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EXAMINING THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL GRADUATES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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EXAMINING THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY DAY

SCHOOL GRADUATES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

————————————————

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University

San Bernardino

————————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate

in

Educational Leadership

————————————————

by

Willie J Jones III

December 2019

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Approved by:

Dr. Nancy Acevedo-Gil, Committee Chair, Education

Dr. Edna Martinez, Committee Member

Dr. Carolyn Eggleston, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Community day school graduates enter society with decisions about college, career, and work. Community day schools operate as a non-traditional education system that provides a separate and often unique education to many disenfranchised students, with lessened accountability protocols to assess whether these systems prepare graduates for life after high school. The number of community day schools and enrollment are declining, due in part to excessive changes within the law and stricter guidelines required to be met. Students with behavior, attendance, or academics difficulties are often sent to the community day schools. Some of these schools lack resources, experience, and expertise often available in comprehensive schools. Many of these community school settings alienate students, and often do not provide high quality education for students preparing to graduate high school. Many label their disenfranchised students as incapable of sustaining rigorous academic standards that will prepare them for career, college, and work. Students are given work that is easy to gain credits quickly; many students that graduate from the community day school are not prepared for the general requirements to be successful after high school. Some schools provide specialized programs developed by specialized staff, that build positive relationships with their students. However, the greatest challenge with community day schools are the teachers and administrators' inability to provide effective programs to prepare students for life after high school.

The significance of this narrative inquiry study was to conduct an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of community day school graduates. The skills of these students focus on how their experiences in the community day school shaped their educational aspirations after graduation from the program. The snowball sampling and unstructured-interviews were the primary methods for recruitment and data collection for this qualitative study. Participants in this study were students who were enrolled, graduated from the community day school, and were willing to share their experiences after transitioning from the community day school into the workplaces, a career, or any form of higher education.

*K*eywords: *disenfranchised, narrative inquiry, non-traditional, community day school, graduates.*

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DEDICATION

My dedication belongs to my supportive family, Raquel, Joshua, Elijah, and Willie IV. I remember when the boys were younger and continued to ask questions about this process. I thank you for your understanding and patience. Your love uplifted me and kept me focused and motivated. There is no way I could have finished without your encouragement. We have experienced many struggles throughout this time, we have witnessed family members pass away, sustain terminal diseases, and withstand financial ruin. We have worked together, knowing that God has a plan and a purpose for us after this journey. We are closer because of this journey; this is not just about me completing my dissertation, but most importantly us finishing my dissertation with strength from him. I love you Raquel, you stood by my side and you have continued to inspire me to move out of my comfort zone and trust in God. I love you, Raquel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Over the years there is evidence to confirm when schools fail to provide

effective education students are more likely to not be successful after graduation,

and more likely to commit crimes, become incarcerated, experiment with drugs,

and have difficult sustaining employment or a career (Aloise-Young & Chavez,

2002; Rumberger, 2004; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). In California, over 10%

of high school students enroll in an alternative programs each year (Hill, 2007).

These programs serve many of California's most vulnerable and at-promise

students. Understanding the experiences of students in these programs have

been brought to attention at the federal, state, and local stakeholders in

education. This attention in an effort to not only close achievement gaps within

and across programs, but to provide higher quality education to provide a higher

level of success after graduation for all students (Hemmer, 2011). This study

engaged community day school graduates who completed their programs and

presented the opportunity to tell their stories. The students identified considered

themselves as successful and were labeled as at-risk, vulnerable, and/or

disenfranchised students.

The graduates that have been identified as being disenfranchised or at-

risk in the past have experienced failure based on their schools deeming their

academic and behavior as disruptiveness at the traditional high school (Aron, 2006). Educators may identify students as being at-risk when they experience academic difficulty based on criteria outlined by the County Office of Education (COE), State Department of Education (SDE), and federal Department of Education (DOE) (Aron, 2006). Students may be identified by school officials as at-risk/disenfranchised and sent to the community day school if school staff claim they are failing in their academics, disrupting the educational environment, lacking credits, have difficulty with attendance, or have been expelled (Aron, 2006; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009; Raywid, 1994).

Research has attempted to demonstrate the significance of community day school graduates by documenting the student voice. Fletcher (2005) described the effects of meaningful student dialogue. The process of engaging graduate students involves strengthening their commitment to improve education, promote positive citizenship, and encourage democracy. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) indicated that engagement mediates the impact of effective curriculum and instructional reforms in achievement. Graduates' points of view offer accurate insight into what is needed and what will help sustain graduates after high school with regards to continued education (Ainley, J., 1995). Students' perceptions of school, learning, and teaching are factors that they consider valid. The perceptions of learning, teaching, and schools are important if we are to develop a foundation where all students are engaged, active, and confident in their learning experiences and future aspirations (Ainley, M., 2004;

2

Fullarton, 2002; Martin, 2003; Romanowski, 2004). Traditionally, students'

opinions and views have been underrepresented and overlooked when it comes

to discussing what students want and need regarding learning and school

experiences (Roberts & Kay, 1997). The extent to which students are

responsible for a degree to which they share responsibility for their learning and

school learning influences how they perceive learning and school. Shaughnessy

(2001a) asserted that student voices are absent in the development of ideas and

counter ideas.

MacBeath (2001) suggested that students collaborating with teachers and

parents can provide active, participative, reciprocal roles in the creation and

promotion of the student's interest and curriculum used in the classroom.

Education Evolution (2005), suggested that teachers and administrators have the

desire to dictate and create fear as suggestions are analyzed about fulfilling the

students' needs as a learner. Accepting greater responsibility for their learning

contributes to the students' success and encourages them to participate in their

learning actively and school experiences (Education Evolution, 2005; Osborne &

Ireland, 2000; Shaughnessy, 2001a, 2001b). The effects teachers have on

students are carried right through to adulthood (Barry & King, 1998).

Understanding the perspectives of graduate students in the alternative high

school can provide quality data for the inclusion of students into the planning and

completion of their educational high school career. Additionally, graduate

student voices concerning their life experiences in the alternative high school will

provide insight into how to build effective career and college educational value.

<u>Problem Statement</u>

The problem of community day school graduate students not having the opportunity to be active participants in the development of their education without a perception (voice) is a silencing of creativity, imagination, confidence, and suppresses the transforming of knowledge and academic achievement. Honoring graduate student perspectives will increase the educational practices because when teachers care and are supportive, they can begin to understand the world from the graduates' student perspectives (Clark, 1995; Davies, 1982; Finders, 1997; Heshusius, 1995). When graduate students are given respect and attended to as serious contributors to meaningful conversations, they feel empowered (Hudson-Ross, Cleary, & Casey, 1993). They feel motivated to participate in the improvement of education (Colsant, 1995; Oldfather et al., 1999; Sanon, Baxter, Fortune & Opotow).

This call to honor graduate student perspectives is a call to count students among those who have the knowledge and the position to shape what counts as education. As the researcher, I examined Determination Theory, I reconfigured power dynamics and discourse practices within existing realms of conversation about education, and created new forums within which students can embrace "the political potential of speaking out on their behalf" (Lewis, 1993, p. 44). Community day school graduate students have a unique perspective of what happened in their schools and classrooms (Cook-Sather & Shultz, 2001; Weis & Fine, 1993; Willis, 1997).

Promoting community day school graduate student voices introduces into a critical conversation the missing perspective of those who attend daily in the alternative high school of existing silence about education, career, and policy. Because students "have been silenced all their lives" (Giroux, 1992, p. 158), they are considered to be invaluable in regards to input into their success in education after graduation. Student voice-focused research and initiatives (related to educational change) are aligned with a range of practices such as (a) providing venues to listen to student perspectives genuinely; (b) actively partnering with students in the processes of dialogue, reflection, and decision-making; and (c) serving as youth allies to student-led initiatives (Fielding, 2004a; Gardener & Crockwell, 2006; Gardner, McCann, & Crockwell, 2009; Mitra, 2007; Thiessen, 2007; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Furthermore, there is an understanding of student voice initiatives that "students provide important insight into the classroom and schools they experience" (Thiessen, 2007, p. 40).

The concept of the graduate student perception can have a different meaning, concentration, and associated practice. Graduate student's voice has led to new educational policy, structure, and processes (Thiessen, 2007) and improved teaching methods (Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003). Mitra (2007) argued that at the "center of student voice is the expectation that students are included in efforts that influence the core activities and structures of their school" (p. 727). Although the voices of graduate students have not been heard in the alternative setting, many educators have reported advantages when students take

ownership of goals and their perspectives are included (Bolmeier, 2006;

Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006). Cook-Sather (2006) stated student

voice is a validated viewpoint, presence, and active role. In its most conservative

form, voice means having a say when asked but without guarantee of a

necessary response, whereas in its most radical forms it "calls for a cultural shift

that opens up spaces and minds not only to the sound but also to the presence

and power of students" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 363).

In thinking about the contributions of graduate student voice, its advocates

(Cook-Sather, 2002a, 2006; Fielding, 2001, 2004b, 2007; Flutter & Rudduck,

2004a; MacBeath, Demetriou, Rudduck, & Myers, 2003; Mitra, 2001; Rudduck &

McIntyre, 2007) have argued for its contribution to new ways of thinking about

improving schools in two main ways. First, it offers teachers valuable insights

into learning, teaching, and schooling from the perspective of different students

and groups of students as "expert witnesses" (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004b, p. 4).

Secondly, student voice advocates claim that this work enables students to

shape their education as citizens actively. Fielding (2007) indicated that this

promotes the active role of students within schools and redefines student-teacher

relationships as a joint endeavor in advancing the learning process.

Despite negative perspective with regards to community day school

graduate students' voice, research indicated that it is a crucial part of the

educational system in developing curriculum, policy, and practice. This

qualitative student confirms the necessity of eliciting the student's voice. Also,

educators can be confident in the dedication of students into their active learning process. Systematically, student voice will develop practices of social justice. Student voice will help to develop new curriculum and define and establish academic excellence.

<u>Purpose of Study</u>

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the educational experiences of community day school graduates. Their educational and personal experiences were examined to understand how their experiences influenced their lives after graduation from a community day school. Their experiences provided an understanding to consider postsecondary decision-making processes and options. In particular, the study aimed to examine how community day schools shaped and influenced the pathways students decided to pursue after graduation.

<u>Research Questions</u>

The study addressed three research questions:

1. What are the personal experiences of community day school graduates?

2. What are the schooling experiences of community day school graduates?

3. How have these experiences influenced their approach to personal and professional growth in preparing them to navigate postsecondary college and career life pathways?

To examine the lived experiences of community day school graduates, a qualitative research design was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the

purposes of this study, the most suitable methodology was narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). This would enable the opportunity to focus on the lived experiences of community day school students, while also allowing their own reflection of their experiences to shape the findings. A narrative inquiry allows researchers to center participants' lived experiences as expressed by their reflection and narrative.

The goal of this qualitative research was to understand the community day school graduates' perspectives of attendance in regards to being successful after graduation. The research dedicated to the promotion of the graduate student's voice and understanding the perspectives of students after graduating from community day schools. Research implied that student voice is important to effective teacher learning, curriculum development, student-teacher relationships, and the political economy. Research argued that student voice stands for values of engagement, learning, and success.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this narrative inquiry was to expand the research on community day school graduates and the effectiveness of education in alternative education programs. Although numerous studies have focused on the traditional high school in general, few have looked at the experiences of community day school graduates in regards to the success after high school and their perspective of an effective education. It is important to provide a venue for their voices to be heard and improve on the effectiveness of all educational

9

institutions; ultimately developing effective programs academically and professionally for the success of future graduates to be positive productive citizens. Silencing the voices of community day school graduates can be inimical to community day school graduate students pursuing success after high school. This study provides the stage for their voices to be heard and their stories to be described through their perspectives.

Assumptions

There are multiple assumptions about the purpose of this study. Based upon the literature review, there is a need for research into the effectiveness of education in the alternative/nontraditional systems. Community day school graduates and their perspective roles in being successful after graduation corresponds to the growing concern for effective curriculum in all realms of educational representation, graduate perspectives would help understand and break the stereotypes experienced by graduates while attending the community day school, and recognize the importance of seizing the moment to develop curriculum, teaching methods, and eliminate barriers experienced by these students after graduation.

It was my hope that the participants in the study would use integrity in describing their experiences and giving their perspectives. It was my assumption that the stories described are true and correct in the articulation of their stories both academically and personally. Also, it was assumed that the participants

10

would give a truthful representation of the data and the experiences within the

community day school.

Delimitations

This study's delimitation was limited to a community day school setting because education is rare in the study of community day school research. The study was delimited to the study of graduates from the community day school programs. Furthermore, the study delimited to the examination of teachers caring for 'at-promise' students as opposed to an emphasis of teachers deeming students behavioral issues. Also, delimitations stemmed from recruiting female participants due to the specific sampling in the study. In addition, delimitation was taking in consideration with regards to the availability of the participants and the ability to gather and code data. Marilyn Simon (2011) identified delimitations as characteristics limiting the scope and defining the boundaries of the study. As the researcher, I delimited my study to students who attended community day schools in southern California. I did not pursue graduates who attended community day schools outside of California. Finally, delimitations include the ability to interview teachers with regards to their true feeling and treatment of 'at-promise' students.

Definition of Key Terms

The terminology for this qualitative research study was defined to understand the findings and perspectives of community day school graduates through their stories. The definitions are:

At-promise: Terminology used to refer to students who are currently being

defined in the educational discourse as academically and socially at-risk.

This language allows students to be framed by a focus on the academic

promise they bring to the school system instead of a measurement of their

supposed risks (Franklin, 2013).

At-Risk Youth: An "at-risk" student is generally defined as a student who is likely

to fail at school. In this context, school failure is typically seen as dropping

out of school before high school graduation. As a result, the

characteristics of at-risk students have traditionally been identified through

retrospective examinations of high school dropouts' family and school

histories. Those characteristics associated with dropping out of school

then become the defining characteristics of at-risk students. However,

defining school failure solely on the basis of a student's dropout status

may be too restrictive. Students who fail to achieve basic skills before

leaving school may also be at risk of school failure. "Thus, this report

expands the notion of 'at risk' to include failure to achieve basic levels of

proficiency in key subjects (mathematics and reading)" (National Center

for Education Statistics, NCES, 1992, p. 2).

Community Day School: Refers to the student who have been expelled from

school or who has had problems with attendance or behavior. As of 2017-

2018 school year, there were 192 community day schools. Community

day schools are run by school districts or county offices of education

(California Department of Education, 2017d).

Disenfranchised: To deprive of the rights of citizenship, especially the right to

vote; to deprive a privilege, right, or power. (Webster's New World

College Dictionary, 2010)

Restorative Practice: The restorative practices model in a school setting focuses

on the ability of the student to reconcile with the victim. The practice

encourages the school staff and students to improve the relationship with

victims and to learn from the process. (McGrath, 2002).

Vulnerable: Vulnerable youth have characteristics and experiences that put them

at risk of developing problem behaviors and outcomes that have the

potential to hurt their community, themselves, or both. "At risk" does not

necessarily mean a youth has already experienced negative outcomes but

it suggests that negative outcomes are more likely. Youth may also

experience multiple risk factors. Vulnerable youth may also display

resiliency that mitigates negative outcomes (Moore, 2006).

In fact, the White House Council for Community Solutions identified at-risk

youth as "opportunity youth" because they display positive attributes and do not

want to be disconnected from work and school. For further information, see

Corporation for National and Community Service, White House Council for

Community Solutions, Final Report: Community Solutions for Opportunity Youth,

June 2012 (White House Council for Community Solutions, 2012).

Overview of Study

There is a significant insight into the real life stories of community day school graduates in the effectiveness of education after graduation and success. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to examine the academic and personal experiences of the community day school graduates after graduation. Their academic and personal lived experiences were examined to understand the effectiveness of their education as it pertains to success after graduation. It examined the stories of graduates that define their own definition of success. The study interviewed community day graduates on how their experiences in their school played a role in their goals? What makes a good community day school? And, What would they recommend to improve the community day school? It also examined, from the perspective of community day school graduates, the opportunity to develop educational goals and community day school protocol in shaping the aspirations of graduates.

Narrative inquiries shared in this study provide educators in alternative education and nontraditional education vital insight into the improvement on how to provide effective educational skills that will improve academic success. Furthermore, the study provides a better understanding on how to develop an effective educational plan for the specific needs of the students. It also has the potential to provide an effective quality education for all students, particularly, community day school students.

Chapter two is a presentation of a literature review that examines the background of alternative schools in California as it is related to community day school graduates, and a discussion of their success after graduation. Lastly, chapter two summarizes the need for further research in the effectiveness of education in the community day school setting.

Chapter three provides a description of how the literature review summarized the conceptual framework of narrative inquiry with the perspectives of graduates that impact the research methodology, research questions, and interview protocol. Also, presented was how the data was collected, analyzed, and retold.

Chapter four introduces the data collected from community day school graduates and the defined successes. This chapter provides a descriptive summary of the academic and personal experiences as the graduates progressed through the community day system and the moments that shaped their aspirations, failures, and successes. It also shapes a new approach to the community day school setting and gives implications to improve the educational experience.

Finally, chapter five provides a summary of the study, including implications of the study, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to provide a greater understanding of real-life data from students in the alternative high school and best practices of

research. It creates a unique opportunity to give a voice to students that are struggling through their educational career. Significantly, with the constant change in education and the encouragement of many state officials for an educator to develop professionally, this research provides opportunities for teachers to develop a listening ear to what their students are trying to express to them. Most importantly, other students will benefit from the data in understanding transition and what makes an alternative high school right? Furthermore, the research may increase strategic planning at alternative high school sites across California. This study will provide a crucial resource for parents and students that enter the community day school. Also, the research will provide critical data for districts to develop the community day schools with students being active participants in their academic achievement and preparation for life after graduation. The research will promote encouragement in the community day school student to finish high school and become a positive citizen in the community. This research will hold students accountable for their learning and encourage high learning.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently there is not a standard definition available to operationalize

"alternative education" in empirical research. In recent years, the definition used

by individual states intentionally narrows the definition to schools serving

students labeled 'at-risk' of academic failure and 'vulnerable youth' who are no

longer in traditional schools' (Aron, 2006, p. 3). Carver, Lewis, and Tice (2010)

analyzed national data to find that public school districts transfer a significant

number of youth to alternative educational settings. Districts often expel students

for many reasons, including: physical aggression (61% of districts); disruptive

behavior (57%); possession, sale, or distribution of drugs (57%); additionally

chronic academic failure (57%); truancy (53%); possession or use of firearms

(42%); or other weapons (51%). If students are not enrolled in 'traditional

schools,' they are likely enrolled in alternative schools, charter schools, or

homeschool programs. Additionally, other states have different names for

alternative schools, so this makes the analyses of these programs difficult to

assess at the national level.

In 2016, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC, Warren, P., 2016)

indicated that there were approximately 210,000 high school students enrolled in

an alternative school. These schools consist of continuation schools, community

day schools, community schools, independent schools, and parent choice

schools. Paul Warren (2016) indicated that these results translate to about

11.5%, or approximately one in nine of California's schools classified as public, non-charters enroll high school students. Community day schools are included in assessing the total number of students enrolled in alternative education programs. Community day school programs operate under the alternative education umbrella and serve as an opportunity for students to continue their education, despite being expelled from a traditional high school (U. S. Department of Education, NCES, 2013).

Schools recommending special education students for expulsion must go through a different process. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2016) *Parent and Educator Resource Guide*, the students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) team meets to discuss behavior, attendance, and the offense to consider alternative placement. The team must have a Behavior Support Plan (BSP) in place before the meeting takes place. If the student has a 10-day suspension, the team will hold a Manifestation Determination meeting to discuss two points: (1) Whether the district followed the IEP and (2) to determine if the behavior or incident was a manifestation of the student's disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The team then has the ability to place the student at the community day school with services that will support the student's educational transition. A student on an IEP cannot be sent to the community day school without their IEP team's review and approval.

Scholars in the field of education agree that without dropout prevention and intervention methods, such as alternative education programs, students

would not graduate high school in existing K-12 contexts (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Mosen-Lowe, Vidovich, & Chapman, 2009). However, the likelihood of students identified as at-risk of academic failure entering community day schools, raise the question of how these schools support the students, generally, but specifically how they support students' postsecondary aspirations.

The literature review for this study focused on community day school programs in the United States, focused on those in the state of California. The following section the following themes are discussed: (a) the history of compulsory education, (b) development of a definition for alternative education, (c) the ideology behind alternative education, (d) the levels of categories under alternative education, (e) the role of a community day school in California's public education system, and (f) identify characteristics of effective community day school programs that influence the aspirations of graduates.

Once the literature review is presented, a discussion of the three leading theoretical frameworks informing this research are presented: critical theory, self-determination theory (SDT), and student voices. Empirical literature support the analyses and use of each framework, discuss the relationships among the theoretical concepts, and define how this review provides a rationale for this particular study. These are especially important as they set the foundation to underscore the importance of a study to centralize the narratives and experiences of community day school graduates.

Brief Historical Background

The historical background in this section describes compulsory education and the timeline to establish the development of the community day schools. The United States educational development roots to Horace Mann, who in the late 1830s, made the public education system a reality, deciding that all 'common schools needed to be equally standardized (Tozer, Senese, & Violas, 2009). The first widely developed public schools were called 'common schools.' However, these 'common schools' were intended to address all educational needs through the readings of the King James Bible and dismiss Protestant catechism (Bernard, Mondale, & Bernard, 2001). However, the all-needs approach in common schools became a challenge as student learning abilities were at varying levels. Thus, compulsory education was designed to support and educate children to build and strengthen their literacy skills.

Compulsory education attendance laws are statutes that hold parents accountable to have their children attend a public or state accredited private or parochial school for a designated period of time (Katz, 1974). The first compulsory attendance law was passed in Boston, Massachusetts in 1852 (Cook, 1912; Ensign, 1921). Compulsory education was effective in increasing enrollment during 1880-1900 and 1900-1920. The education laws had little effect on schooling in the U.S. before 1915. Many states passed compulsory education legislation, but most of these laws were difficult to enforce (Landes & Solomon, 1972). Compulsory laws have changed throughout the history of education with

the promotion of parental involvement in the implementation of these laws and budgetary allocations.

In the 20th century, schools grew in the area of population and strict legislative changes. Another change included schools supporting the development of legislation to require students to attend school on time. In 1959, after the 50th state passed its initial compulsory attendance and labor laws, students were required to attend schools. By the 1920s and 1930s, increasing numbers of states were requiring students to attend high school, and, by the 1950s, secondary-school attendance became customary that students that did not attend schools were routinely seen as "dropouts" (Tyack, 1974, p. 56). Hoyle and Collier (2006) described alternative schools as an innovative method to improve the quality of education for at-risk students and as an effort to decrease the number of school dropouts.

Until 1954, school segregation was legal and affected many Students of Color, and especially African-American students in the education system in the U.S. south. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court outlawed segregation with the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Kashatus, 2004). The intent in *Brown* was to provide African-American students access to quality education because predominantly segregated schools offered students higher quality educational opportunities (Harris, 2006; Kashatus, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2006). The intent of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* was to overturn the separate but equal doctrine established by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision *(Brown v. Board*

of Education, 1954*). Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1955) required

integration of public schools "with all deliberate speed" (*Syllabus*, item 2). Justice

Earl Warren authored the ruling along with H. L. Black, S. F. Reed,

F. Frankfurter, W. O. Douglas, T. C. Clark, S. Minton, H. H. Burton, and

J. M. Harlan II in agreement. Although the Supreme Court declared segregated

schools to be unconstitutional in 1954, it took decades for school districts to

initiate the desegregation process. Majority of school districts resisted and sought

for legal justifications to delay the integration of their schools (Chapman, 2005).

In 1969, the Supreme Court in the *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of*

Education (1969) ruling required school districts to end segregation. The *Civil*

Rights Act of 1964 and the *Alexander* decision gave the authority to the United

States Justice Department to bring lawsuits against segregated districts, resulting

in a rapid increase in school desegregation. From 1968 to 1972, racially isolated

minority schools were desegregated with White student populations dropping

from 78 to 25% (Orfield & Lee, 2006; see also Duncan, 2003). These

demographic shifts in school enrollments would have an effect on how students

would be tracked and shuffled or moved into different types of educational

programs.

Background of Alternative Schools / Alternative Education

Since the 1960s, school districts have access to alternative schools and

specialized academic programs to address exceptional needs of students who

are deemed as being at-risk to fail school (Lehr et al., 2009). Raywid (1994)

describes three types of alternative schools that are still being implemented today, these include: (1) schools that offer innovational educational approaches and project-based learning through application, (2) schools designed to provide academic restoration for students who experience deficiencies in skills and credits, or who are struggling to focus their specific plans to graduate, and (3) schools that specifically emphasize on the development of positive behavior and disciplinary improvement for students who exhibit social or behavioral needs. The U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2014) established precedence for the need to ensure that alternative programs serve students who are English Language Learners (ELLs), students who identify as an ethnic minority, and students from low-socioeconomic areas. Alternative programs are required to maintain high levels of equity, and quality in providing a safe and nurturing academic environment for students (California Department of Education, 2017a).

Alternative education rose in the 1960s, as a response to various groups who, for ethical, moral, religious, and other purposes wanted separate schools (Miller, 2007). Alternative education presented a different form of education outside of the public education system long before being institutionalized and offered as part of the public school system. Many schools were developed specifically based upon parent choice. These schools were associated primarily with the talented, gifted, religious, or economically wealthy students. Some of these alternative schools continue to operate in our society and are often

criticized for serving privileged families (Semel, 1999). Private schools were established specifically for the wealthy, but as schools were desegregated in the U.S. south, many White families established and attended private schools to avoid desegregation or integration.

Alternative education as it is known today was founded on two historical educational systems; public and private education systems contributed to the establishment of policies and procedures that are utilized in current practices. Alternative education describes different approaches to teaching and learning other than state-provided mainstream education. These were usually in the form of public or private schools, with a unique, often innovative curriculum, and a flexible curriculum of study, which is based to a large extent on the individual student's interests and needs (Aron, 2003; Carnie, 2003; Koetzsch, 1997; Raywid, 1988). These developments are critical to understand and assess which would be most appropriate to support students learning needs and what type of environments may be most conducive to their learning. Given the diversity of multiple alternative programs, these provide different avenues to support the needs of all students, from all backgrounds.

As depicted in Raywid's (1988) typology, the categories of 'schools' compliment each other by providing their own separate development of alternative education to meet the needs of their student population. Whether public or private school, public alternatives within a public school system have spawned from one another. While one may differ from another, each school has

a unique approach to support student learning. As such, an example of these evolutionary programs, the Legislative Analyst report (Hill, 2007) identified seven alternative programs that are operating currently: opportunity programs, juvenile court programs, community day schools, county community programs, independent charters, continuation, and parent schools of choice that have been utilized due to behavior. Given the continuous changes in student dynamics, behavior, learning ability, and societal demands, it can be assumed that throughout the years education will continue to evolve, and new alternative schools may be developed to facilitate and meet diverse student needs.

Background of Alternative Education

One of the first forms of early alternative education in the U.S. was progressive education. Education philosophers, such as John Dewey, promoted the progressive educational movement, a movement that placed emphasis on the needs of the individual child. Dewey (1938) discussed the complexity of building upon the traditional elements of science, math, and English. In addition, he promoted the idea about the systematic increase of elements in curriculum that would encourage the preparation for life, as in human development. His conclusion was that students need to live and learn through life itself. The progressive movement of the 1940s was replaced with significant historical events that emphasized advancement of technology, superiority of weapons, and the race in space. The 'Cold War Era' quickly uprooted much of the ideology of

the progressive movement. At the end of World War II, communities were "showered with leaflets about the ills of modern education" (Cremin, 1964, p. 342). The launching of Sputnik in 1957 brought forth another political drive for technological superiority furthering the distance from the progressive movement (Young, 1990).

As years went by, public education in the U.S. attempted to lead the world by establishing an educational system that could compete globally. Much of the debate surrounding the development of the common school system revolved around "the degree of standardization desirable in American institutional forms, behavior, and cultural values (Tyack, 1987, p. 25)" (as cited in Emery, 2000, The Development of a Centralized Bureaucracy, para. 3). This movement grew as immigrants from other countries entered the United States to fulfill their dreams. Tyack and Cuban (1995) stated, "When we speak of educational reforms, we mean planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" (p. 4). We see how the proposals to change the education system was to address different needs, while simultaneously offer a curriculum to support social order and social reproduction.

Conversely, John Dewey's (1938) educational pedagogy targeted the needs of students recognizing the individual academic strengths of individual students. Dewey's Laboratory Schools prepared students for a changing world, teaching them to "learn to be socially responsible people" (Tanner, 1997, p. 31). Dewey proposed that school structures were small communities that offered

opportunities to each student to "feel that they are actors, not just onlookers, in the saga of human development" (Tanner, 1997, p. 34). Dewey's (as cited in Domina & Greer, 2004) writing concentrated on both the moral and academic development of students in becoming "socially responsible people" (p. 3). Dewey proposed that alternative school curriculum was based on multiple learning activities for the purpose of teaching students to think and to problem solve, discipline based on interest, and attention and a school structure that accepted flexibility and change to offer teachers freedom to meet the democratic interests and needs of students. Dewey believed a primary function of education was to help a democratic society build good citizens who would make critical choices.

Dewey's (1939) ideas were applied to alternative schools. These ideas were instrumental in promoting the alternative school–particularly his notion to "promote growth of character" (Tanner, 1997, p. 35). Many of the traditions of the past are embedded in the educational practices within the alternative schools. Public alternative school traces back to Dewey's progressive movement in the 1930s and 1940s, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Alternative programs flourished in the 1960s due to strict policies and limited cultural diversity in the public school systems. Glassett Farrelly (2012) identified a variety of programs that were inspired by the belief and value systems of parents removing White students from schools within the community and enrolling them into parent choice schools. Many of the public alternative schools created in the 1960s and 1970s were open schools, their concentration included student-

centered curriculum and created a non-competitive approach (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Open Schools were considered 'schools of choice.' Many White families removed students from schools with minorities and enrolled their students in schools of choice because many of the parents believed in racism and segregation. Lange and Sletten (2002) described these schools as schools that were supported by parents, teachers, students, and the local community members.

Presently, Magnet schools, Art Academies, Academic Performing Art Schools, Specific Specialty Schools, Charter Schools, and Diversity Schools would be examples of 'open schools.' Open schools provide parents, students, and teachers the opportunity to have a child-centered curriculum designed to allow students to have autonomy in their learning. The existence of the open schools greatly influenced the creation of public alternatives at all levels of education (Young, 1990). The open-school movement led to an array of different school types. Raywid (1994) discussed these types as categories of the alternative educational model. Raywid (1999) argued,

> Despite the ambiguities and the emergence of multiple alternatives, two
> enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the
> start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to
> be optimally served by the regular program, and, consequently have
> represented varying degrees of departure from the standard school
> organization, programs, and environments (p. 26).

29

Raywid (1999) proposed alternative schools had the ability to service at-risk student in non-traditional settings. These schools had the ability to provide instruction in an environment that would meet student needs. While several perspectives exist on the purpose of alternative education, alternative models have coexisted with public education system since the beginning of their inception in the 19th century (Raywid, 1999). Nonetheless, there appears to be no common, nor consistent, definition of alternative education.

Lacking a precise definition, the term 'alternative education' describes strategies for teaching and learning through a variety of curriculum other than state-provided mainstream education. These usually are in public or private schools with a special, often creative curriculum, and a flexible program of study which is based to a large extent on the individual student's interest and needs (Aron, 2003; Carnie, 2003: Koetzsch, 1997; Raywid, 1988). Alternative education has evolved to embody a wide range of options to serve students with varying circumstances, interests, and abilities (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In a national survey conducted by the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE), 64% of districts reported having at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students; these programs serviced 646,500 students in the United States during the 2008/2007 school year (Carver et al., 2010).

Development of Current Alternative Education Contexts

The emergence of alternative education in the 1960s met the demands of accountability and high levels in academic achievement. By the 1960s,

alternative education was embedded within political and social justice movements (Warren, M. R., 2014). The public school system was scrutinized for being discriminatory to Students of Color, low-socioeconomic students, and English Language Learners (Simone, 2012). Regrettably, many reforms came within the first decade of alternative education (Raywid, 1994). Young (1990) noted open schools moved "from the more progressive and open orientation in the 1970s to a more conservative and remedial one in the 1980s" (p. 20). In the 1980s, alternative education continued to transform with the National Council of Excellence in Education publishing *A Nation at Risk* (U. S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report scrutinized the state of the education system in the United States and demanded a shift to focus on academic performance and excellence. This initiative included a focus on remediation and preventing at-risk students' from dropping out of school. Scholars agreed that alternative education changed the educational trajectory in the 1980s and went from a collective teacher-student decision-making process to remediation and teaching basic educational concepts (Raywid, 1981; Young, 1990).

Alternative education has continued to shift through the years and embodies a wide range of options to serve students' varying circumstances, interests, and abilities (Lange & Sletten, 2002). In particular, alternative education settings have transitioned away from the typical public schools to less

traditional settings where specialized programs were targeted to specific groups

of struggling students (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

<u>Definition of Alternative Education</u>

In general, alternative schools "call for diversity in preference to common

standards and uniformity" and "pose organizational alternatives to bureaucracy"

(Raywid, 1994, p. 31). For the purpose of this study, the U. S. Department of

Education's definition will be the working definition of alternative education. The

U. S. Department of Education (2016 as cited in Carver et al., 2010) defined

alternative education as:

> Alternative schools and programs designed to address the needs of
>
> students that typically cannot be met in regular comprehensive schools.
>
> The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically at
>
> risk of educational failure as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive
>
> behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or
>
> permanent withdrawal from school (p. 1).

This definition specifically supports most literature, which describes alternative

schools which primarily serve students identified as 'at-risk' (Lehr et al., 2009).

Subsequently, alternative school programs are growing in number. Many serve

grades sixth through twelfth grade (Carver et al., 2010). However, alternative

schools' definitions vary from state to state, as do legislation and policies that

govern them (Lehr et al., 2009).

Type of Alternative Education Schools

Raywid (1994) identified three typologies that are used widely to describe the different levels of the alternative education system. Raywid, a leading researcher in the field of alternative education, indicated that the alternative education structures are identified by Types I, II, and III. Raywid noted that Type I schools provide opportunities for students to experience academics through their talents, abilities, and interests. These schools are parent choice schools, and provide students an opportunity to further their education with the goal of creating innovative instruction that will lead to higher education. These schools provide opportunities for college preparation and hands-on vocational experiences and serve those students who demonstrate strong academics and positive social behavior. Examples of the Type I schools include private schools, charters, and specialized programs.

Type II programs include community day schools which serve students who are considered at-risk, are suspended, or expelled. These schools primarily concentrate on behavior modification. Many districts use the community day school as a 'last-chance.' Raywid (1993) discussed 'last-chance' schools and the opportunities students have to work on their behaviors. These 'last chance' options are given to motivate students who are disruptive in district schools and for whom the district's next step is to remove them from the district. Comprehensive program schools place students into Type III schools that can include elements of the community day school and nonpublic schools which

serve students who need specialized academic, social, and emotional instruction. Carver et al. (2010) indicated that some community day schools implement common practices with curriculum design, specialized instruction, and counseling services. Kelly (1993) discussed the similarities and differences between Type I, II, and III schools.

Furthermore, Kelly's (1993) ethnographic study examined an intriguing case study of students in the continuation school and described its explicit duty of providing at-risk students with an alternative option to the traditional high school. The study included two continuation schools and examined the experiences of 'disengaged' students. Kelly utilized several data collection methods: on-site observations, school records, and interviews of students, teachers, and administrators. Kelly argued that instead of providing a second chance, alternative schools are more like waiting rooms for disengaged students on their way to dropping out. Accordingly, community perceptions, triggered by negative media coverage, discredit the credibility of these programs. Kelly's work contributed to the understanding of social and organizational systems of non-traditional schools and how they infringed on students' success and aspirations in their educational careers.

Kelly (1993) also identified the role of the continuation school as maintaining students who appear to struggle in the comprehensive high school by eliminating disruptive students from the learning environment; this is also a common practice in the community day school. The continuation school, unlike

the community day school, serves students that are over 16 years of age and are behind in academic credits. Alternative schools as systematically allowing students to fail. Kelley posit whether alternative schools exist to serve or rather to maintain disruptive students. Students were sent to the continuation school to focus on credit recovery and career pathways; however, students were sent to less academically concentrated programs. These programs concentrated on attendance, behavior, and appropriate social development and interactions. Consequently, Kelly observed alternative programs to be a place to store disruptive students and teachers on disciplinary leave. She focused on the continuation school and described four institutional roles for continuation schools.

First, they served students not being academically successful in traditional high schools. Secondly, they served traditional school students considered to be disruptive, so there were a great deal of disciplinary focused activities. Good classroom behavior, attendance, and obedience were the focus of these programs. The third role allowed the students to academically fail by not providing adequate academically rigorous opportunities. These students were also not held accountable to the academic curricula and program they were supposed to complete. Finally, Kelly described many alternative schools as a warehouse that simply kept students in a space. Additionally, these schools also housed teachers and administrators who did not ethically completed their jobs. In all, these are spaces that are not productive, supportive, nor academically

challenging to expect personnel to support and guide students toward academic success.

More recently, Hemmer and Uribe (2012) conducted a descriptive study to examine two types of alternative education settings: (a) the early-college high school and (b) the academic alternative of choice. The researchers investigated how alternative schools responded to shifting at-risk student identifiers. The findings suggested that while the two types of schools serve at-risk students, their populations are in fact more different than homogenous and provide access and opportunity to affords marginalized students the benefit of higher education. position. For students enrolled in academic alternative school of choice, an aim was to apply critical interventions to prepare students to obtain a high school diploma. The study suggests that analytical and quasi-experimental studies are needed to examine efficacy and validity of these schools (Hemmer & Uribe, 2012).

<u>California Legislative Analyst Office</u>

In Table 1, the California Legislative Office (LAO) framework is referenced. Table 1 shows the types of schools, the types of alternative education programs the LAO identified in the State of California, the eligibility in order for the alternative education to operate, and the grades the alternative program serves. LAO also identified the requirement for placement into each particular alternative program, the guidelines for attendance, and the instructional settings that make up what the alternative program delivers.

Table 1: *Types of Alternative Programs Utilized in California School Districts*

School Type	Continuation	Community Day School	Independent Study	Parent Choice Community
	• Complete courses for graduation • Emphasize work and intensive guidance • Meet students' needs for flexible schedule or occupational goals	• Behavior Modification • Strict curriculum designed to rehabilitate behavior	• Individually planned education at own pace • Online/ Contracted at home	• Individually planned education • Emphasis occupations and guidance
Eligible to Operate	*Districts	Districts/ County Office of Education	Districts	Districts/ County Office of Education
Grades Served	• 10-12 (at least 16 years old)	• K-12	• K-12	• K-12
Placement Criteria • SARB- • School Attendance Review Board	• Volunteers	• Involuntarily • Expelled • Referred by SARB • Probation referred	• Volunteer • Parental Placement • Home Hospice • Individual instruction • Independent study	• Volunteer • Involuntarily • Expelled • Referred by SARB • Probation referred
• Instructional Setting	• Small classes • Individual instruction • Independent study	• Small classes • Individual instruction (360- minutes required) • No Independent	• Small classes • Individual instruction • Independent study	• Small classes • Individual instruction • Independent

Source: Adapted from Legislative Analyst Office (LAO, Hill, 2007, p. 5)

As noted earlier, out of the various types of alternative education

programs, the community day school[1] program is the focus of this dissertation

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[1] The term community day school is interchangeable under titles like alternative education, alternative schools, and alternative programs throughout this literature review. Definition varies from district to district.

study. The community day school is a unique entity in that its structure and purpose is not clearly defined (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2005). The community day schools' development was constructed with strict behavior-modification curriculum to rehabilitate student behavior (CDE, 2017b). The removal of students labeled as 'dangerous' or 'disenfranchised youth' as identified by the districts, and the processes of the districts' own interpretation of the law – without clear accountability measures other than high-risk, special education, and attendance – students attend the community day school (CDS). Although there are many definitions for community day schools, for this study the definition of the California Department of Education (2017b) will be used to describe the community day school.

Community Day Schools

The purpose of community day schools are to maintain an appropriate education setting for students who have been expelled from traditional comprehensive high schools. The expelled student is with either academic deficiencies or academic intellectual disabilities. These often students have violated rules that cause the local district to refer these students to another school. The term 'other high-risk youth' refers to students that repetitively violated Education Code 48900 or that the districts warranted the removal and used exclusionary discipline. Education Code was developed for any student that brought specific weapons to school, committed serious physical harm, and/or brought drugs to school.

The classification of 'other high-risk' is determined by the local district and is left for interpretation by the governing body of the school site. Some school districts establish protocols for the removal of 'other high-risk youth,' but there is no formal definition. Many districts utilized the 'other high-risk' moniker to remove those youth that exhibited constant problems with discipline in providing the evidence to move a student to a smaller and more structured site (community day school). The Office of Civil Rights (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014) often times related these methods to 'no tolerance,' policies which in their stance is illegal. The 'no tolerance' term derived from the unwritten discipline procedure of removing a student for any and all punitive acts from the school. School officials would remove students for having scissors, nail files, defiance, and use of profanity, for example.

The term community day program is defined as, "a regular program of instruction provided by a State agency at a community day school operated specifically for neglected or delinquent children and youth" (U. S. Department of Education, 2004, Section 1432, Definition 3). According to the Child Health Kids Survey (CHKS as cited in EdSource, 2008),

> Continuation students are almost three times more likely than
> comprehensive [traditional] high school students to be in foster care or
> living with a relative other than a parent (11% vs. 4% for 11th graders)
> (p. 3).

The frequency of students moving from the traditional to the continuation school

created stress on the students' education particularly as student mobility became

an increasingly issue (Barrat & Berliner, 2013). Between 2004 and 2006, 17% of

continuation school students moved two or more times in an academic year or

lived in multiple locations. Subsequently, alcohol and other substance use were

two times higher among continuation students than 11th grade students in

traditional comprehensive high schools.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, 283 California community day schools

reported an enrollment of 8,923 students. Additionally, the CDE demographic

reports for prior school years indicated that the total number of students served

by these schools over the entire year averaged over 23,700 (California Education

Department, 2014b). Community day schools are intended to have low student-

to-teacher ratios with academic programs that provide challenging curriculum

and individual instructional strategies to meet the students' learning abilities and

needs. According to the CDE (2014b), the instructional day consists of 360-

minutes and includes social and academic programs. Community day schools

must also include career pathway education and other social/emotional

education (CDE, 2014b).

History of California Community Day Schools

In 1995, the California legislators developed Assembly Bill 922 (1995) with

the purpose of designing the community day school for students in the public

education system who were deemed as disruptive. Assembly Bill 922 based the community day school on a history of separation of students who were disrupting the learning environment in comprehensive schools. Prior to the passing of AB 922, for the expulsion discipline protocol districts were limited in their options for inappropriate behavior in the State of California. Educators and legislators argued that students who were disruptive were offered a variety of environments that did not address the maladaptive behavior that was manifested in the traditional school setting (Raywid, 1994).

California Assembly Bill 922 (1995) passed and mandated County Offices of Education (COEs) to create accountability measures for students who were expelled from the traditional high school program and to be guaranteed additional funding for community day schools. Prior to this legislation, there was a lack of an accountability system to ensure expelled students received an equitable education. It was families and expelled students who had the daunting task of researching the appropriate alternative educational placement for the extent of the expulsion process (CDE, 2017a).

Assembly Bill 922 also provided an extension of federal law resulting in the passage of other assembly bills and sections to include provisions that eventually developed a new type of alternative educational placement. This was called the community day schools (CDS) for expelled students and those who articulated through the disciplinary process. Hence, California Education Code Sections 48660-48667 described specific curricular, organizational, and

structural requirements to establish funding formulas for the CDS (CDE, 2017c).

The CDS received significant funding to identify gaps in educational servicing

within comprehensive schools and made the argument to fulfill those needs in

CDSs. The legislation required CDSs to provide a structure that would facilitate

rehabilitation plans, smaller class sizes, individual case management,

counseling, and interventions. While many school districts benefited from this

new alternative placement funding, other districts utilized the CDS to serve other

students with behavioral, emotional, and social issues; usually students were

referred from the traditional high school, probation, and social services centers.

Through AB 922, districts held specific guidelines regarding the CDS

structure; districts were to develop a plan to provide educational services to

expelled students, and the plan must be adopted by the governing board in

conjunction with the county board of education. This, however, did not address

how CDSs would provide educational opportunities that would support the

students' individual goals and aspirations. Districts and CDS programs were

given no guidance and were left to establish their own interpretation as to what

students needed. Consequently, the appropriate training for teachers to service

students with social, emotional, and behavioral issues were inadequate (CDE,

2017b).

Districts attempted to implement programs without empirical knowledge,

training, or research-based data. Nonetheless, districts capitalized on the notion

of extra incentives and funding from the state and federal government (CDE,

2017c). Under Assembly Bill 1845 (1998), districts could receive an extra $4,000 for the average daily attendance of a student. Now, instead of districts spending revenue on transportation and placement at county facilities for students with individual specific needs, districts were encouraged to retain their students and keep the extra funding in the district.

Through the new CDS programs, district began to serve a student population who needed more specialized services. However, the districts were not prepared to serve population of students with high needs. Districts and the new CDS programs lacked qualified teachers, counselors, equipment, and curriculum in this area to prepare students to return to their school of residence or to adequately prepare them for life after graduation. While further discussions about alternative education and California CDSs are discussed in this study, the synopsis of the lack of structure and establishment of the CDS highlights the significance of this research. Understanding the student experiences in community day schools will enable policy and educators to have access to perspectives on how to improve schooling practices. Students' reflections on their experiences while attending these schools will help provide perspectives in how districts can be held accountable to a higher quality of education in CDSs.

Accountability of Community Day Schools

Community day schools serve juvenile probation youth, students with poor attendance, and other students expelled by traditional schools and referred by a School Attendance Review Board (SARB). As previously noted, "the minimum

school day for Community Day Schools is 360 minutes of instructional time (EC Section 48663[a]" (CDE, 2017c, Minimum School Day, para. 1). The CDE established the required program implementations for community day schools and enforced strict penalties for not maintaining the instructional requirements. Community day school law does not allow students to have minimum or shorter educational minutes.

The legislature intended for the community day school to have low student-teacher ratios and opportunities for one-on-one academic instruction. Community day schools were intended to promote a healthy environment with support services and counseling. District community day schools are extremely expensive to operate (CDE, 2014b). The California public school enrollment for fiscal year 2014-2015 by school type, identified the enrollment of students in the traditional settings with that of the community day school. The State accounts for 259 alternative schools that serve 65,606 students (1:253 teacher to student ratio); in comparison, the community day schools account for 204 schools serving 7,353 students (1:36 teacher to student ratio) (CDE, 2017a).

Paul Warren (2016) described community schools, opportunity schools, and community day schools as schools designed to assist students with defiant behavior, attendance issues, or who are referred by the county juvenile justice system. In the fall of 2013, 24,767 students (19% of all alternative school students) were enrolled in community schools, opportunity schools, and community day schools (Warren, P., 2016). California authorized community day

schools as a means to support disenfranchised youth and those with academic

issues. These schools service significant proportions of students that constantly

transition in and out of the local comprehensive, traditional school settings.

Significantly, California is in the process of reconstructing their accountability

protocols to accurately documents the progress made by students attending

alternative schools. Protocols to generate data that is more reflective of the

disenfranchised student population served by community day schools to present

an accurate measure of both student and school progress (Warren, P., 2016).

Characteristics of Community Day Schools

      According to the California Alternative Research Report (Ruiz de Velasco, Austin, Dixon, Johnson, McLaughlin, & Perez, 2008), each year more than 10% of California public high school students attend some 'alternative' programs, most notably continuation, independent study, community schools, and community day schools; these do not include special education placements. Aggregately they represent approximately 850 high schools in the state of California (CDE, 2017b). Among other aspects, community day schools assert the disposition of rehabilitation, behavior modification, and strengthening academic skills. Marland (1974) and McGuiness (1989) asserted that a false perception of students who graduate from the community day schools are challenged through the students' ability to accept assistance with social-emotional needs, and an ability to support students' aspirations.

      This study conceptualized a connection between the student and teacher relationship to facilitate an environment where students can build trust and critical rapport to continue their post-education. The participants include interviews of 27 teachers, four administrators, and eight staff members through four domains. The four domains include (a) discipline, (b) administration, (c) curriculum and instruction, and (d) extracurricular and instruction. Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) explored the perceptions of suburban adolescents and found discrepancies between achievement and a caring culture are often in competition with one another. The discrepancies include the lack of reciprocity in caring for the

staffing at the school which was reflected in students' academic progress and achievement. The study implied that when students build positive relationships they are less likely to exhibit disruptive behavior. The teachers' understanding of their students' personalities, work habits, and cultural background contribute to the students' academic progress (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The success of the student is based upon how well the teacher understands student abilities. While caring is important and practiced by adults, it is often not imbedded within the curriculum. According to the study, caring is a pedagogical method. Building a sense of connectedness and trust with students, allows the student to fulfill their individual need for validation. The perception of care by students may enhance the students' ability too perform well (Osterman, 2000). The implications for the effectiveness of alternative education programs are that students will tend to thrive if they feel that they are cared for.

When the staff models caring practices, and the students replicate acts of caring, you would have positive outcomes. But there is often a disconnect as teams do not identify the process of caring as something that is tangible or taught. Cook-Sather (2006) asserted in their study that substituting care for achievement outcomes would be considered secondary and that a severe form of caring would be considered primary. It was rare to have staff recommend caring as a practice to be taught in teacher professional development. Goals for the standard alternative curriculum revolved around self-esteem, respect, tolerance, cooperation, life skills, self-discipline, and conflict resolution skills.

47

Caring is often a trait associated with parenting practices. According to Glasser

(1992), students will work harder and produce quality work if they feel like they

are valued in the classroom. Furthermore, additional research is needed to

discuss the culture of schools regarding caring, caring practices, and caring as a

pedagogical approach. Accordingly, when caring occurs in a social context and

linked to the culture of schools, ethics of caring become part of the school

culture. While developing a school culture was the primary goal, the school

culture is suppose to unify personnel to improve educational outcomes (Ferreira

& Bosworth, 2001).

Alder's (2002) study discussed the imbalance of control and the care of

the student. He suggested that we all enter the world with some vulnerability that

requires sensitivity by others. The study reported on the rationale for exploring

the urgency for better serving the student. Studies indicated that students of

color are more likely to experience poverty and for longer periods of time than

other populations. The study indicated students of color are more likely to drop

out of school and experience failure in community day schools. For all students

to acquire equitable education, they must be taught in equitable ways.

While Alder (2002) encouraged the district to develop training that would

discuss equity in education and strategies to support positive results from

students in community day schools, the outcomes did not align to said

recommendations. The study highlighted concerns about teachers becoming

more aware of the negative differential treatment some students have faced

48

based on race/ethnicity and cultural misunderstandings. With exposure to diverse populations, curricular inclusion of culture, economics, history, ideology, politics, and attitude can positively change school cultures and student outcomes.

Many students attend school for the security and consistency of being able to have a person show care and give them equitable treatment (Garza, Ryser, & Lee, 2010). Significantly, I assert from my observations, student achievement is affected by and has an influence student behavior. While the definition of caring varies, the following is the guiding definition for this study:

- Caring is the genuine sensitivity toward a student based on placing student's needs before your own.

- Caring involves compassion, character, and sensitivity to understand student needs.

- Caring is supporting students to support them toward progress levels higher level than they were before.

The California Common Core Standards (CDE, 2017d) were not designed to include curriculum of caring; this is a method that an individual professor in a credential program would have to offer to their students. Teachers define the definition of caring their own perceptions and ideology. The definition of caring indicates the change in practices with including caring methods into their curriculum. Garza's (2009) study discussed how Latino and White students define caring attributes of teachers. The participants in this study included 49

Latinos and White high school students. The study generated five themes from a Texas High School. This study promoted the idea of providing students with the necessary academic support that they needed to be able to be successful. Consequently, Garza noted the lack of student's voice on the topic of care. Also, districts need to adhere to Latino voices. This particular dissertation study posits student voice and the theme of caring are instrumental, otherwise the decision not to care nor provide attention could change the trajectory of the students' educational experience.

Thus, nurturing relationships that will inspire students to maintain academic rigor for success after high school are warranted. Students articulate that effective teachers are those who care about them, hold them to high expectation, and show them respect (Alder, 2002). Community day schools are smaller, they have a lower student-to-teacher ratio when compared to traditional schools, student-teacher relationships tend to be stronger, and they have the freedom to alter curriculum compared to the regular high school (Lehr et al., 2009). Community day schools are an ideal setting to fully develop and implement curriculum with caring pedagogical approaches.

Lehr et al.'s (2009) research survey was distributed to 50 teachers throughout the United States; the response rate was 78% and was intended to gather state- level information to understand the alternative setting. Key alternative leaders were asked to provide information about the schools and the students they serve. They included information on students with disabilities. The

study surveyed educators in the alternative settings and indicated that it is in the best interest of alternative schools to increase accountability to ensure the programs are not being used as dumping grounds. The study suggested that alternative schools do an effective job documenting academic outcomes for their students. However, it was recommended for alternative schools to document other indicators of progress to secure additional funding resources. Community day schools presented as an ideal setting for data collection, "the Alternative School Research Project (ASRP) [2001] was designed to gather information about alternative school policies, structure, and educational practice" (Lehr et al., 2009, p. 22). According to the respondents study, 47% indicted that the state standards and curriculum are well integrated with state content standards and curriculum that is similar to the traditional high school; 14 respondents (44%) indicated the institutions are working on improving state and curriculum standards.

Community day schools were designed to house the most disruptive students; these schools provide an opportunity for students to build close and trusting relationships with caring adults. From professional experience, students appear to respond well when they feel like they can restore themselves. Often, students lose their identity once they enter into the community day school and are treated as marginalized humans that do not care about their education. Teachers that care to build relationships and encourage the students to restore themselves have a lasting effect. They refine their practices to address the

needs of the diverse culture in their environment. Garrett, Barr, and Forsbach-Rothman (2007) described the importance of teachers embedding care into their practices and curriculum. These students return to the comprehensive education system or graduate and either continue their education or find employment.

Ruzzi & Kraemer (2006) suggest many alternative programs show increase in self-esteem, positive peer relationships, commitment to school, positive student-to-teacher relationships, and academic progress. These schools are required to provide a free and appropriate education to expelled students. They asserted that some alternative programs lack in rigor, accountability, and data. They suggested for future research the evaluation of effectiveness of standard-based curricula that is designed to improve academic skills for those that are behind and provide professional development for those teachers on how to use this kind of curriculum. Also, evaluation of the connections between learning and work through applied learning, career exploration, career technical education, internships, and vocations as accessible tools to motivate youth and improve the educational endeavors (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006).

The community day schools' smaller environment would create a climate where expelled students could form positive relationships; these relationships would in return support student success (Warren, P., 2016). Ruzzi and Kraemer (2006) note the importance of accountability to the availability of accurate assessment tools for diagnosing academic levels and specific learning needs of diverse populations. They promoted the constant examination of how alternative

education programs like the community day schools are responding to the needs for teaching science, technology, engineering, and math at high levels. Students enroll in community day schools for shorter time periods and have the opportunity to seek out vocational training in most alternative/ community day school programs (Carver et al., 2010). Communities are encouraged to leverage resources and professional development that will prepare qualified staff for transient populations and high mobility rates (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006).

According to the Taylor (2015), accountability measures need to be reconstructed to maintain the responsibility for the progress of low-performing students. Many critics suggested that the accountability systems in California and other states do regulate referrals to alternative school programs as a means to avoid responsibility for the advancement of low-progressing students. Taylor asserted, "while a few alternative schools enroll elementary students, 98 percent of students attending alternative schools statewide are in high school" (p. 5). At any given time during a school year, roughly one in twenty high school students are enrolled in alternative school (Taylor, 2015). Since the late-1990s, when California attempted to create a state accountability system for traditional public elementary and secondary schools, it struggled with how best to hold alternative schools accountable for serving their students well. To date, districts continue to modify the purpose of alternative programs to hold students accountable to be responsible for receiving a high school diploma (Warren, P., 2016).

Mosqueda and Tellez (2016), described the role of nontraditional schools, by examining social capital held by academically underperforming youth. They also observe how these schools have the ability to increase students' success. Employing a qualitative case study, they sought to understand the educational experiences of 16 Mexican-American students enrolled in a community day school in Central California. This study used semi-structured interviews and centralized student voices to share thoughts on their experiences. The study emphasized the lack of connectivity between other schools in the district. The lack of effective and quality curriculum, training, and evaluation tools to build literacy and numeracy skills of diverse populations who are far behind; continuation programs reported that they had insufficient curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies that are validated strategies proven effective with diverse populations that lack in math, science, engineering, and technology.

Mosqueda and Tellez (2016) also reported on the lack of resources and funding for professional development had an impact on training and retaining qualified staff to meet the needs of the student. The program reported being isolated from the mainstream high schools. These programs lacked the experiences to work with problem- solving and critical thinking. They reiterated the importance of informed criteria for decision-making curriculum and the opportunity to share best-practices strategies with fellow colleagues.

This study suggested that credential programs should prepare teachers appropriately for alternative school settings. Significantly, it suggested that

teacher credential agencies develop specific programs to train alternative workers. It would require specialized programs to recruit teachers that have experience in the alternative programs. It would ensure that highly qualified teachers are hired and are prepared to meet the demands of the diverse culture enrolled in the alternative programs. It emphasized that a teacher's first choice in career options needs to be clear from the beginning (Mosqueda & Tellez, 2016). As a result, credential programs need to recruit and offer incentives in the alternative areas for teachers that are experienced and qualified. Most importantly, alternative programs can provide a quality education that can result in students receiving a traditional diploma and potentially decrease the dropout rate, reduce the pipeline to prison, and increase the district's graduation rate.

Students at Community Day Schools

Fuller and Sabatini (1996) examined the personalities and demographic characteristics of a sample of at-risk students in four alternative school programs. At-risk students were placed into alternative schools on the basis of observable behaviors; the study completed short, structured surveys to ascertain demographic characteristics. Generally, at-risk students are enrolled into the alternative school program when chronic, disruptive/norm violating behaviors, which prohibit students from attaining academically and becoming socially successful in the traditional school environment, persist. Participants represented 2.8 males (N=37) females (N=13) ratio, with a mean age of 15 years with a mean of 8.6. The 50 subjects completed the Minnesota Multiphasic

Personality Inventory-Adolescent (MMPI-A) to ascertain personality characteristics.

The conclusion of this study indicate the need for psychological assessments that would lead to focus on individualized interventions that would improve at-risk adolescents in education. Fuller and Sabatini (1996) suggested students seek attention, particularly students with conflict in the home and those with antisocial personalities, conduct disorders, and serious psychological and social withdrawals. These students are often the population that enroll into alternative education programs for a fresh start. "Disenfranchised youth," "at-risk youth," and "marginalized youth" are key words and phrases used to describe those failing to achieve basic academic proficiency in school and those exhibiting behaviors that can lead to failure or dropping out of school (CDE, 2017c). Identifying students 'at-risk' or deviant can place a negative stigma onto the student (Hiebert, 2002). It labels students as failures.

Students that attend community day schools, by current definition, are classified 'at-risk' for academic failure. Young people whose background places them 'at-risk' to future offending or victimization due to environmental, social, and family conditions that may hinder their academic development are considered to have a high potential for enrolling in alternative education programs. As noted earlier, alternative education programs were justified as a means to reduce school dropout rates and help students who are not succeeding in traditional comprehensive schools (Hemmer, Madsen, & Torres, 2013). A large number of

56

alternative education students come from economically disadvantaged and minority households. A study by McNulty and Roseboro (2009) found students at alternative schools had a 'spoiled identity.' In other words, expelled students arrived at the school labeled as deviant and were perceived with deficit lens.

Defining at Risk Students

In recent years, the scope and definition of at-risk students have become increasingly specialized. As a result, it is harder to determine how educators identify at-risk students. Usually, teachers and principals identify at-risk students early in the child's academic journey based on local, state, and federal criteria (Taylor, 2015). Daniels and Arapostathis (2005) studied students who suffered from social and emotional problems, physical abuse, limited parental guidance, and were failing in school. In previous studies, 'at-risk' students required course credits, returned to school after dropping out, were supervised by the court system, had severe discipline problems, or were expelled (Egemba & Crawford, 2003; Griffin, 2002; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Furthermore, Miller (2002) suggested that most of these students have been physically or emotionally abused, were neglected or abandoned, live below the poverty line, have fewer support systems, earn poor grades, or live in high-crime neighborhoods. All of these descriptors note the varying levels of vulnerability experienced by low-income students of color living in high poverty neighborhoods. These environments lack the opportunity to provide support for youth to develop social,

57

emotional, and cognitive skills to excel independently. Here, community day

schools holds the potential to support students holistically.

Hemmer (2009) examined the socio-legal discourse used when seven

administrators and 15 teachers implemented policy as a response to the at-risk

population in five demographically diverse alternative education settings in

California and Texas. The data revealed three dominant discourses of risk

compliance and policy knowledge that were evident forces in the policy of

implementing *No Child Left Behind* (2002). The findings identified that a

moment-by-moment process shapes the construction of role, responsibility,

success, and equity as interpreted by teachers and administrators. The

discourse of risk and policy converged as an ideological and political standpoints

where often these perpetuate a deficit point on disadvantaged children placing

them at greater risk. Additionally, the risk discourse that was engaged influenced

their sense of responsibility, practice, and may contradict the intentionality of the

original policy objective.

Quinn and Poirier (2006) conducted a study to identify the characteristics

of alternative programs that were considered effective. These would help to

describe characteristics of individuals involved in those programs. The study

triangulated data by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods,

followed by discussion and the sampling of teachers and students. The study

was confined to programs that served students in grades 7-12. At least 50

students were randomly selected from each site. The study focused on the experiences by teachers, administrators, students, and parents.

The researchers analyzed quantitative and qualitative findings pertaining to the administrator experience. Additionally, five students and five teachers that were selected randomly from participants from the quantitative phase of the study. Five parents were randomly interviewed in this study as well. The objective of the qualitative portion of this study was to describe, from the perspectives of key participants in the alternative programs, the culture of the programs, and to begin to identify possible components of this culture that are important to how these programs operate and why they might be effective.

Analysis of the data resulted in multiple themes which included the following key findings:

- positive student growth and improved performance
- following administrative leadership
- unique teaching characteristics
- importance of student choice
- separating behavior from students
- positive student-teacher relationships
- management and discipline
- staff collaboration and flexibility
- high expectations of students
- teacher-student ratio
- teacher training and professional development
- transition support for students and parents
- importance of parental involvement
- extended community support, and
- culturally-relevant pedagogy and cultural competence

In many of the interviews and focus groups, the participants requested further research in this field.

Consistently and rather significantly, teachers and administrators commented on the necessity of administrators to have experience in alternative programs before becoming involved in an alternative program. Teachers indicated that they were not like the traditional teachers in the traditional settings. Parents and students commented on maintaining high standards and knowing exactly what was expected to be successful. Administrators encouraged the importance of encouraging students to have high expectations for themselves and to maintain the quality of education with the transition from the traditional school to alternative programs. Administrators and teachers expressed the importance of a collaborative relationship between parents and the schools. Positive parent involvement is a critical component; parents and the schools must work together.

Many parents noted the lack of resources; parent's primary concern with students not receiving a real physical education. Additionally, parents expressed concern about the location of the schools as many locations were established in strip malls. Teachers suggested that it was thought to be better if the schools were located in a more private location away from the public view. Lastly, many participants discussed the frustration with the lack of evidence-based practices in the alternative education and called for more research.

In another study, Putney (2010) examined the experiences of 12 former continuation high school students in northern California. This case study explored the perceptions of the student experiences through critical

conversations and interviews. The participants shared their thoughts on their experiences in education, social life, and the challenges that they experienced while attending the continuation school. This study indicated the frequency of disruptions prevented students from being academically successful in traditional high schools. Students were unable to access the school culture or school social capital; the schools did not provide opportunities for students to learn about other cultures. This study indicated students were not effective in their education because of the circumstances in their lives. The researcher mentioned the students having difficulty with truancy, drugs, alcohol, teen pregnancy, and family trauma. Nevertheless, the author failed to hold educational institutions accountable for not supporting students and fostering access to resources or opportunities for wellbeing and academic success.

In another study, Ruiz de Velasco et al. (2008) examined survey results and state administrative data from field research undertaken within southern, central, and northern California counties. The researchers observed 26 districts and 40 schools (three sending schools and 37 continuation high schools). The researchers interviewed a diverse student population; the commonality was students lacking appropriate academic credits to remain on track to graduate with their age cohort. The data also indicated that a highly vulnerable population characterized by multiple risk factors and other non-academic learning barriers were also prevalent in this environment. Student populations in continuation schools appear to have a diverse variety of ethical and cultural backgrounds as

compared to the more traditional schools. Hispanic students tended to be the majority of the students enrolled, comprised 55% of all students in the continuation school, and 61.4% in attendance at the schools that were visited during the research; this is compared to 43.2% of the 11th grade students enrolled at the traditional high schools statewide.

Non-Hispanic, White, and Asian students were underrepresented compared to 11th-grade enrollments in traditional schools. Upon visiting 13 schools located in districts where African-American students compromised 10% or more of the district-wide enrollment, the disparity in the number of African-American enrolled in community days schools students brings to question: Are community day schools used as holding centers for students of color?

The study by Hemmer and Shepperson (2014) analyzed six to 13 African-American students that indicated African-American students exceeded the district average by 50%. Also, English learners were over-represented. English learners in the 11th grade tested 14% statewide in performance, while student performance data is lacking. Also, Spanish-speaking students averaged approximately 75% more than ELL students (Hemmer & Shepperson, 2014). This study concluded, that these community day schools are not providing the academic quality or/and support that students need to succeed.

In another study, Ruiz de Velasco and McLaughlin (2012) discussed the need to hold California continuation schools accountable for academic improvement, especially for students of color. They discussed raising the bar

and building the capacity of marginalized youth in continuation and community day school educational institutions. The researchers elaborated on how principals and instructional leaders also struggle to navigate an equitable system that assures the socioeconomic and diverse ethnic groups in the continuation system obtain adequate education to be successful post-graduation. The study confirmed that many of these alternative programs are, in fact, successful opportunities to promote students back into their school of residence. The exception, however, is that the goal of providing effective second-chance programs to all vulnerable students remains scarce. Many of these opportunities are lost when alternative programs do not offer them a genuine alternative that can respond to the need of the student.

Most importantly, alternative schools have the potential to provide a caring and trusting environments that will inspire students to restore themselves. Kim and Taylor (2008) discussed one alternative program and determined the benefits of students attending a program from a critical perspective. The research determined whether the alternative schools were helpful in designing the students' pathways to success. The researchers used open-ended questions to interview nine students, four teachers, one administrative assistant, and one associated superintendent. Critical documents analyzed and classroom observations were also included. In this qualitative study, the author used critical theory as a theoretical framework and concluded that many of these schools have the potential to provide caring environments. Caring environments would

provide students an opportunity to build trust but does not guarantee an equal and equitable education. Subsequently, the school did not offer a meaningful and fair alternative education that benefited the students.

In addition, the study revealed that the students and teachers were marginalized by mainstream education. Many districts separate these schools in order to provide an opportunity for the students to focus on themselves. In the process of separating the expelled students, teachers and students tend to be excluded from the mainstream. Teachers holding same credentials began to be identified in a negative way, like the students that attended the alternative education schools. These teachers would not be allowed in mainstream education as they would have to create their curriculum, disciplinary methods, and administrative policies. In many districts, teachers would not allow staff to be involved in interacting with mainstream educational planning processes. This study directs us to the importance of including student and teacher voices in planning and implementing school policy towards sustainable changes of said policy.

The also implied alternative programs need to provide rigorous curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, synthesis, and higher-order thinking which advance and strengthen student's academic outcomes and goals. Data from the study indicated that the curriculum in these programs was behavioristic and reductive because the curriculum was at a lower level than mainstream education. The study suggested that easy credits for graduation cannot replace

64

the basic skills needed to maintain after high school success. It alluded to Freire's (1997) challenge of the banking "education" ideology and methods where students are treated as passive receptacles. This analysis of the literature encourages collaboration with mainstream educators to create and develop processes that ensure a successful and effective alternative education program. Successful alternative programs provide resources for the whole child. These programs consist of rigorous curriculum that prepare for life after high school. Many of these programs provide employment in the skill of the student's interest. Others provide opportunities for students to access and navigate college preparatory experiences through the A-G academic requirements.

In another study, Glassett Farrelly (2013) examined documents and analyzed the experiences of students enrolled in an alternative program before, during, and after attending an alternative school. Findings suggest students hold stories that need to be documented and, more importantly, need to be heard. They examined how alternative schools affected the student lived experiences, and instruction within an alternative education. This study was conducted at the County Community School (CCS) operated from a County Office of Education (COE) in a state located in the southwest part of the United States. This particular district has eight locations and provided services for as many as 300 to 400 students. There were 11 classrooms, 15 classroom teachers, and five independent study teachers. The school had a high mobility rate. In the 2010-2011 school year, the CCS student enrollment was 336. In that year, 1,024

different students with diverse backgrounds attended the school. The research in this study indicated that a caring, supportive environment focused on individual instruction and positive-teacher relationship as crucial but not always the priority in the alternative school.

Other studies indicate alternative education systems have a variety of educational programs with a variety of goals and objectives. Some alternative programs operate with an ideology that supports the traditional school, some operate separately, and others contract out to community organizers. Some are meant to serve disruptive or juvenile offenders, while others service struggling, disengaged youth. Some issue diplomas, some refer students to adult GED programs, and others offer a temporary placement that intends to return students to a traditional diploma-issuing high school (Almeida, Le, Steinberg, & Cervantes, 2010). There is a movement to redesign alternative education programs so that these institutions will contribute to retain students and increase their graduation rates. However, Glassett Farrelly (2013) described alternative education as a separate and unequal system with little to no accountability standards. Many students in this study felt they had a second opportunity to appreciate education for the first time, others indicated that they felt alienated, and, conversely, t the school promoted deviant behavior. Glassett Farrelly described these students in the study as students of color, low socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities who were unjustly disciplined and disenfranchised. Many of these students were required to enroll in alternative schools. These students were

promoted with generous credits and non-rigorous grades, making it difficult for students to be prepared for life after high school.

Aron (2006) recommended following through on the promise of quality educational programs that inspire students to continue despite difficulties in the traditional school programs. Significantly, this study contended that the promise for expelled students that entered the community day school was to increase their maturity and provide a valuable education. However, rather than following through with the promise of education, schools too often engaged in practices that decrease students interest in their own endeavor that prepare them for the future (Carnie, 2003). Nevertheless, the initiative for alternative education provided guidelines for districts to implement in increasing the advancement of disadvantaged youth and described the rights and responsibilities for restoration and reconciliation of students and youth who are labeled negatively neglected, delinquent, or at-risk. In the next section, implications of exclusionary discipline for these student populations are discussed.

Restorative Practice

In 2008, restorative practices were utilized to assist students that were required to attend the community day school as a result of being removed from the traditional high school. In the Minneapolis Minnesota School system, a different restorative practice was initiated with family group conferences. Students were not expelled and were retained in their traditional schools. The data from 2010-2012, indicated that the students that participated in this practice

improved on attendance, had fewer suspensions, and fewer fights (McMorris, Beckman, Shea, Baumgartner, & Eggert, 2013). The premise of restorative justice is to assess, comprehensively, why students may be missing school, behaving poorly, or not performing to meet academic standards. A restorative justice approach takes into consideration external negative environmental factors as impediments to student success, rather than blame students. Methods to practice restorative justice include talking circles between teachers, students, and sometime parents. The exchanges enable school personnel to understand different ways to address students needs. In this way, comprehensive schools would retain students, versus defaulting to traditional measures of expulsion (McMorris, Beckman, Shea, Baumgartner, & Eggert, 2013). Further, restorative justice approached in a community day school, like alternative schools, would strengthen retention methods and help address unique student needs, as broadly as they may be.

Exclusionary Discipline

Students who attend community day schools do not have the opportunity to have a voice in their instructional program. Brown (2007) indicated that suspended and expelled students lose a significant amount of instructional time, due to the wide differences that exist at the traditional high school and the community day school. In Brown's (2007) research, students indicated they felt suspensions and expulsions were issued unfairly, too often issued without

understanding the facts about what happened, and issued unwarranted punishments for offenses.

Brown (2007) conducted the study by examining the experiences of 37 students who were suspended or expelled from school while attending an urban public alternative school in the North Eastern area of the U.S. This study focused on the loss of classroom instruction time and its implications for academic achievement as well as on the socio-emotional experiences of students excluded from traditional education. The study collected survey data and drew from the author's own experiences as a teacher at the school to show how school exclusion was related to students' academic, social, and emotional health.

Brown (2007) concluded that schools and districts should reinforce their commitment to students in trouble through strategies that advance, rather than hinder their academic and socio-emotional development. This implied the majority of students were expelled or suspended from the northeast region and majority African Americans and Hispanics. The study acknowledged that for many students, the issues indicated in this study included academic difficulties, and distrust in or poor relationships with school officials which often led to suspensions and expulsions. School expulsion disrupted students' experience, significantly led to missing key instructional time, and often-delayed admission and readmission processes. Further, when schools default to expulsion, this

prolongs a disconnect, or even a permanent disconnection, from school or the desire to learn altogether.

Perry and Morris (2014) also examined the effects of exclusionary punishment and theorized that these discipline policies had indirect adverse effects on non-suspended students in punitive schools. The study indicated that over time this type of control generates collateral damage, negatively affecting the academic achievement of students that attend alternative schools. From a social control perspective, the idea of eliminating disruptive students will increase academic achievement; therefore the elimination of these students would be justifiable action.

Beckett and Herbert (2010) challenged this ideology, arguing that physical exclusion from schools (social spaces) is the norm in many communities and is extremely acceptable. It stems from the term, 'banishment' (Becket & Herbert, 2010) which was used in cities to exclude negative citizens that brought chaos into the city. This method of exclusion was used to prevent deviant behavior and hold other citizens accountable to being good citizens. This exclusion was utilized to maintain a sense of organization or order in the community. This parallels to the way in which the schools operate with the idea of maintaining social order. Hence, banishment was used by districts in detouring defiance or the disruptions in the educational process; it defined any disruption of the classroom environment as unacceptable, criminal, and academically destructive.

Similar exclusionary approaches to discipline such as confrontation, obscenities, the willingness to obstruct the authority of staff completing their duties, in possession of a controlled substance, physical confrontation (physical assault), and mental illness has saturated our educational institutions. This promotes the idea that institutions in order to maintain order must migrate to stricter policies than to affiliated penal codes. This reiterates the tendency to default to punishment or punitive consequences for behavior rather than restoration or redemption. This underscores the tendency to frame problems as if they are all rooted in criminal crimes and restitution, increasing punishment, and the threat of severe banishment (Beckett & Herbert, 2010).

Jonathan Simon (2007) suggested that this criminal discourse and ideology has become more prevalent in educational systems. In particular, Bart Simon (2004) and Jonathan Simon (2007) contended that Foucault's (1995) idea of a disciplined society, intensive regulation, surveillance, and forced compliance has spread from the prisons and criminal justice systems into the school systems. Thus, in order to maintain control, students, in particular, have encountered the increasing utilization of these strict and punitive policies. Rios (2011) noted the populations most affected by these exclusionary practices are too often urban Black and Latino boys. The environments in which Black and Latino young men live are dominated with restraint-control attitude and practices to promote exclusion. Rios (2011) also discussed the effects of the deficit labels

on the expelled students; he discounted the stereotypes of the criminalization of young minorities as another means to ideologically control youth.

Current school discipline practices use suspension, although this form of punishment has negative repercussions for the students' academic success and life achievements. These exclusionary methods are championed for the advancement of a safe and healthy environment. Noguera (2003) discussed one of the key rationales for excluding offending students from schooling is to maintain control and ensure other students can learn in an atmosphere without disruption. Perry and Morris (2014) identified these practices in situations where students are considered to demonstrate at-risk behavior or will not comply with traditional means of discipline. The objective was to suggest that suspensions and expulsions maintain order for both the suspended and non-suspended student, providing an environment appropriate for all students to learn. Subsequently, mass imprisonment, such exclusionary discipline in schools could very well trigger a broader societal problem. More research is encouraged for the promotion of the equity of students that are affected by exclusionary discipline in order to avoid mass exclusion of student of color in education.

High School Completion

One aim of community day schools is to support students in completing high school requirements and earn their diploma or certificates in career trades that would help student with postsecondary options (Carver et al., 2010). Empirical data suggest a one-year high school cohort graduation rates were 81%

in 2012/2013, the highest level within the last five years. In the State of California, the one-year cohort graduation rate was 80%. The graduation rate in 2014 rose for most student groups in California (CDE, 2014a). There was a decrease in the dropout rate in 2009-10 with 11.6%. In 2011-2012 it decreased by 1.5% (California Department of Education, 2014a). Statistics indicate high school students who do not graduate with a diploma are far more likely to be unemployed, struggle financially, and be incarcerated compared to individuals who graduate with a high school diploma (Cataldi, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2009).

The graduation rate among the data indicated that English Language Learners increased 2.2 percentage-points from the year before, and is now at 65.3%. For Hispanic/Latino students, the graduate rate is 76.5%, which increased 0.7 of a percentage-point from the year before (CDE, 2014a). With the rate of 68.1%, African Americans show no substantial changes from the year before (CDE, 2014b). Although the national dropout rate is decreasing, students that drop out of high school is a primary concern, significantly when evaluating the experiences of graduates and dropouts from community day school settings.

<u>Summary</u>

Community day school students are classified under alternative education. Community day schools serve students labeled 'at-risk' of educational, emotional, social, and behavioral challenges. These students struggle to escape negativity due to disruptive behavior, truancy, frequent attendance issues, probation, associated with failing academics, possible drug use, physical

altercations, sometimes pregnancies, and anger issues (Warren, P., 2016).

Many studies have indicated these students are disproportionately students of

color: African-Americans, Latino, or Native American. A great majority of students

are from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, and classified as students with

disabilities or special needs.

Community Day School Programs Serve Suspended or Expelled Students

The number of alternative schools with community day school

components is growing rapidly, correlated to a rise in student enrollment (Taylor

2015). The increase of at-risk student populations are linked to an increase in

expulsions from the traditional high schools. Students who are suspended or

expelled are often referred and enrolled in alternative schools (CDE, 2014a).

Community day schools were designed to respond and support students that

were expelled from the traditional high school. However, school districts began to

use these schools for punitive offenses and minor violations. While the laws did

not hold districts accountable for implementation of their practices, school

districts were given the freedom to interpret policies and procedures as they

deemed necessary. As a result, there is no standardized protocols for

accountability, let alone to effectively measure student outcomes in alternative

schools – community day schools (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Lehr et al., 2009; Martin

& Brand, 2006). This void of accountability practices represent a major area of

concern as well as an area warranting further evaluation. In the next section, I

will discuss the parameters around the theoretical framework in this study.

Theoretical Framework

As a qualitative driven dissertation study, several theoretical frameworks were considered to best address the guiding questions. The three guiding questions for this study are:

- What are the personal experiences of community day school graduates?

- What are the schooling experiences of community day school graduates?

- How have their experiences in community day school influenced their postsecondary college and career life pathways?

The approach to this study is to centralize the lived experiences of students who graduated from community day schools. In this context, theoretical frameworks that would enable the researcher to document student narrative and pronounce recommendations to centralize student needs were especially critical. The following discussion notes key theoretical frameworks that undeniably pronounce the importance of centralized research query on lived experiences, and honors student voice to disrupt traditional schooling practices that often never take their perspective into consideration.

Critical Theory

The guiding research questions for this study were developed as a response to the lack of research on community day schools. They also arose from critical reviews of alternative programs that have similar characteristics to the community day school. Significantly, the literature pronounces a need to

study community day school phenomena with a critical theoretical lens. Critical theory helps explore the effectiveness of the community day school and give an understanding from the perspectives of graduates on how to improve the schooling practices and overall program. The study focused on converging and interpreting data with a framework that helps identify holistic student needs. Critical theory enables researchers to respond to participant narratives as these are spoken and shared from lived experiences.

Critical theory allowed the researcher to evaluate the community day school program and offer possible strategies to transform the way the program currently tries to rehabilitate and restore students with disruptive behavior. Fay (1987) defined critical theory as the idea of giving the human being the power to rise against those that restrain others because of race, gender, and class. This lens acknowledges the power of student voice and perspective to actively engage in narrating and use theory to interpret or discuss their experiences in their educational system. The central theme this study examined includes the education experiences of students from a community day school. The institution's effect on these lived experiences transformed students' lives through interpreting the importance of preparing students for life after high school; the historical problems or isolations, alienation, and educational struggles; and a critique of the community day school and the opportunity to envision the students' voices. In research, critical theory defines the particular configuration of methodological postures that embrace the human storytelling as a real

organism which is a direct construction by the individual and social stories

(Groves & Welsh, 2010). Critical theory is, at its center, an effort to join the

empirical investigation, the task of interpretation, and a critique and analyses of

these realities. Its purpose is to reassert the fundamental aim of the

enlightenment ideal of inquiry: to improve student existence by viewing

knowledge for its emancipatory or repressive potential. It seeks to challenge the

social, historical, and cultural structures that constrain the innovations of a

particular population. McLaren and Giarelli (1995) discussed the importance of

critical theory to empirical investigation and the ability to interpret, critique, and

question events in reality. In this study, the critique of the society and culture of

community day schools was of utmost importance to understand the student

experience.

Critical theory attempts to construct a normative notion of 'real democracy'

that contrasts the liberal forms of political communities. In a democratic society,

personal gains control over social processes that change the course of the

individual's life to the extent that social life becomes a requirement to the

demands of being entirely subject to the routine of the system (Horkheimer

1982). Critical theory in this context examines the social inquiry that provides

insight into the student circumstances and offers social criticism of current

practices in the institution. It will take a holistic view into the determination of

students as they experience their formal education in community day school

settings.

The three conceptual frameworks in this study provided the framework for 'real democracy' providing for the clear voice of individuals to the extent that the participants' social voices become a product of motivation and unrestraint. Horkheimer (1982) discussed the 'democratic process' and personal gains over the social processes changing the course of individuals lives. The overlap in this study is to provide the freedom and opportunity to speak. Students were encouraged to be intrinsic about the welfare of their education. Critical theory provided the freedom to the researcher in the method in which the data was collected and analyzed to speak freely about improvements within the community day school. During the data gathering and analysis, the researcher looked to identify salient patterns or themes within the data to pronounce student voices. Enlightenment was noted, during the dissemination of the findings, when the researcher discusses whether the community day school was effective and whether the research supported students attending these programs.

Self-determination enables at-promise students who experienced hardships in community day schools to name these in their terms. In the following section Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is discussed as it relates to the dimensions of the student's activities.

<u>Self-Determination Theory (SDT)</u>

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is an approach to understand student motivation and personalities that use traditional empirical methods while simultaneously encourage internal evolution to develop during the research

process. SDT is an approach to the reality of determination, motivation, and personality that uses traditional methods while employing an organism meta-theory that highlights the importance of being involved in the resources for character and behavior development (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). This study investigates whether graduate students' success were met despite possible innate psychological needs. Were these experiences based on their self-motivation and personality integration, or were these environmental factors promoting and supporting pre and postsecondary aspirations. SDT in this study was used to identify skills that helped nurture innate human potentials entailed in growth, inspiration, and motivation and to initiate the determination, incentives, and resiliency that fostered the decisions to graduate from the CDSs.

In the study of self-determination theory, students are encouraged to feel confident, connected, and autonomous. Many students arrive at community day schools discouraged and disengaged from the educational system, often described as dysfunctional, and bring a negative attitude or frustration to the environment. Social environment can be a factor in whether students grow and develop a healthy psychological perspective on life. Social conditions can, according to this point of view, facilitate and/or enable growth, integrate properties to decrease in the human psyche, or they can discourage, disrupt, and fragment these processes resulting in negative behaviors. These possible inner struggles may represent a defiant side of many students who are inevitable expelled from traditional schools (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) also examines the cultural factors that would influence student perspectives of their environment. These environmental factors would encourage students' motivation, social function, and the ability to maintain their well-being while in school. SDT provides the venue to allow graduates to narrate their self-determination theories toward their aspirations and dreams. The experiences of graduates will expand on the theory and help the district improve the environment of the community day school. Understanding student self-control and self-worth are critical to the examination of students' experiences.

In utilizing self-determination theory, it enables the identification of student interests that helped hold their ambition and commitment to complete their education. In assessing the true-natural experiences of these students; I used data as a learning tool. The data was used to help construct training for students enrolled in alternative educational settings as a way to help provide a sense of encouragement through their student trajectory. Many times people are moved by the internal motivation whether it be rewards, grades, evaluations, and/or fear. This study sought to provide student the opportunity to authentically identify and name these experiences. This could lead to future research in met-theory for encouraging intrinsic and varied extrinsic motivation, and an opportunity for participants in this study to describe their perspective roles and individual differences.

Figure 1 demonstrates the connections of the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methods embedded in this study. Critical theory informs the foundation of the questions: What are the personal and schooling experiences of the community day school graduates? and How have their experiences in community day school influenced their postsecondary college and career life pathways? These interrelated questions support the theoretical framework, supporting methodology, and specific methods.

The most interesting concept of critical theory is that an individual's self-determination is set free through his or her ability to tell the stories and adjust with on a society that restrains it's youth. Data findings give power to the those who experienced the risk of failure after graduation to taking the promise of a education to even high heights. The theme that overlaps with student-voice and self-determination is the notion of resilience. Applying critical theory to at-promise students, critical theory creates this innovative space for acknowledging the learning experiences of student who had been through school. The most salient concept of critical theory is that an individual identifies one's voice and becomes liberated. Critical theory provides a space for multiple forms of perception as observed by a marginalized population (Harding, 1993).
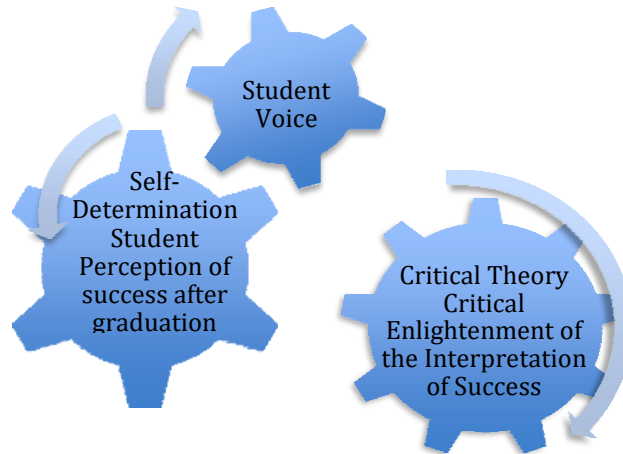
Figure 1. Alignment of Research Questions, Theoretical Frameworks, and Methods.

Critical theory will provide the guiding lens through which primary methods in data collection and analysis will intersect guiding questions to student voice. During the data gathering and analysis, the researcher looked to identify salient patterns or themes. Enlightenment requires that, during data collection and analysis, the researcher examines the process that students deemed discriminatory or inequitable. Possible probing questions would note: what are the high school educational experiences of community day school graduates' and how did their experiences in the community day school shape/influence their educational and career aspirations? An emancipatory lens helps the researcher the opportunity to centralize and prioritize student experiences are the guiding voice.

These voices have been traditionally silenced due to behavior and for the majority of their educational experience. Do students have the opportunity to control their destiny in the community day school? Can students in community day school settings set themselves up for life after high school? The research will develop additional research questions, key interpretation, and warranted recommendations to improve community day school programs and the preparation for graduates' successes. Does the community day school provide the skills and education for graduates of high school? The research of this study will drive recommendations, improvements, and the inclusion of students' active participation in their aspirations and success. This study used self-determination theory (SDT) to provide narration for the understanding of the student's voice (Deci & Ryan, 2000b). The following section discusses how student voice lead our understanding of acquiring competence, connection, and autonomy.

<u>Student Voice</u>

Student voice is critical to the narrative of this study. Students are capable of expressing their views about their learning experiences and school education (Groves & Welsh, 2010). The voice led by students note experiences after graduation to help researchers understand how school contexts shape student aspirations, and influence or discourage success after graduation. Students discussed, in their view, key factors that contributed to their classroom experiences. Students were provided space and time to express, authentically,

their own critique of their trajectory (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; De La Ossa, 2005; Loutzenheiser, 2002).

Community day schools and alternative education may be able to follow through with the promise to develop programs that will meet the needs and interest of the student. Students may actively hold intrinsic input as the fuel that restores their competiveness in the world's work force. 'Student voice,' takes into mind the internal strength and resiliency of the student's intuition. There are different of ways on how 'student voice' affects the spirit of determination once the student is a participant in academic achievement. Studies validate the importance of 'student voice' in programs that allow for the student to freely determine the fate of their future; it is imperative to the achievement of the student.

With the requirement to progress on State standards and the push to be competitive globally, alternative high schools must answer the call and provide quality and equitable education. Alternative programs struggle between student being negatively labeled and following through on the promise of rigorous education: the political agenda for harder courses and strict high-stakes testing; and the need for high levels of learning, scholarships, and advancement in the workplace (Shepperson, Reynolds, & Hemmer, 2013). Student-voice is a major factor in examining the educational experiences of community day school graduates. Furthermore, student-voice provides inspiration for graduates to narrate their experiences with 'What are the personal and educational

experiences of community day school graduates?' and 'How have their experiences in community day school influenced their postsecondary college and career life pathways?'

Although there are limited statistical data to measure for the effectiveness of community day schools, empirical studies underscore vital data about the importance of utilizing student voice to understand the nuances in these particular learning environments. In the research, there appears to be a lack of respect for student voice inclusion to understand the significance of academic success, career aspirations, and college success. The literature opens a new horizon on the mentioned effectiveness of programs that inspire students to challenge themselves academically. It proposed the idea of the promotion of strategies in these settings that prepare community day school graduates to fulfill their aspirations after high school and be successful. The literature discussed throughout this chapter is crucial particularly significant in understanding the pedagogy that will prepare students for freedom of speech in the real world after graduating from the community day school setting. Many educators want youth to be a part of their own destiny and encourage the freedom of speech (Higgins, 1994).

Many researchers champion students to articulate their voice about the improvements that need to be administered into the community day school. Alison Cook-Sather (2006) described student-voice as, having the ability to speak freely ones own perspective, truth, and belief. In its most conventional

forms, student voice means saying what is in your heart without worry of consequence. In its most radical form, the philosophy calls for an educational shift that inspires change and words to be released and minds to be awakened by the power and intelligence (Cook-Sather, 2006). Many advocates for student voice challenge and support student voice; that students will be able to improve schools (Cook-Sather, 2002b). The student is held in high esteem with student voice, allowing the teacher to learn, be taught, and have experiences from the student expert (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004a). The 'student voice' movement frees the young mind to be able to create, use innovation, and build his intelligence without limitation (Fielding, 2007). The devaluation of student voice has a direct impact in how to create their education on their own (Fielding, 2007).

Grace (1995) argued that this point of view challenges the perception of youth as weak, unintelligent, and insecure. Further, brings into question the integrity of a system that belittles the status of the students without recognizing the value and creativity of the that students mind. Significantly, students do not have the opportunity to form responsibility traits, build upon their own maturity, and create their learning (Frost, 2007; Rudduck, Chaplain, & Wallace, 1996).

Although student voices in the community day school are often not included in educational decision-making processes, many researchers encourage that students vocalize their thoughts about the effectiveness of alternative high schools. Cook-Sather (2006) described student voice as speaking with original perspective and having the freedom to have an significant

role in joining the processes. In its most conventional forms, voice means being able to express your agreement or disagreement with no ramifications. It calls for an opportunity to discuss things openly. It gives the student power to change the school culture (Cook-Sather, 2006). This study examined the student voice of community day school graduates and encouraged the narratives of student experiences.

The student-voice conceptual framework supports critical theory and self-determination in providing the liberty to discuss the untold stories of 'at-promise' students in the community day school. The three conceptual frameworks merge to posit an ideology to eliminate restraints in order to speak and develop one's ending to their story. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) approach merges into the reality of determination, motivation, and personality that uses traditional methods while highlighting the importance of being involved in the resources for character and behavior development (Ryan et al., 1997).

Chapter Three provides a discussion of the methodology for this study. The framework for this section included critical theory, self-determination theory (SDT), and student voice. Critical theory was used to encourage community day school students to discuss limitations and sources determination to complete their education. Critical theory in this study enables student voice to provide critical recommendations for educational institutions to include as a way to commit to significant program improvements. Critical theory offers opportunity to critique and change educational programs in the community day school settings.

This study used SDT to examine the graduate experience; SDT provided a way of identifying opportunities for developing effective community day school programs. SDT provided this research with information for understanding the individual student's success and aspirations after graduation from the community day school. SDT was the avenue for understanding the narrative inquiry of individual student's resiliency and motivation. Finally, by examining the holistic needs, SDT provided a way of identifying opportunities for building student confidence.

Student voice in this study provided the framework to capture clear and authentic opinions to pronounce warrant recommendation for future research activities in the field. Additionally, the study provided a venue for students to express their concerns about their educational process and offer recommendations for improvements. Students' voice gives students an opportunity to speak when they have not had the chance to do so. Student voice gives the student voice to a group that has been otherwise silenced by society. Critical theory provided the freedom of the researcher through which the data was collected and analysis to construct the findings and deliberate about the themes and patterns with the participants. During data collection and analysis, the researcher looked to identify salient patterns or themes to prescribe key findings. Enlightenment was noted, during data collection and analysis, when the researcher articulated the results of the examination and the process that students deemed discriminatory or inequitable. Ryan, Kuhl, and Deci (1997)

asserted that being involved in the character building and behavior formation and each conceptual framework supports and highlight the essence of motivation.

<u>Summary</u>

Community day schools fall under the umbrella of the alternative education. Community day schools serve students labeled 'at-risk' of educational, emotional, social, and behavioral failure. These students struggle to escape negativity due to disruptive behavior, truancy, frequent attendance issues, probation, association with failing academics, drug use, fighting, sometimes pregnancies, and anger. Many studies have indicated that these students are disproportionately students of color (African-Americans, Latino, or Native American), students with low-socioeconomics, and students with disabilities or special needs. The community day school program is supposed to support students that have been suspended or expelled from traditional high school settings.

The number of alternative schools with community day school components is growing rapidly, accompanied by a rise in student enrollment. This growth has contributed to the increase in expulsions and suspensions from the traditional high school and into the alternative and community day schools. The community day school transforms students with strategies that include discipline and structure. These schools have strict policies of 'no violence,' and 'no drugs.' CDSs were developed with the intent of autonomy to interpret these laws without accountability. There is no standardized accountability protocols for

student outcomes in alternative schools – community day schools (Lehr & Lange, 2003; Lehr et al., 2009; Martin & Brand, 2006) which represents a major area of concern as well as an area in need of evaluation. In Chapter Three, a discussion on methodology, participant profiles and data interprestation are presented.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the study's purpose, research questions, research design, and methodology will be detailed. I also provide a description of my participants and participant selection protocol, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and the various strategies I employed to ensure trustworthiness. In addition, I present my positionality statement. At the conclusion of this chapter, I summarize key points.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the educational experiences of community day school graduates. Their educational and personal experiences were examined to understand how their experiences influenced their lives after graduation from a community day school. Their experiences provided a personal understanding into how their realities set the context for postsecondary decisions. In particular, the study aimed to examine how community day schools shaped and influenced the pathways students decided to pursue.

The following research questions served as a guide for this study:

1. What are the personal experiences of community day school graduates?

2. What are the schooling experiences of community day school graduates?

3. How have these experiences influenced their approach to personal and

    professional growth in preparing them to navigate postsecondary college

    career life pathway.

To examine the lived experiences of community day school graduates, I

employed a qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Given the

purposes of this study, the most suitable methodology was narrative inquiry

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

<u>Research Design</u>

Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that qualitative research is an approach to

exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or participants discuss to

solve a specific problem. Creswell and Poth asserted that the qualitative

research process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically

collected from the participants in their natural setting, data analysis constructing

codes that are transcribed to general themes, and the researcher making

interpretations of the meaning of the data. Creswell (2013) added that qualitative

research captures the lived experiences of participants in their natural setting.

Also, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted that qualitative study is part of the

relational composition of people's lived experiences both internally and externally

of inquiry.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) asserted that using qualitative methods

provides a more realistic view of the real world that cannot be interpreted or

explained by quantitative data and statistical analysis. Merriam (2009) described

the qualitative methodology as the participants reflecting on their voice and attitude.

The qualitative methodology for this study included the voices of community day school graduates, reflexivity of the researcher, description, interpretation of the situation and interpretation of the issue, and how it can contribute to the solution within the literature (Creswell, 2013). This approach understands that each case is unique; seeks to capture the real story, to respect the perspective, and to capture detailed data from the individual graduates being studied; the reflexivity of the researcher can develop the relationships through patterns, themes, and understands the behavior better (Creswell, 2013).

Therefore, I utilized a qualitative research design, as I aimed to understand the lived experiences of my participants through the use of rich data. I utilized my expertise and professional experience of 25 years in education to build relationships with community day school graduates, which provided an opportunity to understand behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes about their post-graduation endeavors. I used my experience working with diverse cultures, ethnicities, and understanding different social constructs to build trust with the participants, which opened the doors for the participants to be open and honest.

Narrative Inquiry

I used narrative inquiry, which is essential for narrating the lived experiences of the participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that

93

narrative inquiry represents a way of understanding and researching experiences through dialogue between the researcher and the participant through unstructured interviews at different times and places. According to Iseke (2013) who described narrative inquiry as critical cultural attributes, story and story telling are used as attributes of indigenous people as pedagogical tools, witnessing and remembering, and support to spirituality. Chase (2005) suggested that the researcher use paradigmatic reasons for narrative study, such as how individuals are enabled and restrained by social educational standards, limited educational resources, educationally situated in non-active student performances, and how the narrator tells the story. Thus, this study incorporated the participants' intrapersonal and interpersonal narration with description, interpretation, and story telling in consideration of the research questions to contribute to the literature on community day schools.

Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) stated qualitative narrative inquiry is about life and living, it is a difficult and intense method to begin with participants' living, and it is the narrative inquirer situating themselves in a relational way with their participants. Narrative inquiry is appropriate to this study as it has a specific contextual focus of community day schools and the graduates' experiences post-graduation and the stories told about community day schools (Czarniawska, 2004).

My study demonstrated the ability to allow for the free expressions from the lens of community day school high school graduates. The points of view may

be used to advocate for community day school graduates through stories

(Kennedy-Lewis, Whitaker, & Soutullo, 2016) or it may be a disenfranchised

youth lens to report the stories of students, a lens that shows how students'

voices are silenced, useless, and under appreciated (Chase, 2005).

Polkinghorne (1995 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018) discussed "narratives in

which the researcher extracts themes that hold across stories" (Chapter 4, Types

of Narratives, para. 2) which in this research I shaped stories based on

community day school graduates' narration. Chase (2005) asserted that the

understanding of one's own story and the actions of organizing is the shaping of

or the ordering of past experiences.

<u>Participants and Participant Selection</u>

According to Creswell (2007), narrative inquirers "focus on a single

individual (or two or three individuals)" (p. 214). I was able to secure seven

participants. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling (Handcock &

Gile, 2011). Handcock and Gile (2011) asserted that the term snowball sampling

is likely to have been used informally in the past. Biernacki and Waldrof (1981)

described snowball sampling as a "collection of samples from a population in

which a standard sampling approach is either scarce or expensive, for the

purpose of studying characteristics of individuals" (p. 145). The following criteria

were needed for the selection of participants,

1. Expelled from the Comprehensive High School

2. Earned a Community Day School Diploma within five years of the present
    study

I recruited participants outside and inside of educational settings because they have taken a variety of pathways upon the completion of their high school education. The participants were employed by a business and/or students in community colleges, four-year colleges/universities, vocational training institutes, and/or the military. Due to the significant range of career and educational pathways, I was flexible in meeting the graduates whenever and wherever it was convenient for them and their families. Given my snowball sampling approach, all seven participants were graduates of Redemption Community Day School.

For the purpose of acquiring participants, they were assured that their names would be changed to protect their identity. I asked the participants to choose a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. All names used in this study will be pseudonyms. Table 2 presents a broad overview of the community day school graduates who described their stories with me. Every name in this study is identified with a pseudonyms, including participants, colleges, and high schools.

Table 2

Community Day School Graduate Participants

Name (Pysuedo)	Ethnicity	Post-Secondary Aspirations	Post-Secondary Plan	Current Success
Tristan	White	Inventor	*Inventor	Lead Custodian
Nobel	White	XGame Rider	*Heavy Equipment Operator	Yeager Steel Worker
Spirit	White	XGames Skater	*Skater	Ski Lift Mechanic
Titus	Black	Chef	*Chef/Film	Chef/Film Maker
Jesus	Black	Bus Driver	*Entrepreneur	Groomer
Legacy	Latino	Expert Rider	*Construction	Department of Defense
King	Latino	Business Owner	Attend VVC	Foreman for Truck Wash

For the purpose of this research, community day school graduates were identified from a variety of cultural backgrounds, regardless of ethnicity. Although I aimed to secure female participants, all participants were males. Two graduates resided in California, one resided in Utah, North Carolina, Nevada, and Arizona. Also, participants attended community colleges that specifically specialized in their field of interest, such as Universal Technical Institute (UTI), LA Culinary Arts, LA Films School, and private.

Narrative Descriptors

In Chapter Four, I will present the participants' narratives and themes for Tristan, Nobel, Spirit, Titus, Jesus, Legacy, and King. Their individual stories describe their journey before enrolling into the community day school, their experience while attending the community day school, and their post-graduate experience as they describe their definition of success. In illustrating their narratives, I decided to concentrate on the participants' perceptions and voice, while providing the narrative through the process, technical schools, and community colleges.

Informed Consent

All participants needed to meet the inclusion criteria discussed in the previous section. Due to the sensitivity of the responses and IRB requirements, participants were provided with an Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) was discussed and signed prior to any data collection. At the beginning of the interviews (Appendix A), a brief discussion about the research process was discussed. Also a request included a questionnaire (Appendix B) submitted for approval; the questionnaire was collected for demographic information. The participants were encouraged to ask questions and had the opportunity to leave the study at any time without repercussion. I made ethical considerations as required by California State University, San Bernardino, to ensure I was protecting my participants. As I recalled my CSUSB CITI training, I made sure the participants were

accommodated free from unnecessary stress and the participants' well being was taken into consideration. I applied my ethical and moral training and thanked the participants and offered to be of assistance with any of their academic concerns. All participants were given the option of removing themselves at anytime which was discussed in the initial meeting before the study started.

Prior to collecting data, the study was submitted to the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the welfare of participants in the study.

Data Collection

Upon the approval of IRB (see Appendix C), the participants were recruited via social media and contacted through the referrals from other participants. Each potential participant was introduced to the research, purpose of the study, and consented to participate in the study.

Mills (2003) indicated that "Qualitative research uses narrative and descriptive approaches for data collection to understand the way things are and what they mean from the perspective of the researchers respondents" (p. 4). As such, data was collected via unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews are the recommended approach for narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The unstructured interview is a spontaneous, interactive, and reproductive tool to encourage the free thoughts and responses from the participant in the explanation of providing rigorous meaning and expression

(Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I did not have a set of predetermined questions to be asked in a predetermined order, but the questions that I asked my participants focused on their experiences in community day schools.

In addition to being the most suitable approach for narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), unstructured interviews were utilized because I have a solid understanding of the topic and a clear focus. Unstructured interviews give the researcher the opportunity to remain open to the understanding of the area of inquiry. Since it will be difficult to jot notes during the interviews, I requested permission to record the unstructured interviews. Recording the interviews allowed me to focus on interacting with the participants and follow the discussion. It was crucial for me to develop rapport and a healthy dialogue. The benefit of unstructured interviews in narrative inquiry is to provide an understanding and appreciation of the culture, experience, and story. The unstructured interview often contains open-ended questions and discussions that may develop into gaining rich data. Other opportunities to collect data stemmed from personal diplomas, personal notes from the participants, yearbooks, resumes, vitae, and other artifacts participants shared with me as they recalled their experiences while enrolled in community day schools.

Phillion (2002) explained that narrative inquiry does not require one method of gathering data, because the research was created through life as it was lived in the moment. The narrative interview was a major way to gather information about the lived experiences of students graduating from the

community day school. Unstructured interviews were the collaborative activity

that provided the participants to support the research with authentic stories and

rich data. Chase (2005) described the construction of these stories from lived

experiences.

I used interviews that were recorded with an application from Word and

transcribed with Rev: Transcribing Tool. I maintained a notebook that kept the

data organized during my study. Notes were kept throughout the research

process to annotate detailed experiences that captured potent information from

the interview responses. A journal was kept through the entire process to identify

data that was not collected from member checking and the interviews; this

information included tone and participants' attitude. The notes assisted with the

data analysis process and contributed to each participant's interview.

Data Analysis

According to Patton (2002), data analysis is the "Process of making sense

and meaning from the data that constitutes the findings of the study" (p. 128).

Patton asserted, "Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the

data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study"

(p. 454). In order to make sense of the data, I organized the collected data into

categories and interpreted the data, searching for patterns to determine the

significant titles of importance. In qualitative research, the collecting of data and

analysis takes place simultaneously to build a coherent interpretation of data

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). I coded each item into a category and I placed

items into the same categories; if different categories arose, I developed new categories. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) described narrative coding as appropriate for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human story, which was validated in and of itself as a legitimate way of knowing. I read the responses from the participants and began to interpret the data into smaller units of data.

In order to maintain accuracy, I kept organized notes and a journal. Upon completion of the interview process, the interviews were transcribed word-for-word by Rev: Transcribing Tool. When the transcriptions were returned, I listened to the audio recordings several times for accuracy and I member-checked with the participants. After member checking, I began to evaluate the data by rereading over the transcribed interviews multiple times taking notes in the journal. I used different colors to identify themes that were relevant to my literature and research questions. I developed a storyline from the participants' shared stories.

According to Richards and Morse (2013), they described categorizing as the process of what we arrive at from the diversity of data, to the shape of the data, and identify the topics representing the sorts of things that are represented. Data was utilized using Saldaña's Code-of-Theory (Saldaña, 2016). Corbin and Strauss (2015) insisted that the way in which codes, categories, and systems work is interrelated and creates a pathway towards the development of theory.

Figure 2 illustrates a small replication of a streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry.
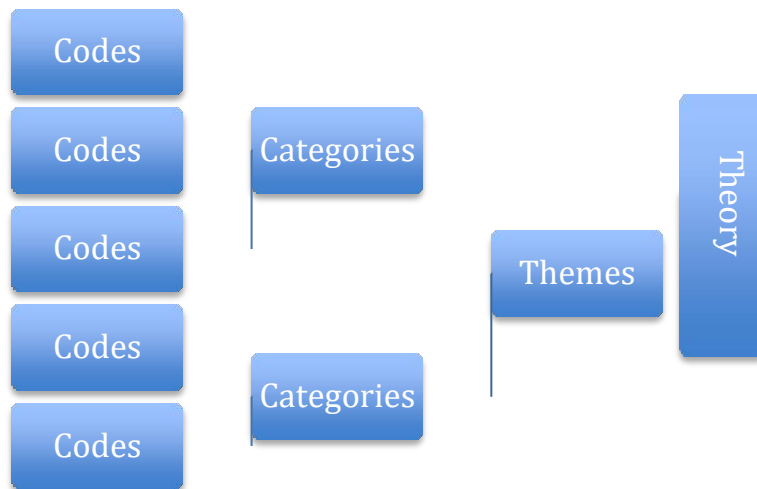
Source: Adapted from Saldaña, J. (2016). Figure 1.1, p. 24.

Figure 2: Codes of Theory Model

I analyzed community day school graduate students' narratives using Self-Determination Theory and student voice as the theoretical framework; however this did not constrain my participants' responses. The qualitative phase drew from graduate students' interviews that analyzed the perspectives of graduates, to answer the question *What are the personal and schooling experiences of community day school graduates?* A narrative inquiry rooted in Self-Determination Theory and student voice was significant in understanding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the community day schools, to answer the question *What are the personal and schooling experiences of community day*

school graduates? Finally, a critical analysis of narrative data was utilized for key themes and were included in the results to answer the question *How have these experiences influenced their approach to personal and professional growth in preparing them to navigate postsecondary college and career life pathways?*

In addition, narrative analysis was used to establish a pattern of the individual stories to identify patterns, categories, and themes that pointed out the lived experiences of community day school graduates to gain a clear understanding of the experiences that have shaped the lives of the graduates. The inclusion of their voices is captured in Chapter Five as part of the summary of the study.

According to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative analysis is the critique of past reflections of stories that have connections to create a timeline of events to account for how a final event may end. The purpose of the analysis of the data was to identify crucial experiences of the participants, and understand the individual and collective data to comprehend and analyze those experiences.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed reliability and validity with the description of trustworthiness containing criteria to assure credibility, transferability, and dependability. Embedded into these concepts were specific methodology constructs for verifying qualitative rigor, reliability, and validity. Lincoln and Guba established methodological strategies for demonstrating qualitative trustworthiness with methods such as member checks during coding,

categorizing, peer debriefing, interviews, the audit trial, case analysis, structural corroboration, and referential adequacy. Lincoln and Guba developed authenticity criteria that could be used to validate quality research beyond the methodological dimensions. Kvale (1996) asserted to validate is to research, to verify, to inquire, and to theorize. These activities are vital mechanisms of qualitative inquiry that validate rigor. Rigor is the desired goal that is used in specific verification methods.

The aspects of validating rigor in this research included member checks. The methodology strategy of member checking provides the opportunity to validate and understand what the participants intended to do through his or her actions. It gives the participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what are perceived wrong interpretations. Member checking also provides the opportunity to volunteer additional information, which can be stimulated by the playing back process; and, provides the opportunity to assess adequacy of data and preliminary results as well as to confirm particular aspects of the data. Member checking was conducted after unstructured interviews were transcribed. I verified my findings by sharing the codes, themes, and categories with my participants for accuracy.

<u>Positionality of the Researcher</u>

If it were left to chance and the circumstances I faced in 1989, I would not fit the profile of earning a college degree. I would not have been selected to become a candidate for the doctoral program. One of my proudest

achievements in my life was being accepted into the doctoral program and earning another Master's degree in the process. Being an African-American aspiring to be inspiring, motivating, and encouraging to those young men and women in his community, this was both stressful and rewarding. My mother had seven children, finished her high school diploma, and married at a young age.

After my father passed, I was on my own in attending high school and playing sports. Although my mother prayed for us to go to college, we struggled financially, eventually moving from our home in Riverside into my Uncle Charles' trailer in Perris, California. My mother worked multiple jobs to provide shelter and food for the family. The idea of attending college was not the topic of discussion but a slim ray of hope was that I would be recruited to play football. This dream quickly disappeared when I was injured during my first game of my senior year.

I would fall back to my plan B; I would sign-up for the Marines. Although my sisters attempted to attend community colleges, I would be the first to graduate with not one, but two Master's degrees. My initial vision was to play football and major in engineering. After not passing the physical for the Marines due to my football injury, I always understood the importance of attending college. I also knew that my mother worked hard and was tired after getting off from work. I did not want to follow down that path.

The comments that were directed towards my life were negative. I was a fatherless, low-income, African-American student that did not have the finances,

grades, or credits to directly attend college. I did graduate high school to at least fulfill the accomplishment of receiving a diploma; this is where my father and mother stopped. As I was enrolled into California Polytechnic Pomona University, in Civil Engineering and being accepted, once again I was in need of financial stability; without any parent assistance, I worked on-campus and off campus. I was determined to not experience the same struggles my family had experienced and most importantly, I was not going to be another African-American without an education and getting his girlfriend pregnant. At least that is what I thought before my girlfriend at the time came and knocked on my door while I was staying in my dorm.

When my girlfriend, and now wife, encouraged me to get back into school and finish my education, I was working for Riverside County Probation with juveniles. I had returned to Riverside Community College to finish my Associates of Arts and my Bachelor's in Human Development at California State University, San Bernardino. I decided that I wanted to help encourage and motivate teenagers early in life before it would be too late. I wanted to set an example for my three boys, they were not going to struggle, and we were going to have conversations about where they would want to go to college. I wanted to be more than another African-American that is a good athlete or a good singer; I wanted to be an inspiration, motivator, encourager, and educator.

It took me longer than most to complete my education. I call myself a life-long learner. I studied, worked, and took care of my family. I applied for classes,

financial aide, scholarships, and grants. At every level, from my associates to my doctoral degree, I was met with negativity, but every time this would inspire me to finish my course work. At this time, I have learned to be inspired by those that are important in my life. I work hard because my God, wife, and three boys are encouraging me to do so. Being the first in my family to receive two Master's and a doctoral degree, champions me to provide positive support to those students that are struggling in life because of circumstances.

Purpose

The goal in my research and study assisted me in creating an equitable educational institution that will prepare all students for relevant career and educational pathways. My desire is to eliminate the gap within education that is between the non-traditional high schools and the comprehensive high schools. The information gathered may provide districts with strategies and programs to prepare students to be ready for life after graduation at all levels. In regards to community day schools, I request an answer to the following question, *Are these institutions providing adequate instruction for the future or are they holding places?* To answer this question, districts can accomplish this by requiring alternative/non-traditional institutions to develop a plan that would promote counseling programs and develop realistic career pathways that the students are interested in obtaining. It would have the potential to eliminate the dropout rate, provide more skilled and qualified workers in specialty jobs, and increase

revenue for the community and promote the next hard workers for the next professional leaders in all schools.

No Respect of Persons in Education**.** Through this journey, I realized that not everyone will go down the traditional educational route. Through my journey, I have found ways to gain credits in unconventional manners that still meet the California graduation requirements. There are students that potentially can attend the community day school and continue to have a diploma that would prepare them to be successful after high school. As I reflect on my accomplishments, I gained advancements that placed me in positions that I would be able to work with disenfranchised youth and prepare a plan for them to be successful. While working on my degrees, I came in contact with educators that appeared to be housing students. I thought that the staff would be enthusiastic about finding ways to get students motivated about their own education. As I continued to work, I came up with questions about the educational institutions that districts send students that have behavior issues.

Many of these students were sent to the community day school for punitive behavior issues. It would not be until my ninth year at the community day school that I began to see students graduating and feeling good about themselves. I continued in my pursuit to develop programs that would help students pursue their educational endeavors; it would be five years into the program where I saw the effectiveness of many programs and the ineffectiveness

of other programs. Through my foolishness, I thought every educator genuinely wanted to help students be successful in life despite the student's behavior.

    <u>Return to Passion Returning to the Need of the Student</u>. In the last two years, I accepted a job as an Assistant Principal, my mentor and principal, Mrs. Hawktastic (pseudonym) encouraged me to finish my doctorate. This may inform how participants perceive me. I assured participants that my identity as Assistant Principal is not the main purpose for conducting the study, to ease any potential discomfort. My purpose for research and study will help bring back the passion of educators to motivate students to strive for a higher level of education, whether it is through career, community college, college, and/or work. The information accumulated from this research will provide districts, and universities with recommendations for the advancement of all students with difficulties in behavior or academics. This can be addressed by maintaining strict accountability measures in all institutes of education, providing high levels of education in all non-traditional educational settings. It will help provide different strategies on how to address, promote, and encourage a variety of methods and pathways to access higher education. This, in return, will provide endless opportunities for all graduates after graduating high school.

<u>Limitations</u>

    My study had potential limitations. In reference to Merriam (1998 as cited in Hills, 2012), "Human instrument are as fallible as any other research instrument (p. 20)" (p. 164). I may be fallible in inquiry, making mistakes, or

accidental errors. As a human instrument, I am limited. The limitations of this

research were related to time and scheduling. However, this provided an in-

depth understanding of the participants' schooling experiences in community day

schools. Additional limitations consisted of participants to entice or change their

responses based on my position as an educator. To account for this limitation, I

gave my participants the opportunity to reflect on their responses for accuracy.

Member checking validated the responses from my participants and established

a level of trust. Another limitation of my study is that all my participants identified

as male. Although I attempted to secure female graduates as well, my

recruitment efforts did not yield this desired outcome.

Delimitations

Marilyn Simon (2011) identified delimitations as characteristics limiting the

scope and defining the boundaries of the study. As the researcher, I delimited

my study to students who attended community day schools in southern

California. I did not pursue graduates who attended community day schools

outside of California.

Summary

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiries have a

way of helping us understand, in the midst of living and telling, reliving, and

retelling, the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social.

The purpose for this narrative study was to examine the lived experiences of

community day school graduates. As the researcher, I attempted to provide the

platform for retelling their stories as they journeyed through the community day school environment and life after high school in an attempt to understand the interpersonal and intrapersonal lives as they decide their future trajectories. Their personal perspectives provided integral data to provide professional development on how to improve interventions that will encourage, inspire, and motivate disfranchised youth in the community day school environment. In addition, their stories provided support structures such as career development, college planning, and life to contribute to being prepared for life after high school and their successes. Their experienced successes and failures were shared to understand and gain insight into the effectiveness of instruction in preparation for a life-long journey of finding work, attending college, working in the vocational field, and their potential interest in career technical education ultimately understanding why they are in their current position in life.

The chapter facilitated the demonstration of the conceptual framework, qualitative research design, and methodology. Narrative inquiry creates a venue for real-lived experiences to be expressed without limitations. Fontana and Frey (2008) asserted that narrative inquiry is the vehicle that brings the stories of the participant alive, which was appropriate for this study. This study offered opportunities for the participants to discuss their concerns about the educational process within the community day school and shed light on how those experiences of graduates from the community day school played a role for these students after high school.

CHAPTER FOUR

DELIBERATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents critical findings on the personal educational experiences of community day school graduates. Using narrative inquiry, this study captures the lived experiences of graduates through their personal account and reflections. In documenting graduates' stories, this study honors their unique and complex experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Examining the experiences, their educational trajectories, and influences to their education in the community day school, provide an in-depth look into how these graduate overcame struggles to become successful after graduation. This narrative inquiry approach aimed to provide a platform for disenfranchised youth to share their stories in a way they could motivate other individuals to be determined and resilient through their educational journey. The three guiding research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the <u>personal</u> experiences of community day school graduates?

2. What are the <u>schooling</u> experiences of community day school graduates?

3. How have these experiences influenced their approach to personal and professional growth in preparing them to navigate postsecondary college and career life pathways?

This chapter enables the audience to understand each participant's individual story; these are organized thematically. The qualitative thematic coding process and final analysis include participants' direct quotes. Direct

quotes are used to accurately capture articulated experiences. In addition to honoring the participant voice, this approach provides the readers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the life of the community day school graduates (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect the privacy and confidentiality of each individual. These pseudonyms are Tristan, Nobel, Spirit, Titus, Jesus, Legacy, and King; they are currently active in their communities. Due to geographical distances, some of the interviews were conducted via FaceTime or via telephone calls.

To examine the lived experiences of community day school graduates, I employed a qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the purposeful approach to this query, the most appropriate method was a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). The methodology of narrative inquiry was instrumental in capturing details of each community day school graduate through the lens of storytelling (Polkinghorne, 1995; Webster & Mertova, 2007). As explained by Phillion (2002), narrative inquiry does not require one method of gathering data because the research is created through life as is lived in the moment. In this study, a narrative inquiry is a way to gather information centered from the lived experiences of community day school graduates. Narrative inquiry provides the stage to community day school graduates to share their lived stories in their own personal way. Chase (2005) asserted that the ability to construct these stories from their lived experiences is crucial to the rich data. Elaborating on each graduates' respective story respected their voice as they reflected and narrated

how they experienced their journey. A great amount of authentic data was gained from the stories of community day school graduates who would, otherwise, may not have had the opportunity to voice their perspectives in other settings. By examining the experiences through their journey, we can gather recommendations that can potentially change the dynamics of the program, while also encourage students the ability to complete their high school career despite schooling obstacles.

Results of the Study

This study examined the lives of seven community day school graduates. The purpose was to gain insight on how they experienced life and how they define success. The individual narratives incorporate: (a) brief explanation of the participants' story; (b) reflection and retelling personal experiences; (c) their expertise and advise for other students journeying through similar experiences; and (d) present the conclusion of the graduate perspectives.

The participants' quotes are used to accurately capture the articulated experiences in their own form by providing the audience to submerge themselves in the life of the community day school graduate in this study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The individual participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect the privacy and confidentiality of each individual. The pseudonyms used for this research were Tristan, Nobel, Spirit, Titus, Jesus, Legacy, and King; each are currently active in their communities and growing into productive citizens. As

articulated by Quinn and Poirier (2006), data were extracted via unstructured interviews and in-depth interviews which produced subthemes. Data analysis revealed pivotal themes on determination and resiliency, as well as, respecting student voices. The study touched on topics including: positive student-relationships, student voice-choice, cultural competence, and transitional support after high school. Upon the conclusion of the narratives, a summation of their individual experiences, as it is relevant to the literature and research questions are presented.

<div align="center">Experiences before Community Day School (CDS)</div>

<u>Tristan's Narrative: "Pushing Buttons"</u>

Tristan recalls his aunt and uncle taking him into their home after witnessing his mother use drugs and getting arrested. He remembers family helped by allowing him and his younger sister to stay and care for them. He appreciates their patience especially when he was angry and getting in trouble at school. He recalled, "Without their encouragement I would be incarcerated or in a mental hospital." Although Tristan's aunt did not talk about her sister, she believed there was a possibility his mother was doing drugs when she was pregnant with Tristan. According to Tristan, he "believed his aunt has been protecting me from the truth but I was not bitter." After the experience, "I know my aunt and uncle love me; otherwise both me and my sister would be in foster care."

"Life is Hard"

Tristan lived with his aunt; he had two sisters that he was extremely protective over. His family was supportive and provided opportunities for Tristan to have a healthy life; his aunt raised him from the age of 6. From an early age, Tristan was interested in repairing small electronics; his aunt could always count on Tristan to improve household electronics. Being the only boy, Tristan spent much of his time building inventions and working on projects that would help his family, financially. Tristan could work well with his hands and used many tools while constructing his projects. It was evident that Tristan was destined to develop something that would help the world. Through the years Tristan describes his childhood as, "Always having to justify my place in the family, and although I knew my aunt loved me, I knew I did not fit in." While on trips to visit family in Utah, his aunt would attempt to research where his mother was located. Tristan's family was usually close, but due to some tragedies, the family had difficulty getting together. His aunt and uncle tried to support him as much as possible. Tristan, once old enough, gave his aunt and uncle credit for allowing him to be a part of their family. They encouraged his creativity even though it was expensive.

Family Fostering Career Aspirations

Tristan considered becoming a designer to financially support and help his aunt and uncle. He would like to repay his aunt and uncle for their hospitality, loca and care. For his aunt and uncle, Tristan described,

. . I am a tinker. I will invent machines that I will be able to get a patent and begin to make a lot of money to help my sister, aunt, and uncle. I was favored with the ability to construct mechanical devices and repair electronics. My aunt and uncle worked hard to make sure I had a big room to store all of my projects and bought me almost every material item that I would need to support my creativity. They motivated me to create and never, ever were negative about what I want to do in high school. To add two more kids to their lives was impressive. This transformed their retirement and the ability to concentrate on their biological children. They never made us feel like we were not a part of the family.

Tristan explained, "My aunt and uncle went above taking me into their home." They supported and fostered his creative interests. Tristan asserted, "I was a good kid and did well in school." He had a vivid imagination and excelled in art and writing. After entering middle school, he had difficulty with students bullying his sisters. His aunt and uncle attempted to support Tristan through engineering programs and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEAM) programs. They decided that they would help his dream; Tristan would attempt to pursue events and apply for grants to build his interventions. Tristan needed to be filling out multiple applications and submit a project to the county fair, local school competition, and community events for recognition.

Although Tristan did not have any communication with his biological parent, his aunt and uncle purchased small engine repair kits to boost his skill

set. He did not know his real mother and father, he just remembers traveling to different states and being a part of his aunt's family. Although Tristan does not recall his biological family experiences, he does tell his stories about the frustration of walking his cousin (sister) to school and being bullied. Tristan was not going to allow this to happen and ended up getting into many altercations on the way home and at school.

<u>Protecting and Consequences</u>

Even when Tristan was fighting in school and he faced expulsion for slamming the boy into ground for bullying, his parents were there. It was difficult because kids kept calling Tristan names and bullying him. At first he was able to ignore it and move on but after a while it built up and he exploded. According to Tristan, "He just went ballistic because they just would not leave me and my sister alone and so I would beat them up."

Although, Tristan's aunt and uncle believed in him, he continued to become frustrated with the other kids pushing his buttons. The trigger word for him during this period of time in his life were people calling him "bastard." He recalls:

> Somehow they found out that my aunt and uncle were not my mom or
> dad. They kept calling me a bastard. Go home you bastard. Go home to
> your mommy, oh, you don't have one. You are a bastard.

During his sophomore year, Tristan was removed from his traditional high school on expulsion for multiple fighting incidents. Tristan stated,

. . . Counseling was not optional. As I faced a citation due to the injuries to the loud mouth kid that kept pushing my buttons, I realized that I was creating a barrier not only for myself but also my aunt and uncle. During that time I felt like I needed to prove myself. In the beginning I was fighting all of the time.

"A Cry for Help"

His aunt and uncle would eventually decide to notify the school about the harassment and bullying. His parents could not afford him to miss school due to Tristan getting into trouble. This meant Tristan would attend school daily with some sort of self-control from middle school to high school. Tristan would have difficulty because to Tristan the bullying and harassment were now extending from his sister to him. He had trouble adjusting because it seemed like the school staff did not care. He found himself making excuses not to attend school and often manipulated his aunt to miss class. He shares why he would get into fights:

I guess I would get into altercations defending my sister because I would tell the teachers and the students would find out my aunt and uncle were not my parents. I fought three boys on the same day."

Although his aunt and uncle were not happy with the fighting, they attributed the behavior to the protection of their daughter. Tristan recalled the discussion at home with his aunt and uncle:

Kids are harassing my sister. I am going to punch them. I don't want to

fight. But it is happening every day. I have to defend my family.

His aunt said, "Go tell the proctors and teachers. I do not want you fighting, we

have been to the school too many times. But if they throw the first punch, you

have a right to defend yourself." My aunt said, "You are going to end up at the

community day school. You have been in the office too many times. You cannot

fight." Tristan remembers going back to school and the following day, "I went

ballistic on this boy."

He was removed from the traditional high school. Tristan got into another

physical fight and was recommended for expulsion, cited for bodily harm, and a

change of placement to the community day school.

Negative Experiences at Community Day School

Struggle with Injustice

Upon the transition into the community day school, Tristan continued to

encounter physical altercations. He tried to control himself but found that he is

actually good at it. Tristan's aunt and uncle attempted to get counseling for him

and wanted to send him back to Utah with other family members. Tristan talked

about his negative experiences at the CDS and began with the school not having

any engineering classes. From his perspective, the community day school was a

school for low-functioning students. With all of the negative labels within the

community, Tristan felt ashamed for attending CDS. Tristan had no trouble

adjusting; he continued to have difficulty when he walked home from school. He discussed the inability to enter his engineering class during lunch to work on his robotics; the CDS did not have engineering. He felt like the curriculum was easy, he would finish his assignments in a matter of minutes to work on projects within the class. To Tristan, the classes were not rigorous enough.

This was a different environment at the community day school; Tristan would have straight A's in a matter of months. Tristan excelled in both sports program and in academics. Tristan realized his mistakes and took the program seriously. He recalled being able to move around the class to help other students with their math. This built Tristan's confidence and his reputation with some of the kids that he had prior confrontations with because he would now help them out. It appeared to him that the teachers were more caring than the ones at the traditional high school. Tristan recalled, " . . . the teachers having the students count money for ASB and sell snacks from the student store. I felt like this was the place for me. We have aspirations and goals."

According to Tristan, it was already difficult to live in the community and attend the community day school. "I could remember the students in the other classes complaining about insensitive teachers." Tristan recalled, "Teachers from the traditional school looking down on the teachers from the community day school." Students that did not want to be held accountable made up the rumors about CDS. Tristan began to understand the process of the community day

school; the school had all types of students from your students going from school to work to students attending four-year universities. He recalls:,

> I personalized my pathway and was given a one-on-one counselor and guidance to the program of my choice. My teacher facilitated trips to colleges and embedded college, scholarship, financial assistance applications inside of the classroom. We went to visit Job Corp, the Dr. Pepper Plant, and the Botox Company. We were challenged; the teacher attempted to provide depths of knowledge to give students the ability to meet the A-G requirements in the event the student returned to the traditional high school.

"Building Trust"

Tristan started out in Mr. Blessed's classroom. Tristan was able to rebuild a bike from scratch. He helped another student rebuild an engine and refurbish a boat. Tristan's goal was to return back to the traditional high school because he was doing so well. As Tristan had the opportunity to work with technology, he developed a program that built and personalized shoes with an Apple i-Pad. Tristan recalled the Mendel Experiment; it involved rotten meat, maggots, and flies. Tristan loved hands-on projects and could articulate the history and steps needed to identify the answers to the hypothesis. Tristan's portfolio included a PowerPoint and the first prototype of his design for his shoes. He wanted to be an inventor. He knew he could explore his options without negativity at the CDS.

Community Day School Teachers Fostering Aspirations

Talented. The math, science, and history were fascinating for Tristan, it was the counseling requirement that frustrated him, however. It was taking him from what he enjoyed the most. Although Tristan had difficulty attending the community day school in the beginning, he identified a teacher that took the time to help him. Tristan shares why he made a connection with his teachers:

Indeed, Mr. Blessed took me in and got me started on a hands-on project. I can remember he brought in an old bicycle, a chair, seat, pedals, and a small motor. He wanted me to discuss the physics, history, and math of different aspects of the bike. At first, I was like – what the – you know what and then he instructed me to go to the computer and then proceeded to pull out all of these tools. 'First,' he said, 'you must find the instructions on the computer to assemble the bike.' He wanted me to research the type of bike he had brought in and what was each function of every part. . . . It was tinkering. He knew the right buttons to push. Not only was I able to understand the history of the Schwinn bike he had brought in. I had to know about the speed, pressure of the bike, this was associated with the gears and the breaking system. This was the science of physics. Then we learned the math, he would discuss the speed and how much distance we would need to stop at a stop sign if we were going 60 miles per hour or how long it would take us to get to Los Angeles at 90 miles per hour. The history was related to Germany. In which the bike was used in

World War II and designed by an Ignaz Schwinn. He was born in 1860 in

Hardeim, Germany.

Indeed, Tristan was excited about the opportunity to build and construct and

appeared to enjoy every part of the experience. .

Positive Experiences at Community Day School

"I Have Hope." Under Mr. Blessed, Tristan would excel in his reading,

writing, and math. He used different programs to build his confidence with

vocabulary. He recalled the teacher defending him when other students would

make fun of him. Also, when I would get frustrated, Mr. Blessed would allow him

to leave the classroom to cool down. Although Tristan did not think he needed to

be punished for responding to bullies, he was excited and proud to be in a

teacher's classroom that cared about what he was interested in doing for his

career. He was proud of his work and the clear expectations that were facilitated

in the class. Tristan shared how his mindset grew because of his teacher's

ability to allow him to create. He shares why he was not sure he was able to

create:

> We had always heard of the negative experiences at the community day
>
> school, the unchallenging curriculum, unhealthy, and unqualified the staff
>
> was at the site. My teacher had high expectations and wanted us to be
>
> successful. Mr. Blessed was an inspiration.

Tristan was able to concentrate on his life and pursuit of successes and

happiness despite not understanding his biological family make-up.

"Build Self-Esteem and Determination." Specifically, Tristan developed his academic and personal goals through the CDS. He is reminded of the tragedy of his older sister and how the school sent their condolences. Although it was difficult for his parents at the time, Tristan asserts, "It serves as a reminder of not only the sacrifices that were made on his behalf by my parents but the time my family gave me to work through the pain." He reflects on the love his aunt and uncle gave him through the tough moments. Tristan shares, "This is an opportunity to give back and allow my parents to not stress about me." He contributed by not getting into a fight and graduating the CDS.

Tristan asserted, "I am thankful for being with a teacher that is passionate about my life." He could tell from the teacher's heart he was there for the kids. He recalled,

> . . . to this day, I can remember the time playing football on the field. Mr. Blessed would be one of the captains. He would always put the best players on one team and the players that needed work on his side. He coached us, and we won every single game. We were always on the winning team with Mr. Blessed. As long as we finished our assignments, we were able to go out and play football, basketball, baseball, and soccer. We learned the real rules of the game. We were learning and having fun at the same time.

Tristan recalled the economic lessons and the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University Lessons. He tells the story:

We needed to save, sell, or earn money to build a portfolio. We talked

about credit cards and visited USA Bank, where we were able to open

checking accounts. We were given an assignment with the amount of

money per month we would make with our ideal jobs and where we would

be able to live with our budgets.

Hands-On and Care. As a creator and inventor, Tristan appears to have

learned a better way to help his community; he would eventually set-up a tutoring

business to help students for $5.00 an hour. He describes, "The genuine care of

teachers and the ability to inspire students to express their creativity in a positive

light, a plus." To Tristan, responsibility is about stepping out of your comfort zone

and making an impact on someone's life for the good. Tristan expresses hi

thoughts:

Once I was able to build a relationship with my teacher and my

instructional associate, I believed that the associate, really cared and took

the time to explain to me the rules, explain to me what I needed to do to

get going and encouraged me to be a part of my education. And also the

teacher, Mr. Blessed was an excellent instructor who went out of his way

to make sure that I understood what it took to be successful in my

education. He helped me prepare for life after graduation.

Someone Cared. Tristan takes his life serious and spends quite a bit of

time designing inventions that would make someone's life better. He is thankful

and continues to keep in touch with his teacher.

"Maturity and Growth." Tristan's experience has shaped his life in the community day school. The different opportunities in his life have provided the foundation for growth, compassion, and creativity. Tristan stated,

> I needed to challenge myself to understand who I was. I had an aunt and uncle that supported me, I am talented, and I was angry. I had a teacher that wanted to make a difference in my life. He wanted me to know what I was capable of.

To Tristan, a caring teacher that understood his struggles was important. Also, his teachers inspired him to want to help other people. His passion was definitely a plus, but his innovation and creativity in the curricular lessons were what made him want to come to school. Tristan proudly shares:

> My senior year I had perfect attendance. We burned a desk in class, and the smoke was everywhere during a chemistry assignment and blowing bottle rockets on the field for science.

His family would move from California after Tristan's graduation in 2010 to start the reunification process with his biological mother.

> Upon my return, I would attend an academy of arts and work as a novice level groundkeeper for a school. I would continue to go to school at the local community college. While working at the school, I would be offered the lead custodian position after major transitions in the leadership of the school. I would earn certificates from the community college in HVAC,

electricity, plumbing, and hazardous chemicals. It's like taking what you

learned in school seriously and being successful.

Given Tristan's ability to vocalize his dreams, Tristan excelled into a

responsible participant in the community. Tristan encourages:

If you do not want to help students with issues, or don't want to give them

a chance, I would encourage you to look at the facts. I would recommend

you listen to your students. Especially, when you know that a student is

about to become unglued. My definition of success – I have no kids, I am

young, and I work to make a decent leaving. I am in the process of

purchasing a house. I have made mistakes but without my supportive

aunt and uncle I am not sure I would have made it.

"Support my Vision."

Tristan gained a variety of coping skills along the way to his own specific

definition of success. He recommends, "Never giving up and do not listen to

negative people who are trying to throw you off track. They will try to push your

buttons." In addition to earning his certificates, Tristan continues to hope he can

support his uncle and aunt financially on a bigger scale. Tristan asserted,

This is for my family. I do not care about my needs; it is time to support

my uncle and aunt. Especially since they are getting older and not being

able to move around as quickly as they used to. I know I made them

stress and it was hard. I have the skills, this not for me, it was for my

family.

Community Day School Influences on Postsecondary Transitions

Tristan's parents and teachers played a significant role in his career five years after graduating. He expressed, "Being in the engineering program and requiring to complete a portfolio to complete the application." Upon graduation, he recalled the interview and presentation; this was an emotional moment because this teacher pushed him despite the tragedies in his life. Tristan could remember having math all of the time, "the teacher kept driving home the importance of knowing geometry and being able to think critically." Tristan recalls the teacher sharing:

> We will not move on until everyone get this, that means everyone studies.
>
> Just because you have it does not mean anything, you have to be able to
>
> use it, . . . explain it to your partner."

Our teacher loved us and wanted us to become healthy. He wanted us to take ownership and change our own trajectory. As I continued my aspirations after graduation, I hear my teacher's words of encouragement.

Tristan remembers going to class and hearing the teacher say these inspiring words:

> Don't be average. Fight for what is yours. Education is provided free of
>
> charge, take advantage of it, be greedy with it. You have to work hard.
>
> Nothing is easy. The ability to run above the average will make
>
> determination and resiliency; you can do it. You are an overcomer; you

have been through many storms. Sometimes you are going into a fight, in

the middle of a battle, or coming out of a dispute. No matter what; get it

right and get it tight.

Tristan felt one of the most contributing factors to his success after

graduation is his experience in the community day school. He expressed, " It

was one of the best experiences that have contributed to the closeness of his

family." Tristan defines success as "Advancing from one position to the next."

He earned an Associates degree in Technology and Associates of Science from

the community college and attributed this transition to his teachers in the

community day school. Upon the completion of the program, the college would

assist Tristan in his supervisory role as he has six employees in his crew.

Although he struggled at the beginning of his journey to college, his

resiliency with support of family and teachers helped him stay determined and

focused. Tristan is excited about his decision and reflects back on the

encouragement of his teacher. Tristan lives in Southern Utah and has made it a

priority to help his aunt and uncle with their finances. Tristan expressed,

I am proud of myself. I never ever would have thought I would have had

success. I deserves this. I feel like I proved to my self, "I got it right and

tight." I am 200 %.

Challenge Accepted and Conquered

Tristan eventually was willing to work with the community day school

teachers and students in the technology field. Through some of the negative

interaction with some of his teachers at the community day school and the traditional school he understood that most of the negativity was generated from his attitude. He often identifies these types of philosophy with his employees. Tristan shares:

> They are going through so many issues at home, and then they come to work and take it out on their colleagues.

After transitioning from the community college, he is working in an elementary school. He is a lead custodian and prides himself on finding the solutions to small devices at his site. Tristan felt that there are still many changes that need to be made at the community day school setting and traditional school setting to motivate students in all pathways. He stated,

> The labeling of students at these educational sites is inappropriate. They need adults that are going to believe in them, motivate them, and encourage them. Our students are talented, fantastic, excellent, and gifted if you take the time to care. If you are not interested in student success, you are in the wrong business. My teacher and associate believed in me.

Tristan recalled the names. He remembers the negativity from when he started the program and continued:

> Most teachers told me I would not make it. I was called deviant. People gave up on me. Mr. Blessed helped me get through some tough times. He has always been there. I am a survivor. I define success as being able

to take my skill and make an impact in the lives of other people. I do not have time to be negative. I love my aunt and uncle.

Although Tristan helps his aunt and uncle, he attributes his talents and abilities to his support system. For Tristan, being a college graduate and being successful has shaped his approach to life and maturity. Through his life, he believes his family can view him as a role model. "I want struggling students to be inspired by my story," he repeated. Tristan thinks that he was not sent to the community day school by chance; he believes he belonged there. He believed that he had the best education he could possibly get. Tristan states, "Extend the lunches."

<u>Summary of Tristan's Narrative</u>

His uncle and aunt supported Tristan's early childhood and teenage years. He believed he was supported no matter what type of tragedy occurred. His aunt and uncle buried a daughter from an accident, and they continued to support Tristan and support him as part of the family. He was aware of the financial struggles and the psychological effects of losing a sibling. Tristan would like to contribute to those students that have experienced lost siblings as they go through the school system. Tristan expressed the importance of the fair treatment to students that have had difficulty in school. Aron (2006) contended that the objective of placing expelled students into the community day school is to understand the individual needs of the student and to provide free and appropriate education.

Tristan believed there is a misrepresentation of the community day school of what it is utilized for; "It has the potential to save all students from dropping out of school," Tristan replies. He felt the district needed to attract specialized teachers that are trained to work with students inside of this program. Brown (2007) concluded that schools and districts must reinforce their commitment to students in trouble through strategies that advance, rather than hinder the academic and socio-emotional development. Tristan shares, "I felt alternative programs struggle to examine the educational experiences of individual students." One aim of the community day school is to support students completing high school and earning their diploma or certificate in career trades that would help them with employment after graduation (Carver et al., 2010). Tristan suggested, "Teachers have some training in clinical psychology, mental health, and career guidance."

Experiences Before Community Day School

Nobel's Narrative: "To Be Free"

Nobel was born in the United States and moved up to a small town west of the 15 Freeway at the age of six years along with his parents. Not much afterwards, his father was offered a job and they were fighting to become financially stable after the father had lost his job and then could not afford to keep their house. Nobel attended the local elementary and progressed through the school system with no difficulty. After the sixth grade, he would appear to be slightly behind due to his transition in the middle of the year but teachers were hopeful that he would have no difficulty catching up as the years went by.

Over the next three years, Nobel's family began rebuilding their stability; both parents were working and he began to excel in school through junior high school and on into high school. During junior high school, because of the family's recovery from financial hardship, Nobel was allowed to get involved in riding motorcycles and began to ride throughout the trails in the desert in his free time. He was expected to borrow his motorcycles and earn the money to purchase his own. Despite these requirements, Nobel knew he wanted to ride in competitions but also understood attending school was important.

Family Support of Passion/Educational Alternatives

Nobel explained that he and his family were extremely close. His family was supportive and provided opportunities for Nobel to be successful, which counters deficit assumptions that all community day school parents do not

support their children. Griffith (1996) asserted that "parents whose educational expectations for their children were high were also more involved in school activities than parents with lower expectations" (p. 1559).

From an early age, Nobel's parents would take him to ride motocross bike on the dunes in the desert. This was a family tradition that would bring the family together during holidays, most weekends, spring breaks, and summers. While on trips to ride motocross, Nobel's family and friends noticed a difference in Nobel as they compared him with the other kids his age. Nobel could maneuver his bike and do jumps better than the other kids. It was evident that Nobel loved to ride. Nobel describes his childhood as always having his parents supporting him and taking him to ride classes and motocross events. Nobel gives his parents credit for encouraging him to express his creativity through his bike.

Nobel recalled riding Yamaha's 250 Stroke when he was in high school. He remembers the wind in his hair and the power at his "finger-tips." He gives credit to the hard work of his parents for their ability to support and encouraged his creative expression in motocross, which would contribute to his obsession to missing school to ride. Nobel's obsession with riding overwhelmed his ability to resist the temptation to take school seriously. Nobel's immaturity and spontaneity as a young 14-year old kid followed his unwise decision-making skills into high school, where his teachers did not appear to care about his activities outside of the school classroom and constantly used punitive measures to correct his inappropriate behavior.

Nobel asserts, "I was a good kid and did well in school." After entering

middle school, his father decided he would attempt to pursue sponsors for riding;

this meant that Nobel needed to be on track riding as much as possible and miss

school due to events. Although his father had to work, he began to research how

his son could legally miss school without having consequences. He is not sure

how many days of school he missed, he just remembers traveling to different

states and having to complete his school in the hotels and on the computer.

Although Nobel recalled the frustration of working in the hotel or trailer on work

he had to figure out by himself, Nobel's mother was able to find ways to motivate

him and keep him on track.

"A Strong Will To Overcome"

While attending Wheel High School in Southern California, Nobel chose a

pathway that would lead him into a career. His passion to ride stemmed from his

encouragement and support from his father and mother. Significantly, he was

going to return the favor back to his parents by purchasing a house, when he

was successful. He would be the first in his family to breakout of the city,

because they had lived in the same city all of their lives.

Experiences Before Community Day School

"Back to School"

His father and mother would eventually decide, due to financial and

academic struggles, that Nobel would attend the local high school full time and

that they would limit their motocross events to the weekend, spring break, and the summer. This meant Nobel would attend school days after being on independent schoolwork through his middle school education. Nobel had difficulty adjusting to the day-to-day schedule. He found himself missing classes to ride his bike and having trouble making a social connection with the other 9th graders. According to Nobel, "I would get into altercations on the track with the bullies and the issues would escalate at school." He recalls "I was angry, one day I fought the same boy two times." Although his parents were not happy with the fighting, they attributed the behavior to competitive rivalry because Nobel had beat this student on the track; he had a right to defend himself. Nobel recalled the discussion at home with his mom and dad.

Nobel had a close family. He was determined to make his parents proud. However, two things the family did not anticipate was that the fighting and attendance related issues would put Nobel in a situation where he would be on his way to the community day school. While at Wheel High School, Nobel would miss a significant amount of school with his friends, especially after it had rained. He does not recall his teachers taking notice of his abilities outside of the school setting. He expressed, "I felt as though the teachers were just there to do a job and go home." He would be removed from the traditional high school. Nobel would get into another fight and was recommended for expulsion and a change of placement to the community day school. Nobel was removed from the traditional high school.

Transition to Community Day School

Upon attending Redemption Community Day School for fighting and attendance, Nobel began to attend classes at Redemption Community Day School – a public school for expelled students in a rural area – he "thought the school was horrible. "I was looking for smaller classes and a shorter school day to be able to ride my bike; the traditional school was too crowded and the days were long," Nobel asserted. The community school provided structure and accountability because of the behavior. The school would provide rewards once the student demonstrated responsibility and behavioral growth. The students would have to start out with a clear record and maintain that record in order to earn a shorter day or week.

Negative Experiences at Community Day School

<u>First Impressions and Resistance</u>

Upon removal from Wheel High School for fighting and attendance, Nobel began to attend classes at Redemption Community Day School – a public school for expelled students in a rural area. Nobel "thought the school was horrible." He did not like the monitored lunches, the inability to socialize with the other classes, and the separate small physical education classes." Upon the transition into the community day school, Nobel continued to ride and miss school. He tried to convince his parents to take him back to homeschool, but they could not

leave their jobs. Both parents worked to support his riding and could not afford to pay for a private tutor or take off to homeschool. Nobel talks about the negative experiences from his perspective. With all of the negative rumors about the community day school, Nobel struggled to want to attend. At the beginning of his attendance, he did not give the program a chance; he discussed the inability to change teachers and was worried that the teachers were not even qualified to teach. He resisted the curriculum by not doing any homework. The classes were not the same as the traditional high school.

At first, Nobel did not listen to his teacher because he felt they were sarcastic in their responses. He recalled being called upon and because he came from the traditional school, he believed that the teacher was harder on him. They would say, "You should know the answer you are from the flagship of the district." Nobel continued, "It appeared to me that the teachers were harder and required work every day. In one of the classes, I was in I had to stand in line with my hands behind my back." Nobel elaborated, " . . . the teacher having the students line up, and because one student stepped out of line, he made us hold onto a rope with knots on both sides."

Nobel felt like this was degrading. He asserted, "we are not in prison nor Kindergarten." According to Nobel, it was already difficult to live in the community and attend a school that had such a negative connotation. With such a small community, there were times when Nobel would see traditional teachers in the stores, and you could see hear them referring to Nobel as "One of those

kids." As he continued to attend the community day school, he became a student with more and more questions. Many of the rumors were not true, and he wanted to be an active participant in the planning of his education.

Discussion of Positive Experiences at Community Day School

Validation and Redemption

Nobel began to understand the process of the community day school; He described students attempting to attend a variety of schools from career technical institutions to four-year universities. The teachers were attempting to facilitate multiple classes for an assortment of different career choices. While students that did not need A-G requirements were working on one curriculum or sometimes the same curriculum, other students' curriculum was modified to meet the A-G requirements either through online means or traditional high school curriculum.

Once Nobel was switched into another teacher's class due to increased enrollment, he was settled into his goal of returning back to the traditional high school to work on his education. He knew he wanted to have a couple options if motocross did not work out. He quickly fell in love with his teacher Mr. Blessed. It was not until Nobel began to attend Mr. Blessed's classes that he began to formulate a plan for his life, as Nobel explained.

<u>Building Trust and Determination</u>

Under Mr. Blessed's care, he was frustrated at first; this teacher was extremely intentional in his curriculum delivery, contact with parents, and discipline. Although Nobel struggled in the beginning, Nobel was excited and proud to be in a teacher's classroom that cared for the student on the inside, as well, as the outside. He was proud of his work and the clear expectations that were facilitated in the class. Nobel says his change in mindset stems from the relationship with his teacher.

> We had always heard of the negative experiences at the community day school, how unsafe, unhealthy, and unqualified the staff was at the site. I feel that the teacher I have right now is more qualified than any other teacher I have ever had. I have not been in a fight at school, I am coming to school regularly, and I have plans that I can develop for myself. Mr. Blessed changed my world.

Interestingly, Nobel understood on an academic and personal level what it would mean to prepare to finish his high school education and walk into something he would enjoy. He is reminded of the many transitions of going from event to event. Although it was difficult for his parents at the time, he said it serves as a reminder of not only the sacrifices that were made on his behalf by his parents but also the care he has for his parents in giving back the joy they had during those times. Nobel was able to do better and know to return the favor of supporting his parents.

This is an opportunity to give back and allow my parents to not stress

about me. I can contribute by not getting into trouble and helping myself.

Nobel asserted he is thankful for being with a teacher that cared.

He could tell from the teacher's heart he was there for the kids. He recalled,

To this day, I can remember the time we did the math, English, science,

and history through a single project. I think this day went so fast. The day

started out with the teacher rearranging the room like a small café. The

teacher provided a menu and newspaper upon every student entering the

class. We had to calculate the price of our meal, which included $1.25

orange juice, $1.00 bacon, $1.00 eggs, $2.00 blueberry muffin, tax 7.75,

and a 20% tip. While we were eating, we were to write two paragraphs on

one item and where the article originated.

Hands-On and Care. As a student and competitor, Nobel appears to have

learned a better way to fight for the top position in school, as he puts it, with the

direction of his teacher. He described the genuine care of teachers and the

ability to inspire students to express their creativity in a positive light. To Nobel,

responsibility is about looking beyond someone's faults and build upon their

needs; it is the ability to transform someone's life for the positive.

After I graduated from the community day school, I had a goal of using my

education to make an impact. While I was at the community day school,

my teacher helped begin a construction program that offered students the

ability to obtain certificates for various trades. He could go outside of the

box and see the needs of the students. I believe that although I was

fighting the program in the beginning if I had not of went to the community

day school I would not have graduated. I graduated because someone

cared enough to see my need and work a plan for my interest.

Nobel's experience shaped his life in the community day school. The different

opportunities in his life have provided the foundation for maturity, passion, and

discipline.

I needed to have some struggles to understand what I had. I had a parent

that supported me, I was talented, and I was spoiled. I had a teacher that

wanted to make an impact; he wants to see me soar. The other teachers

were there, and they did their best, but there was a difference in

Mr. Blessed.

To Nobel, a caring teacher that understood his struggles was important. Also,

his teacher's out-of-the-box approach sparked a passion for Nobel's life. His

passion was definitely a plus, but his innovation and creativity inside his lessons

were what made him want to come to school. Nobel stated, "My senior year I

had perfect attendance." As part of the engaging courses

Additionally, it was not until Nobel began to attend the classes that he

began to formulate a plan for his life. Nobel recalled:

The teacher of Redemption Community Day School took the time to

modify my curriculum to align with what I was interested in doing after high

school. To be blunt, I was not thinking about college or school. All I could

think about was the next new trick so I could get the attention of sponsors like Monster, Red Bull, and Yamaha. It would be my first time I would actually attend multiple weeks consecutively. I finally was able to look at my future. I was ecstatic when my teacher did not dismiss my dream. It was the first time I felt supported and the first time I felt like I had a voice in my own education. When my teacher engaged me, he showed me respect, he encouraged my creativity. Also, it motivated me and inspired me to attend school and develop a digital portfolio for graduation. I graduated on May 30, 2010.

Nobel described his experience at a community day school:

I felt like I had a second chance" because I was not attending school at Wheel High School, my goal was to become a professional motocross rider, I did not think I needed school for that. Upon graduation, I was motivated to have a plan B; this is how I was able to get into construction. At Redemption Community Day School I received my OSHA certificate, CPR, First Aid, and an Electrician Certificate. Most importantly, I was improving through having an active voice into my education (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

The voice of the students and the planning of the student's future would be taken seriously. It would be the student's plan and not the teacher's plan. This is what I want to do, I do not want to go to a four-year college

145

right now. I may decide to go to college at a later time in my life. I

appreciate that teacher and just taking the time to have the patience.

Clearly, the role of a caring adult, and particularly of a teacher, proved to be

especially important for the transition of students into community day schools, but

also in their retention, learning, and completion rates.

Planning for Advanced Learning

The support gained by caring teacher enabled Noble to visualize and plan

for the future. "The ability to learn from the experience of being in the community

day school was instrumental in my decision to make some adjustment for my

future endeavors," Nobel replied. He appreciated the opportunity to develop and

visit the local bank to open up a checking account. Develop a resume, fill out

applications, and practice interview strategies. While at the community day

school, Nobel began to understand the value of the program despite not being

able to socialize with other students, eating lunch in isolation, and taking the

chance of the curriculum not meeting the A-G requirements.[2] Also, to meet the

minimum requirements, you must complete 15 year-long high school courses

with a letter grade of C or better – at least 11 of them prior to your last year of

high school. Career Technical Educational Institutions do not require the same

certifications. Nobel thrived in employment workshops from the Department of

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[2] A-G classes are certified classes required to enter any University of California, the courses are approved by the state. The A-G Requirement includes: *(A)History 2-years, (B) English 4-years, (C) Mathematics 3-years, (D) Laboratory Science 2-years, (E) Language other than English, (F) Visual and Performing Arts 1-year, and (G) College Preparatory Elective 1-year.*

Employment, Youth Opportunity Programs, Job Corp, and classes at the local community college. He received one-on-one assistance in filling out his enrollment to the local college and qualified for federal assistance to be concurrently enrolled. Nobel recalled applying for community college, but forgetting to turn in all of his documents the first time:

> I was nervous the first time. I was unsure of myself and did not think I had the intelligence to attend the community college. I was an excellent rider but I finally realized I needed some further education and I could do both. I would attempt to enroll two more times building my knowledge and confidence each time. I had to step out of my comfort and after graduation I was ready to attend college. However, before taking the final walk across the stage, I would need to complete the last counseling session for anger and anxiety.

The sessions decreased his anxiety and provided an avenue for him to express his feelings.

Community Day School Influences on Postsecondary Transitions

Nobel's parents and teacher played a significant role in his career five years after graduating. He expressed being in the construction program and required to complete a portfolio. Nobel's teacher capitalized on this opportunity to have the student complete his electronic portfolio. "The lack of organization in the past had prevented me from developing a vision for my future." The portfolio

147

provided the opportunity for Nobel to graduate but also apply to the community

college, fill out his financial aid, and begin his first year of college after his

graduation.

> Historically, the community day school did not graduate any students. I
>
> was one of the seven students that Mr. Blessed helped graduate.
>
> Mr. Blessed was there for three years and as the years went by he would
>
> continue to increase the number of students that he would help graduate
>
> and have each of those students enter the community college, military,
>
> four-year college, and/or a career.

Upon graduation, Noble recalled the interview and presentation; this was an

emotional moment because this teacher pushed me like no one else. I could

remember having homework all of the time. He kept driving home the

importance of knowing who you are and the amount of talent I processed. He

would say, "No one will take care of you, like yourself." Do not let someone

else's perception of you become your reality." Our teacher loved us and wanted

us to become leaders. He wanted us to take ownership and change our own

trajectory. As I continued my aspirations after graduation, I hear my teacher.

> You have to work hard. Like Les Brown and Eric Thomas would say, "If
>
> you do not work for it, no one else will." This is your life. You have to be
>
> over 100%. The ability to run above the average will take determination
>
> and resiliency; you can do it. You are an overcomer, you have been

148

through many trials. Sometimes you are going into a test, in the middle of a trial, or coming out of a trial. No matter what; get it right and get it tight.

Noble felt one of the most contributing factors to his success after graduation is his experience in the community day school. He expressed, "it as one of the best experiences that have contributed to the closeness of his family." However, during Nobel's first year, he struggled to focus on his general studies, which almost ruined his opportunity to continue to receive financial aid. Nobel asserted, "My saving grace was the introduction to a construction class that the college was piloting."

> This construction class alleviated the stress of thinking I am back in high school. While I enrolled into the construction class, Nobel recalled entering into the workshop and being amazed at the workmanship of the professor. The majority of the curriculum included hands-on projects after understanding safety components of the machines and tools used in the class.

He elaborated on the skills he acquired while attending the class,

> It was simple to get acquainted with something that I was interested in pursuing. I built my skills in learning how to estimate residential, commercial, and heavy construction projects using technology and software, the study of architectural-related design, and working documents. Improving my ability to network and communicate skills. As well as, learn the art of planning, scheduling, and controlling a

construction site. I was excited to graduate with the ability to understand

the importance of time-management, computation, and management

responsibilities.

Although Noble struggled at the beginning of his journey to college, his resiliency

with support of family and teachers helped him stay determined and focused.

Nobel is excited about his decision and reflects back on the encouragement of

his teacher.

Challenge Accepted and Conquered

In 2012, Nobel earned an Associate's degree in Construction

Management and Associates of Arts from the community college. He recalled

"They motivated me to continue down the path and after 12 months I would earn

an associated degree in construction management." Upon completion of the

program, the college would assist Nobel with employers who would partner up

with community college to find students jobs.

In 2014, Nobel was working in the industry for two years, and despite the

slow down in the industry, he is working. Nobel expressed,

I am determined to finish my education.   I am tired of being behind. I

know I can do it.

Nobel is willing to work with the community day school teachers and students in

the construction field. After transitioning from a small contractor construction

company to Yeager Construction, Nobel meets his future wife after a year, she is

with child, and they are married. Nobel had met his wife by biding on a construction site. Nobel has a son and has a house that he helped build with his skills and his company. Nobel felt that there are still many changes to make in the community day school setting and traditional school setting to motivate students in all pathways. Nobel shares:

> The lack of high school teachers in mentoring–it is not happening. The amount of money in education; there should be no gaps in our education. The advising is not happening, and the students are the casualties. The resources allocated for the student is not happening. The ability to allow students to be active in their education is not happening. Our students are talented, beautiful, excellent, and gifted if you take the time to care. If you are not interested in student success, you are in the wrong business. My teacher saved my life.

A story he usually tells with the people closest to him is about the expectations of his teachers at the community day school, as he matures.

> I love looking back from where I started. I was not supposed to make it. People gave up on me. I can remember my teacher and want to go back and tell him about my life. I am successful. I define success as being able to take care of my son and loving my wife. I do not have time to be negative. I love being with my family and I will support them with hard work. I am focused on them.

Although Nobel has given his parents a hard time and has made them work diligently to maintain his interest, he attributes his talents and abilities to his parents. For Nobel, being a college graduate and being successful has shaped his approach to life and maturity. Through his life, he believes his family can view him as a role model and visualize the ability to create his or her own success. Nobel thinks that he was not sent to the community day school by chance. "There has to have been some type of divine intervention," Nobel proclaims.

Summary of Nobel's Narrative

His parents supported Nobel's early childhood and teenage years. He believed he was supported no matter what type of situation occurred. His parents worked diligently to make sure their son had every opportunity to ride motocross, while still doing classwork. He was aware of their financial struggle and had some conflicts with his teachers, Nobel felt other students are at-risk of having negative experiences and eventually drop out of high school. Nobel expressed the importance of student voice. Student's voice is critical to the narrative process; it allows students to express their views about their learning experiences and school education (Groves & Welsh, 2010). Nobel believes there is a misrepresentation of the community day school, what it is utilized for, and many teachers and parents negatively identify students that go there. He felt the district needs to promote the program better. He felt the CDE should work on developing programs and train teachers to facilitate students' needs better. As

part of the training, programs would provide specialized training for teachers that work at the community day school in psychology, behavior sciences, classroom management, college, and career. Nobel suggests teachers have some training in clinical psychology and mental health. He suggests refraining from sending teachers to the community day school program for disciplinary reasons or retirement.

Experiences before Community Day School

Spirit's Narrative: "Hardship."

Spirit was born in the United States and moved from the inner city of Watts, Los Angeles and was an only child. Spirit came from a low socioeconomic status family. His parent was a hardworking mother who started working at an early age. Although his parents finished high school in Watts, they were unable to attend college because they needed to work to financially support their family. His parents married young, right after high school, but quickly divorced due to infidelity and financial hardship. His father would not visit but would send a card now and then during Christmas. Although his father did not come around, his mother worked diligently to make sure Spirit had everything he needed.

Spirit recalled his mother working two jobs because she needed to provide shelter and pay for daycare. While living in the inner city, Spirit's mother would get robbed several times and both were worried about the environment. He

remembered one incident when he was eight years old. He and his mother were

walking from the grocery market and did not notice a man standing in an alley as

they walked by. While walking, the man "grabbed my mother's purse which had

the months rent." He remembers his mother not crying in front of him. He could

hear her crying in the middle of the night once she put him to bed. As Spirit

narrated his story, he appeared to become agitated as he remembered that his

father was not there to protect them.

> After that incident his mother realized, "We are on our own, just us and we

need a place to have a fresh start, I have to move." So she did just that . . . and,

she settled in a small town in the Southern California, the High Desert, West of

LA and began to look for opportunities to earn money.

Family Support of Passion/Life Lessons

> Trying to relocate would be difficult for a ten-year-old child, but to move

into another city where you do not have to worry about getting robbed was a

significant relief for Spirit and his mother. Spirit described his relationship at the

time was real close and it had to be because the transition was scary. He knew

his mother was sacrificing everything for them to ensure they were safe and had

a better opportunity to live. He was sad to leave some of his family and friends,

he was particularly sad because the sacrifice would take him further away from

being able to see his father.

Spirit spent most of his early childhood years in Watts, California with his mother. She held him accountable to making sure he completed his homework. She did not play. Griffith (1996) asserted that "parents whose educational expectations for their children were high were also more involved in school activities than parents with lower expectations" (p. 1559). This meant being in the house at a certain time. Not playing around during homework, and all distractions were turned off. She would assert to me that education is powerful.

> I know I tell you not to be greedy but when it comes to education. You get every ounce of it as you can. Education is important, even if you get into trouble, don't have finances, or you do not think you can do it, you try education anyway. Education will take you places.

His father had lost his job and then could not afford to keep their house.

Spirit knew his mother was serious, it became a common conversation at the dinner table. While it was important to his mother, Spirit was still a kid. He recalled all of the sidewalks in the inner city and competitions to make a little bit of money to help his mother. Unlike many of his friend in the inner city, Spirit's favorite thing to do was "rollerblading." He loved making jumps and accepting dares from his friends for money. Spirit appeared to be drawn to the next big jump and trick. Although the place where they lived now did not have that many sidewalks, he still found a way to skate. He remembers and attributes his love of skating to his mother taking his to the roller rink.

Inspiration and Transition

<u>"Extreme Sports"</u>

Spirit can recall jumping from the top of the monkey bars onto the ground and standing on the slide as he made his way down on the playground at the age of 11-years old. He remembers doing back flips and front flips over walls. He gives credit to his love of extreme sports to his older brother, who he looked up to when he was younger. Spirit would remember him and recall the jumps they would do around the city. It was like one big playground, he would jump on rails, ramps, and curbs in rollerblades. Their main source of travel was in rollerblades. "If it was clean and had a slope we were going to jump it." My mother recalled driving to the market and seeing me and my brother riding down a hill, hitting a pebble, and flying onto the sidewalk and although she warned us to have safety gear, we thought it was not for us.

> We were constantly getting in trouble for roller blading on private property
> and coming home with skinned knees and bruises all over the place. We
> would constantly go to the mountain to ski and snowboard, Spirit
> remembers spotting Shaun White at the Mountain Ski Resort High in
> Wrightwood, southern California attending a practice session, and he is a
> three time Olympic gold medalist in the half pipe. It was cold and we were
> wet from the snow. At that moment coming down the slopes I knew I
> wanted to do extreme sports, I was young and fascinated with the tricks
> and the adrenaline rush. Spirit's devotion to extreme sport engulfed him

and inspired him to attempt a trick on every rail at the middle and on into

high school where he was enrolled at Wheeler High School in southern

California.

Spirit would developed an obsession for tricks and would miss school due to

injuries and running around town to find the newest and biggest stunt. Spirit's

passion grew to grinding on higher rails and down steeper grades, which opened

his body to injury. The more that Spirit tried new stunts the more he missed

school looking for something bigger, better, and dangerous.

Immaturity and Consequences. Upon attending Wheeler High School in

2005, Spirit attended classes but would leave school early without permission

and miss days to go to the mountain or to go roller blading. Although Spirit would

struggle with attendance and the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB),

after multiple warnings he would need to make-up assignments and clear his

attendance. Spirit liked school but had difficulty with some of the kids on

campus. Spirit's biggest issues were at parties where he would get into fights

with other kids from his school.

I would not attend class and go to class thinking, why am I here I should

be skating. I would have my skates in my backpack. I would hop the

fence in the back and roll right past the campus monitors.

Unfortunately, during one of my escapes while flying down the hill at a

high speed, I hit a rock and flew into an oncoming car. I broke the

windshield of a car, I broke my arm, I was cited for day-time curfew, and I

was put up for expulsion. This was bound to happen: I was in the hospital,

I was grounded, and I was headed to Redemption Community Day

School.

Spirit continues,

My mom was furious when the police called her. I could hear her yelling

on the phone at the school police officer. Not only had I broken my arm,

my mom's trust, but I had also ditched school and she had to leave work

to pick me up and take me to the hospital. I was in pain and everything hit

me all at once. It was hard because my family was not the wealthiest of

families. I was taking away from the family. I was grounded for months

with no skating.

Disciplinary Action. Spirit had no other choice but to focus on his

attendance, grades, and the pain in his arm. Spirit continued to sneak out of the

house to go to parties and began to smoke and sell marijuana while he was at

Redemption Community Day School; he later would be put on probation for

distribution of a controlled substance on school grounds. Spirit struggled with

being enrolled at the community day school but since he was on probation he

was required to attend class and work on his grades. Spirit's probation officer

monitored his progress and threatened to violate his probation. He was required

to attend Drug & Alcohol, Anger Management, and participate in the Boys Circle,

an after school group for probation students to talk about "Restorative Justice."

The Boys Circle created opportunities for Spirit to participate in events like

attending college football games, going to hockey games, the movies, boxing matches, skiing, snowboarding, and skydiving. Spirit admits that it was not the ideal play but since the activities were free, he did not mind. Spirit recalled,

> The district meeting and the representatives from the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB), the probation officer, the Wheeler High School administrators, the DA, and his parents discussing the plan for my life. I knew at that moment I needed to take control back over my life. I did not like not having a voice into what I want to with my life. I loved to skate and I loved all the activities that I attended with the Boys Circle. I had to get out of selling marijuana, which was difficult. I was making real good money and my regular customers were always looking for a hit. I was scared and cut off my ties with my supplier. I tried to deal with it by myself and with some friends that would help me out when I cut it off. Let's just say, I had three broken ribs, bruised the same arm that had healed, a busted lip, and a black eye after my dealer and his crew was done with me. I was certainly out. Due to the fight with the dealer and my attendance after the fight, I was sent to juvenile hall for a couple of months. My mother was frustrated but still supported me. My mother did not know about the fight until the probation officer discussed the situation. I was released early for good behavior and continued to attend the community day school.

Spirit was expelled and would attend the 2007 school year at the community day school. Fortunately, he was able to make up some credits in juvenile hall and only needed 80 credits to graduate. Spirit was a junior at the time and really gave the community day school a chance after going to juvenile hall. Spirit emphasized "relief" because he had another chance to redeem himself. He felt like he was given one more chance, his spirit was not broken, he was hopeful. Spirit asserted,

. . . I was sure I had dug myself a deep hole, I thought I blew it. I thought I was going to stay in juvenile hall and be in the prison system. At first I did not think I belonged at the community day school. I worked so hard there. They told me I was not a bad kid. I was not one of those kids that belonged in the system. I had made some bad choices. I had messed up. I loved skating and continued to focus on other special tricks I could preform. I cared about school. I was going to prove to my mother that I loved her. If it weren't for my teacher [Mr., Blessed[, I would be in trouble. I knew I didn't want to go to school. I just want to go to work. I wanted to teach young kids how to skate.

<u>Support and Care</u>

When attending the community day school, Spirit recalled the positive memories of his experience and his success after graduation:

I think the hands-on projects were one of the best tools of organization for me. I took all the footage of my adventures and edited the clips to

160

develop a video. During my project, my teacher planned an education

adventure to Mountain High.

Spirit continues,

I was given the opportunity to explain what I was interested in doing for a

career. I loved the English lessons and remember, "Café for a Day." The

teacher transformed the classroom into a café and used cross curricular

activities to discuss English, economics, math, science, and history while

serving each student from a menu of muffins, bacon, eggs, croissants, hot

chocolate, beagles, orange juice, apple juice, and newspapers. Chemistry

was the best as we mixed Potassium with water; it reacts very rapidly to

form a colorless solution. It can become so hot that it can catch on fire.

Defining Success. In 2009, Spirit walked across the stage for graduation in June.

He eventually got married and has a child. He visits his teacher every once in

while and works as a mechanic at Mountain High Ski Resort. Spirit aspired to be

able to hit the slopes:

. . . this is what I want. I want to participate in extreme activities. I miss

my time with my brother. I still have a need for speed. I go skydiving and

look for hills with multiple curves and no traffic. I have learned my lesson

about safety – I wear protective gear when I skate. As I continue to share

my experience with my young trainees, I talk to them about safety gear.

Although Spirit has matured, he still skates with passion and enjoys taking his daughter to the skating rink. Spirit is excited about his accomplishments and will continue to work in the extreme sport industry. Spirit asserted,

> I am successful because I have ability to do tricks and stunts in a safe manner. Through my experiences, I can mentor at-risk kids in behavior management and encourage to use their energy for good. I am successful after graduation because my spirit is healthy and I have my diploma. At the end of everyday I appreciate the extreme sport experience, I am blessed to have no broken bones.

Experiences Before Community Day School

Titus: "Fight for Family"

Titus recalled attending middle school while in the sixth grade. His parents worked hard to provide for their family. He proudly accepts his position as a big brother and protector of his little sister. Titus attended Philemon Elementary School and appeared to be an average student with inquisitive thoughts about how things moved through the air. Titus was promoted to sixth grade at Philip Mesa Middle School and recalled a tough transition. Although Titus had grown up in the same town, he had his own individual concepts with regards to people picking on other kids that were smaller, particularly his younger sister. Titus reflected on a time when he was walking with his little sister after school; he and his sister were close enough not to allow anyone to belittle or

162

tease his family. While discussing this incident it became apparent he was extremely passionate as he became emotional sharing the story of his sister being called names. Although he was smaller than the boys doing the name-calling he still spoke up. After this situation he figured, "I am willing to fight for my family, we have to stick together. I will not let anyone in my family be bullied, even if I have to fight." So, he kept his promise, he was not going to let anyone talk about his family; as he transitioned to the middle school he was determined to stick up for those students that were smaller and weaker than the others, while continuing to check up on his sister that was still in elementary school.

The middle school transition was a difficult transition for Titus; he experienced challenges making friends and was not accepted into most athletic or academic groups. Titus had no problem speaking his mind and in a way he had an unorthodox way of portraying his life experiences to those he came into contact with. Titus appeared to have some obstacles developing friends mostly due to the rural location of where they lived; he hardly ever had visitors because of the distance between the school, house, and community center. He was not socially attracted to girls yet, but wanted people to accept him for himself. He had a vast imagination and was really into literature and storytelling. Moving into the seventh grade was a monumental transition in Titus' life. Titus shared:

My older sister was attending the local high school and was driving to

school. She was driving and working on the weekends at Disneyland.

Although he was proud of his sister, it was evident that he was concerned that she was away from the family; plus, his sister would be leaving for college soon. Although he was thankful for his sister's opportunity, the tone of his voice noted this was a tough reflection for him. He knew deep down in his heart that they would never cease from being a family. His mother and father had sacrificed so much to ensure they had everything they needed and that his sister would not forget that.

Titus grew up in Southern California with his parents and one older sister and one younger sister. His father worked constantly and purchased the car for the older sister. His parents were conservative. This meant that the kids needed to focus on their education, no parties, no fighting, no drugs, no alcohol, and no distractions in the family. Their parents explained that family worked and stayed together, they support one another, and make sacrifices for the advancement of the family. They explained that it was crucial to stay and pursue a formal education.

My parents used to get on us and tell us that we need to focus on our education. We, as a family, support our family and sacrifice for the advancement of the family. Education is crucial to the family and it is to be taken serious. Our family works hard to make sure you get every opportunity we deserve; it is easier to do this with an education.

Titus understood this expectations from his parents from a young age. He knew his parents worked hard to ensure they, the children, had an opportunity to focus on their education – this was important to the family.

As the only boy, Titus felt a greater responsibility at a young age to be the protector. Since his parents were always working, Titus was constantly involved in his sisters' activities. Whether it was dance, softball, or drama, Titus would attempt to be there for his sisters. Titus would help his younger sister with her math and English; inspiring her to be confident in requesting help from the teacher when she did not understand the certain concepts.

Transitions - Life Tragedy. After Titus transitioned into the 8th grade, his younger sister into the 6th grade, and older sister into her 12th-grade year, Titus had the reputation of fighting for his family.

I got into my first fist fight in sixth-grade. Then I was put up for expulsion in the 8th-grade for getting into another fight. I was put up for expulsion where I spent two weeks on suspension and then I got a citation.

Although Titus continued to get into trouble, his parents were still strict on his education. Titus stated, "This was a tough time for me and my family." As Titus began to share his story, he began to look down at his arm where he had a small tattoo. During his transition, Titus and his family experienced tragedy. Titus elaborated that his older sister upon her return home from work, she may have been tired and fell asleep at the wheel and crashed. She would not return to the family. Titus' eyes appeared to be watery during this interview and clearly it was

evident that this was a hard situation to discuss. Although his parents hardly

spoke about it, he remembers the day that this transpired and the effect this had

on his life. Titus recalled not feeling anything for a moment and being very

protective of his family after the tragedy.

> I was at a low point, I could fight and would not feel anything with
>
> pounding on the other person and it would not matter if anyone was
>
> bleeding. I would literally black out and it would take someone pulling me
>
> off for me to stop fighting. This would be the case even if I were losing.

Titus stated, "I was rocked by my sister's tragedy, I was not a bad kid, and I

wanted someone to listen to what I was going through." He felt schools were not

doing anything with the bullying that was happening and he had enough. Titus

recalled the family struggling to keep it together and having to raise money for

the funeral services. He tried counseling, but he really did not want to talk about

his sister's death. Titus expressed, "I felt I let my sister down and that although I

had no control of the situation, I felt that I failed protecting her."

As Titus attended the community day school for expelled students, he

really did not know what to expect. He stated, "I did not know what it meant."

After a while, he assimilated into the program and found himself completing his

stay at the community day school and returning to the traditional high school for

his 9th grade year.

> I returned to the traditional high school and was sent back to the
>
> community day school for smoking marijuana and fighting. I was there for

a little while. Then I went back. Then I spent my entire 11th-grade year at

the traditional high school, and then I got kicked out because I had family

issues. I was falling behind in credits, fighting, and using drugs. I was

eventually sent to the community day school for possession of drugs. I

ended up graduating from the community day school.

As Titus returned from the traditional high school, he recalled going and getting

extra one-on-one help, talking with counselors, and getting the support he

needed. He always wondered, why he could not stay at the community day

school? According to administration, the school was designed to be a short-term

program that was built to prevent students from coming to the community day

school. Many of the teachers at the traditional high school would use it as a

scare tactic, they would say, "if you don't straighten up, you will go to community

day school, 'jail.'" While Titus attended the community day school, he found a

different environment the third time he reentered the program. Titus appeared to

be determined not to return to the traditional high school and stay in a small

environment. Titus recalled,

The community day school has 10 to 15 kids in a class and the teachers

actually helped with one-on-one, provided counseling, and opportunities to

concentrate on working on my interest and my academics. This was

better for me because I didn't have to act out to get in trouble. Like most

programs, it is about the people; it took a teacher and an instructional

associate in a smaller environment to bring me back to reality. The

teachers taught me like how to cope with things like anger, take a

breather, you know, calm down, take a couple breaths, think about what

you're doing. It also helped me with the thought process like, knowing that

if I go in there and not to go to work and it's not worse not to make friends,

it's meant to get work done.

A story he often explains to his family about his teachers character and the way

in which he was inspired to finish.

My high school teacher at the community day school would tell us the

truth. We were not at the community day school to make friends; we were

at the CDS to be rehabilitated. The reason you are in school is to build

your academic skills and be prepared to be a positive, productive citizen

after high school. He taught us to get our education by all means

necessary. I had a lot of issues that I would not addressed in the larger

environment.

He felt comfortable and knew he could grow there. He could recall teachers from

both the traditional school and community day school caring about his life. They

would give me advice on what I needed and how to get there.

My education at the community day school was better, it was healthier for

me, and of course I had to find other ways to make sure the classes I took

were A-G. Although they keep talking negative about the community day

school, school students thrived because it's a small environment. It was a

lot healthier for my education. In the beginning, I could not see the benefit

but at the bigger traditional school, I would just be a number. I couldn't

really concentrate as the teachers have so many students and many of

these do not have any passion to teach.

Titus knew his parents wanted him to attend the traditional school because it was

the family tradition but he needed to do what was best for his well-being and

health. He was self-conscious about the meetings his family needed to attend

due him fighting because this would require them to miss. He felt being at the

community day school would be worth the sacrifice of graduating from the

traditional school. He knew would be graduating one to two years behind at the

rate he was going if he were to stay at the traditional school. Where he

graduated on time at the community day school. He had a plan A and a plan B.

Titus asserted, "I had some tough breaks with my family, eventually I matured

and I understand the value of family."

Graduate - Finding My Way

Even though Titus had many obstacles in his high school journey, his

family supported him unconditionally. He continued to fight for his family. He

was determined to stay close to his family home. He graduated in 2014 with the

support of his parents. One thing that Titus talked about in developing his plan

was his aspiration of becoming a Chef. Upon graduating the community day

school, students needed to present an electronic PowerPoint on their future

plans. The students had access to an Apple i-Pad and developed a portfolio

during their final days at the community day school. Once Titus settled on

culinary arts, he began to lay the foundation for his decision after high school.

Titus shared he traveled to Europe and experiencing the food and culture. He

said when he walked into one of the French bakeries, "I felt like the industry was

calling me home." Upon on his return, he enrolled into a culinary arts school.

> I attended the community college for a couple of years and was able to get
>
> the opportunity to experience Europe. Upon my return I was able to
>
> attend a culinary program in San Diego. I work in Southern California as
>
> an Line Chef and will eventually work my way up to an Executive Chef.

Upon graduation, Titus continues to work in the culinary arts field in Southern

California and is also entering an LA Film School. He is now married with a child

and works constantly to support his wife and son. He continues to stay in close

communication with his parents and takes their grandson to visit, occasionally.

Titus expressed, "I realized that everyone in high school looked at me and judged

me based upon where I attended school. I think they thought I was evil. Isn't

than a Redemption kid?" Titus indicated, that this was not the case with every

administrator but he, as a student, did feel shame attending a community day

school. Titus asserted, "Once we were at the community day school our teacher

and associate taught us the truth. We are normal kids who just made some bad

choices."

Titus knows that there is a lesson in all of this. He continued to work and

in his spare time while in film school, he is writing a sitcom parity on his

experiences in the community day school. It will be a comedy using satire to

discuss the injustice and improvements that need to be made in these environments.

> I am attending Los Angeles Film School, which I plan on, now actually I
> am planning on making a TV show based on my community day school.
> Some of the stories at the school are worth telling because of how much a
> memorable experience that was for me.

He knows that he needs to work hard in the world; he would need to continue to receive training. He is looking into the Institute of Culinary Arts in Los Angeles to continue his pursuit of improve his culinary skills in restaurants, bakeries, catering, food media, and television. Titus is motivated to continue to work hard. He thinks his new adventure into the Los Angeles Film School will flourish his ability to speak on film; it would be an asset to his creative ability.

> I would like to develop a TV sitcom that would illustrate the way in which
> students acted at the CDS. They are normal kids that have made some
> wrong decisions due to uncontrolled circumstances in their lives. To
> illustrate the caring people that allowed us to have fun through learning.
> We want the public to know we are kids that make mistakes and no matter
> what we did; we care about our educational . . . it actually helped me get
> to know myself a little better so I could figure out what I wanted to do. But
> especially for people to stop saying we do not care.

Earning Your Keep. Titus continues to make advancement in the area of maturity, being a young husband, father, and homeowner he will need to

maintain his focus. He currently has an opportunity to create his own legacy by

building his family's morals and values. He continued,

> My teacher would tell us the truth and I know what he was talking about.
>
> Unless you win the lottery, inherited a large sum of money, or have
>
> relatives that are willing to share their fortune, you will have to work hard
>
> for the rest of your God-given life. Let education help you with where you
>
> want to work. You have to have some say in what type of work you want
>
> to do and how much you want to get paid – unless you want someone to
>
> dictate how much and where you are going to work.

Educators had the power to change Titus's pathway of life at an earlier stage.

Titus continues to remain positive by thanking those teachers and associates that

took the time to build relationships. This illuminates the kindness obtained

through the building of a constructive relationship. Titus wants to encourage the

CDS staff to never lose the compassion to what is right by kids.

Eliminate Obstacles with Relationships. Titus considered himself a giant.

He would like to let everyone know that he is a positive role model for his family.

Though his negative experiences in high school created a pathway that he never

could have recovered from on his own; his desire – with the support of his family,

teachers, and associates – he was resilient in his drive to be successful. Titus'

determination along with his father's structure and mother's unconditional love

made mountains into small hills. Titus assumed that the same sentiment for

students that attend the community day school exist today. He is concerned that

students are being labeled, not getting counseling, nor getting support, nor getting instruction, nor getting adequate educational opportunities. He notes the importance while in the community day school to set and to make vital plans to build upon their hopes and dreams. Titus' main point is the ability to create relationships at that level in order to plan for success of each student and those students having an opportunity to have an active voice into their interest.

<u>Summary of Titus' Narrative</u>

Titus appears to have found a place where he can thrive but he was only able to access many supports when he was in trouble; therefore, it became imperative that Titus return to the community day school to get support on his own terms. Despite the name-calling and negative environment in the traditional high school, he needed the smaller environment provided at the community day school. While at the CDS, he developed relationships from teachers that cared and as he returned to the traditional high school he found some teachers that fit the model but not enough because the traditional school was too large. The community day school was for expelled students and if you followed the program you could apply for early return at the semester or serve your year-long, required sentence. Titus was in a complicated situation, he was not going to get into trouble because he respected the teacher at the community day school; this is why he returned so many times. Titus' asserted, that he would have stayed at the community day school if it was up to him and his teacher was there.

Experiences before Community Day School

Jesus: "I See the Light"

Jesus' is a community member and is appreciative of his experience.
Living in Southern California all of his life, he moved to a rural area when he was
in the second grade. Jesus loved the district and built relationships in the
community as he went through the school system. Jesus was a family man and
appreciated the district dealing with family issues. For example, he mentioned
his sister unexpectedly had a child at a young age. Despite the challenge, family
was supporting of the situation. Jesus would watch TV in his spare time and was
trying to fit into the community as much as possible. He knew if he was going to
fit in he needed to do well in his education. Unfortunately, he had some difficulty
with both his education and fitting into the school social setting. As described by
Connelly and Clandinin (2006), this "narrative data collected is about life and
living, it is a difficult and intense method to begin with participants" living, and it is
the narrative inquirer situating themselves in a relational way with their
participants. Jesus recalled,

> I have always struggled to keep up in school because I had some
>
> obstacles in my life. The reason we moved was because my father was
>
> put on medical leave and we struggled financially to make ends meet in
>
> Oxnard. My sister stayed down the hill with relatives to finish school. I
>
> was worried about what my father might say when she returned with a
>
> child. He did not say too much, he was upset that he was ill, and could

not work anymore. He was really upset because his wife was working full

time in her small dog grooming business. My father was on disability and

my mom worked constantly because we never had any money. I would

help my mother with her business and we would travel everywhere. There

would always be a discussion about the status of our finances.

Wanting Acceptance

Jesus supports his family and they watched out for him. He shared, "they

watched out for me almost too much. I was an average kid that always attracted

the bullies. They were always tripping me, pushing me, and shaking me down

for what little cash that I had." He continued:

I would be so angry but I could not do any thing. I was really quiet and felt

like I would get it more after school on the way home. I was small and

weak. The bullies, although the same height, seemed bigger and

stronger. I did not mess with anyone.

He also remembers he would sometimes run home to avoid some of the bullies.

I did step up and take it like a man. I was so angry and got tired of the

bullying. It was in English class, I feel like the teachers continued to let it

happen. I told the [instructional associate] one day after school and it

appeared that the [instructor] just ignored my complaint. I do not think he

wrote it down or talked with the students. I got up and said, "I will slam the

book down your throat if you keep touching me." I blacked out and the

next thing you know I was in the office in handcuffs. I hit the boy with the

book from across the room; witnesses say I was cursing up a storm. No one from Wheeler High School messed with me again since then. I was expelled and sent to Redemption Community Day School. It felt like that was the only way I knew I could survive.

Discussion of Positive Experiences at Community Day School

Emotional Support

The ability to control emotions everyday after constantly being harassed can wear on you. Jesus had enough. He was holding his anger in since elementary school and hated being at Wheeler High School, because it was too big. He went to Redemption Community Day School in the ninth grade.

I felt like the people there did not want me at Wheeler High School, I felt they just got tired of me. I had not been in trouble before but had difficulty inside of the classroom. I could not concentrate because I was always being harassed. I was failing all but one of my classes.

Fresh Start

Jesus attended Redemption Community Day School at the end of the 2011 academic school year. He would be eligible to stay for one year and then be able to apply for reinstatement after the end of the year once he finished his program. Jesus was required to attend anger management, have no discipline problems, and have good grades. He thrived at Redemption Community Day School; the smaller classes and one-on-one assistance was the attention that he

needed. Jesus was behind in credits and struggled with his reading. His family

supported Jesus at his new school and knew he was happier there. He was not

at the community day because of drugs, attendance, or bullying. He was there

because of self-defense reasons.

Support for Teacher. Indeed Jesus had the full support of his teacher

(Mr. Blessed); however, his planning for the future needed some assistance. He

had no plans for the future because he had difficulty reading. After some tests, it

was determined Jesus had Dyslexia. Jesus had gone years struggling with

reading in elementary, middle school, and some of high school. Although he had

adjusted his communication skills, he continued to have difficulty pronouncing

words, time management, and organizational skills. Jesus was a little shy in the

beginning of his attendance at the community day school but once he knew the

teachers would take the time to listen and understand him, he began to work on

his plans for his future. Jesus explained,

> Because I admired the district and was planning on living in the same area
>
> for so long, I wanted to drive the district's school bus. I remember riding
>
> the school bus and the driver allowing me to sit right behind him. The bus
>
> driver was nice to me and watched out for me when I rode the bus. He
>
> made sure I was not being picked on. We would talk about the bus and
>
> what it would take to keep it running. I attended a district event called the
>
> Bus Rodeo. It was a competition that districts would send their bus drivers

to compete to see which district had the most skilled bus drivers. I was going to be a bus driver.

To Care or Not Care. Jesus continued his reflection, "Prior to meeting Mr. Blessed in the community day school, I would be on campus by myself. I can remember one campus monitor, Mrs. Spring at Wheeler High School that believed in me. Over 2100 people traveled in and out of that campus, I had difficulty keeping up with the fast pace of the campus. I settled down and began to work with Mr. Blessed and his associate." He explained he worked on quite a bit of math with Mr. Blessed. Jesus never thought he would be able to understand Algebra in his life. Jesus recalled,

> Mr. Blessed used to take us through so much math but what I remember the most was the financial planning by . . .. We talked about cars and bus monthly payments. We discussed what it would take to live in the house with different jobs. We compared buying a house versus renting an apartment. We looked at demographics and the cost of living. We literally worked from 7:00 a.m. to 2:45 for tutoring. The community day school released their students at 1:45 p.m.

Compassion and Care. Jesus stated, "the ability of Mr. Blessed and his associate to have the passion and patience to work with me changed my trajectory and my future plans." I remember telling Mr. Blessed, "I cannot do this. I was shocked when Mr. Blessed was standing outside of my door the next morning waiting to take me to school. I would stay home and then come to

178

school and not do anything. Mr. Blessed was crazy." This teacher tried

everything to motivate the students. When students had a rough day, Mr.

Blessed would look at student and still say, "I will see you tomorrow!" Jesus

recalled:

> Mr. Blessed would ask, "What will you do for the rest of your God-given
>
> life? You will be working from the day you leave this room unless you win
>
> the lottery, inherit money, or you are given money by someone you do not
>
> know." He kept it real. I was intrigued by what he was saying. I remember
>
> he was so passionate because I was not working. He grabs a box and
>
> rips one of the sides off and begins to write: Wheel Work 4 Food, he
>
> hands the cardboard to me and says, "This is your diploma." He then
>
> grabs a Windex bottle and a rag and pointed to the windows and ask the
>
> question to the class, "Is this what you want to do for the rest of you life?
>
> Or do you want choices? Life is an investment in to your future, if you do
>
> not work hard for it, no one else will."

Postsecondary Influence from the Community Day School

Renewed Determination.

The experiences at the community day school, particularly working with

Mr. Blessed shook Jesus – "What he articulated was a huge deal to me." Jesus

graduated from the community day school. He realized he could read with

assistance and once his ability to read was strong enough he would be able to

read fluently. He ended up graduating in May of 2014. Jesus would build his business as a dog-groomer. He worked with his parents throughout the years as an apprentice in a group called Young Business Owners at the community college and partners with the local businesses. Jesus has expanded the business to include other animals including show goats, lambs, pigs, calves, and ponies. He describes success as being confident and build the momentum to be proud of ones self. Jesus stated,

> I have self-confidence and the skills set to be successful. I define success by taking pride in myself and my accomplishments. I have to invest in me through hard work. No one is going to do it for me. I see the light. It is my destiny and my future.

As recommended by Polkinghorne (1995), the narrative analysis is the critique of past reflections of the graduate's stories that have been connected to create a timeline of events to account for how a final event may end. Jesus discussed key experiences to help us understand the patterns with the CDS.

<div align="center">Experiences Before Community Day School</div>

Legacy: "Humble Beginnings"

Legacy can recall riding a quad at the age of five-years old. He remembers doing stunts that most adults would not attempt. He gives credit to his love of riding and sportsmanship to his father who would mentor and manage him and reminisce about the jumps they would create together on their property

until the early hours of the morning and how his mother would be furious. His father recalled bundling his son up with safety gear so that when he crashed he could get back up and ride again, he remembers attending the Daytona Supercross in Daytona Beach, Florida; it was the best race ever. It rained so hard and the riders were covered in mud.

Motivation

Legacy asserted, "Right then and there, he knew he wanted to ride in the mud, he was young and fascinated with not the bikes but the mud." Legacy's passion and dedication to the sport engulfed him and motivated him to ride during middle school and on into high school where he enrolled into Wheeler High School in Southern California. Legacy developed a passion to go to the professional series but knew in the back of his mind education was important. Legacy's passion grew to riding and practicing after school and racing on the weekends. The more that Legacy raced the more his aspirations grew to ride internationally. Also, as Legacy's hunger grew, it was fueled by the pride his father and family had for their son.

As he continued to ride, his aspirations grew out of inspirations and support from his family and private sponsors. In fact, like professional riders Erin Bates and James Stewart; he would acquire interest from powerhouse sponsors like Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, and Monster. The plan was to finish high school in three years utilizing Summer School, On-line Classes, Independent Study Classes, and classes that he could enroll into while on tour. In fact, he planned

to take care of his attendance with the amount of work he turned in and constant communication with his instructors. His father was proud of Legacy. "This was a huge commitment for a 15-year old and I felt like I was on top of the world [because] his family had sacrificed so much time and support," Legacy recalls.

<center>Family Supports the Journey</center>

Upon attending Wheeler High School in 2009, Legacy would attend classes like planned and also practiced and rode in the semi-professional Monster Energy Motocross Supercross at Angel Stadium on January 03, 2009. Although Legacy knew he would need to be ahead in assignments, prepare for the race, and make sure his attendance at school was set-up, he pushed himself with hard work and dedication.

> This was a phenomenal opportunity, I was doing well academically
> because I want to race, that was the stipulation. I would attend class and
> go to class thinking, 'I am a prodigy.' I was doing it. I would have a pre-
> trial race before the event and I was ready.

Unfortunately, during the pre-trial race while coming down from 10 feet in the air, the front of the wheel on the Yamaha-Two Stroke bends and the pressure of the landing breaking his leg and collier bone. "This never happens," Legacy exclaims. "Nonetheless, I was in the hospital; the sponsors came and visited me with promotional gear and get-well balloons." Legacy continued:

The sponsors came out to look at the pre-trial and stayed after the race

and asked me to ride for them after I got better at the semi-professional

level and they were interested in developing me for the professional

circuit. I had to get better, I had to take care of school, and I had to get

back to riding. I was in . . . in pain but ecstatic. It was the first time I could

give back to my family. I did not know anyone in my sphere of friend that

would have had this opportunity. It encouraged me that the sponsors

would come and offer me this in the hospital. It was the best feeling; right

after the race I was feeling angry on the way to the hospital. I thought I

had let everyone down. When they visited me I felt special and important.

It helped me focus on recovery and my grades. I had a significant amount

of time to work on my studies during the recovery process. Family

Fostering Support Despite Injury

Legacy focused on his grades and the pain because his dream was not

completely over to become a professional rider. He would be able to work toward

finishing school early. He was at home and the independent study teacher only

came by the house once a week. He was at home alone all day, five days a

week, while his parents worked. Legacy never accounted for the pain in his leg.

However, in his loneliness he would experiment with other pain medication that

would relieve his pain quicker. Legacy began to try oxytocin, a long-lasting pain-

relieving medicine. He does not recall where he retrieved the medication, but it

worked. However, he began to take this form of medication all of the time. As he

began to make his way back to school, his father and sponsors wanted him to

slowly get back to riding. Legacy was doing well as he entered his junior year

but missed a significant amount of school days and the schoolwork was taking its

toll on him. He was still taking his medication even though his pain had

subsided. By the middle of his junior year, Legacy was not showing up for all of

his classes and most importantly he was not riding. Legacy remembered,

> The district from the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) coming to
>
> the house and he would intercept them before his parents would get
>
> home. My grades began to fall, as I would pretend to leave for school and
>
> walk around to the back of the house to wait for my parents to go to work.
>
> I think I was addicted to Oxytocin. I knew I had to get back to riding but
>
> just wasn't feeling the passion I had before. Deep inside I was scared and
>
> tried to deal with it by myself and with some friends that would help me out
>
> by raiding their parent's medicine cabinets. My father and sponsors would
>
> constantly ask me about riding which I was doing during the school day.
>
> My parents did not know until the SARB letters and a meeting was set up
>
> to talk about attendance and the drugs I had on me at school.

Negative Perception for Community Day School

Legacy was expelled and would attend the 2011 school year at the

community day school. Fortunately, he was ahead in credits and only needed 40

credits to graduate. Legacy did not receive his consequence well and spiraled

out of control when he started attending the community day school in August.

Legacy emphasized "disappointment" because he had let his family down. He

felt like he was being punished for maybe being too prideful. Legacy asserted,

> At first, I did not think I belonged at the community day school. I worked
>
> so hard and made a mistake. They told me I needed Drug & Alcohol
>
> support. I was not one of those kids. I was a prodigy. I was messed up
>
> at the time. I loved riding and everything was planned out. That was my
>
> plan. I cared about school, I had everything. I let my father down. I took
>
> things for granted. My teacher [Mr., Blessed] had a lot of patience with
>
> me. He told me, "I needed to have a plan B and C." I wanted to graduate.
>
> I needed to get my life together.

<u>Support and Resources</u>.

When attending the community day school, Legacy recalled attending

Drug & Alcohol and developing an electronic portfolio that included his Yamaha.

During the project, "I explained the different dimensions of the bike and how the

Yamaha handles under high speeds and pressure." Legacy did not know he

would be interested in physics but it was interesting because as the sponsors

began to talk with him they took him on a tour to the Yamaha plant . . .. "My plan

B was attending a technical school and working in Motocross" Legacy

responded. He emphasized the support from his father and family as he decided

to attend the Universal Technical Institute:

It was not my plan A but I was interested in becoming a mechanic. I was

so impressed with the patience at the community day school. It was easy

to develop a plan B once I was clean and listened to my teacher. He

really showed that he cared . . .. I gave the staff attitude. I used to curse

the staff out and walk off campus at the beginning. They actually

presented things to me in a different way; everyday I feel like I was getting

a customized lesson that would focus on my interest. The math, science,

English, and projects were tailored around what my interests were. I loved

the science. I was surprised when my teacher let me bring my team and

bike in for my project. That changed my outlook on my life. In looking

back, I had someone looking out for me. They really cared about my

interest and me. The teacher took us on field trips and let us see what

was out there.

Higgins (1994) recommended most service providers try to help youth and are

trying to not oppress them. Clearly, Legacy felt supported and became fully

committed to his future through the support provided at the community day

school.

Educational Influence After Community Day School

Resiliency and Determination

In 2011, Legacy graduated after the first semester and participated in the

graduation ceremony in June. He received a mechanic certificate through UTI

186

and is currently working for the U.S. Department of Defense. Upon completing

UTI, Legacy also entered the community college automotive program. He met

his now wife and has one child. Legacy only rides for fun. He revisits his teacher

via social media from time to time. Legacy aspired to be a mechanic because his

father is a mechanic and it allows him to spend time building with his father.

Legacy recalled, "I can remember our trip to Florida and all of that mud." He felt

riding in the mud was something that he inherited from that moment.

Reflection and Support. Although Legacy was humbled by his

experiences, he has a new beginning; he is appreciative to his family, teachers,

and friends that did not give up on him. Cook-Sather (2006) recommended in its

most radical form, an educational shift that opens speech and minds to be

awakened to the power of intelligence. Legacy is excited about his plan C in

taking over the contract with the Department of Defense and training other

mechanics in his field. Legacy articulated,

> I have learned a humbling lesson. It takes hard work and no one is going
>
> to give you anything for free. Even childhood prodigies have to work. As I
>
> look back, I had multiple opportunities. I want to give these same
>
> opportunities to young kids that are struggling. I appreciate my teacher. I
>
> would be willing to return to my community day school and start a program
>
> that focuses on mechanics. At the end of the day, my parents love me
>
> and express their love often to my family. That is all that matters. I am
>
> humbled by my new beginnings.

This narrative supports the recommendation from Grace (1995) who asserted, that contrary to the view that students at the community day school, this view counters the conventional perception of young people as vulnerable, incompetent, and immature.

Experiences Before Community Day School

King: "I Will Fight"

King is fired up to share all about his experience. There is passion for the topic of bullying. Upon moving into the high desert area from Los Angeles, King appeared to mature immediately due to his father and mother selling drugs. King was trying to find some rational to his life as a young teenager in the wrong place at the wrong time. King recalled,

I have always wanted to have a normal family that would take care of each other. We never had money, my mom and dad would go down the hill to sell drugs and we would be left alone all of the time. Literally I was trying to keep it together and I hit a brick wall at school. There would always be something about race tossed at me. I was trying to go to school. I originally wanted to go to foster after my father and mother were busted for distribution, a fix-it ticket, and child endangerment. I just did not get it; we were kids taking care of kids. I ended up getting into fights because we would get picked on and I was not going to take it. It appeared like no

one cared and I was tired of being bullied by teachers, students, and administrators.

The ability to just be a kid and enjoy having fun and the value of preserving the family is important to me. He explained, that he did not have a traditional family. He had to step up and take the responsibility of fighting for his family.

I did odd jobs to fight to earn money to buy groceries for the house and my sibling. I would mow lawns and eventually attempt the family business of selling meth. It felt like that was the only way to survive.. I attempted to go to school but often found myself fighting boys that kept bullying my sister. Prior to going to school, I used to warn my sister about the bullying. If she told me about it I was going to take care of it. So literally everyday I was ready to fight. I fought after school, before school, in school; I hated bullies. I would fight other students' battles.

King was determined to send a message to those individuals that would try and belittle, harass, or threaten him and his family. King aspired to do better than his mom and dad. He was determined to keep his family together.

I wanted to attend school like everyone else. I knew I had difficulty reading because I have always struggled. I just cannot stand when people make fun of me and call me names. I never wanted to read in front of the class. I did not know how to read. Eventually, it would take a caring teacher, Mr. Blessed, and a compassionate instructional associate to

encourage me through achieving small steps. I kept focused on building

my family and the only way to do that was to do well in school. I finished

my first semester with a rough start at the beginning. It took me some

time to build relationships.

King was fighting for his future and realized he needed guidance from the

teachers. He would need to work hard and have resiliency in order to be

successful in the program. This would take some humility and time, but King

appeared to be determined to finish his work.

The ability to meet with Mr. Blessed after another chance was the

game changer for me. I would tell Mr. Blessed that I needed to drop out of

school. Mr. Blessed would look at me and say "I will see you tomorrow."

That was a big deal to me as to why I graduated from the community day

school. Also, it was not that difficult. I realized I could read with

assistance and once my ability to read was strong enough I would be able

to read fluently. I ended up graduating in May of 2011 while I was working

at my father's truck wash. I would enter an apprenticeship with the

guidance of my father. I would become a foreman with the company after

nine years. I work hard and have three girls. We have a house and I

believe that is success. I love my family.

King elaborated on times when he was at his lowest state. He learned

how to control his temper when other kids would enter the room and attempted to

bully other kids.

There were times when I felt like teachers did not listen or care about the bullies that would harass me in the classroom. I understand I was irritating and in trouble but did not think I should have lost my civil rights. I have a right to a free and appropriate education in a healthy environment. The school was the one place I thought I would be able to have peace, I certainly knew my home life was not healthy.

King expected the teachers and staff to be the professionals as well. His teachers emphasized the importance of education in their classes and wanted the opportunity to select a pathway that interested his life.

I definitely approached the teachers and staff in a respectful manner but felt I was not taken seriously by some of them because I was at the community day school. . It was frustrating and disappointing as well, having to hear the side comments "School doesn't care about his education." My teacher, Mr. Blessed, was the only one that listened. I respect that man. I was disrespectful and he still pulled me to the side. I am successful because he and some other associates did not give up on me.

At the end of his time at the community day school, King received the Most Improved Business Award; this accelerated his positions at the Truck Wash as he helped other students find employment and training in the small business industry. With the advancement into management at his business, he was finally ready to return to his district and continue to be a positive productive citizen. "I

never would have imagined making it this far, not to sound shallow, I drive a 2017 Silverado Truck, me and my wife just bought a house, I have three healthy girls, my family is doing well," he noted. However, while he was talking, King started to get emotional "I have to help my sisters that are on the street. I have to continue to protect them from people that are taking advantage of them, they are on drugs." King took a deep breath and was quiet for a minute. King has seven employees he oversees and continues to take business management and management classes at the local community college. He is contemplating transferring to a four-year and eventually acquire an MBA, if his wife approves.

I am going to grow my business to become a full truck mechanic car wash. This is something that my dad would appreciate and would benefit the entire family. I do not want my family to struggle financially; we will be successful. I never would have seen this in 2008, I have plans and goals.

King is confident. When it comes down to it, "It continues to be about protecting my family and as I look back over it all, we had some rough times, but they were rough times with family, It is time now to be successful with family."

Capitalizing on Negativity

During his high school and counseling programs, King worked for Truck Wash. His first job in secondary education was working in the area of the anti-bullying campaign, utilizing his voice and speaking against the pressure of constantly being harassed and belittled due to his progress in reading and writing. King graduated and is a supervisor. From his experience as a

supervisor, he would like to extend opportunities to young men and women to be able to train students on how to interview, work, and run a business. He is a leader in his community and is excited to help high school students with problems in their lives. King took his experience at the community day school as an opportunity to continue to make a difference with students. He did not want students to have to endure the pain of observing his parents in jail for using nor selling drugs.

<div align="center">Participants Summary</div>

The participants expressed the negativity from teachers not believing in students at the traditional high school. Students repeatedly expressed the teachers did not care or listen to what the students were trying to say. The students want to be heard; they know they have issues that they wish they could fix by themselves. The participants articulated that they feel safe with certain teachers in the community day school. Although some teachers at the traditional high school showed them that they cared, it was at the community day school where they felt they built lasting relationships. The participants felt the teachers at the community day school were able to bond with the teachers that took the time to pull them aside to discuss their issues without passing judgment. Legacy asserted, "Build relationships and be open to correction. I define me. I am made different. I have unique dreams and aspirations. I will achieve even if you do not believe."

Discussion of Negative Experiences at Community Day School

Researcher Perspective. Participants talked about the struggles within the community day school as they attempted to maneuver their way through an environment some would consider a hostile space. According to many of the participants, it was difficult to work towards developing goals and aspirations with professionals who already placed labels on the students. The participants asserted,

> We were called at-risk, disenfranchised, vulnerable, and disappointments to our society; all negative connotations toward youth. We had had learning disabilities, dyslexia's, ADHD, and other learning disabilities that many of the staff ignored. Yet, we continued to care about my education. Teachers used punitive methods to disregard my learning process without being held accountable by my own educational system. Oftentimes, we felt unsatisfactory and unsafe for my mental state due to the unhealthy environment that we were made to go through by our district.

Discussion of Positive Experiences at Community Day School

Recognizing Opportunity. Like always from the negative to the positive. The participants reflected on the positives with regard to their interactions to the relationships they built with their teachers and associates. Many participants referred to Mr. Blessed was a significant part of their graduation process. Many looked at the journey to and exit from the CDS as a positive reflection on their success after graduation. Jesus expressed his

appreciation for the teachers and associate that took the time to break down the financial portion of banking and checking accounts. Others were appreciative of the experiences of going to Job Corp and having to develop their own personal portfolio. Others discussed other projects that required hands-on mixing of chemicals and the assembling and disassembling of bikes and motorcycles.

These were positive experiences that would not only help after graduation but also provide a meaningful livelihood after graduation. Many of the participants discussed in their stories how immature they were during that time in treating the staff disrespectfully, lunches were out of the ordinary, and without hardly any interaction; according to the data, the program served its purpose. All participants appear to believe that student voice and improvements to the program must be ongoing and continuous. Many participants articulate these recommendations as noted in Chapter 5.

Significant role models in the participants' lives were their teachers and speakers that were encouraged to come in by the teachers and administration. Jesus can recall visiting a bus rodeo "where we were able to meet the drivers" and discuss his future as a bus driver. Others despite setbacks to their initial plans, were able to engage in construction projects and visit construction sites to help build a small project. Tristan can recall attending the community college in the local area to assist professors in developing inventions for his shoe design. Nobel can recall his tour of a motorcycle, car, and diesel mechanic program to become certified in repairs. As the participants discussed their

journeys, they offered recommendations to the district and other students that find their way to the CDS.

<u>Community Day School Influences on Postsecondary Transitions</u>

<u>Taking Ownership</u>

After graduating high school, participants were resilient in the pursuit of success through many avenues. The true impact on the participants' lives was the establishment of relationships and being encouraged to have the determination to finish stemmed from a passionate teacher. Based on data from the interviews, it is supported that although Legacy had the encouragement and motivation from his parents, to rebound from the stereotypes, discrimination, and often racism in their sphere CDS was a major contribution. The relationships of the teachers made the difference in the graduates following through with their portfolios that were presented at the end of their program. Jesus received much support from his teacher and instructional aide. Jesus explained,

> My teacher did much more than high-level support, he had a high level of expectations. He took the time to pull me outside and talk with respect; making sure to watch his control and facial expressions. Without the teacher, I would not have graduated. He believed in us by showing us things through our own lens."

He further asserted, "I would have been on the street; I now have a family and decent job and a truck."

Jesus stated that the CDS changed his outlook on the school system. For instance, he had perfect attendance at the CDS and had the opportunity to join and become a leader in different programs. He also said "the instructional associates in his teacher's class were exceptional with a host of innovating ideas." Jesus trusts that the teacher helped multiple friends and family to press forward through the storms and the rain and to keep moving forward. Jesus believed that the care in the teacher's voice and tone somehow settled the nerves of the students in the class. It would be extremely useful to those students that "aren't supposed to be at the site because they do not have dreams and aspirations."

Also, King stated that the traditional high school was a poor program. One of the things he retrieved while attending the CDS was to know what you stand for. "You do not always have to believe the perceptions of other people;" he said, "Find out who you are and fight for your character."

Summary of Conclusions

In summary, this chapter highlights important portions of narratives from seven courageous community day school graduates. It drew the conclusion of each participants' journey and personal perception of his or her interactions with the community day school system. As they remembered their trajectory, they recommended and encouraged strategies that helped overcome the obstacles and barriers they surpassed and the integral role played by their teachers and

197

administrators. Their experiences provided them the ability to build resiliency,

determination, and voice. Their stories provided them with the ability to have

influence and favor in their lives and define what it means to have success in

their way while in pursuit of college, technical school, work, and community. The

ability to develop one's own perception of their experiences and the deliberation

of recommendations by the participants allowed the audience to understand the

message of the participants in their own stories as they interpreted it. The ability

to speak with power about the original perspective and having the freedom to

have an active role in making a change, presents the opportunity to discuss

things openly (Cook-Sather, 2006).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This student voice-driven narrative inquiry examined the personal, educational, and professional experiences of community day school graduates and their defined success. Chapter Five includes an overview of key findings as well as recommendations to improve schooling practices. Chapter Five also includes a summary of the common patterns and themes upon the completion of the individual stories of the graduates; these patterns and themes will describe obstacles, successes, and challenges. Recommendations for improvement, policy, practice, and future research are critical for both the progress of academics and improvements in all educational institutions. Overall, conclusions and recommendations were accumulated from findings related to each research question.

Discussions of the Findings

The objective of this narrative study was to describe the specific lived experiences of community day school graduates and their academic and personal lived experiences. A particular focus was to understand the student experiences after graduation to understand how the education implemented in the community day schools prepared them for success and how these experiences may have shaped their lives, if at all. The study focused on community day school graduates, with the criteria that the graduates received

their diplomas from the community day school five years from their initial graduation date, and be over the age of 18 years of age. The purpose of going into this study was to provide the graduates the opportunity to voice their perception of the effectiveness of the community day school and describe how those experiences influenced their successes after high school.

As a former teacher having the opportunity to serve at a community day school for 13 years, this study was important because my own experience in student success after graduation and the effectiveness of education inside the community day school changed my trajectory. I want to make sure the institutions provide a quality education to its students and effective programs to enhance the ability of its students to succeed after graduation. From my experience in the probation department, I thought coming into education as a field, that the teachers and administrators had the best interest of the students at hand. I assumed that students in alternative school settings would have access to educational pathways that would prepare them for life after high school to be successful.

My assumptions going into the study were that the graduates would concentrate on only the negative impacts of the community day school and share significant obstacles of punitive disciplinary measures, insignificant classroom materials, inadequate access to a course that would prepare them for college, discrimination, lack of support, lack of care, and the lack of student's voice. Although many of these topics are validated in the literature, the participants in

this study shared a few incidents of discrimination, punitive measures, lack of support, lack of care, and lack of support. Rather, participants spoke at length about teachers that supported their goals, encouraged their dreams, and promoted student motivation (Ames, 1992). Conversely, the consensus of the graduates did not reflect a negative mindset in defining their experiences with community day schools. The graduates shared their experiences in an inspirational manner, as to teach other at-promise students to listen and learn from their experiences. Their experiences provided a motivational feeling that appealed to developing the maturity of its readers through their negative experiences.

In addition, all seven participates focused on the importance of relationships with the teacher and paraprofessionals. As they described their experiences with their teachers, their voices solidified the significance of the students' voice. Their teachers' encouragement was pivotal to the determination and success of their program. The literature confirmed the interaction between students and teachers (Kennedy, 2008). Furthermore, based upon their response about their teachers, all eventually realized the value of attending the CDS. Upon reflecting on my experience as a principal, I realized the importance of developing educational systems that would benefit all students and that this should be universal across both the community day school and other educational institutions.

Regardless of their different experiences at the traditional and community high schools, the most important aspect of both schools was that teachers built relationships and cared for their well being. Additionally, all graduates shared their preferences of having a teacher from the traditional school versus the community day school, while sharing they could see the aspects of caring teachers on both sites. Significantly, two of the seven graduates voiced it would be considerate and appropriate to have the graduates be actively involved in planning for their dreams and aspirations after high school. Several of the participants did not think their actions would divert their endeavors and thought that with the right support they would be able to restore themselves and continue on with their personal journey.

As noted previously, all participants attended Redemption High School. In addition, four of the seven graduates noted their teachers were male, one African American, and one White—one who cared and one was there to do the minimum part of the job. The persons who cared were Mr. Blessed and Mrs. Hope. As they told their story about the different levels of care from both teachers, it encouraged the participants to apply determination regardless of the circumstances. These teachers decided to exhibit a level of support and care to encourage students to overcome their obstacles. Teaching care nurtured their intrinsic ability to grow and actualize their inherent potential; the teacher-supportive environment helped nurture the needs of the students (Deci & Ryan, 2000a). Furthermore, on their experiences at the traditional high school, three of

the seven graduates stated that the transition to the community day school helped their maturity to be able to voice their opinion about their life. Due to my own life's story, I can identify with the ability to intrinsically grow with determination when I received support and have produced resiliency to be able to be stronger.

Most importantly, four of the seven graduates shared their continued growth toward their potential as they progressed through the community day school upon receiving instruction and training on a specific curriculum, interviewing strategies, letters of intent, and financial stability. Four of the seven graduates are currently in some positions of leadership. Two of the seven graduates shared that they are continuing their formal education through the local community college, technical school, or on-the-job training. One graduate indicated that they were working and raising a family and another is attending school to become a pharmacist, while raising a family. The graduates stated, "The teachers cared" and "we did not give our teachers a chance" listening in the classroom and building a relationship with the teachers. Several graduates currently volunteer to speak with at-promise students about being determined to pursue their goals to proactively motivate students at the community day school to have a positive outcome.

Collective Perceptions

The center of this study was to examine the individual stories of community day school graduates, the study concentrated on the graduates'

individual experiences as the story was told. By retelling their stories, common

themes were identified, many of the themes were supported by the literature and

some challenged the nature of the literature. As themes were compared; the

research questions were used to determine leading factors in analyzing three

overarching categories: (a) barriers for community day school graduates, (b)

effective programs in the community day school system, and (c) suggestions for

community day school students preparing for graduation. The examination of

these real-lived experiences will provide invaluable suggestions that will improve

the experience of other graduates' journeys through the system. The stories that

were collected from the graduates produced emotional experiences; at a point in

the interview process, the tone of King's voice became deeper and louder than

when we first started the interview process about their educational endeavors.

Before, During, and After Community Day School Graduates

The key results from these seven participants identify barriers within the

community day school system that potentially limited the student's potential to be

successful after graduation. Many of the participants significantly discussed

many obstacles in their stories. There were three significant themes in relation to

potential struggles, which were low-socioeconomic disadvantage, effective

curriculum, and the advancement of the family. In addition, other obstacles

included discrimination, crime, and resources.

Based upon the participants, themes included discrimination, unethical practices, and punitive consequences that did not benefit the student experience. Graduates emphasized on the theme of being degraded and not being able to participate in planning their own course for their future. Many graduates had aspirations to attend college, but once they were labeled a "community day school student," they felt discriminated against and believed that they were discouraged to attend postsecondary education.

Major Recommendations

All seven participants except for one discussed the struggles of a complicated home life along with the stress of helping the family. This includes the validation by the family. As the stories were told, many of the graduates were distracted by their peers and did not pay attention in their classes. Because of their experiences, all the participants felt they could restore themselves, if given the chance, and make their families proud. The graduates appreciated those individuals in the community day school program that took the time to meet with their parents and discussed the good within them. Others felt that individual staff were only there for the pay check and not the students. They believed that the staff that built relationships were the staff they felt helped them be successful after graduation. These staff members were encouraging and went above and beyond to make sure they finished their education. It was these staff members that motivated me to graduate. Legacy asserted, "If it was not for Mrs. Hope, I

would not have graduated." In addition, he discussed the process of not having the financial stability to even attend college–"Mr. Blessed helped motivate me to fill out financial aid and apply to the local community college." Legacy noted,

> I was a mess, I used profanity, and was defiant, Mr. Blessed worked with me even when my parents were frustrated with me. I was angry because I got injured and could not ride motor cross. Mr. Blessed pushed me and did not give up on me.

During Community Day School

Upon analyzing the data, patterns supported the perspectives of the graduates that they participants had the ability to mature and learn from mistakes. The graduates' common theme demonstrated the ability to establish compassion for their peers that would journey through the community day school program. The graduates discussed the ability to be proactive and encourage students not to get into trouble. Tristan insisted that, "You have to be focused, this is your education." Many of the graduates expressed the seriousness of education and the power it possesses, if you use it for good.

Many graduates shared that there are many pathways to achieve higher education–you must have the courage to stay focused, fight for your dreams, and have the ability to treat others with respect. To conclude, the participants appeared to understand the significance of working through their problem, being responsible, and understand the consequences for their actions.

Recommendations from the Graduates

Upon the completion of the interviews, a method to honor student voices is by giving them the opportunity to inspire, encourage, and motivate others. As such, solicitation of their recommendations to improve schooling practices was especially critical. Each graduate articulated the following recommendations through their journey toward success.

<u>Legacy's Recommendations</u>

1. Don't assume that because I have made a mistake, I am not interested in my future. I have feeling and aspirations. Listen to me.

2. I need a counselor that has the passion to ask me what I want to do when I finish. I will finish and define my success.

3. I define me. I am made different. I have unique dreams and aspirations. Respect my aspirations. Stop trying to live through me. I learn differently than other students.

4. Know what is required to be successful in the job you want. Research your educational journey and do not let anyone divert you from the path.

5. There are no dumb questions. There are no dumb dreams. Always strive for what is yours. Ask questions, work hard, and don't give up.

6. When you fall. Get back up and work harder than ever before. Improve on your skills daily.

7. Build relationships. Control your anger. You are mad at the circumstance not the people you come in contact with. Learn your communication skills.

8. Be open to correction. It is alright to disagree, but respect everyone. You

   will meet them again later on life.

Jesus' Recommendations

1. Everyone deserves a second chance. Remain open to new ideas and innovative ideas.

2. Be open-minded. I am creative and can use my imagination. Serve others with nothing in return.

3. Be a servant leader. Show kindness and love one another.

4. Do unto others as you have them do unto you. Forgive.

5. Develop communication skills. Be able to articulate what you need effectively. Understand the expectations to finish the job.

6. Do not hold on to hatred. Treat people like they are your brother.

Nobel's Recommendations

1. Take your education seriously. You will have to learn something at some point in your life. Do it now.

2. Use role models effectively. Take what is learned and use it for greatness.

3. Education can come in many different forms. Study each one and use as many as possible to follow your dream.

4. Be professional. Model what you tell us to do.

5. Don't accept nothing less. Expect the best. Surround yourself with positive people, work hard, and dream big.

6. Respect your siblings, elders, and parents. Take care of one another.

1. Be truthful . . . Don't lie to yourself. Education takes hard work. You have to work hard at it. Don't be lazy. Don't take the teachers, counselors, and staff for granted. Take advantage of the free education.

2. Work! Work! This is your life. If you do not invest in it, no one else will. You cannot expect other people to be serious about your life unless you show how serious it is to you.

3. You cannot be average. You must go beyond average. You have the ability to work at high levels. You have to push yourself. It is your life we are talking about. The teachers have their degrees. You have to work to prepare for your life after graduation.

4. You may not know how important it is to your family. You are preparing for your children and your children's children. Take every opportunity to progress your educational opportunity like it is your last.

Tristan's Recommendations

1. Want what is best for like it is your last opportunity. Don't do the minimum. Don't be average. Get it right, get it tight.

2. Keep in contact with your teacher after you graduate. Give back. Return to the community school to inspire someone else. Don't forget about the program. Invest in rewards, resources, and curriculum after graduation.

3. Support the program. Continue to read, write, and do math. Continue to study economics.

<u>Spirit's Recommendations</u>

1. Don't abandon your culture, your language, your ethnicity. Be proud of who you are. You must investigate and keep your culture going. Research where you came from. What is your heritage. Understand your family's traditions. Education is a priority in your family.

<u>Titus' Recommendations</u>

1. Be strong and with courage. Stand up for what you believe. Study to excel and make the best out of your experiences.

2. Just because you ask for help, does not mean you are weak. It means you want to know more.

3. Be greedy with obtaining knowledge. You can never get enough.

4. No dream is too big, too extraordinary, too impossible.

5. Ask for assistance. Ask again, and again. This is your destiny.

Recommendations for Educators

The following recommendations are based from the narratives of the seven community day school graduates. The participants described their personal experiences through their high school journey; these recommendations have significant barring on the way processes and protocols are handled in the community day school settings. These stories hold the potential to improve the effectiveness of programs, curriculum, and relationships for not only 'at-promise'

students but all students in these educational settings. The following recommendations are provided to support the implementation:

1. Identification of Aspirations: There is a critical need to include strategies within the secondary educational settings to help motivate and support 'at-promise' students. More specifically, preparing community day school personnel is important to properly ensure students are supported. The training provided to personnel will inevitably support students holistically. The important role of identifying postsecondary aspiration are vital for 'at-promise' students. As such, training and information about post-secondary requirements and opportunities may include: A-G requirements, Career Technical Education, Community Colleges, and work. Many students are first-generation potential college students, so it is imperative the ideological and discourse about college-going is evident in community day schools.

2. Active Participation. There is a need to increase programs that specifically concentrate and respond to student needs and interests. Allowing students to be an active participants in developing their own plan toward their individualized education are especially critical. Establishing opportunities for students to explore their dreams requires schools to prioritize its resources to engage students in these processes. Also, allowing the student to concentrate on the math, English, and science that are specifically vested in the pathway they are interested in. This would

provide community day school students the opportunity to find strength in the ability to be productive citizens in the community, feel empowered, and find the resources the graduates need to be successful after graduation.

3. <u>Ethical Care</u>. Provide ethical counseling to students throughout their journey and allow the students to identify how they can take charge of their destiny. For the majority of the participants, they agreed they made some bad decisions, but after graduation they needed tools to be successful. In addition, the participants referred to the level of care in the educational institution that would be necessary for all students. Noddings (1995) described care as an essential element in the success of students. .

4. <u>Strengths-Based Counseling</u>. The ability to identify the students' strength and build upon their skills that they are interested in would be powerful. To identify what is present that the staff can build upon would contribute to success of the students.

5. <u>Explore Strengths</u>. At the community day school level, implementation of programs that adequately provide the support that will prepare students for graduation. This would include quality programs, concrete counseling, interest-focused advising, job support, and college/career support. In addition, implementing programs that would access specific interests by providing students with opportunities to experience on-the-job training, visit colleges, working on projects in technology, and partnerships with

interns in job shadowing with the potential to obtain employment. Also, providing students in the community day school with mentors to create positive role models they can identify with. It is important to establish interactions with industries' professionals that are a part of the curriculum. This outreach for community day school students will provide students with hands-on experience in the area of interest.

6. <u>Increased inclusion and validation of parents</u>. In order to address the needs and opportunities of students, parents should be participatory agent. Providing regular training and support for parents and providing a friendly community to increase family unity. More specifically, when incorporating culturally-responsive approaches, families and parents will feel welcomed and included in the schooling of their children. This is especially important if schools want parents to proactively understand their children's schooling experience.

7. <u>Increase Resources to Develop a College-Going Culture</u>. The ability to replicate opportunities to visit 2-year and 4-colleges would have a significant impact on the aspirations and decision-making processes for post-secondary goals. The small populations at community day schools would provide the ability for staff to easily visit a variety of locations and capitalize on the specific strengths of each student. Districts would be encouraged to utilize funding to promote these college-going opportunities. The community day school has programs for students who

not wish to attend college. For example, there are other opportunities such as Career Technical Education (CTE) programs become especially important for students to get them involved in occupational skill training.

Recommendation for Future Research

The following are direct recommendations driven by student voices of graduates from a community day school. These provide strategies to utilize when working with students these alternative school settings. These recommendations may lead to further research opportunities.

1. Explore different curriculum used across community day schools

2. Examine the effectiveness of standardized assessments

3. Identify and examine student interests and needs

4. Continue to explore and understand student experiences

5. Explore college-ready and college-going culture within CDS

6. Explore CDS educators' perceptions of community day school students and their post-secondary potential.

Limitations

This study used the narrative inquiry research method and examined the lived experiences of seven community day school graduates. As they articulated their experiences and the effect their experience influenced their career choices post-graduation, centralizing their observations and voice was critical. Other

elements of the study were that the seven graduates all attended the same community day school within the same district. Recommendations for future research is to broaden the field to further understand the community day school landscape. In addition, the initial study was intended to include female participants; upon the conclusion of the study the participants all identified as male. Further research of other genders and ethnicities within the study will add to the richness and scope of this research. Additionally, there is room to broaden the research to include a diversity of different demographic areas and cultures. Subsequently, the limitations to the study does not specify the professional development or specialized training needed to improve on the teachers and staff that work at the community day schools. Also, limitations include the inability to analyze what aspects of training is provided for 'at-promise' students.

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

There are significant changes that are recommended to continue to provide effective educational opportunities in community day school programs to prepare students for life after graduation. The community day school administration holds the ability and responsibility to modify programs based on student interest and academic experience. These modifications have the potential to create innovative curriculum development to improve the educational experience for historically underserved populations.

This narrative study increases the amount of literature on effective

education in alternative schools and the experiences of community day school

settings in education. The participants in the study provided vital

recommendations rooted on how they navigated through the community day

school system and participated in active planning of their education after high

school. They provided strategies and stories of experiences that would help other

students in their journey through high school. The participants discussed the

importance of relationships and individuals that had the passion to go above and

beyond their duties to champion disenfranchised youth to work toward their

dreams and aspirations.

Many of the participants shared stories of challenges they had in their

lives, all of them did not appreciate the concept of the community day program.

Despite these challenges, students maintained a positive outlook and discussed

effective motivational aspects of the teachers and what they looked forward to

when they attend the program. Additionally, the participants noted key events

that helped sustain their participation in the program. Participants recalled

difficult incidents they felt were unnecessary for them to go through while being in

the program. They appreciate the staff that encouraged them to be determined

to graduate and continue to strive for their dreams even after graduation. These

participants showed their resiliency despite the struggles within their families

whether it was with their biological families, foster care, or unaccompanied as a

student. This is a testament to their determination and willingness as valued students and more importantly, as productive citizens in life.

In the following poem, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure . . ." considers an emotional anthem that many students can relate (Williamson, 1992, para. 1). The author's powerful words resonate amongst those community day school graduate students that believe they have not had access to opportunities based on the circumstances that accompany being marginalized in the community day school and appear to have no chance to formulate a plan for their aspirations. They exemplify the notion of encouraging graduate students' perception (voice) in the midst of alleged negative dispositions. The students appeared to believe they did not have access to opportunities based on the circumstances that accompany being marginalized in the community day school and appear to have no chance to formulate a plan for their aspirations. They exemplify the notion of encouraging CDS graduates' perceptions in the midst of alleged negative dispositions. Williamson's (1992) poem encourages student understanding, student engagement, and student experience after graduation in the effectiveness of education in the community day school, which captures the overall findings of this study.

The narratives elaborated in this study provided insight and voice to students on how to provide effective education to students labeled at-risk and utilize the specific specialties and talents of disenfranchised students to be

successful after high school. Furthermore, the study provided a greater platform for understanding the perspectives of students without a voice, to providing a platform in understanding on how community day school graduates journeyed through the community day school pipeline and what strategies were effective in the pursuit of graduating high school and being successful after high school. Additionally, the participants' stories provide a true outline and narrative for others experiencing difficulty in education; particularly, at-risk students, the participants challenge the negative acronyms that are propelled by staff. The graduates reassess and own their lives into their own hands and demand the promise of a quality education. The real-life experiences of these participants provided strategies to service and create curriculum that will specialize in the specific interest of students and acknowledge the transition from 'at-risk' to 'at-promise.' The stories provided critical information to develop programs to better uphold the promise of our society to give opportunities for all students while attempting to change the negative perceptions of staff using terms like disenfranchised, vulnerable, at-risk, and troubled youth, but also provides new hope for students with terms that will uplift these 'at-promise' students. The result is opportunities for success after graduation for all students and eliminating any pathways to destruction.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form – Questionnaire

California State University San Bernardino

Informed Consent Form – Questionnaire

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Examining the educational experiences of community day school graduates: A narrative inquiry

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Willie J Jones III and I am in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at California State University, San Bernardino under the guidance of my Chair, Dr. Acevedo-Gil. This research will contribute to my doctoral dissertation.

You were referred as a possible participant in this study because you meet the criteria as a community day school graduate and can contribute valuable information and perspectives on the research topic. Therefore, I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which examines the educational experiences of community day school graduates. Its purpose is to understand how their experiences influenced their lives after graduation.

The Institutional Research Board approves this study, if you have any question, please contact, my faculty chair, Dr. Acevedo-Gil, he can be reached at 909-537-5623/nacevedo-gil@csusb.edu.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an unstructured interview, have access to the data upon completion of the study. It should last about 30-45 minutes.

Benefits

There may be a direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will examine specific roles and responsibilities, core competencies, and training that are considered the most crucial for alternative educational programs to serve effectively as leaders. Additionally, this study will assess how districts can develop effective methods of preparation for academic

acceleration, so that such methods can be encouraged and facilitated earlier in the academic plan of students that attend the alternative high school.

Risks/Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks or discomfort associated with taking this survey.

Confidentiality

This study will not collect information that will personally identify individuals. Internet IP addresses will not be associated with the interview responses, and a pseudo name will be used for your institution and participants. Interviews responses will be reported in aggregate.

Compensation

I would like to thank you for participating in this study; you will receive a letter of Thank you for completing the survey/interview.

Rights

You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at 001043535@csusb.coyote.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the California State University, San Bernardino Committee for Protection of Human Subjects.

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

CONSENT

AUDIO: As part of this research project, we will be making an audiotape recording of your interview. Please indicate what uses of this audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this audiotape, your name would not be identified.

I understand that this interview will be audio recorded   Please Initial:_____
I do not want the interviews to be audio recorded   Please Initial:_____

The audiotape can be typed up and studied by the research team for use in

the research project.   **Please initial: _____**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

_____

Participant's Name (please print)

_____ _____

Participant's Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Instrument- drafted by Willie J Jones III

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

Interview Instrument- drafted by Willie J Jones III

Title of Study: Examining the educational experiences of community day school graduates: A narrative inquiry

1. What is your definition of success after you graduated from the community day school?

2. What type of education were you expecting to receive from the community day school?

3. What type of life do you perceive the community day school prepared you for?

4. What are your natural perspectives about your experience inside of the community day school?

5. What makes a good community day school?

6. What do you think is the most important need to be addressed at the community day school?

7. What was your education plan?

8. How would you recommend to a district to raise awareness in building an effective, equitable system for students in the community day school?

9. In your opinion, were you able to adequately pursue your dreams and aspirations while attending the community day school?

10. What suggestions would you give to educators that require students to attend the community day school?

11. Do you think your career plans were modified due to your attendance at the community day school?

APPENDIX C

CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

May 14, 2018

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB# FY2017-98
Status: Approved

Mr. Willie Jones and Prof. Nancy Acevedo Gil   Doctoral Studies
Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Jones and Prof. Acevedo-Gil:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Examining the educational experiences of community day school graduates: A narrative inquiry" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from May 14, 2018 through May 14, 2019. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the

informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

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