- Diamond, J. B. & Lewis, A. E. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Diamond, J. B. & Lewis, A. E. (2015). Despite the best intentions: Making school integration work in integrated schools. *Poverty and Race Index*, 24(6), 1-19. Retrieved September 20, 2017, from <http://prrac.org/newsletters/novdec2015.pdf>.
- Donnor, J. K. & Shockley, K. G. (2010). Leaving us behind: A political economic interpretation of NCLB and the miseducation of African American males. *Educational Foundations*, 24(3-4), p43-54. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Lost+Employment+Opportunities+for+AfricanAmerican+Delawareans&pr=on&ft=on&id=EJ902672>.
- Dressel, Kerr & Stevens (2010). Developing competency with white identity and privilege. Cornish, Schrier, Nadkarni, Metzger and Rodolfa (Eds.), *The Handbook of Multicultural Counseling Competencies*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Edelman, M., & Jones, J. (2004). Separate and unequal: America's children, race, and poverty. *The Future of Children*, 14(2), 134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1602800>
- Essah, P. (1996). *A house divided: Slavery and emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
- Farkas, G. (2003). Racial disparities and discrimination in education: What do we know, how do we know it, and what do we need to know? *Teachers College Record*, 105(6), 1119-1146.

Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.548.3852&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

Feagin, J. R. (2010). *Racist America: Roots, current realities and future reparations*. New York, NY: Routledge.

*Federal Role in Education*. (2018). Ww2.ed.gov. Retrieved January 21, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>

Federal Writers Project (orig. 1938). *Delaware: A guide to the first state*. Reprint (1955). Somerset, New York: The Viking Press.

Fowler, F. C. (2009). *Policy studies for educational leaders*. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, Third Edition.

Franklin, J. H. (1961/2013). *Reconstruction after the civil war*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, Third Edition.

Franklin, J. H. (1967). *The Negro in twentieth century America: A reader on the struggle for civil rights*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Franklin, J. H. & Higginbotham, E. B (1967). *From slavery to freedom: A history of African Americans*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Third Edition.

Franklin, J. H. & Higginbotham, E. B. (2011). *From slavery to freedom: A history of African Americans*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Ninth Edition.

Gadsden, B. (2006). *Victory without triumph: The ironies of school desegregation in Delaware, 1948–1978*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Northwestern University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. 3237000.

- Gadsden, B. V. (2013). *Between North and South: Delaware, desegregation, and the myth of American sectionalism (Politics and culture in modern America)*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goodrick, D. (2014). Comparative case studies. *Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 9*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research.
- Greenblatt, A. (2003, July 11). *Race in America*. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre2003071100>
- Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002, September). Diversity and higher education: theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(3), 330-367. doi:10.17763/haer.72.3.01151786u134n051
- Hamilton Henry, J. C. (2007). *A study of the under-representation of African Americans and Latinos on local boards and commissions*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 3287788.
- Hancock, D. R. & Algozzine, B. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Hannah-Jones, N. (2014). *Segregation Now*. *ProPublica*. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from <https://www.propublica.org/article/segregation-now-full-text>.
- Harper, D. (2003). *Slavery in the North*. Retrieved January 5, 2017, from <http://slavenorth.com/newjersey.htm>
- Hayman, R. L. (2009). A history of race in Delaware: 1639-1950. Hayman, R. & Ware, L. (Eds.), *Choosing equality: Essays and narratives on the desegregation experience* (pp. 21-73). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Hoff, S. B. (in press). Delaware's long road to ratification of the 13th Amendment. *The News Journal*. Retrieved March 2, 2016, from <http://www.delawareonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/12/07/delawares-long-road-ratification-13th-amendment/76782210/>
- Hoffecker, C. E. (1983). *Corporate capital: Wilmington in the twentieth century*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press
- House, E. (1999). Race and policy. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7(16), 1-15. Retrieved September 3, 2017, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/551>.
- Institutional Racism Lesson*. Chegg. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from <http://www.chegg.com/homework-help/definitions/institutional-racism-49>.
- Institutional Review Board. (n.d.). Retrieved July 19, 2016, from <http://www.apus.edu/community-scholars/institutional-review-board/>
- IRB Guidebook Chapter III: Basic IRB Review. (n.d.). Retrieved July 19, 2016, from [http://archive.hhs.gov/ohrp/irb/irb\\_chapter3.htm](http://archive.hhs.gov/ohrp/irb/irb_chapter3.htm)
- Iverson, S.V. & Jagers, D. (2015). Racial profiling as institutional practice: Theorizing the experiences of black male undergraduates. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 52(1), 38–49. ProQuest. Retrieved September 23, 2017, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1877731724/DDF41298E8C840D3PQ/3?accountid=10458>.
- Jost, J.T. & Kay, A.C. (2010). Social justice: History, theory, and research. In Fiske, S. T., Gilbert, D. T., & Lindzey, G. (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 1122-1165). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from [http://www.psych.nyu.edu/jost/Social Justice\\_ History, Theory, & Research.pdf](http://www.psych.nyu.edu/jost/Social%20Justice_History,_Theory,_&_Research.pdf) (5th ed., Vol. 1).
- Laws.com (2015). Jim crow laws. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://civil.laws.com/jim-crow-laws>

- Lewis, A. E. & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Love, B. J. (2004). Brown plus 50 counter-storytelling: A critical race theory analysis of the “majoritarian achievement gap” story. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, (37)3, 227-246. Retrieved July 22, 2017, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ682353>.
- Lund, C. L. & Colin, S. A. J., III (Eds.) (2010). *White privilege and racism: Perceptions and actions*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- MegaEssays.com. (n.d.). Reconstruction amendments and the significance of the Brown case. Retrieved July 08, 2016, from <http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/200915.html>
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Miller, S. (2017). *How anti-racist participatory policy advocacy can change Delaware’s education system* (Graduate). SIT Graduate Institute. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from <http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4005&context=capstones>
- Munroe, J. A. (1978). *Colonial Delaware: A History*. Millwood, NY: KTO Press.
- Muhammad, A. R. (2013). *Africans in New Sweden: The untold story*. Wilmington, DE: Cedar Tree Books.
- Nelson, S. D. (2014). *Are you my brother’s keeper: Challenging the systemic racism that fosters a culture of low expectations for black males in public schools*. (Doctoral dissertation) ProQuest. Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/933feb2d493a5b57dda04789f1664ffd/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

- Newton, J. E. (1997). Black in Delaware: An overview. In Marks, C. (editor). *History of African Americans of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore* (pp. 11-29). Wilmington, DE: Delaware Heritage Commission
- Orfield, G. & Lee, C. (2005). Why segregation matters: Poverty and educational inequality. *UCLA: The Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles*. Retrieved August 20, 2017, from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/4xr8z4wb>
- Pager, D. (2007). The use of field experiments for studies of employment discrimination: Contributions, critiques, and directions for the future. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 609, pp. 104-133. Retrieved September 7, 2017, from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.desu.edu:2048/stable/pdf/25097877.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae77cecbabfece0f424234cdf35ae47f>.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (2nd ed.).
- PBS, (n.d.). *Thematic window: Urban decay in the 1960's*. *Pbs.org*. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.pbs.org/johngardner/chapters/5b.html>.
- Ponder, R. D. (2004). A history of educational injustice in a rural southern school system and the related effects on African American educators. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 3158295. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.desu.edu:2048/docview/305048781/fulltextPDF/6301A488313647C1PQ/4?accountid=10458>
- Professional Doctorate in Educational Leadership [ProDEL] (2012). Dissertation in practice guidelines (DP-2.2-Fa12) Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA: Author.
- Rawls, J. (2011). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

- Reardon, S., Grewal, E., Kalogrides, D., & Greenberg, E. (2012). Brown fades: The end of court-ordered school desegregation and the resegregation of American public schools. *Journal of Policy Analysis And Management*, 31(4), 876-904. Retrieved August 20, 2017, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pam.21649>
- Roark, J. L., Johnson, M. P., Cohen, P. C., Stage, S. & Hartmann, S. M. (Eds.) (2012). *The American promise: A history of the United States (Vol. 1)*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Rosado, C. (n.d.). *The undergirding factor is power: Toward an understanding of prejudice and racism*. Retrieved July 22, 2016, from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/caleb/racism.html>
- Ryan, T. J. (2015, July 17). *Civil War profiles: Post-war race relations in Delaware*. Retrieved July 09, 2016, from [http://www.coastalpoint.com/content/civil\\_war\\_profiles\\_postwar\\_race\\_relations\\_delaware\\_07\\_16\\_2015](http://www.coastalpoint.com/content/civil_war_profiles_postwar_race_relations_delaware_07_16_2015).
- Seabrook, R. & Wyatt-Nichol, H. (2016). The ugly side of America: Institutional oppression and race. *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy*, 23(1), 20-46. ProQuest. Retrieved September 24, 2017, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1936442432/fulltextPDF/DDF41298E8C840D3PQ/7?accountid=10458>.
- Shum, B. (2014). *Separate and Unequal: Recurring Segregation in America's Public Schools*. *Americanbar.org*. Retrieved August 18, 2017, from [https://www.americanbar.org/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/2014\\_vol\\_40/vol\\_40\\_no\\_1\\_50\\_years\\_later/separate\\_and\\_unequal\\_recurring\\_segregation.html](https://www.americanbar.org/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/2014_vol_40/vol_40_no_1_50_years_later/separate_and_unequal_recurring_segregation.html)
- Skelcher, B. (1999/2007). *African American education in Delaware: A history through photographs 1865-1930*. Dover, DE: Delaware Heritage Press.

- Strauss, D. A. (1991). The law and economics of racial discrimination in employment: The case for numerical standards. *Georgetown Law Journal*, 79, 1619-1657. Retrieved July 22, 2017, from [http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2990&context=journal\\_articles](http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2990&context=journal_articles).
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, (22), 195-247. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1167376>.
- Taylor, J. H., Jr. (2014, May 24). *Essay on Delaware: Wilmington's poverty, crime*. Retrieved July 09, 2016, from <http://www.delawareonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2014/05/23/essay-delaware-wilmingtons-poverty-crime/9494437/>
- Test Yourself for Hidden Bias (19 July 2017). *Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved February 28, 2018, from <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>.
- Walters, P. B. (2001). Educational access and the state: Historical continuities and discontinuities in Racial Inequality in American Education. *Sociology of Education*, (74), 35-49. Retrieved August 21, 2017 from JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2673252>.
- Weslager, C. A. (1988). *New Sweden on the Delaware: 1638-1655*. Wilmington, DE: Middle Atlantic Press.
- Whitman, T. S. (2007). *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: African American and white resistance to human bondage, 1775-1865*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society.
- Williams, N. A. (2015). *Are the racial disparities in school discipline the result of or a function of systemic racism mediated by educators' dispositions* (Doctoral dissertation)? Retrieved September 28, 2017, from ProQuest <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1732677715>

- Williams, W. H. (1996). *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware: 1639 – 1865*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods (4th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.