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The Perceptions of Alternative Education Students Ages 18-21 About the Factors in the Traditional School Setting that Inhibited Their On-Time High School Graduation

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The Perceptions of Alternative Education Students Ages 18-21 about the Factors in the
Traditional School Setting that Inhibited Their On-Time High School Graduation

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Ericka Roberson Kursey, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2017**.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how students ages 18-21 who are currently enrolled in a non-traditional educational setting articulate their educational pathway. The narrative inquiry method of research allowed the research participants to tell “their stories” in “their own” words. The research participants could articulate their views and perceptions on the factors that affected their educational pathway. Thirteen participants participated in the focus groups sessions and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Bronfenbrenner’s social systems theory (1979), environmental factors, educational experiences, excessive discipline infractions, and legal problems were dominant themes in the study. The study examined the at-risk social, at-risk school, and at-risk student/family factors that may impact a student’s educational pathway. The study found that even though each research participant had a different educational pathway, many of their social, school, and family experiences were similar. The perspectives of the factors impacting each research participant’s pathway varied as well as his or her perception of the level of support received from individuals throughout his or her educational pathway. Participants in the study were motivated to continue to pursue their secondary educational credentials despite obstacles, setbacks, and adversity.

This study identified the need for the local school district to continue providing alternative educational settings to students that need a different learning environment. There is also a need to evaluate the current student supports and interventions offered in the traditional school setting. There is also a need to address the impact of community and neighborhood factors that may affect students while in school. Policies designed for school improvement are recommended.

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personally or professionally, I know that my “cries” are safe with the two of you. I love you both like family. Thanks for allowing me to be a part of your lives.

Dedication

This doctoral journey would not have been possible without the support of some very, very special people in my life.

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive husband, Karl Michael Hursey. You did whatever you could to ensure my worries were limited, problems were solved, and needs were met. Thanks for doing the laundry, shopping for groceries, caring for the kids, paying the bills, cooking your best dinners, cleaning the house, ironing clothes, and helping Momma. Your support has been invaluable. Your silence helped my progress. Your presence was my security.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research has indicated that many students who drop out of high school are academically capable and could finish high school if given the right type of educational choices (Franklin, 1992; Franklin & Streeter, 1992, 1995). However, for various reasons educational systems continue to struggle with student dropouts. As students' progress from day care to elementary, to middle, to high school, they begin developing relationships with more peers and more adults. This increase in adult contacts occurs because elementary students usually have one central teacher for each of the core classes, while middle and high school students will have a different teacher for each content area, thus developing more relationships with adults as well as peers. As students' progress through school, they may or may not experience challenges in forming these relationships.

These relationships are important to students and may directly affect their educational pathway as they progress through school. Roderick's (1993) research on the relationship between dropping out of school and low school performance found that students connected to school through participation in activities or working with a caring adult were factors in students persisting in school. Having a connection to academics as well as positive relationships are factors that affect students' retention in school. "In recent years, studies have documented ways that students who feel 'connected' with other people and school activities perform better academically than do students who feel 'disconnected' (Strahan, 2008, p. 21). Adolescents may also struggle with adjusting socially, forming good peer relationships, and having low or no self-esteem as a result of physical and developmental changes. To help students with and through

adolescent development, diverse environments with the support to function well in them are needed (San Antonio, 2006).

According to a study conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), success at the middle level requires that some very specific strategies be in place. The main points of the nine strategies, known as Cornerstone Strategies include academic rigor, teacher teams, structured planning, student advisory program, appropriate assessments, and flexible scheduling. Each Cornerstone Strategy has specific recommendations and actions that support the recommendation, which addresses the developmental needs of adolescent students.

The Cornerstone Strategies help address the various needs of middle-level learners and provide teachers and administrators with a framework to help support students during their adolescent years. Since students at this age are going through adolescent development, they face numerous challenges that each Cornerstone Strategy helps to address. Proper implementation of the Cornerstone Strategies can provide additional structure and guidance to the middle school. Transition to high school may also be difficult for students. The many external factors that affect high school students and their ability to be successful may result in their being labeled as at risk of dropping out of school. Hirschi (1969) believed that students who have stronger bonds to teachers, school, or other conventional activities are less likely to defy school norms, and, therefore, are more likely to have a positive school experience (Free, 2008).

Factors attributing to students becoming labeled as at risk and becoming a dropout can differ for each student. A student's environment can also be a factor. However, studies consistently find that a complex set of relationships between student, family, school, and community factors are linked with the dropout decision (Tyler, 2007). Neighborhoods characterized by persistent violence, drugs, residential instability, underperforming schools, and

crowded housing conditions present daily obstacles for many poor, urban youth (Anthony, 2007). Among the strongest family domain, dropout predictors are parental education, occupation, and income—in other words, socioeconomic status (Tyler, 2007). For many older children and adolescents, poverty presents an additional layer of risk in a complex environment. Adolescents growing up in urban poverty are exposed to multiple risk and protective factors that in many cases contribute to negative outcomes like substance abuse, delinquency, and school failure (Anthony, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

There is research available on student dropouts and factors that attribute to students dropping out; however, there is limited research on the viewpoints of the non-traditional students and their perceptions of their educational pathway. Much of the school reform initiatives generally include a sustained interest in addressing the issue of disengaged or at-risk students; however, Levin states that the chances of effecting real change remain limited as strategies continue to build on simplistic and often inaccurate concepts of the pathway to school dropout (Levin, 1992). The gap in the research indicates there is a wide range of personal and social factors affecting students in traditional school that are potential contributors of a student dropping out (Rumberger, 1987; Wehlage, 1989). There is a need for additional research on the factors affecting students in traditional school, as well as the indicators of relationships and school engagement factors that may be potential contributors of students dropping out.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the dropout rate decreased from 12.1% in 1990 to 6.5% in 2014. The annual 2013-2014 dropout report for South Carolina indicated 5,640 student dropouts. Of the total number of dropouts, 25% of all dropouts occurred in ninth grade, with a cumulative 52% of the dropouts occurring by the tenth-grade year. However, the state has seen a reduction in the number of dropouts over the last four years.

Exploring the risk factors associated with student dropouts may provide the state and districts the necessary information needed to help reduce the number of student dropouts, which will directly impact the state's graduation rate.

Because of the impact of national accountability efforts through No Child Left Behind, it became necessary that standards be put in place to calculate the actual graduation rate across all states (NCLB, 2008). This process includes a uniform cohort model to help improve the understanding and characteristics of students that do not earn their high school diploma in the traditional four years. Understanding the dropout is necessary, and it helps schools provide dropout interventions to students deemed at risk (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). This is needed to also help school districts design and implement programs in a non-traditional setting to serve this population of student.

Currently, the State of South Carolina has 81 school districts, all of which offer alternative (non-traditional) programs that operate under the guidelines of a local school district and the State Department of Education's Alternative Education Office. In the field of alternative education, there is a general perception of the type of students served. However, the range of students served in alternative (non-traditional) education programs can range from those classified as special education to regular education or academically advanced (AAP). Students enrolled in these programs are usually labeled at risk of dropping out or have already dropped out of school.

Students enroll in non-traditional settings for a variety of reasons that may include, but are not limited to, a lack of academic performance, poor attendance, employment, disciplinary infractions, medical problems, or family difficulties. Students, parents and educators should be aware of the at-risk youth factors. Identifying these factors early may be beneficial for educators

and educational systems in providing students the appropriate services to help them be successful while enrolled in traditional school. Exploring specific factors that contribute to a student having to attend a non-traditional school may help educational settings to implement interventions or develop programs that will better help serve students while in traditional school to reduce the possibility of their becoming at risk or dropping out. Non-traditional settings provide students a completely different environment than the traditional setting, which may afford students a better opportunity to experience success. Traditional schools are lacking the personal relationships with teachers, school-wide focus on maturity and responsibility, understanding about social issues, and positive peer relationships that alternative schools often provide (Lagana-Riordan, 2011).

Programs must be in place to address specific student needs, and teachers must be willing and proactive when educating youth. These programs require teachers to build relationships with students to become more knowledgeable and be aware of the issues or problems that may be affecting them. At-risk youth who experienced strong and bonded relationships with adults (including an influential teacher) who were themselves inviting provided the necessary protective factors for at-risk youth to overcome adversity” (Lee, 2012). Additional support systems can also help at-risk students. Providing adults with teaching strategies that will enable them to teach successful learning strategies to at-risk students will also help in the learning process (McWhirter, 2013).

Research supports the implementation of mentoring programs as potentially successful approaches to meeting the individual needs of at-risk students (Johnson, 2006; Lampley, 2010). Mentors provide many students with the positive adult role model that is often missing from the lives of at-risk students. Peer tutoring, as well as adult-led tutoring sessions, can also help at-risk

students academically and socially. Many at-risk students also need to learn to build positive trustful adult relationships. These personal connections help students build much needed positive relationships.

Additional factors may also contribute to student labeling as at risk, but there is limited research on these factors. "Studies of the predictors of high school graduation have generally focused on the high school years, with less research dedicated to investigating earlier indicators in middle school" (Kieffer, Marinell, & Neugebaur, 2014, p. 84). Barrington and Hendricks (1989) state that at-risk students may be able to be identified as early as third grade. However, disengagement from school can start very early in a student's educational journey and results from many complex variables combined (Hess & Copeland, 2001). Common predictors of dropping out focus on gender, grade retention, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and achievement; but a school dropout can also be linked to a decline in school engagement (Lamote, Speybroeck, Noortgate & Damme, 2013). "Researchers conceptualized dropping out from high school as part of a long-term process of disengagement from school, with negative developmental pathways that begin before Grade 9" (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 5). "A combination of cognitive, behavioral, and affective factors may help predict the likelihood of a student dropping out." (Kieffer, Marinell, & Neugebaur, 2014, p. 551).

Research has found that attendance indicators during early elementary grades and subsequent declines in attendance during upper elementary and middle school can be linked to the likelihood of identifying students who may be off track for high school graduation (Kieffer, Marinell, & Neugebaur, 2014). A student's decision to drop out or "disconnect" from school is affected by some complex factors, can involve some or all of the factors, and is often the culmination of a long process of disengagement from school (Tyler, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore how students ages 18-21 that are currently enrolled in a non-traditional educational setting articulate their educational pathway. Specifically, there is a lack of research regarding the services, interventions and support that are needed to help students be successful in a traditional school, which will reduce their likelihood of having to graduate from a non-traditional setting. Districts continue to provide schools with funding for academic supports, but the social, behavioral, and relationship needs of students may be neglected (Weatherbee, 2006).

There is limited empirical research that identifies the support and interventions that were limited or not available to students while enrolled in the traditional school setting that may have been beneficial to their educational pathway. “Several questions remain about how students navigate into and through the middle grades and how their struggles or success in navigating these developmental stages predict their later outcomes” (Kieffer, Marinell, & Neugebauer, p. 552). Theories regarding adolescent student development, their personal experiences, and how students learn provided the framework for this study.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was the following:

What are the perceptions of students ages 18-21 in two South Carolina alternative programs of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. How do students describe their experiences in traditional schools?
2. How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting?
3. How do they compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical perspective guiding this research study stems from a constructivist learning theory. This research study explored the perceptions of students in non-traditional settings on the factors in the traditional school setting that inhibited their on-time high school graduation. Student educational pathways were discussed during this process.

The ecological systems theory, which describes how a child's development affects them during their life (Bronfenbrenner, 1969), was explored. The theory, which is divided into five different levels, discusses how and what factors affect students at different stages of development. The five systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem—all explore the factors of development in children and their impact on human development. A study of these systems provides an explanation of students' experiences and how they affect their life experiences.

Internal, as well as external, factors can also affect a student's progress or lack of progress. Additional examination of research by Rotter on social learning added to this research. Locus of control (Rotter, 1954), which comes from social learning theory, is a measure of the amount of control one perceives over the events that occur in life. Students can have a strong internal locus of control or an external locus of control. Students with strong internal control believe that it is necessary to study now and plan, whereas students with a strong external locus of control feel that their environment presents obstacles that they cannot overcome. Students' internal and external controls can influence how or if they persist through school. A thorough examination of these theories and their impacts on students was studied in this research.

Study Design and Methodology

The researcher examined the relevance of several factors that may affect at-risk students remaining in a traditional setting. Specifically, there is a lack of information regarding the

services, interventions, and support that were needed to help at-risk students be successful in a traditional school, and reduce their likelihood of having to graduate from a non-traditional setting. Analyzed data sought to determine how students in two South Carolina alternative programs articulate their perceptions of past educational experiences in the traditional school and what factors may have inhibited their on-time graduation. Additionally, data were analyzed to determine if common academic, social, and relational factors among students were evident. Data were used to determine if there are additional supports needed in traditional school to better support at-risk students. A qualitative narrative inquiry study was used in an attempt to better understand the experiences and perceptions of the students. Understanding the factors affecting at-risk students can be complex, and it was necessary that a thorough and complete approach be used, which allowed students the opportunity to explain their educational pathway and the factors affecting them.

The students identified for this research were all pursuing their secondary high school credential (diploma or General Educational Diploma GED Certificate) and had previously attended school in a traditional educational setting. The identified participants all attend classes in South Carolina in the district's adult education center or evening alternative school. The adult education center offers high school diploma courses, GED courses, and English as a Second Language classes (ESL). The evening high school offers only high school diploma completion courses. Each of the programs hire only certified teachers to teach diploma and GED courses.

Permission was granted to gain access to these students through the district's Accountability, Assessment, Research, and Evaluation (AARE) Office's Research Committee. This committee consisted of district level administrators, with final approval granted through the superintendent's office. Prepared and presented to the committee was an application to conduct

research, which included a letter of consent, research and interview questions and research procedures. Each administrator that directly supervises the adult education program and evening high school program also granted approval. Upon receiving district approval, a request for permission to conduct the study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Seton Hall University. No action was taken nor data collected without the final approval of the IRB at Seton Hall University and the South Carolina School District, where the research was conducted. The potential participants were selected from students enrolled during the 2016-2017 academic year in the identified district.

After the research study had received final approval, permission was granted to attend registration and orientation sessions to discuss the research with the prospective participants. During these sessions, research information was presented to students through an electronic medium, giving them an opportunity to express an interest in the research study. Once students expressed an interest in participating, they received a consent letter to sign and a ten-question student demographic survey to complete. The questions presented in the student demographic survey provided the administrator's background information in the areas of the school, family, and environmental factors and their impact on the potential candidate's educational pathways. The information from the demographic survey was analyzed to determine if any trends existed among the students. After using purposive sampling, 13 participants were identified for the qualitative study based on the information provided on the demographic survey.

Qualitative sources of data for this study included focus groups and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. The focus groups were completed prior to the semi-structured interviews. Each focus group had between two to three students and sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes. One student chose not to participate in a focus group; therefore, the

researcher interviewed her individually for both the focus group as well as the in-depth interview. Focus group sessions gave students an opportunity to have an open discussion about their educational pathway, and questions were designed to provide the researcher more insight on student perspectives. Each student was provided an individual journal to be used for private reflection. Information written in the student journal entries were shared only at the discretion of the student participant.

Research questions were developed based on the review of the literature on at-risk students, behaviors and factors affecting them, as well as prior knowledge gained from working with students in non-traditional settings. Once the researcher developed the questions, they were reviewed, edited, and approved by a jury of experts. The jury of experts included educators that are currently working in a non-traditional educational setting, a traditional educational setting, and Seton Hall professors. Based on recommendations from the jury of experts, adjustments were made to the interview questions and final approval of the instruments that were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

All student demographic questionnaires, interview sessions, and focus groups occurred on the campus of the identified educational settings. Focus group sessions were designed to help gather data on the perceptions, beliefs, and opinions of the student's educational pathway. Each focus group consisted of two to three participants and was intentionally grouped based on the researcher's observations. The focus groups and in-depth interviews all occurred in the conference room at each of educational settings. All interviews and focus group sessions were digitally recorded. The researcher also wrote field notes. All of the data obtained from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed. Triangulation of data was done from the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups from the student

participants that volunteered to participate. Each participant gave consent to having his or her responses recorded before the session's beginning.

The researcher served as the interviewer and recorded as well as organized the data. Participant responses were coded, analyzed thematically, and reported in narrative formats. To discover themes in responses, codes were assigned to the data. Observations of student enrollment, intake, and classroom observations was also completed.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for school administrators, educators, parents, and students to help understand what schools and districts must do differently to help retain students through high school completion and identify areas that need improvement. By understanding students' perceptions of their educational pathway and how it affected them, education officials can gain a better understanding of what adjustments may be needed in the schools in the identified district in South Carolina. By examining students' educational pathways and their perceptions of school, educational leaders may better understand the factors affecting student achievement in the traditional school setting. District leaders will be able to examine the schools and provide the academic, social, and relational supports needed to maintain enrollment and reduce the number of students attending alternative schools in the district.

By analyzing the perceptions of each focus group and interview notes from each of the participants, the researcher identified similarities and differences among the student participants. Results of this study may help school administrators as they analyze suspension, expulsion, and dropout data in providing interventions that are more suitable for students, training for teachers, and support for parents. It may also provide the district with information that can be used in considering the appropriate school staffing and funding. Additionally, this study can give

educators additional insight into the factors that students feel are important to their educational success. The results of this study can provide a better understanding for school administrators, educators, and teachers of the supports that are needed by students to help complete their education in a traditional school setting.

Limitations

It is important for me as a researcher to understand how my lived experiences affected my research. There are potential limitations of qualitative research and research bias. Qualitative researchers become part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001) and therefore are subject to a lack of objectivity. The researcher's experience as a researcher will affect how data are interpreted analyzed, and viewed. To aid in this process, the researcher continuously assessed the research to be aware of limitations, and used the most effective method for analyzing the data. It was important for the researcher to thoroughly understand her personal "truths" and how they were shaped to help reduce bias when conducting research. The researcher's experiences as a teacher and administrator directly impacts the views that are currently held. Advantages to this research process include interviewees' willingness to tell their stories with in-depth meanings and rich descriptions.

According to Mason (2002), ontological perspective is directly related to personal experiences and perceptions that form an individual's "personal truth." Since all humans are different, each person's reality will be different; no two views of the world are identical. Because of differing ontological perspectives, or how the world is viewed, the process of conducting research or observations will be different for each researcher. Another limitation of this research study is the number of research participants as well as the ages of the research participants. This research study included only 14 participants whose ages were between 18-21 years of age.

Delimitations

This study is limited to alternative programs in a school district in South Carolina. The researcher recognizes the use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups as delimiting factors. There are pros and cons to every type of research. However, a major difference is other forms of qualitative research may follow a standard set of procedures; narrative research does not (Reissman, 1993). A challenge to the narrative inquiry is “managing the story” regarding how participants in the story are represented and “spoken” for in the presentation of data (Savin-Baden, 2007). Additionally, consideration must be given to my positionality in the story. Disadvantages involve the researchers’ interpretation of the story and how the data were presented.

Another delimiting factor is that this study was conducted in only one school district within the state of South Carolina. The needs of students, the structure of schools, and school resources vary throughout each school, district, and state. Therefore, the factors and needs of students throughout the state may be different for each setting. Conducting research in different locations may yield different data outputs.

Definitions of Terms

At-Risk Youth: Students who demonstrate characteristics that place them in jeopardy of not succeeding in school (Hubner & Wolfson, 2001).

Adolescence: The transition stage between childhood and adulthood described by key developmental stages, spanning ages 10-24. For this study, ages 10-14 are considered adolescents (Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

Advanced Academic Placement (AAP): Students that are academically advanced in core subject areas.

High School: An educational setting serving students in grades 9th-12th (Tanner and Tanner, 2007).

High School Dropout: Non-completers; students who do not receive a regular high school diploma (Swanson & Chaplin, 2003)

Middle School: An educational setting serving students in Grades 6-8 (Tanner & Tanner, (2007).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): The federal law, H. R. 1 No Child Left Behind of 2001, initiative to improve student achievement. All students are intended to be proficient in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and science at grade level by the year 2014 (NCLB, 2006).

Non-traditional setting: An educational location other than the traditional K-12 school setting (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).

Special Education Students/Special Needs Students: Any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services, even if the child has not failed or been retained in a course or grade and is advancing from grade to grade.

Socioeconomic Status (SES): The social standing or class of an individual or group that measures a combination of education, income, and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2006).

Traditional setting: K-12 educational facility for students.

Summary

This research study's theoretical perspective is interpretive but centers on constructivist theory. The main data collection methods were personal interviews, which gave the interviewees an opportunity to tell 'their stories' in the way they remember. Engaging in narrative research for this study gave the researcher an opportunity to talk to the students individually and in

groups. The analysis method of narrative inquiry was used for this research study. The conversations, interviews, field notes, and other documentation were analyzed and interpreted for my research findings. It was important to understand how my ontological and epistemological assumptions would affect my research study.

It was necessary to be reflective throughout the process and engage in reflexivity to ensure my personal biases were not reflected in the study. Engaging in reflexivity required that I recheck the analysis of the data collected. The data were used to identify educational, family, and community supports that can aid in reducing students' chances of having to be educated in an alternative setting in a school district in South Carolina. Educators in the identified district can utilize the guide. The guide explains specific strategies, interventions, and supports that are needed to help prevent or reduce the number of students having to attend school in a non-traditional setting. This guide can also detail what family and community supports are necessary. The effectiveness of additional interventions or support provided by the alternative school program were also evaluated.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II, which is the literature review, contains research on the environmental, societal, school, and student factors that possibly can contribute to a student being labeled as at-risk. This review includes an evaluation of causation factors, as well as the developmental and foundational needs of students during adolescent development and into young adulthood. This literature review also encompasses information on at-risk student population studies.

This chapter provides a synopsis of the risk factors associated with students categorized as at-risk—the environmental, social/emotional, and relational factors they experienced. The chapter contains sections that include (1) social factors associated with becoming at-risk, (2) school factors related to becoming at-risk, and (3) student/family factors related to becoming at-risk. “Additionally, this chapter reviews the literature on the elements needed to help students be successful while in the traditional school setting.

Having knowledge and an understanding of the developmental needs of students can benefit educational settings in ensuring the right supports are in place for successful student achievement, which will reduce the probability of a student having to complete his or her education in a non-traditional setting. Youth development constantly changes, with the phase of adolescent development being the most difficult. Numerous factors affect students through adolescence, with student discipline being one of the many factors that can directly influence students. Muscott, Mann, and LebBrun (2008) believed the actual problem behaviors (major and minor) were the greatest challenge for educators. Adolescents struggle with adjusting socially, forming healthy peer relationships, and having low or no self-esteem because of physical developmental changes (San Antonio, 2006). Because of these changes, some very specific

strategies are needed to support adolescents as they develop. Middle school students are faced with a different structure of schooling, which may include larger class sizes and multiple teachers (Kieffer, 2014). The transitioning into middle school means increased academic and curricular demands.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) indicated that success at the middle level requires that some very specific strategies be in place for the adolescent student. The main points of the nine strategies, known as Cornerstone Strategies include academic rigor, teacher teams, structured planning, student advisory program, appropriate assessments, and flexible scheduling. Each Cornerstone Strategy has specific recommendations and actions that assist with proper implementation to ensure student success at the middle level.

Cornerstone Strategy #1 is to establish the academically rigorous essential learnings that a student is required to master to make the transition to high school successfully and align the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal.

Cornerstone Strategy #2-Create dynamic teacher teams that are afforded common planning time to help organize and improve the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students.

Cornerstone #3-Provide structured planning time for teachers to align the curriculum across grades and school and to map efforts that address the academic, developmental, social, and personal needs of students.

Cornerstone #4-Implement a comprehensive advisory or another program that ensures each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to meet with an adult to plan and assess the student's academic, personal, and social development.

Cornerstone #5-Ensure that teachers assess the individual learning needs of students and tailor instructional strategies and multiple assessments

accordingly. Cornerstone #6-Entrust teachers with the responsibility of implementing schedules that are flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming, common planning time, and other lesson planning. (NASSP, 2006)

Proper implementation of these Cornerstone Strategies will provide structure and guidance to the middle school. Structure and guidance will help address the various needs of middle-level learners and provide teachers and administrators with a framework to help support students during these years. Because students at this age are going through adolescent development, the Cornerstone Strategies are tailored to meet the developmental needs of the adolescent student at various grade levels, which will be beneficial to students' development academically and socially and prepare students as they transition into high school. Adolescent students face numerous challenges that the implementation of each Cornerstone Strategy addresses.

Because of the current structure of the school day, students can spend an excess of nine hours per day in school. This time can equate to over one-half of their day in school. It is critical that schools can meet the needs of developing adolescent students since they spend an great deal of time in school. Most developmental milestones associated with competence in late childhood and adolescence, including academic achievement, peer relationships, pro-social conduct, and involvement in athletics and clubs, are defined by or related to behavior in the school context (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Studies of the predictors of high school graduation have mostly focused on the high school years with less research on investigating the early indicators that are prevalent in middle

school (Kieffer, 2014). Identifying dropout predictors can start early in a student's educational journey. Focus should not just be on Grade 9; efforts to improve engagement and prevent dropout should span upper-elementary and middle school, not just high school (Kieffer, 2014). It is necessary for educators to focus on all factors that may identify the potential dropout. Identifying factors early may help reduce dropout numbers.

The goal of educational institutions is to educate students with high school graduation as the culmination. Because of numerous factors, some students are unsuccessful and do not make it to high school graduation, resulting in their becoming at-risk of dropping out or eventually dropping out. To help reclaim these students, or provide alternative educational settings, alternative programs are implemented across the nation. The design and implementation of programs vary from state-to-state.

There are currently 81 school districts in South Carolina, 14 of which offer charter school choices. The South Carolina State Board of Education reports approximately 35 alternative schools in the state. Additional opportunities for students that are at risk of dropping out or students that have already dropped out are also offered through 50 adult education programs. Districts also offer additional accelerated programs through local school districts to help reduce the dropout rate. These programs range from day programs, afterschool/evening programs, online programs, and night programs. Program varieties may include programs that are offered on site or at other district locations. Through successful completion of these programs, students can earn either a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or a regular high school state diploma.

The table below contains the annual 2013-2014 dropout report for South Carolina, which indicates 5,640 student dropouts.

Table 1

Annual 2013-2014 Dropout Report for South Carolina

SOUTH CAROLINA DROPOUTS 2013–14

DROPOUTS BY GROUPS	DROPOUTS	ENROLLMENT	DROPOUT RATE
ALL STUDENTS	5,640	216,818	2.6
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	31	1,199	2.6
ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	39	4,235	0.9
BLACK NON-HISPANIC	2,001	79,354	2.5
HISPANIC	398	13,109	3.0
WHITE NON-HISPANIC	3,038	118,853	2.6
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	911	25,254	3.6
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT	58	7,579	0.8
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	3,721	112,347	3.3
MIGRANT	0	51	0.0
MALE	3,350	110,495	3.0
FEMALE	2,290	106,315	2.2

Source: South Carolina Department of Education, *Student Dropout File Collected October 2013-14 and The South Carolina 45-Day Average Membership file collected October 2014-15.*

Of the total number of dropouts, 25% of all dropouts occurred in ninth grade, with a cumulative 52% of the dropouts occurring by tenth-grade year. However, the state has seen a reduction in the number of dropouts over the last four years. Exploring the risk factors associated with student dropouts may provide districts additional information needed to help reduce the number of student dropouts, which will directly affect the states graduation rate.

Literature Review Process

The review of the literature for this study included middle school and adolescent development, social, school, and student/family factors, as well as supportive elements. Resources for this study were found in the Seton Hall University library database, The University of South Carolina library database, journals, books, magazines, and websites. Computerized databases included ERIC Research Database, ProQuest, Google Scholar and Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI). Search terms included the following words: adolescent, traditional school, non-traditional school, at-risk, transition, dropout, educational

pathway, an alternative school, and alternative education. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* 6th edition (2010) style guidelines were used in formatting this dissertation.

The review of literature includes important themes relating to the problem statement, which includes the following:

- Positive adult relationships can be beneficial to student achievement.
- Home, school, and social factors can affect students educationally both positively and negatively.
- Students need structure, set expectations, and must feel a sense of belonging to a group of people or organization.

Theoretical Frameworks

At-risk student factors can vary because of home, school, and family experiences, which directly affect student academic performance. According to research, there are many school, community, and/or family factors that also contribute to the possibility of students being placed in the at-risk category, including lack of parental involvement, lack of support (social, emotional and/or academic) class, low socioeconomic status, and minority status (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009; Free, 2008; Buchanan, 2013).

The presentation of academic, environmental, societal, and relational theories is the framework for understanding the educational pathway and factors that contribute to students completing school in a non-traditional educational setting. When students perceive their academic competence is threatened or they are struggling in a specific area (socially, emotionally, or academically), they are likely to disengage within the educational environment.

Bronfenbrenner's social systems theory (1979) investigated the link between student

interactions and experiences in school and creating a positive climate for school completion. Research from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social systems theory (bioecological systems theory) is a compilation of multiple systems in which human development occurs. This model, known as the "ecological environment," is comprised of five systems, each of which has an effect on the development of children. This theory explains that a child's biology fuels development, and the interaction between factors in the biology, immediate family/community environment, and societal landscape fuels development. Each of the systems identifies phases in which human development occurs. The microsystem is the layer closest to the child, where there is the most contact; these are the immediate surroundings (family, school, peer groups, surroundings). The relationships in this structure affect children in two directions (away from the child and towards the child). The mesosystem provides the connection between and interrelations among the microsystem (e.g., home-school relations between the teacher and parents.) The exosystem is the larger social system in which the child may not function directly, but these events can affect the child's development (e.g., parent work schedules). Children may not be directly involved in this level, but they do feel the impact of what occurs. The macrosystem is the outer layer, which is comprised of cultural values and customs. The chronosystem encompasses the dimension of time, which can be external (time of a parent's death) or internal, which may be psychological changes.

Additional internal, as well as external factors, can also affect a student's progress or lack of achievement. Locus of control (Rotter, 1954) which comes from social learning theory is a measure of the amount of control one perceives one has over the events that occur in life. Students can have a high internal locus of control or a high external locus of control. Students with strong internal control believe that it is necessary to study now and plan, whereas students

with a high external locus of control feel that their environment presents obstacles they cannot overcome. These environmental obstacles may negatively affect a student, resulting in the decision to drop out. Students with a high internal locus of control may persist to completion.

The identification of a “dropout” varies from state to state. DeWitte (2013) defined a dropout as leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential, most often a secondary education diploma. The predictors of dropouts indicate that students starting with a low initial cognitive ability, starting in a remedial class, having an ethnic background, having a low socioeconomic background, being older at the start of secondary education, or being retained a grade in secondary education are significantly more at risk of dropping out (Lamote, Speybroeck, Noorgate, & Damme, 2013).

At-risk is a term that has become widely used in the past few decades in place of other labels, including “disadvantaged,” “deprived,” “disengaged” or “disconnected” (Free, 2008). Many factors contribute to a student being labeled as at-risk. Academic ability and family and community influences are major factors. McWhirter (1993) describes being at-risk as a continuum. Students who come from families with high socioeconomic standing, limited stressors in their lives, and display and promote positive family, school, and social interactions are at low risk of dropping out of school (Little, 1999). However, it is important to note that no student is completely free of becoming at-risk because of the many factors of life that can affect where the students are academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. As a result, it is important to explore dropout factors so that educators become more conscious of these factors. The National Dropout Prevention Network (2007) report identified significant risk factors by the elementary, middle and high school levels. Table 2 below lists the factors and indicates the grade level in which the factor was determined to be most significant.

Table 2

Significant Risk Factors by School Level

Risk Category and Risk Factor	Elem. School	Middle School	High School
Individual Background Characteristics			
Has a learning disability or emotional disturbance		√	√
Early Adult Responsibilities			
High number of work hours		√	√*
Parenthood			√*
Social Attitudes, Values, & Behavior			
High-risk peer group		√*	√
High-risk social behavior		√*	√
Highly socially active outside of school			√
School Performance			
Low achievement	√*	√*	√*
Retention/over-age for grade	√*	√*	√*
School Engagement			
Poor attendance	√*	√*	√*
Low educational expectations		√*	√*
Lack of effort		√	√
Low commitment to school		√	√*
No extracurricular participation		√	√*
School Behavior			
Misbehavior	√	√	√*
Early aggression	√	√	
Family Background Characteristics			
Low socioeconomic status	√*	√*	√*
High family mobility		√*	
Low education level of parents	√	√	√*
Large number of siblings	√		√
Not living with both natural parents	√	√	√*
Family disruption	√		
Family Engagement/Commitment to Education			
Low educational expectations		√*	
Sibling has dropped out		√	√
Low contact with school		√*	
Lack of conversations about school		√*	√

Key: √ indicates that the risk factor was found to be significantly related to dropout at this school level in one study. √ indicates that the risk factor was found to be significantly related to dropout at this school level in two or more studies. National Dropout Prevention Network, 2007.

At-Risk Environmental and Societal Factors

There are many factors that impact at-risk youth that include environmental and societal factors (McWhirter, 2013). In 2006, the results of a study conducted by Fortin (2006) showed that students at risk for school dropout encounter many more social and school adjustment difficulties than not-at-risk students, and the nature of these challenges varies by different contexts; namely, the personal, family, and school contexts.

Environmental factors are characteristics in an environment that affect survival and growth. Physical, cultural, demographic, economic, and political factors contain some of the elements within an environment that may directly or indirectly affect at-risk students. This characteristic can be the geographic location of a family's residence, housing programs, and lack of playgrounds and green areas (Rumberger, 2004). Socioeconomic status (SES) which consists of parental education, occupation, income, and family structure are the strongest predictors of student dropout rates. Struggling families have insufficient fiscal, human, and social resources to guarantee success in school, which commonly leads to troubled youth who struggle in school (Buchanan, 2013).

Educational studies have measured overall student perceptions and their interpretation of factors that are associated with students dropping out. Student connectedness to school influences overall student learning. A student's having a feeling of positive satisfaction with life is beneficial to their success. If this does not happen, this devaluing of education without the right supports can lead to failure or eventually school dropout (Stephan, Caudroit, Boiché, & Sarrazin, 2011).

Adolescents growing up in urban poverty are exposed to multiple risk and protective factors that in many cases contribute to adverse outcomes such as substance abuse, delinquency,

and school failure (Anthony, 2007). Poverty-stricken neighborhoods are subjected to higher crime rates, noise factors, and crowding. These factors contribute to the many obstacles that urban youth face. Research by Eric Jenson (2009), states there are four primary factors afflicting families living in poverty. They are as follows:

- Emotional and social challenges
- Acute and chronic stressors
- Cognitive lags
- Health and safety issues

Students also need to have a positive self-image and be secure in their beliefs to limit the adverse effects that environmental and societal factors may have on their daily lives.

Social factors that may affect a student dropping out include (a) fewer educational materials, (b) financial demands requiring older children to work, (c) parents that do not value school because of past bad experiences, (d) parents with lower educational levels, and (e) language minority students (Persaud, 1992). Many dropouts have shown social maladjustments such as behavior disorders and delinquency (Fortin (2006). In addition to social adjustments, behavioral indicators (i.e., attendance and academic course performance) of students in Grade 6 can also be used to predict dropout in the ninth grade (Kieffer, 2014).

Additional societal factors which place students at risk are poverty, hardships related to minority status, and single-parent or dual working parent families (Davis & McCaul, 1990). Social support is also important for the healthy development of students. The environmental and societal factors that impact youth vary in severity. Having supportive parents and engaging in high-quality activities helps in the development of students feeling satisfied (Park, 2004). These positive factors contribute to at-risk youth success.

At-Risk School Factors

Many school factors may affect a student being labeled as at-risk. School performance, school engagement, and school behavior are some of the at-risk school factors. There are two research theories, student situated learning (Jean Lave & Wenger, 1991) theory and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) that address the way a student perceives his or her school environment and learning as a process that can affect their desire to complete school or drop out. Albert Bandura developed the concept of the self-efficacy theory, which directly links a student's perception of his or her ability to be successful within the school may contribute to his or her decision to drop out. This translates to an individual's belief of what he or she can achieve. People who demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy are motivated by the thought they will accomplish any task or endeavor that they set out to do and see things as a learning opportunity (Lunenburg, 2011). The belief of self-efficacy provides the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Pajares, 2006). "Situated learning emphasizes the idea that much of what is learned is specific to the situations in which it is learned" (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996, p. 5). This theory places emphasis on student learning and where that learning occurs as to how it affects a student's decision to drop out.

Programs must be in place to address specific student needs, and teachers must be willing and proactive when educating youth. "At-risk youth, which experienced strong and bonded relationships with adults (including an influential teacher) who were themselves inviting provided then necessary protective factors for these at-risk young people to overcome adversity" (Lee, 2012, p. 341). Additional support systems can also help at-risk students. Research has also found that students' relationships with parents and teachers are important. These

relationships can significantly predict their academic motivation and educational outcomes (Ricard, 2016).

Research also supports the implementation of mentoring programs as a potentially successful approach to meeting the individual needs of at-risk students (Johnson, 2006; Lampley, 2010). Mentors provide many students with the positive adult role model that is often missing from the lives of at-risk students. An impact study conducted by Tierney and Gromman (2000) found that students with mentors were less likely to start using drugs, less likely to hit someone, and had improved school attendance, academic performance, and improved relationships. Peer tutoring, as well as adult-led coaching sessions can also help at-risk students academically and socially. Many at-risk students also need to learn to build positive trustful adult relationships and know that one or more adults love them unconditionally. Once students know these adults love them unconditionally, it is necessary for them to spend time with the adults while engaged in meaningful activities.

Davis and McCaul (1990) found school-related factors which place students at risk are irresponsible, inappropriate curricula, inadequate/ineffective teaching strategies, unrealistic educational standards, low teacher expectations for performance, school climate which is perceived by students as being negative, and teacher insensitivity to diverse students. Students must feel supported, have a sense of belonging, and participate in the educational process. At-risk students will benefit from instructional methods that positively affect the academic achievement of all students. A study conducted by Slavin (1989) indicated that research finds teacher behaviors that are successful with low achievers tend to be very much like those successful with all students. “Thus, it is likely that if programs focusing on improving teachers’

general instructional skills are successful with low achievers, they will also be effective with other students” (Slavin, 1989).

Certain supports must be in place to ensure the success of students. A study conducted by Wehlage (1989) states, “Effective schools provide ‘at-risk’ students a community of support that encourages school membership and educational engagement” (p. 298). This study described effective dropout prevention programs and developed a framework for understanding the relationship between at-risk students and their schools. Jimerson, Campos, and Grief (2003) explored the construct and measurement of school engagement, determining school engagement is a multifaceted construct that includes three dimensions:

1. Affective-student’s feelings about their school, teachers, and peers
2. Behavioral-student performance, such as participation in extracurricular activities
3. Cognitive-student perceptions held about self, school, teachers, and others (i.e., self-efficacy, level of motivation, encouragement by teachers, aspirations, etc.)

The interactions among these three dimensions, not just one dimension, can identify a student’s levels of disengagement from school (Kieffer, Marinell, & Neugebauer, 2014). In their research, Carbonaro and Workman (2013) indicated the need to better understand the role of friends in a student’s decision to drop out. Students develop varying types of friendships that may serve their needs in different ways. The kind of relationship held by these friends can affect a student’s decision to leave school. The impact of a relationship may positively or negatively affect the student. Giordano (2003) offers three reasons why the characteristics of their most intimate friendship ties may affect adolescents. First, more frequent communication and interaction with close friends provides more opportunities for influence. Second, those who are like themselves may more easily influence students (presumably, their close friends). Finally,

since adolescents value these friendships more than distant relationships with peers, they will engage in acts of conformity to preserve these close friendships. Students feel the need to be accepted by their peers. Students who are rejected by their peers and socially isolated in their school are more likely to drop out of high school (Carbonaro, 2013).

Research shows some of the same characteristics of at-risk students are associated with peers that have similar experiences, may have disruptive behaviors, have lower grades, participate in fewer extracurricular activities, and may also value education less (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Battin-Pearson, 2000; Ellenbogen & Champerland, 1997; Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Sewell & Hauser, 1980). Having positive social networks may benefit at-risk students. Close friendships that are supportive can be beneficial for at-risk students; however, associates that are negative can have an adverse impact on a student's decision to remain in school. More close friends that are supportive and encouraging are important because these students may desire to maintain their social ties (Turner, Hogg, Stets, & Burke) and remain in school.

As students progress from elementary to middle school, the number of teachers increases, as well as the student-teacher ratio, which may impact a student's perception of engagement. Because of this increase, many students have a difficult time establishing relationships with teachers as well as with their peers. Lamote et al. (2013) states, "When there is a poor student-teacher relationship at the start of secondary education, this relation often worsens during secondary school, and thus, these students are likely to turn away from school" (p. 753). Student-teacher relationships help students to feel connected and have a sense of belonging or relatedness. "Relatedness refers to the desire to feel connected to others—to love and care, and to be loved and cared for" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). Connectedness is satisfied when there is an established respect and alliance with others, which results in feeling connected, protected, and

supported (Deci & Ryan, 2008a; Roffey, 2013). Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health indicate that adolescents who report feeling more connected to school show lower levels of emotional distress, risk behavior, and aggression (Resnick, 1997). The role that teachers' attitudes and beliefs have on student success is powerful (Davis & Dupper, 2004).

Additional research indicates that school environment or climate also affects a student's likelihood to become disengaged or disconnected from school. Pittman and Haughwout (1987) demonstrated what may seem self-evident, that the effect of school size on dropout is almost entirely related to the school's social climate and more particularly the influence of the student's participating, as well as the amount of problems in the school environment . . . larger schools have a greater program of curriculum diversity but a less positive social climate. Pierce's (1994) research indicates that the classroom environment and the interactions between teacher and student influenced both academic achievement and the student's engagement in school and social activities. It is necessary that students feel connected towards school. This increases positive academic, psychological, and behavioral outcomes during adolescence (Lee, 2012).

Other student-perceived negative factors might also contribute to a student's decision to drop out. Ricard (2016) noted that students who indicated that they emulated parents and teachers showed more positive school adjustment, motivation, and self-esteem in comparison to students who emulated classmates. When students experience a supportive environment in school, such as having friends who support their academic goals, they are more likely to experience positive outcomes (Lee, p. 330). "In recent years, studies have documented ways that students who feel 'connected' with other people and school activities perform better academically than do students who feel 'disconnected'" (Strahan, 2008, p. 21). Hirschi (1969) believed that students who have stronger bonds to teachers, school, or other conventional activities are less

likely to defy school norms and therefore are more likely to have a positive school experience (Free, 2008). Academic achievement can also be associated with a student's decision to leave school. The failure to achieve academically may result in grade retention or credit deficits (DeWitte, 2013).

At-Risk Student and Family Factors

The combination of at-risk student and family factors for each student may vary. Family-related factors, social class, or socioeconomic status (SES) is a contested factor. SES is often measured by parents' (or guardians') occupational status, education, and income, all of which can be considered influential (Dalton, 2009). Family background characteristics of low socioeconomic status (SES), high family mobility, low education level of parents, a large number of siblings, not living with natural parents and family disruption are factors that affect at-risk youth (Hammond, 2007). Socioeconomic status of parents, educational background of parents and student behavioral issues also affects students' perception of the school. Family engagement or commitment to education are also influencing factors. Engagement or involvement is a key element in student success; it has been linked to stronger academic achievement, higher educational aspirations, more positive perception of education, and more powerful self-regulatory skills (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002, p. 2).

At-risk students are in need of parental support to help them emotionally, socially, and academically. Parents may have low educational expectations and are sometimes not involved in their child's education. This forces students to disconnect from school. It is necessary for schools to engage parents in an attempt to support their child. Schools must make parents feel welcomed, value their opinions, and keep open communication. Involving families in their student's education has become a major focus of educators, particularly those working with at-risk students (Bermudez & Marquez, 1996).

Additional personal factors affect at-risk students. “Forces within their personal lives which place students at risk are low self-esteem, low aspirations, chemical abuse, unresolved emotional conflicts, inappropriate behavior, negative peer pressure, and dangerous sexual practices” (Davis & McCaul, 1990). The dynamics of at-risk students’ families can affect them becoming labeled as well as impact their decision to drop out. The size of the household, marital status of parents, and parental support or engagement are all factors of family support (Cooper, 2005; Dustmann 2008). These family conditions directly impact student success in school. Research conducted by Taylor (1912) lists six family-related predictors of dropping out.

1. Low-income status
2. Single-parent homes
3. Low educational attainment on the part of the parents and older sisters or brothers
4. Unsatisfactory relationship with family members
5. Cultural differences between the school staff and the homes of these students
6. Lack of parental interest

Students that are impacted by these factors become disengaged from school. Three dimensions of engagement are the following: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Declines in both behavioral and affective engagement contribute to the decision to withdraw from school (Lamote, p. 741). Behavioral engagement refers to involvement in academic and social activities; emotional engagement refers to the relations with teachers, classmates, and school; and cognitive engagement refers to the willingness to put effort into complex problems and tasks.

Summary

Some of the studies on at-risk students and dropouts were reviewed that included information on the factors that may contribute to students receiving these labels. There are

factors affecting students that varied by student demographics, school locations, home/school environments, and family dynamics. Thoroughly understanding the many factors that influence students is necessary for school improvement. Understanding the developmental changes of students in early adolescence and the impact of middle-level development can serve as the foundation for institutional changes as students enter post-secondary education.

Having knowledge of how situated learning theory and self-efficacy theory impacts students is necessary for helping to meet better the needs of at-risk youth. The combined factors of environmental, societal, school, and family factors must continue to be researched to help meet the individual needs of students to maintain their matriculation in school. Research has found that the methods and strategies used to teach students and keep them engaged must change as the students served change.

Chapter III describes elements that at-risk youth feel is needed in the traditional setting to help sustain their matriculation in a traditional school.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher explains how her professional background provided the foundation for interest in this study. Details on the research methods used to assess the necessary information needed to answer the research questions are provided. Procedures and methodologies used to collect data, the guidelines followed to conduct the research, and the steps used to collect, analyze, and validate the research findings are also included in Chapter III. Also included in this chapter are the (a) population and sample studied, (b) data collection instruments, (c) data collected, and (d) a description of data analysis and reporting.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore how students ages 18-21 that are currently enrolled in a non-traditional educational setting articulate their educational pathway. Specifically, there is a lack of research regarding the services, interventions, and support that are needed to help students be successful in traditional school, which may reduce their likelihood of having to graduate from a non-traditional setting. School districts continue to provide schools with funding for academic supports, but the social, behavioral, and relationship needs of students may be neglected.

Researcher Background

At the time of this research, the researcher is serving as principal of a Grade 6-8 middle school in an urban city in South Carolina. Before this principalship appointment, the researcher held various positions that provided background knowledge in working with students classified as at-risk or students that may be in danger of becoming at-risk. The researcher has been

principal of an alternative school, director and assistant director of an adult education center, a high school assistant principal, a middle school assistant principal, and teacher on the secondary level. The researcher has taught in affluent schools, schools that were not affluent, and programs that received minimal funding. The researcher has also been an administrator and teacher in both rural and urban school settings. These positions have afforded the researcher an opportunity to experience working with students in traditional and non-traditional educational settings. The socioeconomic status (SES) of students in these schools and programs varied greatly, as well as their educational pathway.

The researcher is interested in research on this topic because there is a desire to understand the factors that contribute to students' lack of success in traditional school. The researcher would like to build upon prior educational experiences as well as training received through university coursework, professional conferences, administrative training, and personal experiences. The researcher's educational background was beneficial in helping to understand and interpret what the students discussed. The researcher was also able to relate and compare some of their experiences to those of other students in her previous work with at-risk students as an administrator or teacher. The researcher believes that students attending school in non-traditional settings have had similar educational and life experiences that have resulted in their being unsuccessful in the traditional school setting. By better understanding students' educational pathways and the factors that affected them, district officials can provide better support for students while in the traditional school setting.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was the following:

What are the perceptions of students ages 18-21 in two South Carolina alternative programs of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

1. How do students describe their experiences in traditional schools?
2. How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting?
3. How do they compare their experiences in traditional school to a non-traditional school setting?

Design

This study discussed students' perceptions of their educational pathways. It looked at the factors in the traditional school setting that students felt inhibited their on-time high school graduation. This information was obtained through the student's "telling" of their story. This was accomplished through in-depth semi-structured interviews that gave students an opportunity to respond openly. The researcher also conducted student focus groups and conducted observations of the students while in class. This qualitative research was conducted using the narrative inquiry method of research. Narrative inquiry is the study of people in relationships by researchers who themselves are immersed in the relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). The narrative research method has three stages: telling, transcribing, and analyzing. (Reissman, 1993). The telling of the story gives the interviewee an opportunity to illustrate the story verbally through his/her eyes. As the result of narrative inquiry having a variety of different approaches and traditions, conducting it can be very complex.

Having personal contact with the participants provided the researcher an opportunity to ask questions for more clarification to gain additional insight as needed. It also permitted the researcher an opportunity to allow the interviewee to elaborate when needed. Once the “telling” was completed, the information was then transcribed. In this second stage in the narrative inquiry process, taping and transcribing were done with close attention to details. Riessman (1993) advises that the researcher begin by getting the entire interview, including both words and selected features (crying, long pauses, laughter), on paper in a first draft. This gave me an opportunity to review the entire transcript and select specific pieces for further analysis. The third phase in the narrative inquiry process was analyzing all of the data collected.

Population

The study encompassed students enrolled in a non-traditional program in the identified school district. The identified district currently serves over 24,000 students, over 4,200 full-time employees, and has 52 schools which consist of 28 elementary, nine middle, seven high, and eight special schools/centers. Student demographics are 73% Black, 19% White, and 8% other. Approximately 72% of the student population qualified for free/reduced-price lunch. The 2014-2015 graduation rate was 74.7%, which is an increase over the past year. The district covers over 480 square miles, which range from rural schools to urban schools to suburban schools. During the 2014-2015 school year, the adult education center served 1,111 students; in the 2015-2016 school year, 1,599 with a projected enrollment of 1,700 for 2016-2017. During the 2014-2015 school year, the adult education center awarded 14 high school diplomas, and 48 General Equivalency Diplomas (GED). During the 2015-2016 school year, only three high school diplomas were awarded and 81 GED's. The reduction in student enrollment is attributed to changes in both the diploma and GED programs.

The evening high school served 125 students during the 2015-2016 school year and projected an enrollment of 75 students for the 2016-2017 school year. The reduction in student enrollment in the evening high school is attributed to several factors, including a change in location and district procedures for student referrals. High schools in the district are also retaining students to reduce their dropout rate, which will directly affect their overall graduation rate.

Sample

The students identified for this research study were between the ages of 18 and 21 and were enrolled in the evening high school program or adult education center, working towards completion of their high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED). The evening high school accepts students between the ages of 15 and 20. Students that enroll in the evening high school attend classes Monday through Thursday between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The adult education center begins accepting a student at the age of 17 and does not have an enrollment age limit. Students can attend classes at the adult education center Monday through Thursday during the day as well as in the evening from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. However, students that are between the ages of 17 and 18 must attend classes during the day.

There were 13 students selected to participate in this research study. The matrix below identifies the purposive sampling used to select research participants. The identified school district has seven high schools and two additional special schools/centers that serve over 6,000 high school students. Eight of the high schools/special centers are located within the city with only one of the high schools located outside of the city in the rural area of the district. Student demographics for the district are 73% Black, 19% White, and 8% other. The demographics for high school student gender are 53% male, and 47% female.

Because of the current district gender breakdown, the number of students projected to enroll in each of the programs and the location of the sites, the matrix explains how purposive sampling was done to select the research participants.

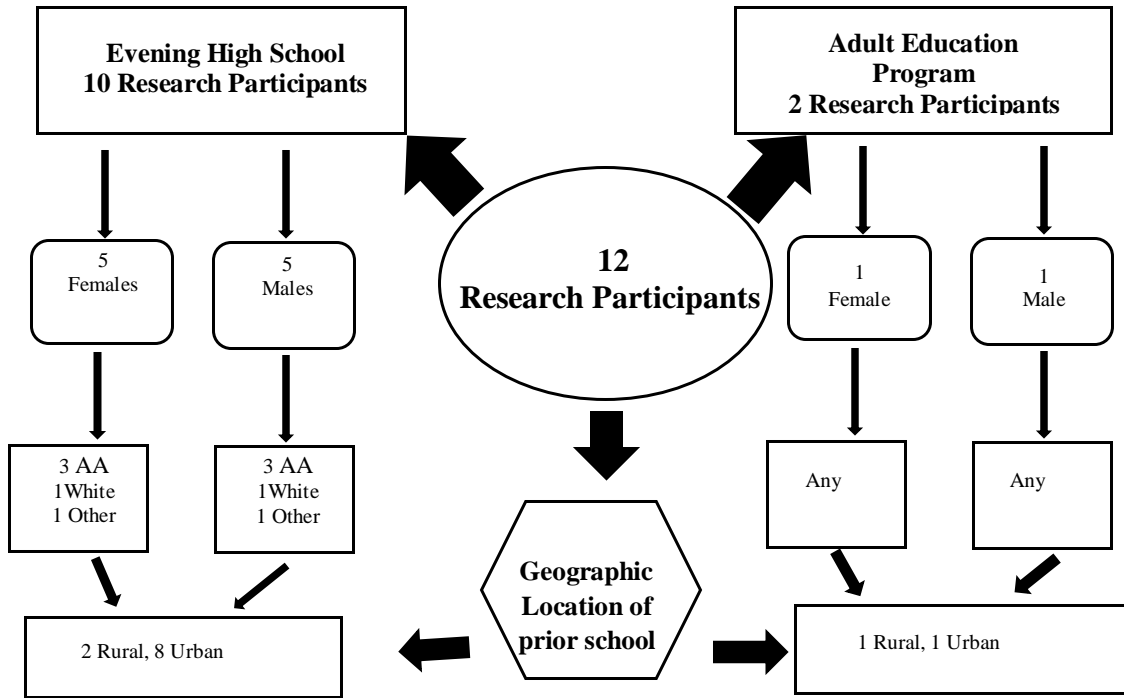


Figure 1. Illustration of how purposive sampling was done to select the research participants.

The research presentation was presented to 53 students at the evening high school. Only 12 students agreed to participate in the study and 11 qualified. All research participants are African-American. There was only one Caucasian male enrolled; however, he did not meet the age requirement guidelines. The research presentation at the adult education center was presented to 25 students, but only four qualified to participate in the research study. I was only able to arrange interviews with two of the four students that qualified to participate.

All research participants attended traditional school at some time during their education; however, they were unsuccessful in their traditional home school. There are many different

reasons why the students may have been unsuccessful, resulting in their having to enroll in one of these non-traditional settings. Reasons for enrolling may include, but are not limited to, dropping out of their traditional school, lack of required minimum credits needed for grade level, family commitments, disciplinary infractions, employment requirements, and attendance/truancy infractions (Richland School District One, 2016).

Students were provided a Letter of Solicitation (Appendix B) that explained the research purpose. If students expressed an interest in participating, they each completed a demographic profile (Appendix C) that provided background information, contact numbers, and email addresses. Students also completed a ten-question student demographic survey. After completing the pre-screening, the researcher selected students based on the guidelines identified using purposive sampling. Four student participants were identified from the adult education program; only two were selected. Eleven student participants were identified and selected from the evening high school.

Once participants were identified, the researcher met with each student participant and provided him or her with an Informed Letter of Consent. The students signed the original, and a copy was given to them for their record keeping. To protect the identity of the research participants, all students selected a pseudonym that was used for the duration of the study. All data collected were retained in a locked file box in the researchers' home. Files included surveys, field notes, interview questions, digital recordings, and USB drives.

The information from the demographic survey and demographic profile was analyzed to determine if any trends existed among the students.

Profiles of the Participants

Table 3

Profiles of the Participants

Alias	Participant Demographics	
FEMALES		
Emonie	Emonie is an 18-year-old Black female and the only child from her mother. She has two older brothers from her dad. Her mother and father raised Emonie. Her educational path included three schools, with her current enrollment in the evening high school being her fourth school. Emonie was served in academically advanced placement (AAP) courses throughout her educational pathway. Disciplinary issues for Emonie did not begin until she entered high school. Upon graduation, she would like to attend college to become a math teacher.	Diploma
Nana	Nana is an 18-year-old Black female student, the youngest of three (two older brothers) children from her mother. She has an older brother and younger sister and brother from her dad. Her educational path includes attendance in three schools with her current enrollment in the evening high school being her fourth school. Upon graduation, her desire is to become a cosmetologist.	Diploma
Angel	Angel is an 18-year-old Black female. Both parents raised her. She had an older sister that is deceased and two younger brothers. She has an additional brother and sister from her dad. Angel has attended five schools with her current enrollment in the evening high school being her sixth school. Disciplinary issues did not start for Angel until she entered high school. Angel has a desire to become a model.	Diploma
Baby Girl	Baby girl is an 18-year-old Black female. She was raised by both parents with her younger sister. Baby girl attended four schools including the district's alternative school. Her current enrollment in the evening high school is her fifth school enrollment. Disciplinary issues started for Baby Girl in middle school. Upon graduation, she would like to study psychology.	Diploma
Indy	Indy is a 19-year old Black female. Both parents raised her. Indy is the oldest of twin sisters and a brother. Her educational path includes attending ten schools, with her current enrollment in the evening high school being her	Diploma

	eleventh. These enrollments include a private school and being homeschooled. Disciplinary issues for Indy started in middle school. She was an “A/B” student throughout elementary and middle school. Indy currently maintains her own web site selling customized items. Upon graduation, she would like to be a cosmetologist and makeup artist.	
Chad	Chad is an 18-year-old Black female and the oldest of two. Her grandparents raised her. Her educational pathway included her attendance in five schools, two different stints at the alternative school. She was also kicked out of alternative school, which resulted in her being incarcerated with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Her disciplinary issues began in the 5 th grade. Chad was an "A/B" student in elementary school. She currently suffers from severe back pains as the result of a bullet being lodged in her back as the result of her being shot in a drive-by shooting. Her desire upon graduation is to become a registered nurse.	Diploma
Niya	Niya is a twenty-year-old Black female. She was raised by her mother and father for the majority of her life. She is the oldest of two. Her educational path includes her attending nine schools with her enrollment in Adult Education being her tenth school. She did not have any disciplinary issues while enrolled in school.	GED®
MALES		
Lil Sin	Lil Sin is a 20-year-old black male and an only child. He was raised by both parents all of whom later moved in with his grandmother. His educational path includes his attendance in seven schools (one year of private school), with his current enrollment in the evening high school becoming his eighth. Disciplinary issues for him began in the 2 nd grade with his being engaged in a physical altercation with another student. His desire is to attend school for culinary arts.	Diploma
Jq	J is a Black 20-year-old male and is the middle child of three from his mother. He was raised primarily by his grandparents with some assistance from his mother. He did not have a close relationship with dad due to his dad's incarceration and later death. His educational pathway includes his attending four schools; with his current enrollment in the evening high school. Disciplinary issues for J began in middle school after his dad was incarcerated. Evening school is becoming his fifth school enrollment. J currently works a third-shift job and would like to get his CDL.	Diploma

Q	Q is a Black 19-year-old old Black male and is the oldest of three children by his mother. He has two additional siblings from his dad. He was primarily raised by his mother. His educational path includes seven schools including two years at a charter school. His current enrollment in the evening high school is becoming his eighth school enrollment. He repeated 6 th grade twice and was socially promoted from 8 th grade to the 9 th grade. His disciplinary issues began in the 3 rd grade after he started a fire at the school. After graduation, he desires to become a doctor.	Diploma
Jaylen	Jalen is a 20-year-old Black male and has an older brother. He was raised by his mother and step-dad. He was serviced as a self-contained student in school because of anger management issues. Jaylen indicated that he is now able to control his anger, so he is no longer classified as a special education student. His educational path includes eight schools including the district's alternative school. His current enrollment in the evening high school is his ninth school.	Diploma
Kyng	Kyng is a Black 19-year-old male and is the oldest of two children from his mother. He has three additional brothers from his dad. His grandparents primarily raised him. His educational path includes his attendance at four different schools, including the district's alternative school. Disciplinary issues for Kyng started in 7 th grade. He also attended a private military academy for six months. His enrollment in the evening high school is his fifth school. His first child was delivered the first day we met. His desire is to go into the military and create an organization to help young males.	Diploma
T	T is a 21-year-old Black male. He was raised by his mother and has served three years in prison. His educational pathway includes attending ten schools including the district's alternative school. His current enrollment in adult education is his eleventh school. He is having trouble finding employment because of his previous federal charges.	GED®

Instrumentation

The instruments that were used to collect data were student demographic questionnaires, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher, based on a review of the literature,

developed all questions that were designed to address the following areas: environmental/social, family, student, and school at-risk factors. The environmental/social questions gave research participants an opportunity to discuss environmental and social factors through their perspective. Research participants were also able to discuss their family, their family dynamics and the impact on their educational pathway. They were also given an opportunity to discuss school factors that included information on their personal experiences, relationships, and supports. Once the researcher developed the questions, a jury of experts reviewed, edited, and approved the questions. The jury of experts included one educator that is currently working in a non-traditional educational setting, one district level administrator that previously worked in a non-traditional educational setting, two teachers that are currently working in a traditional educational setting, one professional consultant and two Seton Hall professors.

Based on recommendations from the jury of experts, changes to the interview questions were made before final approval of the instruments used to collect the data. Members of the jury of experts were not participants in the research study. The demographic questionnaire was administered to potential research participants in advance.

Data were collected through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and researcher field notes. The documentation from this research helped me identify the factors in the traditional school setting that had an impact on their on-time graduation. The semi-structured interview (Appendix E) questions were used to conduct individual student interviews. All research participants responded to the same interview questions but were provided opportunities to elaborate as needed. The researcher also asked follow-up, probing questions as needed. As stated by Brogdon (2014), “Narrative inquiry is not about putting together a puzzle . . . you are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts” (p. 6). Having this

approach allowed for me, as the researcher, to ensure participant perspectives were accurately told.

Data Collection

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Executive Director of Accountability, Assessment, Research, and Evaluation Office (AARE) by submitting a research proposal application. Final approval was granted by the superintendent in the identified school district (see Appendix A) by letter on July 21, 2017. Each student received an informed letter of consent (see Appendix D) which explained the purpose of the study and explicitly explained the confidentiality of the process. Each student signed an original and received a copy for their personal records. Permission to conduct this research study was also provided by the IRB office of Seton Hall University on October 31, 2016.

The data collection process included focus groups, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and observations. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that in-depth interviewing involves the researcher trying to understand how the perspectives of the informants developed. The questionnaires allowed me to understand better at-risk factors and how much they affected the students. The personal interviews and focus groups allowed an opportunity for a deeper understanding of factors that influenced their lack of achievement in the traditional school setting. The interview questions were designed to support the primary research questions of the study. The questionnaires, focus group topics, and interview questions are all representative of the environmental, social/emotional, school, and student/family factors associated with becoming at-risk.

Each focus group had between three to five students, and sessions lasted approximately 60 minutes. Focus group sessions gave students an opportunity to have an open discussion about

their educational pathway, and questions were designed to provide the researcher more insight on student perspectives.

The focus group guiding questions were the following:

1. Can you tell me about your educational pathway?
2. What are school-related factors that impacted your decision to attend this school?
3. What is different about this school from your previous school(s)?
4. What are some things that could have been done differently that would have impacted your educational pathway (path)?

During my initial observations at the Evening School, it became apparent that the structure of the focus groups would vary. The various dynamics surrounding the student's enrollment, student personalities, and personal "cliques" were taken into consideration. Only one focus group consisted of three students; others contained two and some were done individually. All focus group sessions and individual semi-structured interviews were held with all participants in person on-site. Interview questions addressed environmental, family, school, and student at-risk factors.

The adult education program required 17 and 18-year-old students to attend during the day, while students above 18 were permitted to attend during the evening hours. Because of this requirement, the research participants were selected from students that attended during the day. The students that attended at night were all over 21. Because of the various work schedules of these students, only in-depth interviews were conducted. All interviews were held at the adult education center.

The list below includes the semi-structured interview questions:

1. Please tell me about where you grew up (geographic location) as a child?

2. Do you feel that growing up in this area had an impact on you in school?
3. How many schools (elementary, middle, high) have you attended?
4. What experiences have you had that positively or negatively influenced your views about school?
5. Do you feel that you were supported at school and home? Why or Why not. Explain.
6. If you were supported, who were the individuals that supported you? If you feel that you were not supported, who were the individuals that you feel did not support you?
7. What personal/family experiences do you feel impacted (affected) your life? Explain how these experiences have impacted your educational pathway?
8. What role did your parent(s) or your guardian(s) play in your education?
9. Why are you completing your education in a non-traditional educational setting?
10. Why is this setting proving to be more successful for you?

What additional traditional school supports do you feel would have been beneficial to you?

The design of the interview questions provided an opportunity to ask follow-up and probing questions as needed. The use of field notes during the interviews and focus groups sessions gave me an opportunity to record additional comments that were made during the interview or focus group time. Field notes included student body language and non-verbal gestures. At the end of each interview, students were provided an opportunity to express their feelings about the interview as well as ask clarifying questions as needed.

The researcher considered the data sources that were used and how these sources impacted the final analysis. In narrative inquiry, data sources can include interviews, focus

groups, observations notes, journal entries, and oral stories. It is important to adhere to the following:

- Listen to participants' stories.
- Acknowledge the mutual construction of the research relationship (both researcher and participant have a voice with which to tell their stories).
- Acknowledge that person are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and tell their stories in words as they reflect on life and explain themselves to others (Savin-Baden 2007).

Allowing students an opportunity to dialogue and reflect on their educational experiences can provide educators insight from a students' perspective. Student voice research has indicated that including children's perspectives in discussions about education empowers students and provides us with more knowledge about learning experiences that can affect school practices (Edwards, p. 34) Student voice can aid educators in making essential changes to provide proper educational supports for students while enrolled in the traditional school setting. "Student voice, in its most profound and radical form, 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).

Allowing students the freedom and opportunity to express their concerns through their voice is important. In his research, Davies (2005) states, "Even though many students at-risk are resentful, defensive, and feel alienated when given an opportunity to provide feedback, it is surprisingly fair and realistic" (p. 300). Listening to at-risk students' voices will provide researchers first-hand accounts of their experiences. The information obtained from these students can be added to the literature to help with educational reform.

Levin (2000) outlined five arguments that support using student's voice:

1. Effective implementation of change requires participation by all those involved; students no less than teachers.
2. Students have unique knowledge and perspective that can make reform efforts more successful and improve their implementation.
3. Students' views can help rally educators and parent opinion in support of meaningful reform.
4. Constructivist learning, which is increasingly important to high standards reform, requires a more active student role in schooling.
5. Students are the producers of school outcomes, so their involvement is fundamental to all improvement.

This research, presented by Levin (2000) can help organizations better understand what is needed to help implement effective school reform.

Validity and Reliability

The research study is designed to fully engage in the student's perceptions. "Validity is generally understood by educational researchers as the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data" (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992). Qualitative researchers attempt to demonstrate ways in which their research is "trustworthy, plausible or credible" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49). To assist in ensuring research validity, a jury of experts approved the focus group discussions, and interview questions used in this research. This panel provided feedback on the structure of questions and made recommendations to assist with ensuring appropriate data collected. Creswell (1998) also recommends eight procedures in qualitative research to contribute to trustworthiness: prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation; peer review and debriefing; negative case

analysis; clarification of researcher bias; member checking; rich, thick description; and external audit. To ensure triangulation occurred, after interviews were transcribed, member checking (Creswell, 2003) was employed by providing participants copies of the narrative script to review for accuracy and approve for use in the research. The researcher also used field notes to assist with triangulation.

Data Analysis

Analyzing data encompasses looking for patterns and trends in the stories that are told. Sutton-Smith (1986) asserts that there are two emerging perspectives for story analysis and that they follow Bruner's (1986) two modes of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative. Within the first, paradigmatic stream, there is a textual or structural analysis that analyzes the stories to place them in one of the two categories. The second perspective derived ultimately from various hermeneutic traditions (Sutton-Smith, 1986). Qualitative analysis was conducted following their interviews and focus groups. As recommended by Kramp (2004), a narrative inquiry was used to gain access to the personal experiences of the person telling the story. This person referred to as the storyteller frames, articulates, and reveals life as experienced in a narrative structure that becomes his or her story. The narration gives the individual an opportunity to tell his or her personal account of the story to others, and in a way, they interpret themselves what occurred.

Analysis of student responses was coded and categorized to identify specific themes. All questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups were conducted in person. The transcripts were first re-read before being coded to check for accuracy. The second step included general coding. Categories were then defined and placed into a codebook. Coding schemes were derived based on themes that were discovered while conducting the research and/or evidence in existing literature. The themes for this research are as follows: at-risk environmental and societal

factors, at-risk school factors, and at-risk student and family factors. Codes for this research study are as follows: family issues (FI): concerns with parents; neighborhood problems (NP): the implications of neighborhood crime, gang activity, and violence; peer pressure/peer associations/friends (PP): the impact of peer associations and friendships on events that occurred while enrolled in traditional school; legal problems (LP): that may be either as a juvenile or as an adult; Goals (G): may be personal or professional; behavior health (BH): covers any mental or emotional challenges; work/job/employment (WJE): legitimate, honest work/employment; school/teacher/administrative (STA): any issues, positive or negative, about school; and support (S): this may be from anyone including, but not limited to, family, educators, friends, or caretakers.

Ethical Considerations

As a qualitative researcher, it is important for me to be aware of ethical issues while researching, interviewing, analyzing, and collecting data. While conducting the interviews, the researcher must be aware of personal biases, previous experiences, and research. To protect the confidentiality, pseudonyms protected the identity of all participants. Before beginning the research process and conducting interviews, the researcher made the participants aware of my role in the study and the rationale for conducting the study.

Researcher Bias

Qualitative research data composes various traditions and styles. It was necessary that as the researcher I understand these styles to help me through the research process. As stated by Prasad (2005), “A paradigm is used to designate researchers’ ontological and epistemological assumptions within a community of scholars and prescribes specific guidelines for conducting research” (p. 8). Researchers must understand the various paradigms to understand traditions,

sub-traditions, and theories (Prasad, 2005). In addition to each theory having its ontological and epistemological assumptions, methods and methodology are also linked to specific theories. A researcher conducts qualitative research to understand phenomena and gain an understanding of data collected.

This dissertation reviews the risk factors associated with students labeled as at-risk, the environmental, social/emotional, and relational factors experienced. It also reviews the social factors associated with becoming at-risk, school factors associated with becoming at-risk and student/family factors associated with becoming at-risk.

According to Mason (2002), ontological perspective is directly related to personal experiences and perceptions that form an individual's "personal truth." Since all humans are different, each person's reality will be different; no two views of the world are identical. Because of differing ontological perspectives, when conducting research or observations, the data collected will be different for each researcher. The differentiation of data is a direct result of each researcher having a different perception of what occurred. My perceptions are influenced by many factors that may include socioeconomic status, education, family composition, gender, ethnicity, and age. Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (as cited in Maxwell, 2013) state that ". . . we recognize that what people perceive and believe is shaped by their assumptions and prior experiences as well as by the reality that they interact with" (p. 43).

An epistemological perspective addresses the researcher's assumptions and individual process for understanding. "Epistemology is the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be" (Grix, 2002). My epistemological perspective explains the process of "how" I gathered my knowledge. Because it is not static and is based on my perspective and life experiences, it may change (Grix, 2002). My epistemological perspective

also influenced the methodology that I used in my research (Maxwell, 2013). My knowledge of at-risk youth and their behaviors are all defined by my personal experiences working with them, information gained from educational literature, and societal observations. While working directly with youth ages 17 and older, it became apparent that many of them had very similar experiences, which attributed to their labeling as a dropout or at risk of dropping out.

Summary

Chapter III explained the elements of qualitative research design that was employed in this study. This included a description of the population, sample, instruments, and methods used to conduct the research. The process of data collection and data analysis were also included. Also, the chapter reviewed the ethical considerations important in consideration of my research. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose

The research from this qualitative study encompasses data on students 18-21 on their perceptions of factors in the non-traditional setting that inhibited their on-time graduation. In this chapter, the researcher presents the key findings of the student demographic surveys, focus groups, and in-depth student interviews. These research findings answer the following overarching research question:

What are the perceptions of students, ages 18-21 in two South Carolina alternative programs, of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The secondary research questions that this study seeks to answer are as follows:

1. How do students describe the impact of their experiences in traditional schools?
2. How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting?
3. How do they compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

Review of Research Methodology

The qualitative data obtained from the research participants are presented and organized based on at-risk environmental/societal factors, at-risk school factors, at-risk student, and family factors. The information is organized by using major themes that emerged after the coding process was conducted. The major themes that emerged from coding the focus groups and in-depth interviews were the following:

Table 4

Major Themes That Emerged from the Coding

Major Themes	Coding
Family Issues- concerns with parents	FI
Neighborhood Problems- or impact of neighborhood (i.e., crime, gang activity, and violence)	NP
Peer Pressure/Peer Associations/Friend- the impact of peer associations and friendships on events that occurred while enrolled in traditional school,	PP
Legal Problems- that maybe as a juvenile and/or as an adult	LP
Goals- personal or professional	G
Behavior/Health- mental or emotional challenges	BH
Work/Job/Employment- legitimate, honest work/employment	WJE
School/Teacher/Administrative- any issues, positive or negative, about school	STA
Support- may be from anyone including, but not limited to, family, educators, friends, or caretakers.	S

The in-depth interviews all occurred at the evening high school or the adult education center in Richland County School District One. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, to

ensure the thoughts of each student were accurately captured. The tone, dialect, and verbal expressions of each student are depicted through the narrations. Thus, the student responses to the in-depth interview questions, not focus groups, were not altered for grammatical errors, the use of slang, nor the use of profanity. It is to be noted that the responses are exact quotes.

Chapter IV is divided into three sections: Section I introduces the 12 research participants. Section II presents the themes found in the research study with theories that were discussed in Chapter II: Rotter's social learning theory and Bronfenbrenner's social systems theory. In Section III, additional themes identified in this study are discussed as they relate to educational at-risk environmental/societal factors, at-risk school factors, and at-risk student and family factors and their impact on the student's educational pathway. The fourth and final section summarizes the findings. This qualitative research study assesses the themes identified, their impact on the at-risk factors, and how the research subjects perceived these factors inhibited their on-time high school graduation.

The 13 participants of this study were all between the ages of 18-21 and were enrolled in one of the two identified non-traditional educational settings. All the participants attended at least one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school within the identified school district. Some of the participants may have also attended school in other districts but eventually returned to the identified district to complete the requirements for high school graduation. Several visits to the district's evening high school and adult education center occurred over a series of 12 weeks. Because of the transient nature of this population of student, it was paramount that research sessions began immediately.

I decided to begin conducting my research at the evening high school because most of the participants were attending in this location. During the initial visit, I explained the research

process to the two lead administrators to ensure they were aware of what to expect as well as provide me with any stipulations. During my initial visit, the organization of the program, enrollment procedures, and student scheduling and program restraints were discussed. Because this program moved into a new location, student enrollment is 30% lower this school year. The administrator escorted me to all of the classrooms, introducing me to the teachers, monitors, and students. After introductions were complete, I began to conduct my research.

During visits to each of the classrooms, the researcher re-introduced herself to the students and provided them with background information on where she worked within the district. This gave many of them an opportunity to connect and ask questions. Using a preapproved presentation, the researcher described the research process to the students and thoroughly explained what she wanted to accomplish. The following ten students were identified to participate in the research study after this initial process:

Evening High School Participant Profiles

“Emonie” is a very high spirited, talkative 18-year-old young lady. It was obvious that she was the leader in her group of three girls who always stuck together. Emonie only needs .5 credits to complete her diploma but indicated that she is not in a "rush" to finish school. It was obvious that Emonie enjoyed socializing. She is on track to participate in graduation in May.

“Nana” is a very carefree 18-year-old young woman, who adamantly expresses her dislike for school and seems very uninterested in focusing on her academics. She indicated that she wants to finish school but does not want to complete the necessary requirements. She currently has earned 18 of the required 24 credits needed to graduate.

“Angel” is an 18-year-old, quiet female. Her focus is on her appearance. Before beginning her interview, she brushed her hair and applied lip-gloss. She constantly looked into the mirror

during the focus group session. She is very petite in stature. Angel only has 5.5 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. Angel is not on course.

“Baby Girl” is a quiet, reserved, and mature 18-year-old Black female. She is currently working to support herself and lives with her boyfriend. Her parents have moved to another state. “Baby Girl” only has 7 of the 24 credits needed to graduate.

“Indy” is a focused 19-year old Black female. "Indy" usually sat alone at the back of the classroom. She only talked when another student spoke to her. Indy currently maintains her web site selling customized items, which provides her income while in school. She is enrolled in the last class she needs in order to graduate in May.

“Chad” is a very private 18-year-old Black female who did not want to participate in a focus group. She has been exposed to and experienced a lot in life that she attributes to making her a better person. She is currently suffering from back pains because of gunshot wounds that she received from a drive-by shooting. "Chad" has 18 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. Her plans are to finish during summer school.

“Lil Sin” is a tall, slender 20-year-old Black male that constantly keeps ear buds on and listens to music. He indicated that he is a very private person and prefers to keep to himself. "Lil Sin" has 20.5 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. He is on track to complete all requirements by May.

“Jq” is a Black 20-year-old male and the father of one son. He was very willing to share his story because he is happy with the progress that he has made. Jq is very focused and determined to complete school. He reports to work as soon as he leaves school, works overnight, goes home to sleep for a couple of hours before reporting back to school. He has 18.5 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. Jq is on track to participate in graduation in May.

“**Q**” is an 18-year-old Black male that enjoys music and works at night. He had a support system but felt after his grandmother had died he began to have more problems in school. “Q” currently has 17.5 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. He is on track to participate in graduation in May.

“**Jalen**” is a 20-year-old black male with a big smile. "Jalen" indicated that he was previously served in a special education self-contained classroom because of issues of anger management. Once he realized he was not earning credits towards graduation, he signed himself out of special education. He has 20.5 of the 24 credits needed to graduate. He is on schedule to participate in graduation in May.

Kyng is a Black 19-year-old. His first child was delivered the first day we met. "Kyng" would like to do outreach to help keep younger children off the streets. Kyng works a full-time job and uses his down time at work to do his class assignments. He has 22 of the 24 credits needed to graduate in May.

After identifying these research participants, the researcher conducted classroom observations and spoke with teachers in the program to garner any background information that would be beneficial while conducting the research. It was easy to determine student “cliques,” identify students who preferred to be “left alone,” and those who were more “sociable.” Using prior knowledge of working with at-risk youth and based on these observations, the researcher developed a strategy for interviewing the students.

The researcher’s background knowledge helped her recognize the need for at-risk students to feel comfortable, heard, and appreciated. Because of these needs, the researcher and the students had small “chatter” about anything the student(s) wanted to discuss prior to beginning the official interview and/or focus groups. Each student was also given the

researcher's business card and a small journal for notes or journaling. At each session, the researcher also took snacks that included chips and various chocolates.

At the initial session, the researcher took a draft copy of Chapters I-III of the dissertation to show the students. The researcher explained that the information obtained would be kept confidential and their anonymity would be protected. The students were told that the information they were providing was very beneficial in assisting with completing the next chapter, which was Chapter IV. The researcher then explained the next steps would be analyzing their interview and focus group responses to determine trends. This data would be used in the summary of the research findings that would be in Chapter V.

After completing all interviews and observations at the evening high school, the researcher moved to the adult education center. Because of changes in adult education funding guidelines, local program enrollment guidelines, and the need to reduce the dropout rate, enrollment in this program has significantly decreased over that five years. There were numerous visits to the program during the night hours. However, the researcher was only able to identify one student that met the age requirements. After meeting with that one student, he completed the necessary documents and agreed to conduct the interview. Numerous attempts to set up the interview were unsuccessful. During the researcher's day visits, the following students were identified to participate in the research study:

Adult Education Center Participant Profiles

“Niya” was a very, very quiet Black female. Her responses were relatively short; she did not provide details. Because she is quiet, she was overlooked in many school situations. "Niya" would like to complete her GED test this year.

“T” is a 21-year-old Black male, who was raised by his mother and foster parents. “T” was willing to conduct the interview but surfed Facebook during our entire session. With his past federal charges, he has a tough time finding employment. On the day of our interview, “T” had just completed one portion of the Workkeys assessment. He is planning to complete the GED test within the next few months.

The interviews with these students also occurred in the conference room of the adult education building. The researcher explained the research process to these students and explained how they were contributing to the research study. These students were enrolled in different classrooms and were not familiar with one another; therefore, the sessions at this location were done individually.

Analysis and Coding

Analysis and coding of the focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted in stages. Initially, the recording of the sessions was reviewed and then transcribed. After transcribing was completed, the transcripts were reviewed to look for words and phrases that helped research participants in "telling" their stories. The next steps involved identifying similarities and differences in student experiences as they expressed their perceptions of their educational pathway. This process helped identify emerging themes, which are discussed in this chapter.

The purpose of this research study was to allow these students an opportunity to articulate their perception of their educational pathway and the factors in the traditional setting that inhibited their on-time high school graduation. The primary research question for this study was as follows:

What are the perceptions of students ages 18-21 in two South Carolina Alternative Programs of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathway?

This research question was answered through the support of three secondary research questions: (1) How do students describe the impact of their experiences in traditional schools? (2) How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting? (3) How do they compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

Focus group questions and in-depth interview questions all addressed at-risk environmental and societal factors, at-risk school factors, and at-risk student and family factors.

Emerging Themes

Findings for Primary Research Question

Primary Research Question: What are the perceptions of students ages 18-21 in two South Carolina Alternative Programs of the influences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The themes identified after analyzing and coding of the data supported the findings of Bronfenbrenner's social systems theory (1979). This theory investigated the link between student interactions and experiences in school to student learning about creating a positive climate for school completion. This theory explains how a child's biology influences development and the interaction between factors in the immediate family, community environment, and societal landscape that fuels development. The factors linked with social systems theory was supported throughout the student sessions.

1. Immediate family, school and peer relationships impacted the students' development.
 - Sub-theme 1.1: Home-school relations
 - Sub-theme 1.2: Life-altering events

2. Internal Motivation

Theme 1: Immediate family, school, and peer relationships impacted the students' development

As indicated, in the first layer of the social system theory, the microsystem is the layer closest to the child where there is the most contact, which is the immediate family, school, peer groups, and surroundings that directly impacts a child's development. In my interview with "Baby Girl," who is currently estranged from her family, she indicated that there was not a relationship developed with her parents during childhood. The absence of a family relationship is evident.

Baby Girl: No they wasn't as involved. They didn't try to push me to do better. They would tell me I should do this, I should do that, but they wasn't on me how they should have been.

Interviewer: Do you think that that affected you with school?

Baby Girl: Yeah because when I would tell my dad what I actually wanted to do, he'd tell me no, that's not how you going to make money. You should go do this or you should go do that, but it's not what I wanted to do.

Additionally, students whose parents were not present in their lives because of incarceration also indicated that this absence in their lives impacted them as they developed into young adults.

Jq: It was just that one thing that I was missing; the whole time is support from my daddy. My daddy been locked up majority the time of my life. Like ten years of my life, my daddy was locked

up. He came out and he passed three years after him being out of jail.

Interviewer: You talked briefly about your dad being incarcerated. Do you feel that that impacted your life at all?

Jq: Yeah, because I feel like I needed him there to say certain things to me that a lot of other males in my life said to me, but I ain't saying I don't appreciate them for saying it to me, but I wish it was him that did say it. I ain't gonna sit right here and talk like I ain't talk with my father before. I done talked to my dad before plenty of times. I just wish those conversations could have lasted longer and you know what I'm saying, stretched a little further. I wish he could have been able to meet his grandson and stuff like that. I feel like if he was around more I wouldn't have been in the position that I'm in with certain situations. I wouldn't have did some of the stuff that I done did if he was around more. You know? But, every girl need it too, but really a boy, every boy needs his father in his life. It's a big impact on they life for real. They momma could say a lot of things to 'em, that the daddy could say too, but it's just something about hearing it come out of his mouth than rather hers. You will hear a lot of stuff come out your momma mouth. Ain't too much that you gone hear come out your daddy mouth. When it do come out it feel good to hear it come out and it make you look

at stuff a lot different. I look at my uncle as my dad. My uncle did a lot of stuff with me that I feel like my daddy should have been there for.

A lot of stuff and still to this day. God bless dad, I know he ain't here to do it, but he could have been here doing it if he wasn't doing what he was doing.

During my session with Kyng, who has just become a dad himself, he indicated that there was a lack of support from his biological parents.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you want to talk about your mom?

Kyng: Yeah, she alive. I think I was in the 5th grade she had got locked up for something. She was selling stuff and she had got out when I got in the 11th grade, but I really didn't know her so it wasn't really nothing we can relate, but she call me now and then and I try to help her out. Get on her feet and stuff.

Interviewer: How about your dad?

Kyng: I don't know the story, but he said my grandma kept me away from him. My grandma said he ain't want to come get me. It's just a lot of stuff, but now he in my life and he trying do a lot more. He tryna help me find my own apartment. He tryna help me now.

Sub-theme 1.1: Home-school Relations between the Teacher and Parents Can Affect a Child's Development

Events, which include parent and work schedules, which are also important to children as they develop. The students in this study indicated both support and non-support of education from their family members, as illustrated by the following response:

Chad: But, my mama was always at work.

Niya, who is 18 and currently working on her GED, felt she was mostly supported by her mom even though her parents were together while she was young.

Niya: Like she came up to the school and she wanted to talk to my teachers and stuff about my grades and stuff.

T, who only has been released from prison within the last eighteen months indicated that being in foster care and having to transition between different family homes often didn't provide much stability for him.

T: Because I went in foster care then got out and went right back. Different families. From house to house. From school to school. It really did. I mean, it messed me up. Being so young, not being able to stay with your parents, not knowing what's really going on and why you can't stay with them, that really makes it hard to go to school. You get to see other people's children going to school with their parents dropping them off. We go to like little meetings and stuff. We used to go to my little therapist. I could see them there. Just my mom. My dad wouldn't go.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Life-altering Events That May Impact a Child's Development

These events can be external (time of a parent's death) or internal and may be psychological changes. Two of the students interviewed indicated that the death of a family member had a direct impact on their educational pathway.

Jq: High speed chase with the police. Doing what he wasn't supposed to do, basically. I had just got out the car with him too, five

minutes before. Not even five minutes before it happened. Probably like two or three minutes for it happened. I was going stay in the car with 'em. He dropped me off to my cousin house. He was going my grandma. I was going ride with him to my grandma house, but he dropped me off and literally after he left from my cousin house. My cousin house right here. He went up the road and busted right on the next road. When he got on that road is when everything happened. Soon as he dropped me off. We was still out the door like, I heard the collision. I heard everything. I didn't think it was him though..... That's why my sister the way she is, my daddy. She aint' have no father figure in her life like she was supposed to.

“Q,” who has been socially promoted twice, and began experiencing discipline problems in the third grade also indicated that the death of his grandmother had an impact on him:

Q: Yeah. Yeah. When my grandma died. My other grandma died. My mama mother, she died. When I was going to . . . I think it was . . . I was going to MMBA. The alternative school. She passed away from old age. That kinda hurt me for a little bit. I wasn't doing no work. I was being bad, acting out, stuff like that. Then my mama was talking about working some job where she'd go to Iraq, or something like that, and be like a nurse, and she left do the orientation, and I was acting out then too. I was acting out

then. I was lying. I was telling them I was acting out cuz I was missing my mama. I was just being bad, just being bad. But I was telling them cuz I was missing my mama and stuff like that. Yeah. When my grandma passed that really hit hard to home.

The data provided by these participants all support the social systems theory. The data provided by these research participants support the need for positive support from their families. Positive or negative family factors impacted each participant's development. Life-altering events, such as death or incarceration, also affected these participants' educational pathway. Additionally, these factors also directly affected the home-school relationship.

Theme 2: Students Participating in This Research Study Were Motivated To Complete Their Education for Various Reasons

When examined against Rotter's (1954) social learning theory, it became evident that the students in this research study did not allow external obstacles to negatively affect their pathway; instead, they all had a high internal locus of control and persisted toward graduation.

Indy: I just think that was probably the reason because my mom didn't support me. I didn't care. I was like, "Because my mom don't care."

Interviewer: What made you make the turn? Because now, you're here, you want to finish. What made you make the change?

Indy: Seeing all my friends. My friends then pass me. I was like, "Man, okay, I need to get it together." I was getting tired.

Kyng, who had a brief stint at a military academy and desires to help young males, was determined to complete high school so that he could provide a better life for his child. Even

though a district official attempted to push him to get his GED, through his determination he continued to pursue his high school diploma.

Kyng: Yeah, Ms. M. She tried to keep me to go to adult education, because I ain't have that many credits because when I first got here I was in the 9th grade now I'm in the 12th grade. I told her I was going do it, but she ain't believe in me, but I tell when I graduate I'm a call her up and let her come. Now, I only need I think seven more credits and then I graduate. Probably less than seven. I been working hard.

Interviewer: You've been working hard.

Kyng: We got a computer lab at my job. I work at my job. I work all through the weekend, every night I go home before I go to sleep.

Despite facing family obstacles and school obstacles, these research participants were determined to earn their high school credential. Students in this research study did not allow external factors to prevent them from pursuing their goals. These students are all internally motivated to achieve and have continued to work towards high school completion despite the numerous external obstacles.

Findings for Secondary Research Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1: How do these students describe their experiences in traditional schools?

The interview questions that were used to address Research Question 1 included questions that asked where they grew up geographically, whether this area impacted them in school, and the number of schools they attended along their pathway.

Theme 3: Environmental Experiences in Which a Student Lives Directly Influences Student Behaviors in School and in the Community

- Sub-theme 3.1: Gang Activity in Neighborhoods
- Sub-theme 3.2: Rural Experiences versus Urban or Suburban

Each of the 12 students interviewed indicated that neighborhood factors impacted them either directly or indirectly. Of the 12 interviewed, seven of them experienced attending school in two or more geographic regions within the school district. Because of this, these students could articulate fluently the differences in each of the educational settings. To gauge students' perceptions of the neighborhoods, they were asked to talk about where they grew up as a child. They also discussed whether this area had an impact on their educational pathway.

Emonie, who was academically gifted but grew up in the suburbs, indicated that her neighborhood experiences negatively impacted her.

Emonie: Okay, my name Amani. I grew up on that River Side, get it in! So yeah. But that had a lot of impact on me. I was born in the trap house, that's it. That made me a trapper. I'm not a rapper. But yeah, that got a lot of impact on me, though. With the people I was around. They influenced my life, you know. Because. You know you be like, Oh, I want to do what they do. So I do what they do. And now I'm in the predicament I'm in.

Interviewer: So the side of town that you lived on and the people you were around had something to do with your schooling.

Emonie: Yeah. Because what you do at home you gonna take it to school. That's how you act at home, that's how you act at school. So I act a fool at home, I act a fool at school.

Indy and Q both indicated that influences in their neighborhood in the city negatively impacted both. In Indy's interview, she revealed that because people in her neighborhood did not attend school, she got in trouble as well just to get kicked out of school.

Indy: A matter of fact, I did come back. I moved to Columbia and then I came back to West Columbia. That was when it went downhill. Well, I was trying to follow my friends and people I've seen. Most of the people over there, they didn't go to school, they dropped out, or they stop going. I was just doing stuff that you get kicked out.

Q, who transitioned between a suburban school and an urban school indicated that he participated in the inappropriate behaviors with children in his neighborhood.

Q: Yeah, cuz the kids in the neighborhood ... I was always messing around with them in school, and getting in trouble and stuff.

Interviewer: Which neighborhoods?

Q: Broad River and Long Creek.

Sub-Theme 3. 1: Neighborhood Gang Activity

During the analysis of the identified themes, sub-themes also emerged which help to better understand the research questions. Some of the students talked about gang activity in their neighborhoods and their association with gangs. Lil Sin and T discussed gang activity in their neighborhood and its impact on them.

Lil Sin:

Yes, but some of the times when you grow up in a bad neighborhood, growing up with no daddy, and stuff like that, you feel you look to other older people in your neighborhood, and you want to do what they doing. You see somebody walking around with a whole bunch of change, fresh, you got a pocket full of money, you just get into stuff like that. You feel me? Then my neighborhood is a gang affiliated neighborhood, so we seen everybody older than us wearing red, being in gangs, stuff like that. That's how we grow up. I really ain't disassociate myself all the way, yet. I still hang around the red now and again, but I just don't make it an everyday thing to be with them. Because the neighborhoods, the neighborhoods ... I'm from Gonzales Gardens, so that's a gang-affiliated neighborhood, so if you go to school, and it's neighborhood that go there ... Like Gonzales Gardens and Four Eight, they have beef, so when we see each other in school, it's sometimes some people be on some cool junk, but other people be on some, "Oh, I don't like him just because he from that side, so we might have to fight," or something like that. I really done got too old for that, so I aint really worried about nothing like that no more, but back then I used to take it to heart.

T:

Because neighborhoods I grew up in, I mean it wasn't nothing but violence. Like the Bishop, gang banging, drugs, stuff like that. Growing up watching people smoke weed and sell drugs, making

fast money, I grew up wanting to do it. So I pushed school to the side.

Sub-Theme 3. 2: Students Attending Rural Schools Experienced More Disciplinary Infractions Once They Moved into the City

Four of the students, Jq, Baby Girl, Angel, and T, each experienced attending school in the rural area of the district at some point along their pathway. Jq experienced living in the city and indicated that leaving the rural area and going into the city had a negative impact on him. T, as well as Angel, felt that living in the rural area of the district was better for them because there were fewer distractions in the neighborhood.

Jq moved into the city and then returned to the rural side of town. He indicated a change in the environment had an impact on him behaviorally.

Interviewer: That's good. These are just a few questions about you. Tell me where you grew up as a child. You mentioned going to Elementary 3 and then Elementary 4 and then Middle School 3. That means you moved around town a little bit.

Jq: Yeah, Crayton. Like most of my family. A lot of my family from Eastover, but my whole family really from Connecticut. I grew up in Eastover as a child and once I got older. Once I left right at the end of elementary school when I was graduating 5th grade, we left and moved to Starlight off Bluff Road. We was staying up in there for five, six years if I'm not mistaken. Then, we moved from there and went to Bluff. We moved in Bluff Estates after that went back to Eastover.

Basically, I grew up in Eastover all my life. Honestly, that's where I'm from if you want to ask. That's where I'm from.

Interviewer: Do you think where you're growing up had an impact on you in school?

Jq: Not Eastover, but when I moved to Starlight and that's when a lot of the . . . When I moved up there is when I got around a lot of gang activity and stuff like that. I can honestly say by staying down there it turned me out a little bit to a whole 'nother way of life. I tried my hardest not to stay in that way of life. Down in Eastover I just stayed in my grandma house I didn't really grow up in the hood where everybody grew up at.

Jq: Yeah, Middle School 3. Basically, when I went to Middle School 3 that's when I start surrounding myself by the wrong crowds and doing all the wrong stuff. I stopped going to church all that. I couldn't tell you the last time I been to church other than a funeral.

T, who spent some time living in a foster home in the rural part of the district, stated that he did not get into trouble while he lived there.

Interviewer: Was one neighborhood more positive than the other was? Did you get in less trouble when you lived . . .

T: When I stayed in a home on Leesburg, I didn't get in no trouble because we didn't really have no neighbors.

Interviewer: When you were on Leesburg, that's when you were at what school, Hopkins?

T: I was going to High School 1.

Angel, who also grew up in the rural areas and attended school in rural area of the district and then moved to a school within the city, expressed how this move negatively impacted her educationally.

Angel: Hello, my name is Angel. I grew up I grew up on Bluff Road, Four Eight, down that road. But I moved to the city and everything just went downhill. . . Because when I was staying down the road over there, down the road it's not so much you can do with like you can do in the city. Like when I was going to L.R., L.R. was a gated school. It wasn't no going off campus whenever you felt like it. It wasn't no walking outside, walking to your best friend house when you was tired of class. It wasn't none of that, because yeah, they had us gated in there. Ain't nobody was going nowhere.

But when I moved to Allen Benedict Court, like five years ago, everything just went downhill, you know? Went to High School 2, started smoking weed. Started skipping class. Walking off campus, coming back when I feel like it. Stuff like that. You know? They had some place for me to go when I didn't want to be at school.

Angel: When I was going to High School 1, yeah. But when I was going to High School 2, no.

Interviewer: What was positive about High School 1?

Angel: I mean a lot. I was thinking about going into the Air Force. I was making honor roll. All that. I'm going to my classes. But at High School 2, I just stopped caring.

Interviewer: And it was because of a change in location that made you stop caring, or did something else in your life change?

Angel: It's just a change in my environment. A change in my life, yeah.

The students interviewed indicated the neighborhoods, as well as the geographic locations where they grew up, had an impact on their educational pathway. The research participants discussed how exposure to crime, drugs, violence, gangs and criminal activity influenced their behaviors. The students also indicated the differences in schools, their geographic locations and expectations had an impact on their development. The experiences of each student varied as well as the extent to which these factors impacted them varied as well.

Theme 4: Educational Experiences of Each Student Included Attending at Least Four Different Schools

In the identified school district, schools are grouped K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. If a student attended school in this district from Grades K-12, a regular progression would include the student only attending three different schools, one school per level—elementary, middle, and high. However, the students interviewed in the research study attended between four to eleven schools.

Chad: From elementary. Okay, I went to one elementary school, I went to Elementary 4. I went to two middle schools including the Alternate School. I went to Middle School 4 and the Alternate School. And I did my eighth-grade year here twice, and I did half

my ninth grade year here, and my eleventh year I went to High School 2. I got kicked out of High School 2, and then I went to High School 4. Oh, I went to the hearing board like when I got expelled from, between those two.

Emonie: My name Emonie. I went Private Church School. That's a private school, and I was in kindergarten, and then I went to kindergarten again at Elementary 1. I stayed at Elementary 1 until fifth grade, then I went to Middle School 1 for middle school, then I went to High School 3, and I always been all honors list.

Angel: My name Angel, and I went to Elementary 2, and I went to Elementary 3. I went to daycare. I went to Miss A's daycare in Eastover, and I went to Gleams right there on Pine View, and my middle school, I went to Middle School 2, and for my high school I went to High School 1 my ninth and tenth grade year, and I went to High School 2 half of my 11th grade year.

Nana: This Nana. I went to Elementary 1. No, I went to Gleams, and then I went to Elementary 1. I stayed at Elementary 1 all my life. I hadn't went to no other school, and then I went to Middle School 1 all my life, all my grades, and then I went to High School 4 my freshman and sophomore year, and then I came back to High School 3 my 11th grade year, and then 11th grade year, I came to the Alternate School around Thanksgiving, and then . . .

Kyng followed the regular progression of schools, attending only one elementary, one middle, and one high school as set by the school district; however, once he entered middle school, he felt girls caused him to get off track.

Kyng: Elementary, I went to Elementary 5. I was good. Had good grades left there I went to Middle School 4. That's when I got kind of off track because of females and stuff. Started feeling myself. I got expelled in the seventh grade. Came to the Alternate School, but I ain't stay there long because they said I had good grades, so they let me go back to school. Went back to Middle School 4. Then, promoted from Middle School 4, went to High School 4. After High School 4, everything changed. They sent me back to evening high school. I got expelled, getting in a fight. I came to evening high school. I had little problems when I first got here. Then I started doing better because I knew I had something to do in life, and I tried. I wanted to graduate. Now, I'm graduating I January. All the females wanted me, because I used to have slugs in my mouth. I used to have a lot of stuff. I was spoiled, but I used to always go work for what I want. My grandma taught me I can't depend on other people so I used to like ... They think I used to be stealing stuff and selling stuff, but I used to really be cutting grass on the weekend just to get money. Yeah. They just used to think I was in the streets doing other stuff. I used to cut grass. I used to go rake people grass for money just to put money in my pocket.

Jalen, who has attended seven different schools, measures his progression through school a seven out of ten.

Jalen: My first elementary school I started going to is Elementary 6. It was kind of sort of good because you got to take naps and stuff, and I like taking naps. That's one. Then it taught me a lot of stuff that I needed to know until this day. Then I went to Elementary 4. They taught me a lot, too. I used to be up on the morning news. Then I went to Elementary 7, and I left to Orangeburg, and went to another school up there. It's called Elementary 8. Then I went to Middle School 5. Then from Middle School 5, I came back down here, and went to Middle School 3, and I went to Alternate School. Then I went to High School 5, and then I came here.

Q attended three elementary schools within the district and two elementary schools in a neighboring district.

Q: For me, elementary school, my first elementary school I went to was Elementary 9 Elementary School. I did from like I think the third, I mean from like the first, maybe the second grade. Yeah, I started in the second grade at Elementary 9. I don't remember what school I went to ... Oh yeah. I went to Elementary 10. I went to Elementary 10 from like Pre-K all the way up to like second, first grade. In second grade, they moved me over to Elementary 9 cause we moved on Briar Road. That's originally where I'm from too. I'm from Briar Road, so yeah, we moved to

Briar Road and I started going to Elementary 9 Elementary School from like, I think from like second grade up to my . . . Say from like second grade up to like my fourth grade year I think.

My fourth grade year I got kicked out cause I brought a ... first time I got kicked out I got sent to the hearing board in the fourth grade cause I set the bathroom on fire. Dumb stuff. Little kid stuff, playing with a lighter, set the bathroom on fire and set my desk on fire. They sent me to the hearing board. Me and my momma missed the hearing board meeting but they told my momma I can come back to school so I think I got expelled for like 17, no for like 17 weeks, or 17 days. Something like that.

Something. Something like that. It was so long ago.

Then went back fourth grade. Finished my fourth ... because I got expelled I had to redo fourth grade again, so redid the fourth grade. That put me a year behind and my birthday in January so I was already a year behind so that made me two years behind. I went to the fifth grade and messed around and got in trouble again. As a matter of fact, third grade was when that happened, when I did the fire thing.

So I got in fifth grade and got in trouble again. In fifth grade, I brought a knife to school and somebody told on me and I got expelled for that too. Went to the hearing board again. They said I couldn't go back to that school. I couldn't go back to Elementary 9.

So after that I moved to Florence with my daddy and I went to Elementary 11 in Florence. I stayed with him for like a year. I ain't like it down there so I moved back to High School 3 with my momma.

My sixth grade year I started at MMBA, Midlands Math and Business Academy, over there in front of Adult Education. They closed now though, but it was in front of Adult Education by the police station. I went there my sixth grade year. I did sixth grade. I ended up doing a program where I was at Royal that got me skipped back up so I was in my right grade and when I got back down here to High School 3 when I went to MMBA they messed around and didn't have the right transcripts so I had to do the sixth grade over again. So I did the sixth grade twice.

I did sixth grade, seventh grade at MMBA. I never did a eighth grade year cause I got skipped up. I got socially promoted cause I was already fixing to turn 16. I was 15 fixing to turn 16.

Interviewer: So when you got to Middle School 6, you were socially promoted to high school. So you never really attended Middle School 6?

“Q”:
No. I'm lying. When I came back from Royal I graduated from ... when I came back from Royal I graduated from Royal and then when I got back to High School 3, I started going to Elementary 9. I mean, not Elementary 9, um . . .

Interviewer: MMBA.

“Q”: Middle School 1. I went to Middle School 1 my sixth grade year. When that summer came around and the next school year came around that's when I did the sixth grade over at MMBA, cause I got kicked out of Middle School 1. They said I couldn't go there no more. I don't remember what I did, but they said I couldn't go there no more. So I did the rest of my years at MMBA. I did sixth grade over and I did seventh grade at MMBA. They had said since I did the sixth grade over and I wasn't supposed to, cause they didn't have the right district files at MMBA cause it was a charter, so they said cause I did that year over I could get socially promoted. I could get promoted up to the ninth grade, so I went straight from middle school, straight from the seventh grade to High School 2 in the ninth grade.

When I got to High School 2, boy it was a new experience. It was like more freedom and stuff. I got to High School 2 my ninth grade year. That's when I went ham. I just started doing crazy stuff, like skipping and all kind of stuff. I was skipping. I wasn't going to school. Then when I was there I wasn't ever in class.

Changes in family dynamics resulted in many of the research participants having to move numerous times. This instability of home life resulted in the participants changing schools within the current district and some having to attend school in neighboring districts. Having to adjust to different schools and the lack of structure in some locations negatively affected the research participants.

Findings for Secondary Research Question 2

Research Sub-Question 2: How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting?

Each of the students had a different educational path that led them to a non-traditional setting. Each student's pathway that led him/her to the evening school and adult education was unique. Some came willingly, some were referred, and others were required to meet probation requirements that were the result of legal problems. To determine how each student matriculated through traditional school, the following interview questions were used to address Research Sub-Question 2: Why are you completing your education in a non-traditional educational setting?

Through in-depth analysis of the participants' interview responses, the following themes emerged about each student's path that led them to a non-traditional setting:

5. Excessive disciplinary referrals resulting in administrative hearings.
6. Probation stipulations that require school attendance.
7. Self-Referral

Theme 5: Excessive Disciplinary Referrals, Resulting in Administrative Hearings

Eleven of the students committed infractions that resulted in their having to be sent before the district's hearing officer. Students that commit excessive infractions (Level 1 or 2) or severe infractions that require police involvement (Level 3) receive discipline referrals and may be referred to the hearing office by the principal.

Emonie: Me and a couple of my friends, we high ...

Interviewer: Yeah. I'm telling you all. I'll let you all see what I type. It's not going to have your names tied to it.

Emonie: We was high, and . . .

Interviewer: You got put out of school for being . . .

Emonie: No. We had pulled the fire alarm, and the kids was outside for a good little hour, standing in the rain. We had fun that day, though, but it wasn't no . . . I just made a dumb mistake.

Interviewer: You got expelled because of that?

Emonie: Yes.

Angel: I got expelled. I got expelled for walking off campus, and police brought me back to school, and they searched me, and I had weed, and I had vodka in my purse, they decided to take me to jail. I stay around the corner from the school, so I told everyone I was going to walk home and go get my mama so they could talk to my mom, and after that, I just never came back to school.

Q: Getting kicked out of school. Getting kicked out of High School 2. I did ninth grade, tenth grade at High School 2. I was doing good but like every year, every year at High School 2, I'd just play around till it came till the end. Then I'd just do my work and go to summer school and I'd graduate to the next grade, and I did that for ninth grade and tenth grade. Then when it got to eleventh grade, the beginning of the last school year I got kicked out of High School 2 for selling weed. They kicked me out on the second day of school cause they had like evidence of me doing from the year before, so they kicked me out the second day of school, cause I guess they was already gonna kick me out the year before but they

didn't catch me before the year was up. So they kicked me out and they sent me to.

I was like, I was gonna drop out after that, but then I was like nah, I'm just gonna stay and I'm gonna graduate. So my momma was like, the hearing board want to send you to Alternate School, but I refused to go to Alternate School. I ain't never want to go to Alternate School cause all my home boys went there. I ain't never want to go to Alternate School. They said it was like a jail so I ain't never want to come here. So, my momma was like she gonna look around and it just so happens she came up on a paper one day in the mail for evening school. So she was like it's a night school. That way you could work in the day time and you could get a job, cause I always wanted to get a job but she said I was too young and I had to go to school in the day time.

She was like now you can get a job and you can go to school at night time. You get out at eight and it's only like four hours. It's from four o'clock to eight o'clock. It's four hours, way less than regular school. With regular school you gotta go for eight hours. So I was like, I'll go to that school.

Chad: If High School 2 was stricter I would of last at High School 2. So, I got kicked out of High School 2 for truancy. It was so easy to leave off campus and come back on. It was too lenient.

The severity of disciplinary violations and the age at which the research participants began to experience disciplinary infractions varied. Inappropriate behaviors for seven of the 13 participants began in early elementary school and continued throughout their academic pathway. Disciplinary infractions while in elementary school included consistent disrespect, assault on a teacher, and fighting. Additionally, inappropriate behaviors for four participants began in middle school, including fighting, drugs, and alcohol. One participant did not begin experiencing problems until high school, and one did not experience any disciplinary problems in school.

Theme 6: Probation Stipulations That Require School Attendance

Because of previous legal problems, some of the students interviewed were required to attend school as a part of their probation ruling. Failure to complete school would result in imprisonment.

Lil Sin: The main reason why I really came here was for probation, and because something in my head just clicked one day like, "Bro, this, five years from now, Bro, you got to find something to do, Brother. You just cannot be playing around for no reason. You got to get up and do something. I went to jail, now I got on probation, and they said this was how I complete my probation, get a high school diploma.

Chad: See honestly, it wasn't a choice for me to come here. It was court, yeah it was mandatory that I come here because I was on probation when I got kicked out of High School 4. So, when I got kicked out of High School 4, I went to DJJ and when I got out of DJJ they sent me here and I've been going here ever since.

Students that are required to meet probation obligations must attend classes, adhere to program rules, and report to their assigned probation officer as indicated in their court order. Obtaining a high school credential will satisfy the requirements of probation and release them from these commitments.

Theme 7: Self-Referral Students Enrolled in the Program Because of Their Self-Motivation and Self-determination

Even though some of the students interviewed faced disciplinary or legal problems forcing them to the evening high school, there were some that decided to come on their own. These students expressed various reasons for their choice.

Jq: I chose to come. I can honestly say I chose to come because I had plenty of chances to go back there to regular school. I actually -- excuse me for me stuttering just now -- I actually left from regular High School 1, came to Evening High, caught up on my work and tried to go back to High School 1 to see if it'll work out. It didn't work out. I had it in my mind to turn around and come back to Evening High School, because it seemed like I was focused more on my work here and what I had to do, like my priorities. I chose to come back here.

Nana: I don't know. I ended up here because I just woke up one morning and said, "Forget school. I ain't going to school."

Baby Girl: It was my choice. It's less people. I don't really like being around a lot of people.

Students that are enrolled because of self-referral had different reasons for wanting to complete their high school credential in a non-traditional setting. Reasons included less distractions, less people, and the desire for more individualized attention.

Findings for Secondary Research Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3: How do they compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

The following interview questions were used to address Sub-Question 3. The in-depth interview questions were designed to give students an opportunity to talk about support at school and at home. Students also indicated a different level of support or lack of support at each of the school sites. The students were asked the following questions:

- Do you feel that you were supported at school? Why or Why not. Explain. If you were supported, who were the individuals that supported you? If you feel that you were not supported, who were the individuals that you feel did not support you?
- What experiences have you had that positively or negatively influenced your views about school?

Through in-depth analysis of the participant's interview responses, the following additional theme emerged with regard to support:

8. Adult Support

- Sub-Theme 8.1 Traditional School Support vs Support in Non-Traditional School
- Sub-Theme 8.2 Family Factors & Support

Theme 8: Support from an Adult

All of the students interviewed addressed various levels of support from their educators, which included teachers, administrators, counselors, and staff. They also addressed the

support from their families, which may not have always been biological parents.

Jalen, who at one time was serviced as a special education student, felt his special education teacher supported him.

Jalen: My homeroom teacher, her name was something like Ms. C at High School 5. She's very nice. She like, if I get into trouble in one class ... cause she had come up out the class to check up on me, and then she told my momma I need to sign up for anger management. So they put me in anger management classes, and I was up in there with a man named Mr. A.

Lil Sin: For me, it been my math teacher. He been the basketball coach at High School 6. His name was Coach J. He grew up in the same kind of neighborhood I grew up in, so he really could relate to what I had going on. Every time I got mad, though, somehow he'll just come out of nowhere, and just start talking to me, and I'll calm down.

Jq and T who attended the same high school in the rural part of the district stated:

Jq: The teachers talking to me. It was certain teachers that showed me that they cared about my education and my life. Even though I wasn't they child or kin to them or anything, they still talked to me and kept me on the right track. It was hard for them sometimes to talk to me, because sometimes I didn't want to talk.

T: My teacher Mr. L did. He was my coach and all, kept me out of trouble. He stayed on me all the time. He helped me with my

work. He helped me get A's and B's on the A/B honor roll when I was going to Hopkins.

Sub-Theme 8.1: Traditional School Support Versus Support in Non-Traditional School

In-depth interviews and focus groups gave students an opportunity to openly discuss the level of support they received in a traditional school as compared to the current non-traditional setting. Kyng, who attended a district's urban high school, when discussing the level of support he receives now, compared it to his previous high school stated:

Kyng: He break it down to your level. Say if somebody in class, they know how to do everything. He'll still break it down to other people that don't know how to do it. They know how to talk to you. They know how to handle stuff a different way than going by what the school want them to do. They be so afraid of losing they jobs, so they want to go by school district rules or whatever.

However, you want to put it-

Jq: Tone-wise. Language-wise, the words ... I ain't saying certain teachers came out they mouth with cuss words and all this that and the other, but you got some of them that raise they voice, put they hands on you, even though that's not they job to do that. Some of them get to be here to feel like that's what they got to do. No, you don't got to do that. You could just talk to 'em, just learn how to talk to students. You gotta know how to talk to certain students. They don't go by the district. They don't teach how the district want them to teach. I ain't saying they teaching wrong, but they

teaching in a better way. They teaching in a way that we can understand. You got some students ... I ain't saying some students dumb by saying what I'm 'bout to say because I'm one of these students. I rather Seabrook teaching me the way he know in his mind than teach what they know ain't out of the book. I know everything come from the book, but you can put stuff in your own words and in your own ways to make it sound better to the next person or to make it look better or make it more understanding.

Lil Sin: I feel like some of my teachers supported me, and my mama and them supported me for school, but I never really been one of them, students, to really talk like to guidance and stuff. I just ain't never been one of them people. Yes. I like to just keep stuff to myself, type. If it's a problem, I like go to the bathroom or something and just think to myself.

During the focus group session with the girls, Angel and Emonie indicated their like for the In-School Suspension Supervisor at their school. Nana indicated her like for her principal.

Angel: Because they help you out. They understand.

Nana: There's something about the ISS person. They're like a counselor. They understand.

Emonie: When you get in trouble, they come back, they talk to you, and then tell you that you can do better.

Nana: My favorite teacher, my favorite person was Ms. M, the principal, to be honest.

Emonie: My favorite teacher was Ms. Imma. You know Ms. Imma? Dr. Imma? Nowadays, the generation that they become . . . Teachers being so young, and they have the mindset, "I'm just coming here to get a check. They learn, they don't. If they do, they do." They don't care. If we catch it, we catch it. If we don't, they don't worry about it. They got other things to do.

Baby Girl, who attended all schools within the rural area of the district but also spent a short time at the local military school, stated the following:

Baby Girl: My teacher, Miss S, my psychology teacher. She doesn't work there anymore. She worked at High school 1 my tenth-grade year, and she used to help me out a lot. When I went to the military school, she was my mentor. She would come pick me up every weekend; she would take me to USC or go take me out to eat. We would just talk about things. She would take me to the bookstore. I would get books. She was really positive.

Indy: A positive experience, I had an administrator that I was real close with. She was like my mom. I use to call her my mama. She use to help me stay out of trouble. She use to be my mentor. She talk to me about stuff. I talk to her about stuff. They knew if I was having a bad day to call her and I could talk to her. She was younger. We just clicked instantly. Because at first, I didn't know her and she called me like she knew me. She just started talking to me. I was just, in a joking way, my teacher is like, "Why are you

out there?" I was like, "Oh, I was talking to my mom." I was playing with her. Ever since then, I started calling her my mom for real.

The students interviewed also indicated why their current setting was proving to be more successful.

Jq: I probably would say if I had my own one-on-time with all my teachers that probably would have helped. I rather, and honestly, I'd rather do work . . . Say if Seabrook when I first started him it was just me and three other students in it. I can concentrate way more. I'll put myself in the little things that go on in class. Say if it's a class full of students. I'm not going act in none of the activities. I'm not, that's just me, but if it's like four people in there like Seabrook's classes just me and four other people. I'll participate in anything.

Baby Girl: Yeah. I don't really like a big class. I don't like being around a lot of people.

Chad: I would have to say the environment. There's not as many people and a couple of people that's here, we're here for the same situation. We all have something to relate to. It's not a big group, it's smaller groups. Like I said, the classes and how they do it it's a faster process.

Jq: Yeah and they don't go by the district. They don't teach how the district want them to teach. I ain't saying they teaching wrong, but

they teaching in a better way. They teaching in a way that we can understand. You got some students . . . I ain't saying some students dumb by saying what I'm 'bout to say, because I'm one of these students. I rather Seabrook teaching me the way he know in his mind than teach what they know ain't out of the book. I know everything come from the book, but you can put stuff in your own words and in your own ways to make it sound better to the next person or to make it look better or make it more understanding.

Chad: The hours, first of all and the time. The time is a quicker pace. With High School 4 all our classes were year classes, year-long classes. But the year- long classes that are in regular high school, they're just half a year here so, everything moves quicker. You can get more credits.

Students also addressed why attending school in a non-traditional setting has been more beneficial to them than regular school. The interview questions also sought to determine if any additional supports were needed in traditional school.

Jq: I prolly would say if I had my own one-on-time with all my teachers that prolly would have helped. I rather, and honestly, I'd rather do work ... Say if Seabrook when I first started him it was just me and three other students in it. I can concentrate way more. I'll put myself in the little things that go on in class. Say if it's a class full of students. I'm not going act in none of the activities. I'm not, that's just me, but if it's like four people in there like

Seabrook's classes just me and four other people. I'll participate in anything.

Indy: It's better here. You more focused here, because like there ain't a lot of students.

Lil Sin: There ain't a whole bunch of people in your class, and the teacher can really focus on what you ...

Indy: And we don't have homework. You got to do your work here, so it ain't like you can be like, "Well, I didn't do my work because I lost it," or something.

Baby Girl: When I get here, I know these people, but it's like they need to get they stuff done just like me, so they going to play around with you, and stuff like that, but at the end of the day they getting their work done.

Each of the district's seven schools was represented in this research study. The culture and structure, as well as the experiences of each student, were different. The at-risk school factors experienced by each student varied based on the individual student, their prior experiences, and relationships. School factors for each student were also diverse depending on the environment and individual experiences of each student at while attending school.

Sub-theme 8.2: Family Factors and Support

As indicated in the literature review, the theories presented Bronfenbrenner's Social Systems Theory (1979), and Rotter's Social Learning Theory (1954) are evident in the research of the student data presented in this chapter. The "ecological environment" which is comprised of five systems, all effect the development of children. It is necessary to comprehend how a

child's biology fuels development and the interaction between factors in the biology, immediate family/community environment, and societal landscape fuels development. Understanding at-risk student and family factors that impact a student's internal or external locus of control is addressed in the following interview questions:

Do you feel that you were supported at home? Why or Why not. Explain.

If you were supported, who were the individuals that supported you? If you feel that you were not supported, who were the individuals that you feel did not support you?

Chad, who grew up with both parents stated that her mom really supported her:

Chad: My dad, he was always the one that tell me I wasn't going to be nothing, I wouldn't graduate high school, I was going to be in jail until I was eighteen. I'm eighteen now and I'm still here. He was just the type that always down me, always. My mom, she would be the one to try to pick me up and be like, "Don't listen to what your daddy's saying, he's just mad." My mom, she's always been there. She's always been very supportive.

Jq: I can honestly say my whole family supported me, but- It was just that one thing that I was missing, the whole time is support from my daddy. My daddy been locked up majority the time of my life. Like ten years of my life, my daddy was locked up. He came home, and he passed three years after him being out of jail. I was 14.

Q: My mama just wanted me to graduate high school. She said she don't care what I do after I graduate high school, but my grandma

wanted me to go to college. My grandma wanted me to do something. My grandma wanted it. Cuz I guess . . . Cuz she ain't do nothing, so I guess she wanted me to do something. She always been like that. She really-My dad? I know my dad, and I see my dad from time to time. Just so happened I talked to my dad just a few days ago. Friday. I went to stay with him . . . Only time I really stayed with my dad is when I went to Royall in Florence. But he moved back to High School 3. He don't really . . . Other than me talking to him last week, he don't really . . . He stay right down the street from us. He don't really talk to me or my brother, nothing like that. He don't really talk to us like that, so.

Emonie: The money. They paid me. My granddaddy pay me, and my mom would pay me. They'd pay me 50 dollars for a A, 40 dollars for a B. I liked money, so . . . I mean I ain't no dumb girl. I catch on to stuff I always had all A's and B's. Because I'm getting paid for it.

Indy: Well, my dad, he is a good supporter. He supported me still. Like, the nights I have projects. My mom, she didn't help me. I call him, and he help me. He'll come get me. I had this big project, he came and got me. I got an older cousin. She's in the army. He let her help me too because she knew about it. It was Jamaica. She went to Jamaica before, and she helped me too.

Saniya: Um, I feel that if my Mom wasn't stressed so much. Maybe my Mom and Dad wasn't so like in and out of the relationship, maybe I would have been more on track.

Lil Sin: My mom was supportive, but me and her got into it a lot, so I really cannot elaborate on that.

Interviewer: How about your dad?

Lil Sin: Yes, but he used to do too much. He used to . . . He wanted me to be perfect, on some type junk like that, but it just wasn't going that way.

T, who was removed from his biological parents and sent to foster homes talked about how the moves impacted him:

T: Being so young, not being able to stay with your parents, not knowing what's really going on and why you can't stay with them, that really makes it hard to go to school. You get to see other people's children going to school with their parents dropping them off. We go to like little meetings and stuff. We go to my little therapist. I could see them there. Just my mom. My dad wouldn't go.

Indy, who had both parents in the home, felt that after her parent's separation while she was in elementary school she began to act out.

Indy: Both of my parents wasn't in the house. My mama, well, first, they was in the house together and then when they got separated, it was just me and my mama and then my brother, my sisters. I don't

know. I think when they got separated, I started acting out even more. I don't know why. I think that's part of the reason why.

Because of this life-altering event, Indy and her family were homeless for a period.

Indy: We was in this transitional housing, I think, is what you call it. I could stay at my home school. I had school choice. I didn't have to go there. When we moved, I don't think I really had school choice again. I still stayed there. That's my home school.

Chad expressed that her life experiences has resulted in her being the way she is. She indicated that she has gone through a lot in life; consequently, her reasons for doing some of the things that she has done are the result.

Chad: When I caught my assault charge in middle school, the charge I guess, it was so . . . They really wanted to send me to court, but since it was my first offense I did youth arbitration. They had put me with . . . I did anger management through them, but when I got to DJJ, I had to go through therapy for the depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and I went through the ADAC. When I went to the jail, I tested positive for marijuana. That was the whole reason why I never went to school at High School 2. I wanted to skip school and get high.

Chad: When I was younger, I was molested and raped and a few years after that happened I was admitted into the hospital and I was diagnosed with depression and post-traumatic stress; that's the only

reason why I can think that I'm like this or put in the predicament that I'm put in.

Chad: I really was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but, hanging with the wrong people also. I should of never put myself in that predicament. When I got shot the whole situation was just wrong. I was never supposed to be there. First, I was in a stolen vehicle smoking. Yeah it was basically, yeah. It happened for a reason. Everything happens for a reason.

Each participant indicated the desire to have or benefit from adult support. The research participants spoke about their perceived view of the impact of adult support from family or adult support while in school and how the level of support impacted them. The level of support and whom they received support from was different for each student.

Summary

This chapter reported the qualitative findings of the study, attempting to answer the overarching research question:

What are the perceptions of students ages 18-21 in two South Carolina Alternative Programs of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The secondary research questions are as follows:

1. How do students describe the impact of their experiences in traditional schools?
2. How did they arrive in a non-traditional setting?
3. How do they compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

Each of the 13 students in the focus groups spoke openly about their experiences both academically and socially in traditional school as well as in the current non-traditional setting. Additionally, the students talked about their positive and negative views on schools and what impact this had on their educational pathway. The students also spoke openly about the family and social factors that had impacted them.

Three findings emerged from the study that are related to the at-risk environmental/societal factors, at-risk school factors, and at-risk student and family factors that inhibited the research participants' on-time high school graduation. The first finding is that the environmental experiences in which a student lives directly influence student behaviors in school and in the community. The second finding is a compilation of school factors that include employees, location, and school wide expectations. The third finding is that student and family factors, which can range from individual matters to parental matters, also impacted their pathway. The findings also verify that as each students' personal experiences are different, their experiences along their educational pathway are also very different. Each student's "story" and "perceptions" are special to them as well as how they recall what occurred along their educational pathway.

In Chapter V, the researcher summarizes the findings of this study in relation to the research questions and the theoretical frameworks that define the study. Additionally, the researcher provides recommendations for policy, practice, and future educational research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter V summarizes the finding of this research study on the perceptions of students ages 18-21 of the factors in the traditional school that impacted their educational pathway, resulting in the student having to complete graduation requirements in a non-traditional setting. The researcher discusses the relationship of the factors that students specified. This study included the students' interviews, focus groups, the researcher's field notes, and journaling throughout the process. The researcher discusses the relationship between previous research and the findings of this study and makes recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how students, ages 18-21, who are currently enrolled in a non-traditional educational setting articulate their educational pathway. The students that participated in this research study specified a variety of factors that positively or negatively impacted their pathway. Kieffer (2014) stated students could have a behavioral component and affective component that can lead to their disengagement from school. "The affective indicators include attendance, on-task behavior, and some suspensions, where examples of affective indicators (also termed emotional indicators) that include positive or negative attitudes as well as an interest in certain activities" (Kieffer, 2014, 550). Each of the students that participated in this study indicated one or more behavioral or emotional factors affecting them. The students also talked about their home and school environment as well as home and school support.

This research study was specifically designed to gather the perspectives of at-risk students who have chosen to continue pursuing their high school credential. Lee and Breen (2007) indicated that there needs to be future research on the perceptions and experiences of school held by students who are considered at-risk of leaving school early. This study design contained one overarching research question and three secondary research questions that acquired specific information from the research participants. The presentations of findings from this research study are presented by each question that was explored in the study.

Primary Research Question

What are the perceptions of students, ages 18-21, in two South Carolina Alternative Programs, of the influence of their experiences in traditional schools on their educational pathways?

The first research question explored the perceptions of the students of their educational experiences. The focus group questions were open questions that allowed the researcher an opportunity to ask clarifying questions during the group session or the individual in-depth interviews. The questions gave students the opportunity to elaborate on the influences of family, school, environment, and peer relationships as well as life-altering events. The data collected from the in-depth- interview questions and focus group sessions revealed that a student's environment and support were the major factors that influenced their experiences in traditional school. These experiences had a direct impact on their educational pathway.

This study produced findings as it relates to the social systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and how immediate family, school, peer relationships, home-school relations, and life-altering events impacted students' perceptions of their educational pathway. The first finding is that the relationship or lack of relationship with family, school, and peers directly or indirectly

influenced the students' perceptions of their pathway. Each of the 13 students indicated that at some time in their development, they had experienced problems with one or possibly both of their parents. Three students also discussed how their parents' incarceration negatively influenced their childhood relationship with that parent and how it continues to affect them into young adulthood. Parental incarceration may be an indicator of serious threat to adolescents' development (Dallaire, 2007). The incarceration of a parent results in a disruption of relationship between the child and the parent. This break in relationship impacts the adolescent's relationships (microsystem) and their environment (mesosystem) (Nicholas, 2015). Because students had strained relationships with their parents, home-school relationships were not solid.

The research participants, although labeled as at-risk, are motivated to complete high school to earn their high school credential. They are internally motivated to continue despite the many obstacles they have confronted. Students in this research study all have what Rotter (1954) describes as a high internal locus of control. Individuals with a high internal locus of control persist, despite external obstacles. These research participants are motivated for various reasons to continue to persist. Data from three additional secondary research questions were used to help identify the major findings and themes.

Secondary Research Question 1

How do students describe the impact of their experiences in traditional schools?

The first secondary research question looked at the specific factors that students felt impacted their experiences in traditional school. More specifically, additional factors such as neighborhood, number of schools attended, and geographic location of the schools were explored to see how these factors contributed to students' experiences. Based on the responses of the students, their neighborhood had a huge negative impact on them. Eleven of the students

interviewed had direct exposure or indirect exposure to violence. They felt that their exposure to crime, drugs, shootings, gang violence, and other illegal activities enticed them to participate in what was occurring within their neighborhood. Disputes between neighborhoods, which were linked to gang activity, may have also spilled over into the school and other areas within the city. Because of these experiences, neighborhood influences negatively impacted students. To reduce or alleviate the damages caused by violence, it is necessary to understand the individual and contextual pathways to violence exposure in the general population, as well as in the urban community (Zimmerman, 2013).

Participant responses also revealed that while attending school in the rural area of the district, those participants had fewer disciplinary infractions and focused in school. Once relocating into the city, they experienced more behavioral problems, resulting in a disconnection from school and behavior repercussions. Research by Resnick (1997) indicated that school connectedness is linked to lower levels of emotional distress and better psychosocial outcomes and that school support, defined by attachment to school, teacher support, and academic motivation, has a protective role among students that have been exposed to violence. The data revealed that students perceived the rural school as having more structure and fewer distractions. One student indicated that while attending school in the rural area of the district, she was focused and had set goals for herself after graduation. After leaving school in the rural area of the district and enrolling in a school within the city, she was no longer focused and lost sight of her goals. She also indicated that because the school was not structured and the rules were not enforced, it became very easy for her to cut school, thus resulting in more problems. She commented that while in the rural setting, she did not cut school because the school was more secure and there was not anywhere for her to go; but once she moved into the city, it became very easy for her

and her friends to find different places to go during the school day. Her excessive absences from school negatively impacted her progress in school, resulting in her not accruing the correct number of yearly credits. Because of her disconnection from school and lack of progressing academically, she did not advance at the projected rate of her peers. This ultimately resulted in her dropping out of school.

From student interviews, it was also determined that participation in extra-curricular activities was a positive influence on their behaviors. Students indicated that additional activities helped keep them focused so that they would not get into trouble. Once disconnected from the activities, they experienced disciplinary problems. One student indicated that after not being selected for the football team, he lost the desire and motivation to continue in school. After disconnecting from school, he eventually dropped out, resulting in his getting into trouble and committing crimes during the school day. Incarceration was the result of his criminal activity.

Students interviewed also spoke about the adults in their lives and the impact these individuals had on their development. A study conducted by Ricard (2016) revealed that the level of parental support for basic psychological needs plays an essential role in the prediction of dropping out of high school. The level of adult support for each student varied; however, each of the participants spoke of the importance of having caring adults in their lives. Adult support ranged from immediate biological family, extended family, adopted family, to school family. Because the level of support for each student varied, their experiences and acknowledgment of who helped support them was different. The data obtained from the interviews revealed each student had a desire to have a connection with one or more caring adult. Several also spoke about how the lack of support from their biological parent affected them emotionally. To build

better adult to student relationships, students desire to have adults who listen, are empathetic, keep promises, and maintain confidentiality (Peters, 2015).

Because many of the research participants experienced fluctuating family dynamics, some experienced living in numerous locations. The change in homes naturally forced students to have to adjust to different schools. For some, this meant moving from school to school, resulting in constant academic changes as well as the need to build different peer relationships and adult relationships. The number of schools attended ranged from four schools to 11 schools within their twelve-year educational pathway. Ten of the research participants interviewed began having disciplinary issues in elementary school, and these problems continued as they advanced through their pathway. For some, the severity of their infractions accelerated. With the exception of three students, the number of schools attended also included at least one visit to the district's hearing office, which resulted in a referral to the district's alternative school. Two of the students interviewed also attended a local military school before enrolling in the evening high school.

Secondary Research Question 2

How did the research participants arrive in a non-traditional setting?

Each student's pathway to their arrival at the evening high school or adult education center was different. The data revealed that 12 students experienced disciplinary issues in school or legal problems within the community. There were different infractions that occurred while at school, which resulted in some of the students being sent to the district's hearing office. It was revealed that these students had prior disciplinary infractions. Student incidents included having drugs on campus, fighting, truancy, or weapons violations. Various stints at the local youth facility, local jail, and federal prison resulted in three of the research participant's placement on

probation. A requirement of their satisfying probation requirements was enrollment in an educational setting. The participants that enrolled in a non-traditional setting because of probation indicated that because they now understood their mistakes, they would have completed school without having the mandatory stipulation placed on them.

The option to enroll in the evening high school or adult education program was also voluntary for some of the participants. Participants that volunteered to enroll indicated that they felt the setting, hours, and individualized attention was a better environment for them. They elected to enroll in the non-traditional setting to remove themselves from the distractions of the traditional school setting.

Secondary Research Question 3

How do the research participants compare their experiences in traditional school with their experiences in a non-traditional school setting?

When asked to articulate their experiences in traditional school compared to their current experiences in the non-traditional setting, each participant indicated satisfaction with their current setting. Data gathered from the interviews indicated that students desire a smaller setting, which allows for more individualized and differentiated instruction. Research participants communicated the need for additional academic assistance and a better pacing of the content. The interview responses revealed that in the current non-traditional setting, students appreciated having the opportunity to work at a pace that is comfortable for them, even though they were cognizant of specified deadlines. For some, they worked on school assignments outside of their regular hours to ensure completion; for others, they were able to complete their work ahead of the designated deadline. Students also indicated teaching styles are different in the current setting. One student could articulate the ability of the current teachers to make the

content relevant. He stated, “It's like they going off what the district want them to do.” He elaborated, referring to his current math teacher, “He teacher teaches from his head and not from a book. Like my math teachers at High School 1, I couldn't understand a thing they was saying.” This indicates the need for teachers to be fully competent in their content and confident in their ability to make instruction and learning relevant for the students.

Based on student responses, the need for structure, consistency, and respect from adults in the school are also very important factors in a traditional school. In the current setting, students are accountable for their attendance and understand how time spent working positively affects their progress. Participants indicated that while enrolled in the traditional setting they wasted time in class, did not complete assignments, and rarely did homework. In this setting, some research participants appreciate the flexibility of not having to adhere to the traditional school rules. However, two participants interviewed revealed that if traditional school had enforced the rules, they might not have gotten into as much trouble. Peters and Wolley (2015) posited students did better academically when there were high levels of control, high levels of support, and higher levels of challenge. As studied in Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (1977) the student’s perception of their school environment and learning can impact their desire to complete school or drop out. This is because students have varying degrees of goals and their desire to achieve them or not may reflect in their educational attainment.

Research participants felt that the relationships that exist with their current teachers are better than what they experienced in traditional school. They felt that some teachers in the traditional school setting did not form solid relationships with them because of the large number of students present in each class. Since the class sizes are much smaller in the non-traditional setting, students feel that the teachers now listen to them and are more supportive. Research

participants also indicated that they had formed better relationships with non-certified employees, specifically the in-school suspension (ISS) supervisor. When asked why, research participants indicated that the ISS employee “listened to them and talked to them like a person” and understood them more than the certified teachers. The reasons given for the absence of adult relationships while in the traditional school setting were different for each student.

Conclusions

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore students’ perceptions about the factors in the traditional school setting that inhibited their on-time high school graduation. The study explored and aided in the research of traditional school factors that may impact a student’s educational pathway. The study additionally gained the students’ perceptions of neighborhood influences and the additional supports they need to be more successful in the traditional school setting. This qualitative study was conducted to examine the factors. Chapter IV supplied the data that led to the following conclusions:

- The environments in which students are exposed directly influence their behaviors and choices. Students need environments that are safe, stable, and structured. They need stability in their homes, with adults that are caring, supportive, and understanding.
- The educational environment must be arranged to meet the various needs of the students served, yet controlled enough to ensure students feel protected and removed from external distracting factors. Students must also have educators who are willing and capable of addressing their individual needs and differences academically.
- Additionally, this study determined that many students need flexibility and a smaller classroom setting to thrive. The students felt they are more focused and more

productive in a smaller setting, which directly resulted in their building better relationships with an adult that they felt cared about their academic progress.

The findings from the data revealed that even though each student's educational pathway was different, many of their experiences are similar. They each experienced a different route, leading them to the completion of their high school credential in a non-traditional setting. There were 13 different interviews conducted resulting in 13 different "narratives," each with a different "story." The students were excited to tell their "story" in hopes that the information they shared would help other students as they progressed through school and life. It is evident that students now understand the importance of self-control, motivation, and determination.

The researcher gained valuable information about the students' perceptions of the various schools within the district in which she currently works. This was very interesting because the researcher was familiar with many of the employees whose names the students referenced, as well as many of the participants' peer associates. The researcher was also able to understand when students spoke of the differences in their experiences in the various geographic areas of the city and their experiences in the neighborhoods.

Even though the research revealed several factors impacting a student's educational pathway, when asked, "What could your regular school have done differently?", unexpectedly, the students responded by taking acceptance of their individual inappropriate behaviors. Research participants indicated a lot might have been different if they, the students, had possessed a different attitude. This leads the researcher to conclude that the age and maturity of the students interviewed directly influenced their responses. Because they have been separated from the traditional setting for at least six months, they have been able to reflect on their

experiences and have a better understanding of how their behaviors and attitudes resulted in their having to finish in a non-traditional educational setting.

After the study, the researcher self-reflected on the entire process and evaluated how the study was conducted. Because this study had an age stipulation, the selection of student participants was limited. A broader age range may have resulted in different data findings. Overall, the results from this study found that several factors impacted the students, but each student's experiences and needs are different. Students face adversity at home, at school, and in the community. However, there were some perceptions of home, community, and neighborhood factors that were common among the student participants. The students felt strongly about the need to have adults listen to what they have to say and to have these same adults treat them with respect. They felt that some adults in the school were more focused on the students that were preparing for graduation and did not care about their individual progress. Student dropouts are prevalent among school districts nationwide.

This study revealed that some at-risk youth might have been able to complete in a traditional setting if the right support and interventions had been in place. Some of the findings in this study correlate with other studies that have been conducted on at-risk students; however, it is also unique because the students could tell their individual perceptions of the factors that impacted their educational pathway. There were several limitations that were addressed within the study: (a) the perceptions were all of African-American students, (b) how the participants responded to the researcher during the interview may also be a limitation factor, (c) the time required to conduct interviews can also be described as a limitation factor and can influence responses, and (d) the personal biases of the researcher before, during, and after the interviews can also be a limitation.

Recommendations for Policy

Policy recommendations are developed to strengthen and improve current educational programs and practices. In the state of South Carolina, students are required to attend school up to the age of 17. As a result, it is necessary for districts to provide programs and interventions to support at-risk students to reduce their dropout rate.

Some of the implications for school policy based on the findings from this study are as follows:

1. Districts and schools should advocate for additional funding which would allow schools to reduce class sizes. Smaller class sizes would allow educators an opportunity to provide students more direct, one-on-one attention. Current state funding is 25:1.
2. College and university courses of studies should include training on culturally relevant teaching and identifying at-risk” student factors. Culturally relevant training for current educators should be required.
3. School districts should advocate for regulation that would allow schools to alter the hours of the school day, allowing for more scheduling flexibility.
4. The state of South Carolina should implement a policy requiring school districts to review and evaluate school-based suspension data to identify trends in administrative practices and inequities. Data could be used to provide additional school and student supports to reduce the suspension rate.
5. The state of South Carolina should require parents and/or guardians to spend a minimum number of hours per year in their child’s school. For parents receiving federal assistance, failure to complete could result in a loss or reduction in wages.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Educators should be provided with appropriate, researched-based professional development training on effectively teaching a diversified group of students, which includes identifying factors associated with at-risk youth.
2. School districts should consider implementing an "early warning system" to help identify students as early as elementary school that are potentially at-risk of becoming a dropout.
3. Schools should implement research-based, school-based interventions to support at-risk students while in the traditional setting.
4. Schools should implement programs to ensure that each student is connected to a caring adult during the regular school day or through extracurricular activities. This adult connection will ensure each student feels supported by at least one adult that can help assist him or her when needed.
5. Educational institutions, community organizations, and faith-based organizations need to provide more intense support for students and their families to aid them in dealing with trauma, parenting, and financial strains that impact family dynamics.
6. Districts must also train employees on the factors that can be used for early identification of at-risk students so that proper interventions can be implemented to better assist these youths while enrolled in the traditional setting. Implementing the appropriate interventions may help prevent the at-risk youth from dropping out of school.

7. The traditional school day is not suitable for meeting the diverse needs of all students. School districts should consider implementing flexible scheduling to meet the needs of the current student population.
8. Districts must also evaluate district-wide educational practices. Teaching and learning expectations should not be generalized across the district. The needs of schools and students vary, thus requiring a more centralized focus on the needs of each school.
9. Districts and schools should advocate for a paraprofessional at each middle and high school to provide direct support to students that are identified as at-risk as well as ensure each student is assigned an adult mentor.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Further research to determine the educational impact of students' exposure (direct or indirect) to neighborhood and community violence.
2. A narrative study to explore the perceptions of students within the same geographic area (i.e., attending the same elementary, middle, and high school) on the traditional school factors that impacted them.
3. Future research may want to use a case study design that follows students from the same geographic area, but of different racial backgrounds, which are finishing in a non-traditional setting.
4. Additional research can also include a case study design that follows a specific gender of student from the same geographic area but of different racial backgrounds, both of which are finishing in a non-traditional setting.

5. Future research can be a phenomenological study conducted on family dynamics and analyzing what influence an incarcerated parent has on the factors impacting a student's educational pathway. Is the experience of the youth different based on which parent is incarcerated, mother or father? Is the experience different for boys or girls?
6. A case study encompassing students from one specific high school, all of whom are completing in a non-traditional setting.

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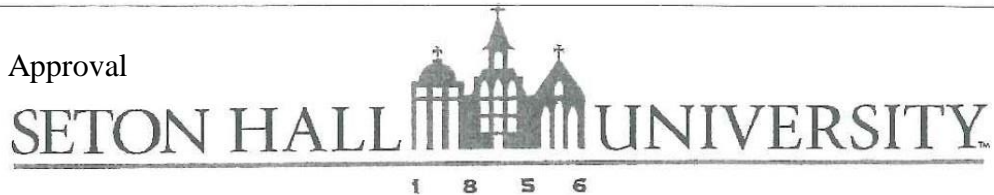
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APPENDIX A IRB Approval



October 31, 2016

Ericka R. Hursey
1648 Congress Road
Eastover, SC 29044

Dear Ms. Hursey,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "The Perceptions of Alternative Education Students Ages 18-21 about the Factors in the Traditional School Setting that Inhabited Their On-Time High School Graduation". Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of these stamped forms.

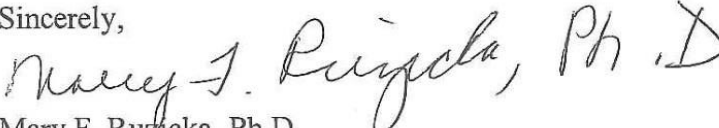
The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,


Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Anthony Colella



Jennifer Coleman, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation
Stevenson Administration Building

July 20, 2016

Dear Mrs. Erika Hursey,

The Research Committee of Richland County School District One has approved your dissertation project regarding "The Perceptions of Alternative Education Students Ages 18-21 about the Factors in the Traditional School Setting that Inhibited Their On-Time High School Graduation" for the duration of the 2016-2017 school year. You may conduct your research at Evening High and Adult Education. This approval is good for one year. You may not conduct your research during testing, both state testing and school end of year exams.

Please maintain the confidentiality of the data and do not make public the name of the district or school. We ask that you provide us with a copy of your completed research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Coleman".

Dr. Jennifer Coleman, Ph.D., Chair
Richland One Research Committee

CC: Dr. Marva Coats, Adult Education
Kerry Abel, Evening High School

Dear Student:

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student in the College of Education at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey.

A major part of my program is to complete a research study. I am very interested in your educational pathway and the many factors that may have affected you while in your homeschool.

This process is expected to take no more than three hours.

The information obtained for this study will be gathered through focus groups, and a one-on-one interview. The focus groups will contain only 3-5 of your peers where we will discuss the schools attended and your experiences in those schools. The one-on-one interview will last no more than an hour. The researcher will ask you questions that will focus on the following areas: educational path, family, school and environmental factors that may have affected your educational path.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If at any time you decide that you do not want to participate you may stop.

You can select a fake or one will be assigned to you. This name will be used during the process. All data collection, analysis and reporting will be coded to protect your privacy.

All data will be stored on a CD or USB drive, which will be locked in a file box.

The information obtained from this research study will remain confidential. You will also be provided a consent form to sign and return to me if you are interested in participating.

Sincerely,

Ericka R. Hursey, Doctoral Student

Seton Hall University

Subject Information

Personal Information

Full Name:

Last

First

M.I.

Address:

Street Address

Apartment #

City

State

ZIP Code

Home Phone:

Alternate
Phone:

Email



By signing below, I agree to participate in the research study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and all information will be kept confidential.

Signature

Date

Alias

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF STUDY: The Perceptions of Alternative Education Students Ages 18-21 about the Factors in the Traditional School Setting that Inhibited Their On-Time High School Graduation

RESEARCHER: Ericka R. Hursey, Student in the Executive Leadership Doctoral (Ed. D.) Program

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to explore how you explain your education.

Procedures

You will take a survey, be a part of a forty-five minute focus group, and an interview. They will take place at school. The interview can be done by phone. If permission is given to be audio taped, it will be done. If not, notes will be taken.

Before the sessions, the study will be explained. You will select a fake name that will be used. The researcher will then ask questions that are related to the study.

Sample survey questions are:

How many elementary schools have you attended?

How many middle schools have you attended?

was the approximate student enrollment at your high school?

What was the total number of students at your high school?

Sample interview questions are:

Please tell me about where you grew up (geographic location) as a child?

Do you feel that growing up in this area had an impact on you in school?

How many schools (elementary, middle, high) have you attended?

What experiences have you had that positively or negatively impacted your views about school?

Do you feel that you were supported at school and/or at home? Why or Why not. Explain.

What personal/family experiences do you feel impacted (affected) your life? Explain how these experiences have impacted your educational pathway

Instruments

The information sheet includes questions about the school attended, family demographics (age, race, income) and your demographic information.

Questions are about the schools attended and your school now. The interview will include structured questions and open questions. The interview questions will focus on the following areas: educational path, family, school and environmental factors that may have affected your educational pathway.

Voluntary Nature

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If at any time you decide that you do not want to participate in this study, you may stop.

Anonymity

You will choose a fake name that will be used. All data and reporting will be labeled to protect privacy.

Confidentiality

All information in this study will be kept private. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that will link you to the study.

Records

A copy of the data will be stored on a CD or USB memory stick in the researchers' office in a locked cabinet. After completion of the study, all records will be locked and stored in a secured cabinet for a minimum of three years. The researcher will be the only person to have access to the cabinet. After the storage time ends, the information will be destroyed.

Risks

There are no expected risks with this study.

Benefits

There are no benefits to you as a participant.

Compensation

This study does not involve any payment.

Contact Information

If the participant has questions as to his/her rights as a participant, he/she can contact Seton Hall University IRB at (973) 313-6314 or email at irb@shu.edu.

At the conclusion of the interview, if the participant has any questions about the research, he/she can contact the Researcher/Doctoral Student Ericka R. Hursey .

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study, and I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this signed and dated Informed Consent will be provided to you.

Agreement to be Audio-Recorded or Not:

Please check your preference about audio recording:

- I agree to be audio recorded.
- I do not agree to be audio recorded.

Participant Name (Print)	Participant Signature	Date
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Question	Focus Area
1. Please tell me about where you grew up (geographic location) as a child?	Environmental Factors
2. Do you feel that growing up in this area had an impact on you in school?	Environmental Factors
3. How many schools (elementary, middle, high) have you attended?	Family Factors
4. What experiences have you had that positively or negatively impacted your views about school?	School Factors
5. Do you feel that you were supported at school and/or at home? Why or Why not. Explain.	School/Family Factors
6. If you were supported, who were the individuals that supported you? If you feel that you were not supported, who were the individuals that you feel didn't support you?	School/Family Factors
7. What personal/family experiences do you feel impacted (affected) your life? Explain how these experiences have impacted your educational pathway?	School/Family Factors Student Factors
8. What role did your parent(s) or your guardian(s) play in your education?	Student/Family Factors
9. Why are you completing your education in a non-traditional educational setting?	School/Family/Environmental Factors
10. Why is this setting proving to be more successful for you?	School Factors
11. What additional traditional school supports do you feel would have been beneficial to you?	School Factors

APPENDIX G

Student Questionnaire

Questions	Response Choices
1. How many elementary schools have you attended?	a. 1-2 b. 3-4 c. 4 or more
2. How many middle schools have you attended?	a. 1-2 b. 3-4 c. 4 or more
3. How many high schools have you attended?	a. 1-2 b. 3-4 c. or more
4. Who were you raised by?	a. Mother b. Father c. Both Mother and Father d. Grandparents e. Other relative f. Foster Parent g. Other
5. Do you currently work or have you previously held a job?	a. Yes b. No
6. While in traditional (regular) school what type grades did you earn?	a. A's-B's b. B's-C's c. C's-D's d. D's-F's e. F's
7. Did you feel your teachers were available to assist (help) you?	a. Yes b. No
8. Do you feel your administration was available to assist you?	a. Yes b. No
9. Do you feel your guidance counselor was available to assist you?	a. Yes b. No
10. What was the approximate student enrollment at your high school? What was the total number of students at your high school?	a. Less than 500 b. Between 500-800 c. Over 800

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Guiding Questions

1. Can you tell me about your educational pathway?
2. What are school-related factors that impacted your decision to attend this school?
3. What is different about this school than your previous school(s)?
4. What are some things that could have been done differently that would have impacted your educational pathway (path)?

APPENDIX I

Focus Group Emonnie, Angel and Nanna

Interviewer: We're going to go ahead and get started. I have Nana, Angel, and Emonie:. My first question is, can you talk to me about your education in the past? What schools did you attend, and how long did you stay at those schools?

Emonie: I can go first?

Interviewer: Who wants to speak first? Okay, Emonie:.

Emonie: My name Emonie:. I went to Private Church School. That's a private school, and I was in kindergarten, and then I went to kindergarten again at Pine Grove. I stayed at Pine Grove until fifth grade, then I went to Middle School 1 Middle School, then I went to..., and I always been all honors classes.

Interviewer: You're honors.

Emonie: I took college courses in high school.

Angel: My name Angel, and I went to Elementary 2, and I went to Elementary 18. I went to daycare. I went to Miss A's daycare at Eastover, and I went to Pine View right there in Columbia, and my middle school, I went to Middle School 2, and for my high school I went to High School 1 and my ninth and tenth grade year, and I went to High School 2 half of my 11th grade year.

Interviewer: Nana, would you like to speak?

Nana: This Nana. I went to Elementary 1. No, I went to Gleams, and then I went with Elementary 1. I stayed at Elementary 1 all my life. I hadn't went to no other school, and then I went to Middle School 1 all my life, all my grades, and then I went to High School 4 my freshman and sophomore year, and then I came back to High School 3 my 11th grade year, and then 11th grade year, I came to Alternative School around Thanksgiving, and then ...

Interviewer: You didn't stay very long?

Nana: No, because I went back to my regular school. I had to get back to my environment. Then I had to stop. No. Then I got kicked out and went to night school, and I just stopped going to school.

Interviewer: You mean you got kicked out and came here, or you went somewhere else?

Nana: I got kicked out and came here, and then when I came here, I just stopped going altogether, and now I'm back.

Interviewer: What do you feel, and anyone can answer this question, what are some of the factors in traditional school that impacted your decision to come here?

Nana: The rules. It's like ...

Female: [crosstalk 00:03:03]

Nana: Once you're used to a certain environment, certain tradition, when somebody come to you and be like, "Be quiet," you're going to look at them like, "You be quiet. You don't tell me what to do. What's wrong with you?"

Emonie: Then they teach you like kids. They got to understand, we is grown up. You can't just be sitting and pointing in my face all day, telling me what to do and what not to do. Teachers take their job too far.

Interviewer: Talk to me about somebody telling you to be quiet, Nana. If you're in class, and the teacher's providing instruction, and she asked you to be quiet, then that's what bothers you?

Nana: No. I'm trying to think. When might somebody [inaudible 00:03:50]. Some teachers, you come in some day and say, "Do now on the board, and I don't want to hear no talking." Well dang, who peed in your coffee this morning? What's your problem, you know? The animosity stuff. Whatever got you upset, don't come to work taking it out on us, because a person like me, I'm going to talk, and I'm going to make you even madder.

Interviewer: You feel that the teachers didn't have that ... What is it that you wanted the teacher to do differently? Or treat you differently? What did you expect differently from the teacher? I'm not saying she was right, I'm just asking, what is it that you wanted. What would have allowed you to have a better relationship with that teacher?

Nana: Attitude.

Interviewer: The teacher attitude. Did your attitude have anything to do with it?

Nana: Afterwards.

Interviewer: What do you mean, "afterwards"?

Nana: Everything is a cause and effect. You act nasty, I act nasty.

Interviewer: Your part of it is, if the teacher is rude to you, you're not going to accept it. You're going to automatically respond.

Nana: I don't know. Depends on what type of mood I'm in.

Interviewer: Depends. Does it depend on the teacher as well?

Nana: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Emonie:, you mentioned, "treating you like ..." I think you said they treat you like children. Yeah. "They treat us like kids."

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Even though you were in honors classes or advanced placement classes, you still felt that you weren't treated as a mature student?

Emonie: Yeah. Even though I was in the classes, that kept me out of trouble, but still, they still [labor 00:05:43] me because of my friends outside of them classes, and the stuff that we got into when I'm outside of them classes, so them classes ain't really matter to them. Them just classes I took. I was just smart. [inaudible 00:05:55].

Interviewer: Why do you think they ... But your behavior didn't necessarily reflect with your friends' behavior.

Emonie: Yeah, because I'm ... I don't know. They said I was a loser. I was the leader of the group. Basically, I tell them to jump, and they jumping all over the school, and then they get in trouble, and they all fall back on me, and then I come here.

Interviewer: They pull you into it.

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Wow. Do you have anything you want to add about what are some of the things that may have gotten you here?

Angel: The company I used to keep.

Interviewer: Association. Talk about the company.

Angel: Shoot, we used to [inaudible 00:06:45] I went to two high schools. When I went to High School 1, everything was straight. My grades was good. I was making the honor roll. I was straight, but when I moved, and I had to go to High School 2, that just was a whole other environment to me. That's a whole school in the city, and knowing that everything right there, I used to just come to school just to meet up with my home girls, and we used to just walk off campus, and be like ... It's just [inaudible 00:07:19].

Interviewer: What is ...

Female: That was with me, too.

Interviewer: Nana, what is your reason? How did you end up here? What was the last thing that happened at your last school?

Nana: I don't know. I ended up here because I just woke up one morning and said, "Forget school. I ain't going to school."

Interviewer: You came on your own?

Nana: Yeah.

Interviewer: You came willingly. How did you end up coming here?

Emonie: Me and a couple of my friends, we high ...

Female: We can get detailed?

Interviewer: Yeah. I'm telling you all. I'll let you all see what I type. It's not going to have your names tied to it.

Emonie: We was high, and ...

Interviewer: You got put out of school for being ...

Emonie: No. We had pulled the fire alarm, and the kids was outside for a good little hour, standing in the rain. We had fun that day, though, but it wasn't no ... I just made a dumb mistake.

Interviewer: You got expelled because of that?

Emonie: Yes.

Interviewer: Wow.

Emonie: Stupidity. You know [inaudible 00:08:28].

Interviewer: What was your reason for finally coming in?

Angel: I got expelled. I got expelled for walking off campus, and police brought me back to school, and they searched me, and I had weed, and I had vodka in my purse, they decided to take me to jail. I stay around the corner from the school, so I told everyone I was going to walk home and go get my mama so they could talk to my mom, and after that, I just never came back to school.

Interviewer: They didn't do hearing board on you or anything?

Angel: No.

Interviewer: [crosstalk 00:09:13].

Angel: I just left.

Nana: You told them you was coming back with your mama and ain't never come back?

Angel: I just left and never came back.

Interviewer: Wow.

Emonie: They had ... when we were at that school, though. I'd get expelled every year.

Interviewer: You got expelled every year?

Emonie: It still say honors list.

Nana: I been getting expelled ever since my eighth grade year.

Emonie: Ever since seventh grade, I've been getting expelled. I got expelled one time seventh grade, two times eighth grade, one time ninth grade, one time tenth grade, and eleventh grade. This my last year of school, and I ain't going to through all that, so I'll just stay here.

Interviewer: What is different about being here than your last school?

Emonie: It's more relaxed.

Nana: But they aggravating. They just as aggravating.

Angel: Ain't nothing different.

Emonie: Less people and less hours in the day.

Nana: Less hours, and it's less of a distraction.

Interviewer: Because it's not as many people?

Emonie: That's what was wrong with me, too, because

Nana: And the classes more at easy.

Angel: And it's the environment. I ain't going to lie. If this school was still on ... then it probably would have been a whole new story. I feel like this school just feel like that because we all the way down here, because that's how I felt when I was going to High School 1, like I was far away from everything.

Interviewer: You think this location helps you focus more?

Emonie: It do, because last year, in high school, I didn't even go a lot. That's why I came back, because I thought I was going to jump again. School used to be fun.

Angel: I like Hershey's. Not Hershey's but...

Emonie: I want some Snickers.

Interviewer: What are some things that could have been done differently? You kind of eluded to the fact about how teachers treat you. Anything else differently? Were there any people in the school that ...

Nana: Me, I could have had a strong mind, and [crosstalk 00:11:03]

Emonie: [crosstalk 00:11:03].

Nana: Yeah.

Emonie: He racist. He came my ninth grade here, and he just took over. Everybody had told me that before, High School 3, it was good. All schools are going to have their ups and downs, but they were saying, but [inaudible 00:11:19], he white, that racist man came to High School 3, he came from some school in [inaudible 00:11:24] trying to change the school. This ain't [inaudible 00:11:27]. He trying to make it like [inaudible 00:11:30]. We walking through the door. It's 7:55. He's, "Where your ID? Where your ID?" All in your face. Stuff like that made me mad. It's already early in the morning. Just be glad I'm here.

Interviewer: What's your ideal school? What should a school look like?

Emonie: High School 5 and High School 6.

Interviewer: Why? What's different about High School 5 and High School 6?

Emonie: Because they take care of them, because them the white communities.

Angel: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nana: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: What you mean, "They take care of them"? It's the same type students.

Female: No.

Emonie: No, they're not. Majority of the ...

Interviewer: They've got students that look like you at High School 5.

Nana: [crosstalk 00:12:01]

Emonie: I know, but majority of them is ...

Interviewer: They do.

Nana: No, they don't.

Emonie: Yes, they do. Black people go to High School 5.

Interviewer: High School 5 almost probably 50/50.

Emonie: But it's in a white community, so they treat them like white kids, regardless. High School 5, they've got open campus.

Nana: High School 3 ain't got no open campus.

Emonie: You think you going to walk out High School 3? You'll expelled for this year, next year ...

Female: Okay.

Angel: At High School 2 it was, too.

Interviewer: They had a open campus?

Angel: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You could walk out and into any door you want to.

Interviewer: But you weren't supposed to.

Angel: You weren't supposed to, but you could.

Emonie: But at High School 5, you can do that.

Interviewer: They used to, High School 5, they let them leave for lunch. That's what she's talking about. They can go for lunch and come back.

Nana: So why we can't do it?

Emonie: That's the thing. They say opportunity is a way for other stuff to happen, and they expect us to ...

Nana: Not to react [crosstalk 00:12:49].

Emonie: This year, this is why I really didn't go back to Columbia High. They took away PM release for seniors. You know all seniors be waiting all four of their years just to leave from school. Why would you talk that away? Just because last years seniors had other people leaving with them, they going to take it out on us. They're not there no more, so now we've got to suffer for what they did.

Angel: But you all done left all that shit, and hang with us.

Interviewer: How was your freshman year? Was your freshman year your best year, or worse?

Nana: My freshman year was good.

Emonie: My freshman year was my best year.

Nana: Good grades.

Angel: [crosstalk 00:13:25]

Emonie: Yeah. I was messing up towards the end.

Interviewer: What got you all of track different?

Nana: I got back to High School 3, got around my friends, my homies,

Emonie: 11th grade, that's why me and Ashley ain't go to school together. They didn't want us to go to high school together. Ashley came to 11th grade. Jamaya going to school at 10 o'clock. Jamaya leaving school 11:30.

Nana: No, Ashley came my supposedly senior year.

Emonie: No. My 11th grade year.

Nana: No.

Female: cracking up.

Nana: Awesome.

Angel: Yeah [inaudible 00:13:54].

Emonie: Nana came my 11th grade year, but that was her 12th grade year, but my 11th grade year, last year, and they didn't ever want us to go to school together, because they already know, because me an Ashley, me and Nana grew up together.

Interviewer: Tell me about you all teachers. You talked about it, but I want to hear more about the teachers. Which teachers do you all feel you were able to get along with, and why?

Emonie: My best teacher was Ms. Imman and the ISS teacher, because they was my dogs.

Interviewer: The ISS teacher?

Emonie: Yeah.

Angel: Ms. M was my favorite teacher at ..

Emonie: Ms. Carter, because I been there so much, so that was like home.

Angel: ... and Mr. Sanders

Interviewer: Outside of the ISS ... Okay, why did you all like the ISS person?

Angel: Because they help you out. They understand.

Nana: There's something about the ISS person. They're like a counselor. They understand.

Interviewer: That's what I want to hear.

Emonie: When you get in trouble, they come back, they talk to you, and then tell you

Nana: ...my favorite teacher, my favorite person was the principal, to be honest.

Emonie: My favorite teacher was Ms. Imma. You know Ms. Imma? Dr. Imma?

Interviewer: The ISS supervisors took the time to talk to you, find out what was going on?

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: A listening ear, and so the teachers didn't always ...

Emonie: They know. ..., she used to even say they used to be treating us bad. This High School 3 just ... I don't know.

Interviewer: But the teachers didn't have time to do it? They didn't take time to do it or they didn't want to do it? What do you feel?

Emonie: What?

Interviewer: Why the teachers didn't listen to you.

Emonie: Because they ...

Nana: They retarded.

Emonie: Nowadays, the generation that they become ... Teachers being so young, and they have the mindset, "I'm just coming here to get a check. They learn, they don't. If they do, they do." They don't care. If we catch it, we catch it. If we don't, they don't worry about it. They got [things to do 00:15:36].

Female: I'm sorry.

Interviewer: You think the age of the teacher has something to do with it?

Emonie: Yeah, because ... That's why I like Ms. Imma. She's this old lady. They care. Old school, you care. Them young teachers, they don't care. They try to [crosstalk 00:15:51].

Nana: My favorite teacher was Coach Newman.

Interviewer: Was he an older or a younger person.

Nana: He was older. ... my dog. "Hey, Coach N, I'm here today." "All right [inaudible 00:16:00]"

Interviewer: Would you say Ms. Miff listened to you?

Nana: I love Coach N.

Angel: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Do you consider her a older person, or younger?

Angel: Yeah, she a church lady.

Nana: Yep, Coach Newman was a church man.

Angel: Mr. Sanders, he was a old dude, but he acted like us, though. He was cool.

Interviewer: Do you all think those people could have still been cool with you all, and you all learn from them? Which teacher ... Give me a content area teacher that you thought you could get along with, like a math, English, science, or social studies.

Nana: Coach Newman was my history teacher.

Interviewer: He was your history teacher?

Emonie: Yeah. Ms. Imman was my English teacher. She was my dog. We didn't like each other at first, but once we got to know each other. .

Interviewer: Let's talk about guidance counselors real quick. Did you all have a relationship?

Emonie: They don't care. They don't call you in the office. They don't want to see you. I didn't know how many credits I had at High School 3. I don't even know how many credits I got now. All I know is ...

Angel: they don't care.

Emonie: [inaudible 00:17:01] they don't teach you nothing.

Angel: They walk around trying to

Emonie: Then they don't try to help you. We supposed to be ... Seeing us try to go to college. They ain't never called us in the office to help us with college. We got to do all this stuff on our own.

Interviewer: Did you feel your counselors ... You had the same guidance counselors.

Nana: .

Interviewer: He helped you?

Nana: Honestly, I [crosstalk 00:17:28].

Emonie:

Nana: Yeah.

Emonie: They never see us.

Nana: They concentrate on the seniors. They try their best to get you out of there.

Interviewer: Did you feel your counselors helped you?

Angel: No.

Interviewer: What about the administrators?

Angel: No.

Emonie: No. They didn't even want me there.

Angel: .

Emonie: Every chance they got.

Interviewer: She said her administrator, she liked her administrator, though.

Nana: Ms. Carles? Yeah. Ms. Carles my dog, but and ...

Emonie: Harrison, the one that can suspend you.

Nana: Harrison, he was pretty cool.

Emonie: Harry had his days, but when they made it hard. He trying to take over.

Nana: I like Cruz, too. Cruz, he was a cool officer, because when I got caught with a little weed, he didn't take me to jail. He just wrote me a little ticket and sent me home.

Emonie: Yeah, because they could have locked me up for that fire drill. You know how they had to pay for the fire trucks to come out there.

Nana: I like Cruz. Yeah. Cruz my dog.

Emonie: I didn't know it was that serious.

Interviewer: Those were the main four things that I wanted to talk about in the focus group, and then the individual interviews, I have some more questions, and I want to do those one-on-one, not as a group, and if somebody wants to stay back now, I can go ahead and knock out one of the interviews now, or we can come back one day next week and do it.

Nana: Let's come back.

Angel: Yeah. One day next week.

Interviewer: That's fine, or later this week.

Emonie: So we can see you again.

Interviewer: Yeah. I'll be back.

Girls Individual (Angel, Emonie, Nana)

Interviewer: All right. I'm here doing ... We were gonna do individual interviews, but these ladies would like to speak together. I have Amani, Angel, and Nana. Talk to me, y'all, about where you grew up geographically. Where in Columbia you grew up and whether or not you feel that that had any impact on you in school.

Emonie: Okay, my name Amani. I grew up on that river side, get it in! So yeah. But that had a lot of impact on me. I was born in the trap house, that's it. That made me in trouble. I'm not a rapper, I'm a.... But yeah, that got a lot of impact on me, though. With the people I was around. They influenced my life, you know?

Interviewer: How's that?

Emonie: Because. You know you be like, "Oh, I want to do what they do." So I do what they do. And now I'm in the predicament I'm in.

Interviewer: So the side of town that you lived on and the people you were around had something to do with your schooling.

Emonie: Yeah. Because what you do at home you gonna take it to school. That's how you act at home, that's how you act at school. So I act a fool at home, I act a fool at school.

Nana: Hey. I'm Nana. And I grew up on Broad River. Once again.... river side.

Angel: Neighbor neighbors.

Nana: Neighbor neighbor. Let me think. No, my side of town didn't have an impact on me. It was really me, and what did I want to do. I'm just a strong minded person. If I see something and I like it and I like doing it, I'm gonna do it. That's it, I guess. I don't know.

Angel: Hello, my name is Angel. I grew up on Bluff Road, Four Eight, down that road. But I moved to the city and everything just went downhill.

Interviewer: So tell us why being in the city was not good.

Angel: Because when I was staying down the road over there, down the road it's not so much you can do with like you can do in the city. Like when I was going to High School 1, High School 1 was a gated school. It weren't no going off campus whenever you felt like it. It weren't no walking outside, walking to your best

friend house when you was tired of class. It weren't none of that, because yeah, they had us gated in there. Ain't nobody was going nowhere.

But when I moved to ABC court, like five years ago, everything just went downhill, you know? Went to High School 2. Started smoking weed. Started skipping class. Walking off campus, coming back when I feel like it. Stuff like that. You know?

Interviewer: How did your neighborhood have anything to do with that, though?

Angel: They had some place for me to go when I didn't want to be at school.

Emonie: Right.

Angel: That was somewhere to go.

Emonie: People in my neighborhood-

Nana: Don't want to go to school, go to ... Cut.

Interviewer: So some of those experiences. Talk about how they were positive. It's positive because you all are back here in school, finishing. But along the way, how did some of those experiences positively impact you or negatively impact you? That you had while in traditional school?

Emonie: What.

Interviewer: The experiences that you had.

Emonie: Possibly it happened because ... I always been smart, so I used to brag about I ain't gonna lie, I'm the smartest person in the hood. I used to brag. That's why I'm over there. They all in the regular classes and I'm the only person on the honor list. So I used to brag about it. But that negatively impact me, because if I'm smart why I'm hanging around here for? Dumb people make dumb decisions. And look at me.

Interviewer: So you said you were the smartest person in the hood.

Emonie: Yeah. For real. You ask Ms. Sims. Ms. Sims know that why they really didn't want to keep me. I could have been back in that school, with all those classes. So you know they look at it, too.

Interviewer: What are some of your positive experiences Angel? What were some of the positive experiences that you had?

Angel: Nothing, really.

Interviewer: You wouldn't say anything you had were positive?

Angel: What you mean?

Interviewer: Your views about school. Did you have any positive views on school?

Angel: When I was going to High School 1, yeah. But when I was going High School 2, no.

Interviewer: What was positive about High School 1?

Angel: I mean a lot. I was thinking about going into the Air Force. I was making honor roll. All that. I'm going to my classes. But at High School 2 just stopped caring.

Interviewer: And it was because of a change in location that made you stop caring, or did something else in your life change?

Angel: It's just a change in my environment. A change in my life, yeah.

Emonie: Your freedom you're gonna take advantage of it.

Nana: My first few years was good. And then it got bad at High School 3.

Emonie: That's how it was with me too. I used to be a good student. I ain't gonna lie. I used to get in trouble, but I used to be good. I got the car, I didn't know how to stay in school. I got the keys in my Middle School 7, got to go somewhere. Just got to leave school. drive the car to school. But when you have the car for the night, we're going somewhere.

Interviewer: So you mention your mom. Do you feel that they supported you through school? Who do you feel was your support system in school?

Emonie: The money. They paid me. My granddady pay me, and my mom would pay me. They'd pay me 50 dollars for a A, 40 dollars for a B. I liked money, so ... I mean I ain't no dumb girl. I catch stuff ... but I always had all A's and B's. Because I'm getting paid for it.

Interviewer: So they were your support system.

Emonie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who else? Your mom, your granddad ...

Emonie: That's it.

Interviewer: That's it. Angel, who was your support system?

Angel: Myself.

Interviewer: So you don't feel that any of your family supported you?

Angel: No.

Interviewer: Nana, who was your support system?

Nana: I had a good support system.

Interviewer: Who were they?

Nana: I don't know. I guess school was ... They motivate me to go to school.

Interviewer: Your mom?

Nana: Mm-hmm (affirmative). But I really don't have a support system. I don't like school. To be honest I just want to pay for my GED. I'm just saying. You know?

Interviewer: What is it that you don't like about school?

Nana: I don't know. The thought of coming here every day. The fact that I ain't got nothing but one class done. That's aggravating. I'm just tired of school.

Interviewer: Did you feel anybody in your regular school supported you?

Nana: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Who?

Nana: Ms. Sims.

Interviewer: Your principal. How did she support you?

Emonie: She used to pay us to come to school on time.

Nana: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emonie: We used to be so late that the fact that she buy us lunch just to be there at 8:00.

Interviewer: Did it work?

Emonie: Yeah.

Nana: It did.

Interviewer: So she would bring y'all lunch every day that y'all on time.

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Buy us lunch.

Interviewer: In the cafeteria. Angel, do you feel anybody at school supported you? Angel. Did you have any supports at school?

Angel: High school?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Angel: No.

Interviewer: No. Okay. Any family experiences you feel impacted, affected you in school?

Nana: No. Mom being aggravating. Crazy.

Interviewer: Was that for the better, or for worse?

Nana: I mean it's for the better, but you gotta understand. You can't push somebody. They say you could lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink. I'm just a strong minded person. Okay? You can't make me do something I don't want to do. If I don't want to go to school, you don't have to make me go to school. I'm not going to school. That's just how I am. If I say I'm not gonna do something, I'm not gonna do something. I mean it.

Interviewer: Even though she was there trying to push you, do you feel that you rebelled?

Nana: That's just who I am.

Interviewer: So what if she hadn't forced you to go to school? Then what would you have done?

Nana: Probably ... I don't know. In the beginning, probably just let it go by. But maybe if somebody wasn't so pushy of it, I'd probably have a more of a better drive to come back.

Interviewer: I understand. I've heard that before.

Nana: But people's all, "Go to school, go to school, go to school!" That shit just - Oh! I'm sorry. It just make me ... No. You can't make me do something I don't want to do. And then it's like everybody got their own options and outcomes. I just feel like the things I want to do don't require a high school diploma.

Interviewer: And what's that?

Nana: Cosmetology.

Interviewer: But don't you have to have that to get ... Well, you can get your GED and go to cosmetology school. But you have to have some sort of secondary completion.

Emonie: They don't really require a high school diploma. Just the more education you get the more money you'll make it your field. For real. And I need more money. You can do anything.

Interviewer: What about your parents? What role did your parents play, Amani, in your education?

Emonie: My mom as old as dirt. So the stuff we learned in school, they don't know nothing about.

Nana: Yeah, that's true.

Emonie: They can't help me. That's why I do everything on my own. I don't need no help.

Interviewer: I mean supporting you, like motivating you to go to school, supplying you with the clothes you need to go to school, reminding you to get up and go to school, did she support you in that manner?

Emonie: Duh. I mean, they gotta wake you up. You laying up in the house, you get up outta bet 6:00 on the dot. You got to go someway. Mom used to wake me up.

She'd buy me stuff. Buy me what I need for school. That's what she'd do. We getting grown, now.

Interviewer: You grown now, but I'm saying like ninth grade, tenth grade year.

Emonie: Oh yeah, my mom always made sure I had what I need. I'm spoiled. I'm an only child, so I get what I want.

Interviewer: You the only child?

Emonie: My mom only child. My dad has other children.

Interviewer: But you grew up in the house with your mom.

Emonie: Yeah.

Interviewer: You circled mom and father because he was a part of your life, he helped raise you?

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Okay. Angel. Did you grow up with your mom?

Angel: Yeah, I grew up with my mom and my dad but my daddy had got taken out of my life when I was eight years old.

Interviewer: Do you feel that that had ... Did that have an effect?

Angel: That had a negative impact on my life, because my daddy was really ...by this school situation. And if my daddy was home I probably wouldn't even be here at my night school, or even hang around with because my daddy ain't play that. Smoking weed. So basically everything just went downhill when my daddy went to jail.

Interviewer: Do you communicate with him?

Angel: No.

Interviewer: No.

Angel: I don't communicate with my dad's side of the family.

Nana: Did your dad come home?

Angel: No.

Interviewer: Do you go visit?

Angel: No. I don't know about none of that, because I don't communicate with my dad's side of the family. They don't communicate with me. The only time I hear from him when they hear stuff about him. The only time I hear from him.

Interviewer: Nana, is there anything in your life that happened that you feel may have affected you in school?

Nana: I don't know.

Interviewer: When did you begin to have your dislike for school? Around what age?

Nana: Like 15, 16.

Interviewer: So that was right in high school. Happened ninth grade. What was it about the ninth grade year that was challenging?

Nana: It wasn't challenging, it was just ... I don't know what made me dislike school. Really just being in and out of school, and being out for so long, once you get accustomed to something you just be like, "Nah, I'd rather not go."

Interviewer: Why would you be out for a long time?

Nana: Being expelled.

Interviewer: Oh. Okay. I think we kind of talked about that earlier when you mentioned going to the hearing board. How many, between the three of y'all ... My next question was why are you here? Is it a choice to be here? Did you choose not to go back to regular school?

Emonie: Yeah. This year.

Interviewer: So Amani, you had a choice.

Emonie: This year. But last year I got kicked out of ... I was like ... I got kicked out of school every year since seventh grade. So I'm like, you know, this is my last year.. stay where I'm at, because I was good here. Since October last year, I ain't got no

referrals. You know at school, you know how we all getting referrals. So I'm just gonna stay here.

Interviewer: But you could have gone back to your regular school if you wanted to?

Emonie: No.

Interviewer: No.

Emonie: Not really. I could have went to another school, but I can't go back to my school.

Interviewer: Okay. Nana, is it your choice to be here, or this is where you're here because of the hearing board?

Nana: It's my choice.

Interviewer: It's your choice. So you could have gone back to High School 3?

Nana: To be honest, I was considered a senior at High School 3. Then, you know. The only senior that's there. So it's kind of like I could go back, but I don't know.

Interviewer: Angel, would you maybe go back to your regular school?

Angel: Yeah, but I ain't want to go back.

Interviewer: So y'all didn't want to go back, so you choose to be here somewhat. Why is this being more successful? Why are you being more successful here in...

Emonie: It's more laid back. The teachers at regular school, they do too much. But here they treat ... They gotta understand, we not children. I'm not your child. They can at least give us some respect. Treat us like we ... People want to disrespect teachers so much, they treat us like we our age. They can't make them talk to us any kind of way. We grown up now.

Interviewer: Okay. Angel, why is this one more successful for you being here?

Angel: Because it's less people here. I focus more when there's not a lot of people around me.

Interviewer: Okay. And Nana?

Nana: I look at it as an easier way. Other than sitting in class, not knowing what's going on. Sometimes it's like, I connect with the teacher and I know what's going on in class. Sometimes I don't. And I just sit there. So then a whole lesson be done bypass me. And then ... I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything regular school could have done differently that might have been beneficial to you to keep you there?

Emonie: Given me some more freedom.

Interviewer: Some more freedom?

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: In what sense?

Emonie: They be all up on me. They do too much. It's not like that. They don't be all up in my face. And then they ...

Nana: They treat you like.... Once you get into something, that's it.

Interviewer: Treat you like what?

Emonie: Basically, it's ... I ain't even gonna say they racist, but it's like they ... I don't know, like for instance ...

Nana: Yeah, like ...

Emonie: Ninth grade, for instance, once you get into something ... Ninth grade, I had 55 referrals. Out of all the kids, I had 55 referrals myself in the whole school year. So from day on, you know, basically your first year out of school, that's how they ... The judge you. Ever since then, ever since stuff happen, they always point me out. Because you know, I'm the bad one. I got the most referrals, stuff like that.

I don't even care about trouble. Trouble don't scare me, so I take the blame for everything. Just like when I pulled the fire alarm. That's how I got sent here last year.

Interviewer: Anything traditional school could have done differently to help you? No? How about you Angel? No? What's your ultimate goal? Nana, you said you want to be a cosmetologist, is that right? You want to own your own salon? You do? Angel, what's your ultimate goal?

Angel: Hm?

Interviewer: What's your ultimate goal?

Angel: Ultimate goal for what?

Interviewer: Once you get your high school diploma.

Angel: Get me a good paying job.

Interviewer: Doing what?

Angel: I don't know.

Interviewer: You hadn't thought about what you want to be?

Angel: I really want to be a model.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Angel: But I don't know. I need somebody to pay me good money.

Interviewer: Amani, what's your goal?

Emonie: I want to be a teacher.

Interviewer: Really?

Emonie: Uh huh.

Interviewer: What subject?

Emonie: Math.

Interviewer: Math.

Emonie: Or I might be a early childhood teacher.

Nana: Yeah, that's what I said. Once I graduate I want to do something, go into ... early childhood development. Just something to fall back on.

Interviewer: Nana, you're the only child?

Nana: Uh-uh.

Interviewer: Where do you fall in the group?

Nana: On my mom's side I'm the baby. On my daddy's side I'm his second oldest.

Interviewer: So you that baby of how many on your mom's side?

Nana: Three.

Interviewer: Three? So you have two older siblings. Wow.

Nana: Two older brothers. And then on my daddy's side I got a older brother a little sister and a little brother.

Interviewer: Two older brothers on your mom's side, and then on your dad's side what do you have?

Nana: A older brother, a little sister, and a little brother.

Interviewer: So they're younger than you?

Nana: Hm?

Interviewer: They're younger than you?

Nana: Who?

Interviewer: On your dad's side. The siblings.

Nana: The sister and a brother. But the older brother is older than me.

Interviewer: And Amani, you the only child.

Emonie: My mom's side.

Interviewer: You want to talk about your dad's side? You don't have to.

Emonie: My dad, I got two older brothers.

Interviewer: They're older than you?

Emonie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Angel: I'm the second oldest. My big sister's the oldest and I got two little brothers.

Nana: On your momma and daddy side?

Angel: Huh?

Nana: On your momma and daddy side?

Angel: On my daddy's side I got a big sister and I got a baby brother. And on my mom's side I just got one little brother. But then, you know, another little brother and a sister. But me and one of my brothers got different daddies. But me and my sister and my other brother got the same daddy.

Interviewer: You got me confused.

Emonie: So you got a brother?

Angel: There's three of us that got the same daddy and one of us that doesn't.

Interviewer: That doesn't matter. I don't care about that. Because me and my sisters don't have the same daddy. But from your mom you have a older sister, she's deceased? Okay.

Angel: And I got two little brothers.

Interviewer: And then two little brothers from your mom. Okay. And then from your dad you have ...

Angel: A little brother and an older sister.

Interviewer: A brother and a sister. So you're the oldest in your house with your two younger brothers. Are they much younger than you?

Angel: One's 17 and one's 15.

Interviewer: What high school?

Angel: The 17 year old one go here, he go to Alternative School. And the one that's 15, he go to high school.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. None of y'all really mentioned grandparents. Did any of you grow up with your grandparents?

Angel: Yeah.

Emonie: Yeah. Not my grandma. My grandma-

Nana: Praying grandma. I got a praying grandma.

Angel: Mine is too. She aggravating.

Nana: Aggravating.

Emonie: She don't even like me. She want my mom- My granddaddy rich. He not rich, but he got money. She just want to steal all our money. I'm tired of her trying to take all of my granddaddy's 'cause he old. That's our money. That's our land. She ain't work on that farm, my granddaddy did. So no. She just want to get her nails done, get her hair done, buy a 72 inch TV with our money. That's our money. My granddad money. But she had to have it, so you know.

Interviewer: So he remarried?

Emonie: Yeah, he remarried. But ...She just buy stuff. My granddad 80- something years old, and he got a galaxy S6.

Nana:

Emonie: He don't even know how to work a phone. He done just wasted money.

Angel: She must be younger than him.

Emonie: Yeah, she's like 40-something.

Interviewer: Young.

Emonie: She's like 48. But, you know. She old. She just steal all our money. She don't like us because I tell it how it is. I don't care.

Interviewer: Anything else y'all want to share about school?

Emonie: Any what?

Interviewer: Anything else you want to share about school?

Emonie: Don't smoke weed. That'll fuck up your whole education.

Nana: Honey.

Emonie: For real. If I could go to the elementary school and tell the kids one thing, you better -

Nana: Believe in DARE.

Emonie: Believe in DARE.

Nana: Believe in DARE.

Emonie: Them drugs ain't what it is, I'm telling y'all.

Nana: For real.

Emonie: I started smoking weed in like 11th grade, and I swear to god. You could ask me what I did yesterday and I just, "Uhhh ..."

Nana: I got no idea.

Emonie: What did I do yesterday?

Nana: You don't know what.

Interviewer: But how did y'all get caught up in drugs? I mean smoking marijuana? It's a drug, but I don't see it as like a drug drug.

Nana: Let me tell you my story. Let me tell you how I started. I ain't gonna lie, I was like eight years old. Did I tell you? You know how you got older cousins, you know. You got older cousins. So me and my cousin Christian...we used to go get the little roaches out the ashtray, and blow 'em ... No. What really happened is it started off with paper. You know, there's levels to it.

Emonie: Grass.

Nana: Take a little paper and grass

Emonie: Me and Asher, we smoking construction paper, sitting in the car. That's how we knew we was gonna be riding together. We got our kids in the back. The little teddy bears.

Nana: Teddy bears!

Emonie: We sitting in my momma old car cussing. "Sit your ass down!" Smoking the paper.

Nana: Yes.

Emonie: That's what we do now, be in the car just smoking weed. Be in the car ain't going nowhere.

Interviewer: You were eight years old?

Emonie: We was young.

Nana: Young.

Emonie: Six. Man, like in the car. Sitting in the car.

Nana: Doing stuff.

Emonie: The windows up. We sitting in the car smashed. High up on some grass. We high.

Nana: We high.

Emonie: We about to fall out. We dizzy as hell.

Interviewer: And y'all remember that.

Emonie: We used to

Interviewer: Wow.

Nana: That's crazy. That's what I said ...just the other day. It used to be ...you're staying at, now it's, "Oh bitch, what club are you going to tonight?" That's crazy.

Interviewer: What are y'all gonna do to keep each other together so you can finish? That's the big question.

Emonie: ...

Nana: That's crazy. And my day does not go good if I don't smoke.

Emonie: That's the thing. I don't know why weed take over your life.

Nana: It take over for real.

Emonie: And you look at it ... After you smoke weed for a while and you go with your friends, you like, "What am I here for? We ain't smoking."

Nana: Yeah.

Emonie: You can go to your friend's house, have a good time, play. You go to that friend house now, you like, "There's no blunt?" You go home!

Nana: You got no snacks, you won't see me. Blunt, snacks, and cable.

Interviewer: Okay, so what are y'all gonna do to ween y'all selves off?

Emonie: I don't know. I don't smoke weed I think I be....

Nana: It keeps you sane.

Emonie: You don't think about life. You know, you be ... When you ain't high, everything going through your head. What I'm gonna do next, what I'm gonna do about this, what I'm gonna do about this? When you high you just mellow. I was high when I came here. High as a fool. This man gonna tell me, "Go home." If I wasn't coming here high, if I wasn't high, I would have cussed ... out. Like no thought. Like "What do you mean go home?" You know, something like that. But I was high, so I just turned around and I thought about it. Did he really just tell me to go home? And we turned back around and came back in the building.

Interviewer: Do your parents know?

Angel: Know that we smoke weed?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Angel: Hell yeah.

Emonie: We grown.

Interviewer: I know y'all are grown, but y'all still live in their houses.

Nana: Okay, and?

Emonie: I smoke a blunt on your porch. Why can you tell me I'm.

Nana: Okay, what's the difference?

Emonie: What, you want a hit?

Nana: She might want a cigarette.

Emonie: Gimme some of them cigarettes. We smoke it all.

Interviewer: That's an expensive habit.

Nana: It is. It's serious business.

Emonie: Oh hell yeah. I swear to god.

Nana: Get paid.

Emonie: I use ... Ask Asher. All my life, everything I like. I used to every shoe they have. The come out. Every shoe. Every shoe. I start smoking weed, I'm like, "Quarter or the shoe? Quarter or the shoe? Quarter or the shoe? Am I gonna get a quarter or the shoe?" I need this quarter. Ain't got no shoes.

Interviewer: Do you work?

Emonie: No.

Interviewer: Do you work? Do you work, Angel?

Angel: Nope.

Emonie: I got a job ... I gotta go to a interview right now

Interviewer: Tonight?

Nana: Yeah.

Emonie: ...

Interviewer: That's a busy McDonald's.

Emonie: Hell yeah.

Interviewer: But y'all can't go in there all of y'all together, laughing, giggling. You gotta go in and be serious.

Emonie: This ain't my first job.

Interviewer: I'm just saying.

Nana: I had worked at McDonald's before.

Emonie: I'm a whole nother person. I can be two people.

Interviewer: Okay. Because you're very intelligent.

Emonie: Unless you piss me off, them I'm good. Once you make me mad ...

Interviewer: You're very intelligent.

Emonie: You better think about ...I'm gonna say something.

Focus Group with Indy, Baby Girl and Lil Sin

Interviewer: This is session 2. I have Baby Girl, Lil Sin, and Indy. We're ready to get started. I'll start with Baby Girl. I'll let her talk first. Tell me about your educational pathway, some of the schools that you attended, anything you want to share.

We're going to revert to Indy, let Indy go first. Talk to me about your education.

Indy: What you want to know? What you want to know first?

Interviewer: About your schools, like where did you go to elementary school, middle school.

Indy: Elementary, I went to AC Moore, Saluda River, BC Number One, and that's it.

Interviewer: What about middle school?

Indy: In middle school, I went to Middle School 7, and then sixth grade I went to Middle School 7. You want me to tell you about everything?

Interviewer: Yes. Just talk about it.

Indy: I got kicked out of that school.

Interviewer: You got kicked out of middle school?

Indy: I got expelled.

Interviewer: Okay. You want to talk about that?

Indy: Fighting.

Interviewer: Fighting. Okay.

Indy: I was doing everything, unnecessary referrals. Then seventh grade, I started going to a Christian school. It was like a private school. Then I started being home schooled, I got kicked out of that school, too.

Lil Sin: Out your home?

Indy: No. I got kicked out of that ... It was a private school.

Lil Sin: Oh. I thought you said you was at home school.

Interviewer: You got kicked out of the private school?

Indy: Yes. At first, they just let me sit in the principal's office, and do my work, but they said they had to let me go. From there, I went to Middle School 8 School, and I got kicked out of there. Then I started going to an alternative school.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Indy: It was named Alternative School 2, but I think they got a new name now.

Interviewer: In Lexington?

Indy: Yes. They named Par now, but they used to be in Cacy.

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: I stayed there through eighth grade, and I finally finished my middle school off there, and then high school I started going to High School 7, they called it ** for short. I didn't get kicked out of there. I did good, I finished a whole year there, but I was not doing my work there, so I started going to High School 6, tenth grade. That was supposed to be my tenth grade year, but I was a transfer student, so they set me back, so it was my ninth grade year again, at High School 6. That's the only high school I ever been to other than here.

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: No, I went to the career center.

Interviewer: The career center?

Indy: Yes.

Interviewer: Lil Sin, you want to talk to us about your schools?

Baby Girl: I'm ready.

Lil Sin: Oh, yes. I'll talk, too.

Baby Girl: Then hurry up.

Interviewer: You answered the questions. Go ahead, Sinclair. You can talk to us.

Lil Sin: Elementary school, I went to Elementary 12, got kicked out in second grade for fighting, and then they sent me to Elementary 13.

Interviewer: They sent you, or you moved?

Lil Sin: My mama moved.

Interviewer: Okay.

Lil Sin: I went to Elementary 13, my third and fourth grade year. Then my fifth grade year, I finally got to go back to Elementary 12. It was straight. Middle school, I went to Middle School 7. I didn't really get into no trouble like that at Middle School 7. Then high school, I went to High School 6 my ninth and tenth grade year, got kicked out, I got expelled, and they put me on probation for two years, so I cannot go to a school in District **.

Interviewer: Wow.

Lil Sin: Yes. I did some stupid junk. When they kicked me out of District, me and my mama had moved to District ***, so I went to High School 7, my eleventh grade year. When I went to Ridge View, though, like that was a whole new ballgame. Everybody over there on some preppy stuff over there, like it's way different from District **. I went over there, I really had fun.

Interviewer: Did you get in trouble over there?

Lil Sin: Yes, but it wasn't really all that. It wasn't really that much trouble. Then last year I had got my probation was up, so they said I could come back to District **. I came back, I went to High School 6 for like six days, and then I messed around and had got into a ruckus outside of school, but somehow it came back to school, so they said I cannot go to that school no more, and then they sent me here. When they sent me here, I only came like five days, and then I just stopped coming.

Interviewer: You just stopped coming, so what brought you back?

Lil Sin: I went to jail, now I got on probation, and they said this was how I complete my probation, get a high school diploma.

Interviewer: But that's important to have, right?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Baby Girl, do you want to talk about your pathway?

Lil Sin: Come on, Baby Girl.

Baby Girl: I only went to one elementary school, and one middle school, and that's Elementary 3, and Middle School 2. Elementary school, I didn't really get in trouble, I guess. Like I was good up until probably like third grade, and then I started getting into it with my teachers, and stuff like that. I didn't really like when people told me what to do because I thought I was grown. When I got in fourth grade and fifth grade, I was passing, like getting good grades and stuff like that, but I was always in ISS and stuff like that. When I got in middle school, it got worse. I got expelled in sixth grade because I came to school with a knife because I wanted to cut this girl, and I got sent to Alternative School. They let me go back for my seventh grade year, and my eighth grade year. My eighth grade year was good, I didn't really get in any trouble. My seventh grade year, it was straight, I didn't get in no trouble.

Then when I got in high school, my ninth grade year, I didn't really like my ninth grade year. I didn't really like being at High School 1, but I didn't get in that much trouble. I was skipping class, and stuff like that. I had bad grades and stuff because I didn't really want to go. That's when I started doing illegal things, and I got in some trouble for that, but I didn't get kicked out or anything. My tenth grade year, that's when I got kicked out. I got kicked out on a delayed start. I came to school under the influence with another female, but the thing was the principal and my teacher, she didn't know I was under the influence until the female that I was with mentioned my name in the situation, or whatever, so we both got expelled that year. I came back to Alternative School, I got expelled from Alternative School because I got into it with a teacher here, and that's when I went to a military school.

I didn't really last at the military school. I had probably three months left there. It was at YCA. I could have finished, but ...

Interviewer: What's YCA?

Baby Girl: Youth Challenge Academy, in Leesburg. I could have finished, but I got in an altercation with another student, and they felt threatened by me. I threw a lock at her head, or whatever. That's it.

Lil Sin: Baby Girl, you thuggin'.

Interviewer: What are some of the things that impacted your decision to come here? You kind of ... All you all kind of mentioned it.

Baby Girl: I wanted to come, yes, because I didn't really want to go to the military school, but I wanted to go ahead and finish school, whatever, get it out the way. I don't really like school, but I know ...

Indy: Me either.

Baby Girl: I want to have an education, I want to have my high school diploma. That's something I need. The military school was GED based. I have half of my GED, but I came here to get my high school diploma. I mean I know I'm probably not going to graduate as soon as I want to, but at least I can.

Interviewer: What's different about being here, than regular school?

Baby Girl: I wanted to come here.

Indy: This the only thing that change my life around because you seen my friends group.

Baby Girl: There's too many people.

Lil Sin: It's too much commotion going on. It's always something everyday.

Indy: It's better here. You more focused here, because like there ain't a lot of students.

Lil Sin: There ain't a whole bunch of people in your class, and the teacher can really focus on what you ...

Indy: And we don't have homework. You got to do your work here, so it ain't like you can be like, "Well, I didn't do my work because I lost it," or something.

Interviewer: Someone mentioned in the other session about being in this location you're more focused than you were downtown.

Baby Girl: Probably because I know so many people that lives in my area, and when I be in the classroom with my friends and stuff like that, I know I'm not going to do my work. When I get here, I know these people, but it's like they need to get they stuff done just like me, so they going to play around with you, and stuff like that, but at the end of the day they getting their work done.

Indy: I ain't got time.

Interviewer: Do you all think this location was better for you?

Baby Girl: I haven't been down there.

Interviewer: You haven't been down there. Were you at the other location?

Indy: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think it's better here? Are you more focused here?

Indy: It was the same. I'm talking about the school, period. This school, period, is like ...

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: I mean I liked the other school better because it's ...

Lil Sin: It's closer.

Indy: It's closer. This so far out, but it's the same environment.

Interviewer: What are some things that could have been done differently, that could have kept you in regular school?

Baby Girl: My mouth.

Interviewer: Your mouth?

Baby Girl: Yes. I'm very quick with it.

Interviewer: When you say your mouth, you feel ... Elaborate. This is Baby Girl talking. Elaborate on when you say 'your mouth'.

Baby Girl: Basically, I don't know. When teachers ... I don't know how to explain it.

Interviewer: Help her out.

Indy: You smart mouth.

Baby Girl: Yes.

Lil Sin: Yes. Teachers will try to talk to you like you were a little child or something. "Hold up, I'm a grown person, bro. You feel?"

Interviewer: What did that make you feel, how did that make you feel?

Lil Sin: Oh, oh, no, no. I ain't going to lie. I ain't even one of those students that's with all that, all that little like talking loud to me, and all that, because my mama don't even yell at me like that. I don't be with that.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel? What do you do when that happens?

Lil Sin: A teacher yelled at me, this happened when I was in like eleventh grade. For some reason, everybody like me for some reason because I guess I'm funny or something, but all that yelling, no, I ain't with that. In eleventh grade, a teacher messed around and yelled at me, and I messed around and booked on him, but ever since that day, though, me and that teacher been cool.

Interviewer: When she yelled at you, she didn't yell at you out of hate ...

Lil Sin: It was a he.

Interviewer: It was a he? Why did he yell at you?

Lil Sin: I think it was something about me and my homeboys been talking or something, and I guess he got tired of it because he real live, like, "Man, you all need to ..." He been cussing, and all. I ain't with all that. I messed around, and stood back up, and cussed him back out. Then he just left it at that.

Interviewer: Brianna, you wanted to add something?

Baby Girl: No.

Interviewer: Did you want to add something about how teachers talked to you, because that was my next question, how did you feel the teachers treated you, or it's what the teachers did impacted you being here? Is it something that they could have done differently?

Baby Girl: I showed out with all my teachers.

Interviewer: Why, though? You had different teachers. You're the same person.

Indy: I feel like they try to talk to you like you slow sometimes.

Baby Girl: Yes. Some of my teachers, they was like ... I don't know. Teachers be trying to bully you because they got the power and authority, so they be feeling like they can just belittle you and stuff, but no.

Indy: I know one teacher, I used to get in trouble a lot, and like I didn't get in trouble for like a while even, and one day I came to her in her class, and I wasn't feeling good or whatever, and she wrote me up for no reason, because I told her I didn't feel good, and I had my head down. She says like, "I'm going to write you up," and I was just like, "What the world?"

Baby Girl: That happened to me in PE before.

Indy: I said, "What the world?"

Interviewer: How do you all feel your guidance counselors played a role in this war?

Lil Sin: I ain't never even talk to them.

Baby Girl: I ain't really talk to them.

Indy: They steady called the guidance counselor on me. She was the assistant principal.

Baby Girl: I only talked to my guidance counselor in middle school, and I didn't really talk to her in high school.

Lil Sin: I ain't never. I ain't never really been with that.

Interviewer: How about your administrators?

Indy: I was close with my administrators.

Lil Sin: I been cool with some of them, but ... At High School 6, a lot of them ain't cool.

Indy: I was close to Doctor [Smith 00:14:46], at High School 6. She, they used to call on me all the time.

Interviewer: Who was the one teacher at your school that you felt that you could relate with or talk to?

Lil Sin: You talking about at High School 6?

Interviewer: Wherever you want, or whatever you want to pull from.

Baby Girl: My psychology teacher. She doesn't work at High School 1 anymore, but she was my like ... When I was going to the military school, she was my mentor and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Why do you think you were able to talk to her? Why did you have a better relationship with her?

Baby Girl: I don't know. She was like very young. She just got out of college. She was probably like 26. No, not even 26, probably 23. She just got out of college, and she just knew how I felt coming into high school, and all that stuff that was going on, I used to just talk to her about it.

Interviewer: You had a connection with her.

Baby Girl: Yes.

Lil Sin: For me, it been my math teacher. He been the basketball coach at High School 6. His name was Coach Jackson. He grew up in the same kind of neighborhood I grew up in, so he really could relate to what I had going on. Every time I got mad, though, somehow he'll just come out of nowhere, and just start talking to me, and I'll calm down.

Interviewer: Because you had a connection with him.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Who did you feel, did you have somebody?

Indy: The administrator.

Interviewer: Why did you feel you had a connection with her?

Indy: Because she'd be defending me, now. She ripping up my referrals, and all. She be like, "Oh, you get written up for this? This stupid." She'd rip it up. I showed out at High School 6, though. I ain't going to lie. I was bad.

Interviewer: If she was helping you out, why couldn't you conform, and try and stay in school?

Indy: I honestly don't know. I don't know what was wrong with me. I was so angry, I just like to fight people.

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: I promise you ... Middle school, my friends, you just look at me wrong, I'm going to fight you. My friends, I used to do everything they tell me. They were like, "That girl's talking junk," she didn't even have to be talking junk, I'm going to fight her. That's just how it was. I got assault on a teacher. I punched a teacher because she was holding my Middle School 7s like this. That's like jumping to me. You holding my Middle School 7s while somebody hitting me, I'm getting jumped, so I had to hit her. I felt bad, though. I apologized to her.

Interviewer: A lot of it is more so some of the things you did, not so much what the teacher did.

Indy: At some schools.

Interviewer: Okay. It depends on the school.

Indy: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: I feel like I deserved to get kicked out.

Interviewer: You do?

Indy: At that school, I deserved it.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything else you all want to add? I want to talk with you individually. I want to do an individual interview, one on one, so you can save it for later if there's anything else you want to add, that's not going to contribute to the whole group. Anything else? Okay. I don't want to keep you all too long. I know, Sinclair, you weren't here ...

Individual Baby Girl

Interviewer: This is my individual interview with Baby Girl. Tell me about where you grew up as a child. Geographically, what area of Columbia? What town did you live in?

Baby Girl: Eastover.

Interviewer: Do you feel growing up in this area had an impact on your school and how you did in school?

Baby Girl: A little bit but not really. Everybody that grew up around that area, everybody knew each other. Most people were family and stuff like that so I knew everybody.

Interviewer: What experience did you have while in school? You can think about elementary and middle school that were positive? What are some positive things?

Baby Girl: Some of my teachers. The teachers that actually talked to me and tried to help me out with things when I came to them about problems and stuff like that, when I needed help. That's it. I ain't really have friends.

Interviewer: You didn't have any friends your age?

Baby Girl: Yeah I didn't really talk to people my age.

Interviewer: How were you able to talk to those teachers? What made those teachers able for you to communicate with?

Baby Girl: They could relate to some of the things I would mention to them on a different level. They went through that same situation before in life.

Interviewer: Okay. What about some of the negative influences with school? What are some things that you remember that was negative that may have impacted your outlook on school or how you thought about school?

Baby Girl: Students, me smoking all the time, leaving school to go smoke.

Interviewer: Why? What made you?

Baby Girl: I just wanted to do it. Nothing made me do it. It was something I wanted to do.

Interviewer: Do you feel that your friends influenced you or those are just choices you made on your own?

Baby Girl: No because I was doing it way before I met people that I went to school with.

Interviewer: Okay. Who do you feel supported you while in school?

Baby Girl: My teacher, Miss C, my psychology teacher. She doesn't work there anymore. She worked at ...my tenth grade year and she used to help me out a lot.

Interviewer: How did she help you?

Baby Girl: When I went to the military school, she was my mentor. She would come pick me up every weekend, she would take me to USC or go take me out to eat. We would just talk about things. She would take me to the bookstore. I would get books. She was really positive.

Interviewer: What about at home? Who supported you in your family?

Baby Girl: My dad but I don't really talk to my parents like that. I never really did.

Interviewer: Were your parents involved in your education as you came through school? At what point did you stop communicating with your parents?

Baby Girl: No they wasn't as involved. They didn't try to push me to do better. They would tell me I should do this, I should do that but they wasn't on me how they should have been.

Interviewer: Do you think that that affected you with school?

Baby Girl: Yeah because when I would tell my dad what I actually wanted to do, he'd tell me no, that's not how you going to make money. You should go do this or you should go do that but it's not what I wanted to do.

Interviewer: What is it that you want to do?

Baby Girl: I told him I wanted to study psychology and want to be a psychologist and he told me there was no money in that, that I should go do hair but that's not what I wanted to do.

Interviewer: Did that affect your decision to stay focused in school?

Baby Girl: No, it just made me forget about it.

Interviewer: You grew up with both parents, your mom and your dad, right?

Baby Girl: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have any sisters or brothers?

Baby Girl: I have two sisters.

Interviewer: Are they older or younger?

Baby Girl: Younger.

Interviewer: Okay. Are they in what grades?

Baby Girl: Third grade and first grade.

Interviewer: So you're the oldest. There's a ... Wow. What are some personal family experiences you feel that may have impacted your life?

Baby Girl: My parents used to argue a lot. My dad was never really home.

Interviewer: You feel that impacted you in school?

Baby Girl: Yeah I never really communicated with my dad. I never had a relationship with him like I wanted to.

Interviewer: Even though he was in the home.

Baby Girl: Yeah.

Interviewer: Talk to me about what role did your mom play in your education.

Baby Girl: Nothing really.

Interviewer: Okay. You're here, this is considered a non-traditional setting. Was it your choice to come here or were you sent here by-

Baby Girl: It was my choice.

Interviewer: It was your choice, okay. Why being here has proven to be more beneficial than regular school?

Baby Girl: It's less people. I don't really like being around a lot of people.

Interviewer: Okay. What are some other things that's been more successful for you here? Class size?

Baby Girl: Yeah, class size.

Interviewer: That's the biggest thing?

Baby Girl: Yeah. I don't really like a big class. I don't like being around a lot of people.

Interviewer: What about the teachers?

Baby Girl: They're normal.

Interviewer: No different to you?

Baby Girl: No.

Interviewer: Okay. What additional supports could High School 1 have done to maybe keep you there?

Baby Girl: Nothing really. I left because of drugs. I got caught with drugs. I could have went back to High School 1. I chose not to go back to High School 1. That's not where I wanted to be. It was too much. It was a lot of drama, lot of fighting, I didn't want to be around that.

Interviewer: Distractions.

Baby Girl: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. What's your ultimate goal after you graduate from here, what's next?

Baby Girl: I was going to go to tech for two year thing and then go to the university but I don't know because I know I'm not going to have a scholarship so I don't know about the university thing.

Interviewer: The transfer program with Midlands Tech?

Baby Girl: Yeah. I was thinking about that but I don't know.

Interviewer: Because you still want to major in psychology?

Baby Girl: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Okay. What do you want to do with psychology?

Baby Girl: I want to have my own business.

Interviewer: Be a therapist?

Baby Girl: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Be a therapist.

Baby Girl: A marriage counselor.

Interviewer: Marriage counselor, okay. All right is it anything else you want to add?

Baby Girl: No.

Interviewer: You want to talk about friends?

Baby Girl: I don't got none.

Interviewer: You just don't have any. You are a loner.

Baby Girl: Yeah.

Interviewer: You have friends.

Baby Girl: No. I don't talk to none of them at all. I haven't talked to them since I was in ninth grade.

Interviewer: Why did you disconnect yourself from your friends?

Baby Girl: After I left High School 1, they never talked to me. When they see me now, they be like, "I miss you" all this. They don't miss me because they never text me, they never ask me how I was doing. They didn't care.

Interviewer: What are they doing now?

Baby Girl: They're in school. They still go to High School 1.

Interviewer: Okay. All right well thank you.

Individual Indy

Interviewer: This is the personal interview with Indy. Tell me where you grew up as a child, geographic location.

Indy: I grew up in West Columbia. You want to know the street?

Interviewer: No. You lived there the entire time, West Columbia?

Indy: No. I moved. I lived there up until, what, first grade and I moved to Columbia. I've been in Columbia ever since. I always still go over there.

Interviewer: In the area?

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel where you grew up had an impact on how you did in school?

Indy: Maybe.

Interviewer: In what way?

Indy: A matter of fact, I did come back. I moved to Columbia and then I came back to West Columbia. That was when it went downhill. Well, I was trying to follow my friends and people I've seen. Most of the people over there, they didn't go to school, they dropped out, or they stop going. It was just doing stuff that you get kicked out.

Interviewer: What school was that?

Indy: Oh, High School 7.

Interviewer: Okay.

Indy: Short for HS7. After that, I did move back to Columbia. Ever since then, I've been in Columbia. I moved back after my ninth grade year. That was it. I stayed in Columbia.

Interviewer: You said, things started happening when you were at middle school?

Indy: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Which middle school? What area? What side of town were you in then?

Indy: Oh, dang. I did switch a lot in middle school too. Well, when I first started middle school, sixth grade, I was still in Columbia. Because elementary, I did ... Dang. Okay. First grade, I was in Columbia. I left ... No, I stayed there until second grade. Second grade, I left in the middle of the year because I was having problems with my teachers. They enrolled me in a school. It was this one teacher that I got into with. I think they eventually fired her. Because she was horrible. She put me in front of the class. She told them I was the class clown and I copy everything I do. Because all the students was doing it and then I told the principal. She had a lot of complaints. I think they let her go.

After that, second grade, the middle of the year, I went back to Columbia. I stayed all the way into the fifth grade. Sixth grade, in Columbia. I got kicked out of that school. That's when I came back to West Columbia to finish my sixth grade year. I went to a private school. I stayed in West Columbia, seventh, eighth, ninth. At the end of that year, I remember I had repeated because there was so much going on in that school. My ninth grade, again, I was in Columbia. That's when I stayed over here after my ninth grade year.

Interviewer: What are some of the experience, as you talked about, the teacher saying that she has repeated you? I know that was a negative experience. What are the negative experiences or positive you feel impacted your views about school? You remember that so well and that was second grade. How did that make you feel about school?

Indy: I don't know. I know I was mad that she did that. I don't know if I'm probably mad. I remember I was mad. I got in trouble again because she sat me in the hallway. She told me, "to come here," I guess. I didn't hear her. The students was like, "She's calling you." I was like, "Oh, I didn't hear her." When I got up, she was like, "No, you're getting a referral. Go back in the hallway and sit down." That's when the principal came. I said something to him. They moved me out of that school because of that. They pulled me out.

A positive experience, I had an administrator that I was real close with. She was like my mom. I use to call her my mama. She use to help me stay out of trouble.

Interviewer: How did she help you?

Indy: She use to be my mentor. She talk to me about stuff. I talk to her about stuff. They knew, if I was having a bad day to call her and I could talk to her. I have a good ...

Interviewer: What was it about her that you were able to communicate with her?

Indy: She was younger. We just clicked instantly. Because at first, I didn't know her and she called me like she knew me. She just started talking to me. I was just, in a joking way, my teacher is like, "Why are you out there?" I was like, "Oh, I was talking to my mom." I was playing with her. Ever since then, I started calling her my mom for real.

Interviewer: Do you keep in touch with her?

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Good.

Indy: Well, I didn't talk to her in a while. Normally, I do. I got her number and stuff.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel that you were supported at school? You mentioned this person is supporting you. Was there anybody else you could feel that supported you?

Indy: Uh-uh.

Interviewer: No. What about at home?

Indy: Uh-uh. That's why I did the stuff I did. That's why I didn't do what I was supposed to do.

Interviewer: You grew up with both parents.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: You don't feel that they supported you in school?

Indy: Both of my parents wasn't in the house. My mama, well, first, they was in the house together and then when they got separated, it was just me and my mama and then my brother, my sisters. I don't know. I think when they got separated, I started acting out even more. I don't know why. I think that's part of the reason why.

Interviewer: Around what age? Do you remember what age it was?

Indy: I was seven because my brother was born around ... No, no, no. Second grade.

Interviewer: That's seven?

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Second grade.

Interviewer: Okay. Why do you feel your mom didn't support you?

Indy: I don't know. Well, the beginning, she was involved, okay, first grade, second grade, third grade. Fourth, fifth, okay, she's involved. She use to take me to tutoring and stuff. Middle school, she wasn't involved. I guess, because I was acting out. She was just like, "You're going to fail. You're going to fail. You're going to be a failure." I just believed that. I just took it and ran with it. I was like, "Okay. You don't want to motivate me." I ain't getting a motivation from home, so why should I come to school motivated, why should I care. I guess, it's why I did the stuff I did.

Interviewer: You've made it this far. Who were some people that you feel may have supported you?

Indy: To help me out?

Interviewer: To help you get-

Indy: Well, my dad, he is a good supporter. He supported me still. Like, the nights I have projects. My mom, she didn't help me. I call him and he help me.

Interviewer: He would help you by phone?

Indy: No. He'll come get me. I had this big project, he came and got me. I got an older cousin. She's in the army. He let her help me too because she knew about it. It was Jamaica. She went to Jamaica before and she helped me too.

Interviewer: Good. Okay. You mentioned your parents' divorce or separation that may have affected you in school. Any other things you could think of that may have impacted your schooling?

Indy: I just think that was probably the reason because my mom didn't support me. I didn't care. I was like, "Because my mom don't care."

Interviewer: What made you make the turn? Because now, you're here, you want to finish. What made you make the change?

Indy: Seeing all my friends. My friends then pass me. I was like, "Man, okay, I need to get it together." I was getting tired. Well, four of my friends really made me change was when ... I didn't get locked up. I did had to stay the night in jail for one night because of my mama. She dropped me out. It was Beyond Scared Street. I went there. I went to the tour. Before all of that, I went to a DJJ tour. That didn't really help me because I just ... I don't know. It help me but it didn't really help me, help me. .. really help me. I'd seen that. I was like, "Okay. No."

She got to put me in this program saying I was a problem child and stuff. They made me talk to somebody. They made me go see somebody to talk to her. I was crazy or something. I was like, "There's nothing wrong with me." I don't know. I don't know why I did act like that. Well, I had to. That was part of my arbitration. I was on arbitration. I had to do that.

After that, that really made me turn around when I had to spend the night in jail that night. I was like, "Okay. This is not me." They made me write a letter to my mom. I was like, "I don't want to write no letter to her or what would I write down or what would she be doing to me. I don't know how she treat me. I don't want to write no letter to her." I had to write it because if I didn't write it, they'll lock me up for real. I was like, "Okay. I'm going to write. I'm just going to go put anything in the letter. I don't care." I just wrote it.

Well, at first, she didn't come pick me. She wasn't going to go pick me up because she wouldn't answer her phone. I had to call my dad. He was like, "Are you seriously in jail?" I was like, "Yeah." He didn't know. She lied to him and tell him I was at a game, a football game. This is during the time my dad had a fiancé because they mentioned it to me. It something like, "You think he got a fiancé. You think she love you. She won't love you or something like that." They're just trying to make me turn against her, I guess. I like her. I really like her. After that, that really made me turn around. I started doing better in school.

Interviewer: When was this? Were you still in high school when you took the State Street?

Indy: I was in middle school. I was in seventh grade. That's when I was at an alternative school. When I was at the alternative school, I started being good at the alternative school. We had levels like, level one, two, three, four and five. I don't really remember what the levels meant. I know that level one meant bad and level five, that mean you're good. Level four, that means you on track. The other ones, I don't really remember.

Interviewer: Once you got through that and you went back to high school, you didn't have any more problems after that?

Indy: Well, I didn't have no more problems until I got to Well, I was saying the administrator that I like, she was from there. I just wasn't doing my work. I don't know. I thought it was a game or a joke, I guess. I wasn't doing my work like I should have been. When I left there, they put me in Hayward. That was like a school like this kind. You all eat ...all day. When I got adjusted to that, when I went back to regular school, I was like, "Okay. I can't keep up with this." Because it's different now. I'm not used to it. I was there for two years. I was like, "Okay. I'm not used to it now." I was trying to do my work. It wasn't like I couldn't do it. I got used to that environment.

Interviewer: Then you came back here at ninth.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Before you started having your problems, you made As and Bs in school. When did the Ds and Fs start? Because I've seen circle Ds in this.

Indy: That started when I got to high school.

Interviewer: High school. Okay. Elementary and middle, you make?

Indy: Yeah, I use to make good grades. Especially in middle school, I was doing so good in middle school, at first, until I got into that little altercation, ISS teacher. She's the reason why I had to go to the DJJ tour because I got into with her. I didn't do anything to her. She said about a look in my face. Like, I wanted to slap her. They used that as a threat and they charged me. I was like, "What? By the look in my eyes, I wanted to slap you?" I didn't know that was a threat.

Interviewer: How do you communicate with your mom now?

Indy: I don't know. We don't really have no relationship. I don't know.

Interviewer: The question is, what role did your parents play in your education? You would say that your dad played more role in your education than your mom.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Okay. Why is this setting proven to be more successful for you than regular school?

Indy: Because at this point, I was thinking, "Okay. I got to get it together now." It's more laid back and calm. You don't have people coming at you and they go and sound like, "What are you doing?" I don't know. It's so easy to adjust here. I was just like, "I'm ready to get out of school now. I need to graduate. I need to stop playing."

Interviewer: Is there anything that .. could've done differently to keep you there?

Indy: No, not really. I feel like my atmosphere was better here or maybe at Hayward. They wouldn't take me back because out there, I'm not going to lie. I didn't do my work there at first. Well, the second time I didn't do my work. I wasn't doing my work like I should've been. Well, I was. I just wasn't moving as fast as I could've been moving. I was doing my work. I just wouldn't. Because I ended up finding some friends there, talking and doing all of that and not really working as fast as I should've been. Like I said, I didn't work as fast. I can't come back. They said that that's when I had to go to From is when I came here because this is my only other option because I can't go back career center.

Interviewer: Did you get put out of ... to come here or you just chose to come after you realized you couldn't adjust to be in there?

Indy: Uh-uh. I didn't get put out. I almost wasn't get put out. I had referrals, mostly, for tardies. You get wrote off for tardies. I was always late. I don't know why I was late. I live all the way on Brown River and I drive to go to Probably that's why.

Interviewer: Why didn't go in your zone. You lived in the zone for High School 3.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We was in this transitional housing, I think, is what you call it. I could stay at my home school. I had school choice. I didn't have to go there. When we moved, I don't think I really had school choice again. I still stayed there. That's my home school.

Interviewer: You had to drive yourself.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). My mom, she didn't want to ... Well, I didn't want to switch either. I'm glad I didn't switch because I was at High School leady going to I didn't want to go to another public school. I was glad I came here.

Interviewer: Okay. What's your ultimate goal when you finish here? You said you're real close to finishing. What are you going to do next?

Indy: Well, right now, I'm an entrepreneur. I make custom clothing. I have my own website. I want to go to hair school too to do hair and makeup. I'm trying to get into Paul Mitchell in January. That's why I'm trying to finish so I can get there in January.

Interviewer: Wow. Have you already applied?

Indy: I need to. I talked to my guidance counselor about it though. She said she's going to help me. I talked to her about it. That's what I like to do.

Interviewer: That's good. What clothes do you make?

Indy: I use to be wearing them. Well, they're slides, furry slides. I make those. I make little furry bras to go in them. I'm going to start making jackets, jean jackets.

Interviewer: You buy the stuff and all to renew.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I buy and I just start making it. I just bedazzle it.

Interviewer: Do you have pictures?

Indy: Yeah, I do have pictures. It's in my phone.

Interviewer: You sell them online or just to people you know, people contact you.

Indy: Well, at first, I didn't mind it. I had a lot of orders. I started selling them online.

Interviewer: Wow.

Indy: Oh, I make furry pants too because people like some of those.

Interviewer: Wow. You sew them like, you'd use a sewing machine or you do it by Middle School 7?

Indy: Uh-uh. I do it by Middle School 7.

Interviewer: You take your time and stitch it so it didn't ...

Indy: No. I use a real strong boon to make designs.

Interviewer: Wow. How did you come over there?

Indy: Well-

Interviewer: You got some clothes? You got any clothes you've done?

Indy: Uh-uh. I didn't do no clothes yet. I'm going to start doing clothes. I've just been having some ...with these that's why I've been doing other stuff again. Because a lot of people liked it. I didn't expect a lot of people to ... I knew they would like it. I didn't expect that many people to like it. I had a website to keep track.

Interviewer: Wow. You ship it to them or you-

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I do ship it to them. I charge. I only charge \$2 for shipping.

Interviewer: How much does a pair cost like?

Indy: For a full set, it's \$25. For just a slippers, it's \$20. Just a regular bra, it's \$15.

Interviewer: You go to Michael's at a craft stores and buy the-

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Or Hobby Lobby. I need to go to JoAnn's. I'm seeing some stuff online I can get to, some first stuff online. That's really popular now. A lot of people would be asking me for it. They like fur, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah. I saw some keys with the furry key rings, I think. The ball.

Indy: Mm-hmm (affirmative). They was asking me do I have those too. You can make those too. I haven't make none yet.

Interviewer: Wow.

Indy: I'm going to start doing cases too. They want phone cases.

Interviewer: Oh, I could see that.

Indy: They keep asking me, phone cases. Now, they want pillows.

Interviewer: Do you know how to sew on a sewing machine? Because it'll be good if you knew how to sew on a sewing machine.

Indy: Not yet. I did take a sewing class. I stopped going.

Interviewer: Yeah. That would be really good.

Indy: Not like I know how to sew really, really good. She makes her own dresses and stuff. I'm going to get her teaching.

Interviewer: She could finally give you one of her old machines and go ahead with it. That's good. I'm good. I'm glad you're back on track.

Individual Lil Sin

Interviewer: Are you ready? All right. This is an individual interview with Lil Sin. Okay? Lil Sin, tell me about where you grew up, geographic wise, where you live. Talk to me about starting out from as far back as you can remember.

Lil Sin: I really grew up in the country.

Interviewer: What do you call the country?

Lil Sin: Like over there by Eastover, but it's not Eastover yet.

Interviewer: Me, too. So did I.

Lil Sin: Over like down Hawkins Road.

Interviewer: Okay.

Lil Sin: I grew up there, and then my grandma moved into a big house on Rosewood, when I was about like 7-, and I started going to South Kilbourne.

Interviewer: Wait a minute. You moved in with your grandmother?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: You moved in with your grandmother in elementary school. Okay. I just want to make sure because I want to understand everything that happened with you.

Lil Sin: Then ...

Interviewer: Was your mom and daddy with you then, or just you and your grand mama?

Lil Sin: No. It was my grandma, my mama, and my cousins, aunties, and uncles and stuff.

Interviewer: Okay. You circled 'father'.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: He was there some?

Lil Sin: Yes, because I started staying with him my, I want to say, sixth grade year, because my my mom and my daddy broke up when I was like in fourth grade. I

started staying with him my sixth grade year. I really ain't get in no trouble like that because he stayed on me. Then when I went to high school ...

Interviewer: Let's slow down. You went to Middle School 7 Middle School. Is that the only middle school?

Lil Sin: Yes. That's the only middle school I went to.

Interviewer: And at that time you were living with your grandmother and your mother?

Lil Sin: No. When I went to Middle School 7, I started staying with my daddy, until the end of seventh grade, and then I started staying back with my grandma.

Interviewer:: When you were at Middle School 7 for seventh grade, where did you go for sixth grade?

Lil Sin: Middle School 7.

Interviewer: Middle School 7. So you didn't get in any trouble in sixth or seventh grade?

Lil Sin: I mean it's little write ups.

Interviewer: Minor stuff.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: What happened in eight grade?

Lil Sin: Eighth grade, I been chilling, too. It wasn't really nothing going on.

Interviewer: Still at Middle School 7.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think you had a good time at Middle School 7? What happened? What was different about being at Middle School 7?

Lil Sin: I don't know. I think it probably could have been because my daddy.

Interviewer: Okay.

Lil Sin: Because he used to stay on me.

Interviewer: During these three years, your dad stayed on you?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: You lived with him until you got to the end of sixth grade?

Lil Sin: No. I stayed with him until the end of eighth grade.

Interviewer: Oh. Okay. So that may have made a difference. Back track for a minute, because you said you were in a fight in elementary school.

Lil Sin: Oh, yes, in second grade.

Interviewer: In second grade.

Lil Sin: And I got kicked out. I really do still got anger problems, but when I was younger my anger used to be horrible.

Interviewer: What elementary school you got kicked out of, ...?

Lil Sin: .

Interviewer: Who were you living with then?

Lil Sin: I was staying with my mama.

Interviewer: Your mama?

Lil Sin: My mama and my daddy still been together. We used to stay right there in Bayberry.

Interviewer: Okay. Then you transitioned from Middle School 7 to high school, two years at High School 6.

Lil Sin: My ninth and tenth grade year. I got kicked out my tenth grade year for starting a gang riot.

Interviewer: Okay. Then did you come here for alternative school?

Lil Sin: No. They expelled me, and they put me on probation, so they said I couldn't go to no District ** schools, so me and my mom and my little sisters had moved over

there in District **, and I started going to High School 7, for my 11th grade year and part of my 12th grade year.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me about District **, because a lot of people sometimes leave Ridgeland 1 because they feel District ** is better.

Lil Sin: Yes. They teach to a higher level in District **, and they don't tolerate no extra stuff.

Interviewer: Do you think that's good or bad?

Lil Sin: I really do think it's good because my senior year, when I left from High School 7 and I came down here, they was teaching stuff that I been learned like from the beginning of the year, so I already knew that. That was a little boost, and they really just move faster over there.

Interviewer: Do you feel because you talked about the different places you moved around, do you feel that growing up in those different areas had an impact on you in school?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: In what way?

Lil Sin: Because the neighborhoods, the neighborhoods ... I'm from Gonzales Gardens, so that's a gang-affiliated neighborhood, so if you go to school, and it's neighborhood that go there ... Like Gonzales Gardens and Four Eight, they have beef, so when we see each other in school, it's sometimes some people be on some cool junk, but other people be on some, "Oh, I don't like him just because he from that side, so we might have to fight," or something like that. I really done got too old for that, so I aint really worried about nothing like that no more, but back then I used to take it to heart.

Interviewer: Because you were younger.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: What made you, what's that switch, what made that light go off?

Lil Sin: Because I messed around and had got locked up too many times, and I realized ...

Interviewer: Not worth it.

Lil Sin: Yes. I ain't with that.

Interviewer: When you got locked up ... How old are you?

Lil Sin: I'm 20, now.

Interviewer: 20, so you were at Alvin S. Glenn, when you got locked up?

Lil Sin: Yes. I first got locked up when I was 17, for unlawful carrying of a pistol, and possession of a stolen pistol.

Interviewer: How much time did you do then?

Lil Sin: I only sat back there like two or three days, and my mom came and got me. Then I got locked up for fighting, but that's a little petty charge, so they let me out the next day.

Interviewer: That was enough?

Lil Sin: Yes, and no.

Interviewer: So then what did you do next?

Lil Sin: Like some months later, I messed around and got locked up again.

Interviewer: How long did you stay the last time?

Lil Sin: The last time I got locked up, I sat back there for three months.

Interviewer: What can you say to me that will make me feel, "Okay, he's serious that he doesn't want to go back"? What was it about going back that last time?

Lil Sin: Because I was supposed to have a baby on the way. I messed around and had my baby's mama stressing too much, she had a miscarriage. Then just not being able to see my little sisters and stuff like that, and not being able to talk to them how I want to.

Interviewer: What is your ultimate goal, past completing high school?

Lil Sin: I really want to go to college for culinary arts, and try to get a job at being a chef somewhere, because I like to cook.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you watch the cooking shows?

Lil Sin: Yes, every now and again when I can.

Interviewer: Which ones do you like?

Lil Sin: I like ... What's her name? She a little old white lady, with blond hair. She be cooking.

Interviewer: Paula Dean?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Paula Dean. You ever watch the one Cook Versus Con? You ever seen that one?

Lil Sin: No. I don't think I ever seen that one. I was watching ... You know Larry the Cable Guy?

Interviewer: No.

Lil Sin: I think that's his name. Is that his name? It's fat white dude, and he go around the USA like checking out everybody ... You know like a restaurant got a famous dish?

Interviewer: Yes.

Lil Sin: He'll go there, and he'll eat and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Is that on the travel channel?

Lil Sin: No. It's on the cooking channel.

Interviewer: It's on the cooking channel. Guy? No, not Guy. Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives?

Lil Sin: I think so.

Interviewer: The guy with the spiked hair?

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes. I watch him, too. What are some of the experiences that you've had that positively or negatively impacted your views about school? You talked about

some of your personal things that happened, but what are some other experiences? What are some positive things you can think about for school?

Lil Sin: It can keep you out of trouble. It can keep you out of these streets.

Interviewer: What were some of the good times you had in school? What were some of the people you feel that supported you in school?

Lil Sin: I feel like some of my teachers supported me, and my mama and them supported my for school, but I never really been one of them students to really talk like to guidance and stuff. I just ain't never been one of them people.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you have anger issues. What did you do, how did you help control, what did you do to control your anger?

Lil Sin: My anger is still pretty bad, but ...

Interviewer: But you're older now, so you should ...

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you back away when you know you're about to get upset?

Lil Sin: I just try to walk off.

Interviewer: You walk off.

Lil Sin: I know what I'm capable of when I get to my point of breaking, so I just try and just be chill, and just don't pay no attention.

Interviewer: That's a good thing, because some people don't know when to stop.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Some people don't know. You mentioned your mom and your grandma supporting you. Who else do you feel supported you? Mama, grand mama, daddy ...

Lil Sin: Mama, grandma, daddy ... My cousins. They used to help me with my homework, stuff like that, if I didn't know something. My older cousin, Javon, and my other cousin, Jayquan, they'll sit with me some nights, help me with my homework ...

Interviewer: Is that Jayquan that's here?

Lil Sin: Oh, no, no, no, no.

Interviewer: Okay. Who were some people you feel that didn't support you?

Lil Sin: My homeboys.

Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting.

Lil Sin: Because we just used to be worried about females, and with everything else got going on. They really ain't support me like with that school stuff.

Interviewer: What are they doing now, in general? When you say they didn't support you, did they do what they were supposed to do, and graduate?

Lil Sin: No.

Interviewer: No.

Lil Sin: A lot of my homeboys that I grew up with, most of them in jail, for murder, attempted murder.

Interviewer: How could they have supported you?

Lil Sin: By not going down that path, and staying in school with me, and doing our work.

Interviewer: Together, you all should have pulled together to do what was right.

Lil Sin: Yes, but some of the times when you grow up in a bad neighborhood, growing up with no daddy, and stuff like that, you feel you look to other older people in your neighborhood, and you want to do what they doing. You see somebody walking around with a whole bunch of change, fresh, you got a pocket full of money, you just get into stuff like that. You feel me?

Interviewer: Yes.

Lil Sin: Then my neighborhood is a gang affiliated neighborhood, so we seen everybody older than us wearing red, being in gangs, stuff like that. That's how we grow up.

Interviewer: How did you disassociate yourself?

Lil Sin: I really ain't disassociate myself all the way, yet. I still hang around the red now and again, but I just don't make it an everyday thing to be with them.

Interviewer: Okay. What personal experiences, you kind of talked about it a little bit, impacted you being here? You having to move ...

Lil Sin: The main reason why I really came here was for probation, and because something in my head just clicked one day like, "Bro, this, five years from now, Bro, you got to find something to do, Brother. You just cannot be playing around for no reason. You got to get up and do something."

Interviewer: Right. How supportive was your mom?

Lil Sin: My mom was supportive, but me and her got into it a lot, so I really cannot elaborate on that.

Interviewer: How about your dad?

Lil Sin: Yes, but he used to do too much. He used to ... He wanted me to be perfect, on some type junk like that, but it just wasn't going that way.

Interviewer: Are you with either of them now?

Lil Sin: Am I ...

Interviewer: Are you living with either one of them?

Lil Sin: No. I stay with my grandma because that's the main one I really be with.

Interviewer: That's good. Why has this setting proven to be more successful to you?

Lil Sin: Because it ain't got that many people, and a teacher can really focus on you if you need help with something. If there's a classroom full of people, they cannot just stop and go back for one person, and everybody else trying to move on.

Interviewer: Last question. What additional supports do you feel that a regular school, like at High School 6 may have kept you there? Do you think there's anything the school could have done differently to keep you there, or was it all on Saint Claire?

Lil Sin: To be real, I really don't even know why I got kicked out of High School 6. The reason they kicked me out was because I was fighting at the fair, so they said that some of the people that I was fighting at the fair, it could come back to school,

and they don't want that to be in they school, or something like that. I really don't know how that had to do with me getting kicked out, but I guess they could have just ... I guess they really could have just talked to me. If they would have just talked to me, and really figured out what happened, they wouldn't have did what they did, like all that, because it was pointless. I really didn't see no meaning in that.

Interviewer: You didn't feel that you would go back to High School 6 and cause a riot, but they weren't sure in that.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: You can understand how they felt.

Lil Sin: Yes. I understand where they're coming from. You feel me, but it's like when I started back going to High School 6, I wasn't talking to nobody.

Interviewer: They didn't know that.

Lil Sin: They knew that. I used to just walk through with my headphones, don't say nothing to nobody. I mean I knew people, and everybody at the school knew me, but it was just like at lunch I'd sit by myself, and I'd just don't talk to nobody. I guess when I got into that altercation, they figured that I was going to bring it back to school or something like that, but I really wasn't. I just used to go to school and do my work.

Interviewer: That's good. Anything else you want to add?

Lil Sin: No.

Interviewer: How were you academically? You didn't talk about your academics. What kind of grades did you make?

Lil Sin: When I went to District **, I was making B's and C's. When I first started ninth and tenth grade at High School 6, I was making A's and B's.

Interviewer: Wow.

Lil Sin: For my 12th grade year, I didn't get to stay long enough to get grades, but here I got good grades.

Interviewer: So academically, you got the sense and the knowledge to do the work.

Lil Sin: Yes. I just let other stuff distract me. That's how I'm saying it, I just let other stuff distract me.

Interviewer: Where do you think you got such a good foundation?

Lil Sin: My mama.

Interviewer: Kindergarten, first grade, your mom? Do you remember where you went to school in kindergarten and first grade?

Lil Sin: I went to a private school.

Interviewer: Okay. You didn't mention that. Kindergarten and first grade, you were in private school. You think that people gave you a good foundation.

Lil Sin: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. You did say your guidance counselor was there to assist you, but you just never really had a relationship with your guidance counselor. Okay, and it's because of who you are, and how you're private, so you didn't feel the need to go talk to a guidance counselor.

Lil Sin: Yes. I like to just keep stuff to myself, type. If it's a problem, I like go to the bathroom or something, and just think to myself.

Interviewer: Talk it out. Okay.

Focus with Jq and Kyng

Interviewer: All right. Tonight is Monday, November 21st, and I'm going to do a focus group with Jay and Kyng. First question fellas, tell me about your educational pathway, the schools you attended, just talk about where you went to school.

Jq: You want me start out from elementary?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jq: Okay. The first school I went to was Elementary 3. I used to get in a lot of trouble at ..., so I had to leave from there and went to Elementary 4 School. That ain't really work out either, because I had family and friends there, but I had to stick with it because it was the end of my 5th grade year anyway. I graduated, left from there. I went to Middle School 3 Middle School, got into a little bit of trouble. I wasn't really that bad around that time until I started meeting people that was there. I used to get my work done. I had good grades. I stayed focused until about eighth grade. Eighth grade I started messing up and grades started dropping, started failing. When I met more people, my grades dropped even more.

I went to high school after that. After I left from Middle School 3 Middle School, I went to HIGH SCHOOL 1 It got way worse. I started skipping school, wasn't showing up to school sometimes. Grades was real bad. In one whole year, I really ain't even go. After that year, I came here to Evening High School. I came to Evening High School, I had less things to pay attention to. Less people to worry about. I could just focus on my work and what I had to do to get out of school.

Kyng: Elementary, I went to Elementary 5 Elementary. I was good. Had good grades left there I went to Middle School 4. That's when I got kind of off track because of females and stuff. Started feeling myself. I got expelled in the seventh grade. Came to Alternative School, but I ain't stay there long, because they said I had good grades, so they let me go back to school. Went back to Middle School 4. Then, promoted from Middle School 4, went to High School 4. After High School 4, everything changed. They sent me back to Evening High School. I got expelled, getting in a fight. I came to Evening High School. I had little problems when I first got here. Then I started doing better, because I knew I had something to do in life, and I tried. I wanted to graduate. Now, I'm graduating I January.

Interviewer: What are some things in regular school that impacted your decision to come here? You both kind of touched on a little bit. Were you forced to come? Did you choose to come?

Jq: I chose to come. I can honestly say I chose to come, because I had plenty of chances to go back there to regular school. I actually -- excuse me for me stuttering just now -- I actually left from regular High School 1 High School, came to Evening High, caught up on my work and tried to go back to High School 1 High School to see if it'll work out. It didn't work out. I had it in my mind to turn around and come back to Evening High School, because it seemed like I was focused more on my work here and what I had to do, like my priorities. I chose to come back here.

Interviewer: What was it about High School 1 that you couldn't be focused?

Jq: Popularity.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jq: Popularity. That's exactly what it was. Like you said, girls, you got all your homeboys, all your friends around you that's talking you into doing things that they probably wish they wouldn't do around that time. Now, they're in a bad spot. I'm glad I caught on. I'm glad I caught on before it got bad and didn't end up where they're at now, because see now they're at the point where they can't even get their diploma. Certain ones in jail, some of them not. I just had to separate myself from the crowd basically.

Interviewer: Same, Kyng?

Kyng: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I can't say I was forced, because you ain't never forced to do nothing. I chose to come here, too. Popularity there, too. Everybody knew me, based off what I did. Then, I came here everything changed. People still knew me here, but it was just less people to worry about and talk to. I guess that's why I got more work done. Then I just stayed here. I ain't never tried to go back. I noticed wasn't getting nothing done there. If I go back to the same situation, it's going to have the same results.

Jq: Same results. I wouldn't be where I was at right now if I didn't come here. At a point, it was a decision for me. For here or either regular school, it was a point when I went to the hearing board. I had a choice. I'd either

come here, or either go on back to High School 1 High School. I still chose to come here. I felt like it'd be a better way for me to stay focused.
[crosstalk 00:05:05]

Interviewer: When you talk about the school, what's different here than High School 1?

Jq: The amount of students.

Kyng: Less people.

Jq: The type of crowds that be around you. Necessarily, the whole school is actually just one crowd, actually here. High School 1, you're dealing with more than a thousand kids. Here, you-

Kyng: Yeah, you're in different spots. Sports over there, all the fine girls in this corner. It's just a whole lot of stuff you can do with more people. It's more attention on you. If everybody know you, everybody gone to talk to you, in every class.

Jq: Things that's different about here is they're a lot more strict about things. I can't really explain. It's more helpful. You've got a little bit of time. You're only working on four hours and you're getting everything you gotta get done. That gives me a lot more space to do what I gotta do, because for one, I've got a child, so I'm a need a lot more time to do what I need to do for him besides just school. I know school is a main thing too, but by them doing this, it's giving me enough time to do what I gotta do and be able to still get my education at the same time. They're giving us time to do whatever else we gotta do on the outsides of the school time.

Kyng: They're a lot more organized. They're not going to let too many people come here, because they know that's why we weren't staying in regular school, so they'll keep a certain amount. If you did good in the recent years, they're going to let you come back, because they've still got a choice if they want us to come back or not.

Jq: It was a choice to come here when I first found out about this, but now it's not a choice. You literally have to get into some type of trouble in your regular school to get sent here.

Kyng: Yeah.

Jq: I did that on purpose one time, too.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Because you wanted to come back?

Jq: Yeah. Because when I tried to come back, I asked, "Can I just sign up?" There had to be a reason for me coming here. I had to be given this choice or Alternative School if I was to do whatever I did. I did what I did to get right here. That's how bad I wanted to get back here. I got in trouble at my regular school, got expelled, to get here.

Interviewer: Wow. Is it anything your regular school could've differently that would've made you stay?

Jq: No.

Kyng: I can't say it's the school. It's just the surrounding. It's a lot of people. You can't keep up with a whole lot of people.

Jq: That's why I say, no it really ain't [crosstalk 00:07:40]

Kyng: It's not the school. It's just the surrounding.

Jq: It really ain't nothing that you can do, honestly. Period.

Kyng: I can't even it's the surrounding, because people graduated from high school. So, you gotta to have it in yourself and stay focused to graduate.

Interviewer: So, for some people, it's a distraction?

Kyng: Yeah.

Jq: I know for me, popularity was a big distraction.

Kyng: Yeah, it was a distraction for me.

Jq: I let little things take control of me in school, take my attention off what I needed to be focused on. It was days in regular school that I went to school and did what I had to do the whole day, but then I'd come back the next day-

Kyng: Yeah, and forget about everything.

Jq: Yeah, I'd be a whole different person.

Kyng: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jq: I'll come to school that day, that day and I'm focused on that and I'll come to school with all my homework and everything for all my classes. Next day I come, I don't got nothing.

Kyng: You just forget what you did the day before.

Jq: I don't got no bookbag on. I don't do nothing. I go in classes, put my head down.

Interviewer: Why? Why is that?

Jq: [crosstalk 00:08:33] I don't know, It was just the type of vibe that I caught in school at sometimes. Excuse me. It was like, just the type of vibe that I caught in school sometimes. I can't really explain to you the type of vibe it was, but it was just a feeling that I had sometimes.

But when I'm here.

Kyng: I had the same thing the other day.

Jq: Here, they let you listen to your music if that's what keep you concentrated on your work. They'll let you do that. At school, that's a big problem.

Kyng: You can't even have a phone out.

Jq: Because they feel like if one student see you doing it, and the next student sees you-

Kyng: Everybody's gonna want to be doing it.

Jq: Everybody's gonna want to do it. They're going to have to make that something for everybody in the school. Then, it's going to run out, because it'll go from one person that's just listening to their headphones paying attention to they work. The next person is seeing them. After that person gets seen, then the whole school want to do it. Then, once the whole school starts doing it-

Kyng: Somebody's gonna blow it out of proportion.

Jq: Yeah, they're going to take their headphones out-

Kyng: Take their headphones out, play it out loud-

Jq: And just start playing it out loud. It'll get out of proportion like that. It'll go just like that, but here, it's just something they let you do, because they know it ain't but so many students that they're already dealing with. You can listen to your music as long as it ain't loud to where the teacher can hear you, it's good.

Kyng: I look at stuff like that. Just the little things in regular schools that'll distract another student. Then, you got some students that like to show off for the next person. That'll get her in trouble too. I wasn't that type of person though.

Interviewer: Tell me this, when you talk about teachers and how you listen to music here versus regular school. Did you feel that the regular teachers supported you at the other school? Not here, but at regular school.

Kyng: Yeah, they support-

Jq: Yeah, they supported me-

Kyng: They can't just give you all the attention, because it's a lot of students. Here, if a teacher think you great, they're going give you the attention. It's less students, though, so they can do that.

Jq: Another thing to tell you about this school, the teachers here, they teach a whole different way.

Kyng: Yeah, these teachers are different.

Jq: Like my math teachers at HIGH SCHOOL 1, I couldn't understand a thing they was saying compared to what Jones tell me.

Kyng: Jones break it down.

Jq: Yeah, Jones give it to us the way that we know best. They give it to us the way they know best.

Kyng: Understand it yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: They basically give it to you how they give it to everybody. I don't know.

Jq: It's like they going off what the district want them to do. Jones going off the-

Kyng: Yeah, he break it down.

Jq: They going off the books, Jones going off his mind. Jones teaching a whole 'nother way. When I'm in Jones's class, Jones don't even open the book.

Kyng: He never-

Jq: He tell us to look in the book so we can know what we're looking at, but he don't-

Kyng: He goes based off his brain and what he learned and what he knows.

Jq: The only thing he gotta see out of that book is the numbers on that problem.

Kyng: And not even that sometimes. He'll make up a problem and it could be the right answer.

Interviewer: Do y'all feel that you had a good relationship with your teachers?

Jq: I have a way better relationship with these teachers than I did at High School 1 High School.

Interviewer: No, I'm talking about at High School 1.

Jq: Oh, no.

Kyng: Oh, no.

Interviewer: Why?

Jq: I had a good relationship with some of em, certain ones. Certain ones that I had a good relationship to, because they know how to talk to you. They know how to get stuff over to you without doing all the extra stuff that they got to do like ... You got some teachers that, I ain't saying just specifically HIGH SCHOOL 1, any school, because every school got that

one teacher ... But it's, when you get here, you won't catch too many teachers that's like here. Jones probably teach us like that here, but at his other job, he's teaching a whole different way. He's just going off what his job wants him to do.

Kyng: He break it down to your level. Say if somebody in class, they know how to do everything. He'll still break it down to other people that don't know how to do it.

Interviewer: Okay. Relationship-wise, which teachers in regular school you had better relationships with, and why? Just think about the people that you had a good relationship with and what is different about them.

Jq: Specific names?

Interviewer: No, you don't have to give me their names. What was different about the teacher that you may have had a good relationship with?

Kyng: They know how to talk to you. They know how to Middle School 7le stuff a different way than going by what the school want them to do. They be so afraid of losing they jobs, so they want to go by school district rules or whatever. However you want to put it-

Interviewer: When you say talk to you, elaborate on when you say, "They know how to talk to you."

Jq: Tone-wise. Language-wise, the words ... I ain't saying certain teachers came out they mouth with cuss words and all this that and the other, but you got some of them that raise they voice, put they Middle School 7s on you, even though that's not they job to do that. Some of them get to be here to feel like that's what they got to do. No, you don't got to do that. You could just talk to em, just learn how to talk to students. You gotta know how to talk to certain students. Certain students ain't got no temper for nothing. For instance, my little sister. You know my little sister. She ain't got no temper for nothing. All you gotta do is come out your mouth wrong, the wrong way, just get loud with her.

Kyng: Spazzy.

Jq: That's it, and she's spazzing. That spazzing going to end up causing her to either get expelled or something. Then guess where she comes? Here.

Thing about it, my sister don't listen to nobody, none of that stuff. When my sister came here, she was doing what she had to do until she got distracted from whatever was going on on the outside of school. She just left and ain't came no more.

Interviewer: What about your guidance counselors at your regular school? Did you know your guidance counselors?

Jq: I still got the same guidance counselor here.

Interviewer: Do you?

Jq: Ms. Moore.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you know your guidance counselors?

Kyng: I was too popular at my school, so of all of the students know that you popular. The teachers know too so they ain't really even try to deal with me.

Jq: Then, at the same time [crosstalk 00:14:18]

Kyng: I think the coolest teacher was the I.S.S teacher. I used to be in there all the time [crosstalk 00:14:21]

Jq: Yeah, Smith was the coolest. Smith was cool man.

Kyng: That was the coolest teacher.

Interviewer: Y'all know the other group said the same thing.

Jq: Yeah, I.S.S. teacher was one of the coolest teacher there.

Kyng: I guess they understand why they got that job.

Jq: I ain't gone lie though bro. Smith ain't play none of that bro. She was cool on certain days. But when that day came, oh man.

Kyng: I had Ms. G.

Interviewer: Tell me about your administrators do you feel that they supported you?

Kyng: No.

Jq: I like my administrators were cool at HIGH SCHOOL 1 Certain ones though. I ain't say nothing. Yeah, it was certain ones at that school that was cool man that I could deal with.

Kyng: Yeah, I did like one, but she don't even work there no more. She the principal for High School 2.

Interviewer: But you had a relationship with her.

Kyng: Yeah. She tried to help me more than my administrator did. I was in the 10th grade then. She was like the 12 grade administrator. She was still trying to help me, because she seen something in me.

Interviewer: How did she try to help you?

Kyng: The first time they tried to expel me she helped me stay in school, but I told her I wanted to come here and she helped me get here.

Interviewer: Oh, good. Okay. All right. So, that covers the first four questions. Then, I have some one-on-one questions I'd like to ask y'all okay? Who wants to go first?

This begins my interview. We'll interview with Kyng.

Kyng, tell me about where you grew up as a child, the location-wise in Columbia.

Kyng: I grew up off North Main and Meadow Lake right across the street from the park. I grew up with my grandmother. She not really my grandmother. She my auntie, but I look at her like my momma because she raised me.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: I just grew up on that side of town.

Interviewer: So, do you feel that area had any impact on things that you may have gotten into in school or ...

Kyng: No, I feel like everything is a decision, so it was really my decision to go out and do different stuff, because where I used to be at I wasn't no where near my house.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: I feel like it was my decision.

Interviewer: You hung out somewhere else?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Where did you hang out?

Kyng: Off of Beltline and Two Notch.

Interviewer: What area is that?

Kyng: Over there by High School 2.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you hung out more in the downtown area?

Kyng: Yes, ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: That's where I knew everybody at.

Interviewer: How did you know the people from that area?

Kyng: Popularity. My name just was spreading around a lot. That's really how ...

Interviewer: What are- Go head.

Kyng: Some people from High School 2 came to High School 4 and then they had went back to High School 2 and that's how my name got on that side of town.

Interviewer: So, what was it about your name? What type of student were you?

Kyng: All the females wanted me, because I used to have slugs in my mouth. I used to have a lot of stuff. I was spoiled, but I used to always go work for what I want. My grandma taught me I can't depend on other people so I

used to like ... They think I used to be stealing stuff and selling stuff, but I used to really be cutting grass on the weekend just to get money.

Interviewer: But, they didn't know that.

Kyng: Yeah. They just used to think I was in the streets doing other stuff. I used to cut grass. I used to go rake people grass for money just to put money in my pocket.

Interviewer: Good. The experiences that you had while in school. Were they positive experiences or negative experiences or do you have a combination of both?

Kyng: Combination of both. From the positive side, I was a good athlete so I would have stayed in school, I probably would have been somewhere. I don't know. I was real good in baseball. I'm still real good in baseball. I had got a scholarship in 9th grade. Then, I had messed up because of my surroundings then I start going down the wrong track. I got expelled from High School 4 because my sister got in a fight with this girl and her brother jumped in and then I had no choice but to jump in. That's really how I got expelled. None of them got expelled just me.

Interviewer: How did that happen?

Kyng: I had blacked out so I don't know what I was doing.

Interviewer: Wow.

Kyng: My sister stayed in school. Everybody else stayed in school except you.

Interviewer: Except you wow. Do you feel you were supported at home? Who supported you at home to help you stay in school?

Kyng: You talking bout now?

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, through middle and high school. What was your support system?

Kyng: Through middle school, my grandma, but when I got in high school that's when I met Makayla. She kept me on the right track. I ain't know who I was. I just used to follow the wrong crowd, but she brought me back to my

common sense. I start doing the right thing now I'm going to graduate and got a good job, supervisor, as doing good.

Interviewer: If you had conferences at school or you got in trouble who was that person that took you to the hearing office?

Kyng: My grandma.

Interviewer: Your grandmamma, okay. You mentioned she was your aunt, but you call her grandmamma or she's your grandmamma and you call her aunt?

Kyng: She my aunt.

Interviewer: She's your aunt so she's your momma's sister?

Kyng: My great aunt because that's her-

Interviewer: Got ya. Okay. Do you want to talk about your mom? Is she alive or-

Kyng: Yeah, she alive. I think I was in the 5th grade she had got locked up for something. She was selling stuff and she had got out when I got in the 11th grade, but I really didn't know her so it wasn't really nothing we can relate, but she call me now and then and I try to help her out.

Interviewer: Good.

Kyng: Get on her feet and stuff.

Interviewer: How bout your dad?

Kyng: I don't know the story, but he said my grandma kept me away from him. My grandma said he ain't want to come get me. It's just a lot of stuff, but now he in my life and he trying do a lot more. He tryna help me find my own apartment. He tryna help me now.

Interviewer: That's good. Basically, you were supported by your grandmamma throughout school, so she got you in elementary school?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Wow. So, did you maintain contact with your mom throughout or you lost contact with your mom?

Kyng: Lost contact.

Interviewer: You did lose contact? She came back maybe four years ago?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: About four years ago, okay. What about your siblings did they grow up with you?

Kyng: Oh, no, just my sister. She grew up in the household with me, but my brother he grew up with my father's mom.

Interviewer: Okay, so you and your sister have the same mom?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay, and your brothers have the same dad?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay. What is some personal experiences that you feel may have impacted your education?

Kyng: The type of crowd I hung around. I'll start focusing on sports and start focusing more on females hanging out in the streets just doing stuff I wasn't supposed to.

Interviewer: What made you make that switch, because you said in middle school you had pretty good grades?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Right, in middle school you had good grades.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: What was the change, just coming to high school?

Kyng: Yes ma'am. It was a lot more people and it was a lot more influences. I start focusing on the wrong things.

Interviewer: Okay. Will you talk briefly about your mom, because I was gonna ask what role did your parents play in your education, but basically your mom and dad weren't around, it was your grandmamma that kept you focused.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: And kept you through school. You're here as a choice. You did get into some trouble at the other school, but-

Kyng: Yes ma'am-

Interviewer: You've made the choice to do what was right and come here-

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: If you hadn't come here where else would you think you have gone?

Kyng: Before school started this year Ms ... I forgot her name at the hearing board-

Interviewer: Ms.-

Kyng: Yeah, Ms. She tried to keep me to go to adult education, because I ain't have that many credits because when I first got here I was in the 9th grade now I'm in the 12th grade. I told her I was going do it, but she ain't believe in me, but I tell when I graduate I'm a call her up and let her come. Now, I only need I think seven more credits and then I graduate. Prolly less than seven. I been working hard.

Interviewer: You been working hard.

Kyng: We got a computer lab at my job. I work at my job. I work all through the weekend, every night I go home before I go to sleep-

Interviewer: Wow, you're determined.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: What's your ultimate goal?

Kyng: I was going go in the military, but I don't know who the President right now so I don't know how I want to do it, but I want to be a entrepreneur

though and I want to have a organization like to get young males out the streets.

Interviewer: Good.

Kyng: When they come straight out of jail, I want to help em out like get em on the job.

Interviewer: Transitional housing.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: That's what it's called. That's good. You feel that this setting is proving to be more successful, why?

Kyng: I got me more on track. Nothing here phases me. Somebody can come up to me and say anything. It'll just go out the ear and go out through the other ear, because I'm so determined on graduating.

Interviewer: That's good.

Kyng: My ultimate dream, I really want to be a welder. I just want to be entrepreneur too, but like workforce, I want to be a welder.

Interviewer: Okay. Is it anything else you think regular school could have done or put in place that would have been beneficial to you?

Kyng: Like I said, it wasn't really them, it was me.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: I didn't want to abide by their rules and regulations, but if I did I prolly would have been somewhere in college, because I would have been graduated.

Interviewer: What was so hard about the rules?

Kyng: Nothing. I just ain't want to listen.

Interviewer: Just ain't want to listen. Okay.

Kyng: I was just focused on everything else except classwork.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyng: I used to focus on how I look at school, what the next person think about me. I just wasn't focused.

Interviewer: What you're wearing.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Which girl you're talking to.

Kyng: Now, I don't even care.

Interviewer: You don't care. Okay. Anything else you want to add or that you want to share? You mentioned a little bit about trouble, but did you get in legal trouble or just minor things?

Kyng: Both.

Interviewer: Both.

Kyng: I got in trouble one time for riding in the wrong car with a person. I still got charged because it was Middle School 7s of one Middle School 7s of all, but now they really dropping all the charges now, because they told me it was really on me. They wanted me to go back to school. They wasn't forcing me to. They was telling, "You just need to show us that you're better than this."

Over the summer, I had met Makayla best friend mother and she not a lawyer, but she go through they system. She really help me get on the right track. She live in the country and I asked to move with her so I can get away from the environment I was in and they got my head back on the right track.

Interviewer: Good. Did you spend an extensive amount of time locked up?

Kyng: No ma'am. I only went to military school. Youth Challenge Academy.

Interviewer: Okay. How long did you stay there?

Kyng: I graduated.

Interviewer: So, you graduated with your G.E.D?

Kyng: No ma'am. I had failed it by three points.

Interviewer: When you got to Youth Challenge, between which times?

Kyng: The 10th and 11th grade.

Interviewer: Between the 10th and the 11th.

Kyng: I had went around December and I think I graduated in July.

Interviewer: Okay, so you stayed about six months?

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: You did the six months. Okay. Even after that you was still determined to come back and get your diploma that says a lot.

Kyng: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: That's good. Anything else you want to add?

Kyng: I'm a graduate.

Interviewer: Graduate to make sure you can take care of your child to provide a better life. That's good. Okay.

Jq: He not spoiled.

Interviewer: That's really good.

Jq: He love everybody. You can pick him up he won't start crying. You know you got some babies that cry if certain people want em like if it ain't they momma or daddy or somebody they know they gone cry. ...don't do that. He just sit in your face, laugh, and want to play all day.

Interviewer: That's good. These are just a few questions about you. Tell me where you grew up as a child. You mentioned going to ... and then ... and then That mean you moved around town a little bit.

Jq: No, I ain't went to-

Interviewer: Middle School 3. I'm sorry Middle School 3.

Jq: Yeah, Middle School 3. Like most of my family. A lot of my family from East Over, but my whole family really from Connecticut. I grew up in East Over as a child and once I got older. Once I left right at the end of elementary school when I was graduating 5th grade, we left and moved to Starlight off Bluff Road. We was staying up in there for five, six years if I'm not mistaken. Then, we moved from there and went to Bluff. We moved in Bluff Station after that went back to East Over.

Basically, I grew up in East Over all my life. Honestly, that's where I'm from if you want to ask. That's where I'm from. Down the street from your house.

Interviewer: Do you think where you're growing up had an impact on you in school?

Jq: Not East Over, but when I moved to Starlight and that's when a lot of the ... When I moved up there is when I got around a lot of gang activity and stuff like that. I can honestly say by staying down there it turned me out a little bit to a whole nother way of life. I tried my hardest not to stay in that way of life. Down in East Over I just stayed in my grandma house I didn't really grow up in the hood where everybody grew up at. I stayed down there in a poor town like in Town East Over, but I didn't live in to stay out there for long.

Excuse me. East Over, I really stayed around my family. My family, I grew up in Christian home. My grandaddy a preacher. I really wouldn't say me growing up around ... My lifestyle outside of school had an effect on what was going on inside the school.

Interviewer: You said it did or it did not?

Jq: It didn't.

Interviewer: It didn't.

Jq: At a point in time it did, but after while it was just that point in time when I moved to Starlight and I went to Cray.

Interviewer: That's what I was going to ask you.

Jq: Yeah, Middle School 3 Middle School. Basically, when I went to Middle School 3 Middle School that's when I start surrounding myself by the wrong crowds and doing all the wrong stuff. I stopped going to church all that. I couldn't tell you the last time I been to church other than a funeral.

I done been to my homeboy funeral, my daddy funeral, my grandma, my grandad on my daddy side. I had to grow up watching my momma get beat before my daddy passed. I feel like that had an impact on my life too. Watching my momma and daddy fight every night. It wasn't my momma it was just my daddy came home drunk every night and God Bless daddy, but ...

Interviewer: Those were some of the negative experiences. Did that have an impact on you in school?

Jq: Yeah. It did. It did, because around that time I was bad. I wasI was like my sister is now. My sister always been. From hearing so many people try to talk to me in school and not just in it. At home, I wasn't getting some of the conversations that I was getting at school. I wasn't getting em at home.

I looked up to some people in school as somebody that I can go to and talk to. Around the time when I started coming up around all the gang stuff when at Middle School 3. I got into a lot of trouble at school, but I still had people I could talk to that'll keep me from getting in trouble that I was walking into even though sometimes I still got into that trouble when they tried to stop me, because I had homeboys that really wasn't homeboys and they still talked me into doing what I was trying to ignore doing from the jump.

That's why I wish I didn't go to Middle School 3. If I could rewind I wouldn't go to Middle School 3. That's like my mom stopped me from going High School 5 ... She was still staying in Starlight when I went to High School 1, but I moved to the country with my grandma and granddaddy because I know I would have got in a lot more trouble at High School 5 than I did at High School 1.

I still got in trouble at High School 1 because I knew so many people. I knew people everywhere I went.

That's my momma calling me now.

Interviewer: Tell her you'll call her back.

Jq: Hello. She done hung up.

Interviewer: What are some things that positively impacted you at school, impacted your views about school? Everything wasn't negative you had some positive experiences.

Jq: The teachers talking to me. It was certain teachers that showed me that they cared about my education and my life. Even though I wasn't they child or kin to them or anything, they still talked to me and kept me on the right track. It was hard for them sometimes to talk to me, because sometimes I didn't want to talk. I ain't going sit here and lie and say I can't get like that, but at a point, if I get mad enough I'll turn into a whole nother person. I don't show that person though. I don't like nobody to see em. I don't want nobody even know that I got that side of me in me.

Interviewer: How do you control it?

Jq: Uh.

Interviewer: It's good that you're aware of it.

Jq: I control it by just keep my mouth closed. Music calm me down a lot. If I'm in school, I just put my headphones in and just go with the flow. Go with the music and just pay attention to me don't pay attention to nobody else. Do my own thing. That's why I said when I said early when we was in the first little interview about the music situation. Music calm me down a lot. When I'm at home, when I'm cleaning up I turn the music on. I clean the whole house if I got the music playing. That and talking with somebody that I'm comfortable with talking to. At this school, I can honestly say Mr. Cain, Mr. Aye, Jones.

Interviewer: Good.

Jq: I can talk to you too, because we done had our times at High School 1

Interviewer: I just used to fuss at you to go to class.

Jq: Yeah, that's it. That's why I said I can talk to you. You gotta show me for me to show you basically what I'm saying. I know I'm a child and all that, but in order for you to get what you want to get out of me you gotta show

me that you can be the person that I want you to be. If you can't be that person I'm not going to talk to you. I ain't going to tell you. I ain't going to do what you want me to do. I'm being hard headed. Ain't going to be nothing that you could tell me.

Interviewer: Who do you feel supported you? You mentioned your grandmomma, your momma, your granddaddy-

Jq: I can honestly say my whole family supported me, but-

Interviewer: Good.

Jq: It was just that one thing that I was missing, the whole time is support from my daddy. My daddy been locked up majority the time of my life. Like 10 years of my life, my daddy was locked up. He came on and he passed three years after him being out of jail.

Interviewer: Wow. How old were you when he died?

Jq: 14.

Interviewer: That was why you were in ... You just made high-

Jq: I was at Middle School 3-

Interviewer: Oh, you was in middle school.

Jq: Yeah, I was at Middle School 3. My daddy passed 2011. It was probably in the middle of 8th grade year.

Interviewer: You didn't have him elementary and middle school really in your life.

Jq: Mm-hmm (negative). All I had was my momma, my uncles, my granddaddy, my brothers. That's about it and the males that was surrounding me in school like resource officers. I had certain resource officers that was cool at Middle School 3 I had Officer Brick. He was cool. I went through a couple of little programs. I had to go to Alvin S. Glenn. I had to take the little trip to Scared Straight, but they weren't recording it when I went. It wasn't like it was now. They ain't had us on record. It was just a little trip back then, just a little program. The thing about it when I went, because my uncle was locked up. I went back there and I talked to him.

Interviewer: You were able to see him?

Jq: Yeah, I went ... on top of him. If it weren't for him I would have flipped out in there. They was just doing the most in there. I can't go back on that trip no more.

Interviewer: Going there was a place you knew that you didn't want to stay for an extended period of time.

Jq: I went my 10th grade year High School 1, I think, when I got into that fight in the bus loop in High School 1 gas station. I had to go to jail for that. I had to go to jail for that, because the boy filed a restraining order on me. He filed a restraining order on me and he sued me or something like that. I had to pay \$2,000 back for that. I had got assault and battery charge.

Interviewer: How long did you stay?

Jq: I just had to go sit in jail for 10 hours. I ain't went to prison or nothing. I just had to go sit in there for 10 hours and I ain't like it just sitting in there. It was boring. It was stank. It wasn't clean in there. No nothing. I ain't use the bathroom the whole time I was in it.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jq: I held everything, word. I ain't eat none of they food. I ain't drank nothing. I don't want nothing that y'all got going on here. Y'all lucky if I'm sitting down here. Y'all lucky I'm sitting down here. Y'all chill. That's how strict I am about my hygiene and all that period. Ain't nothing. I can't.

Interviewer: Wow. Is there anybody you feel that didn't support you?

Jq: No. Throughout my whole like, people done told me stuff that'll help me not hurt me. I can honesty say no. It wasn't nobody that wasn't in for me and didn't influence me to do what I had to do.

Interviewer: You mentioned your friends. Talk to me about some of your friends, because you've chosen to be on the path and go right and do what you need to do to finish.

Jq: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: What are some of your friends doing? How did you pull yourself away from them? That's a better question.

Jq: I pulled myself away. One thing I can honestly say that made me pull myself ... It really ain't too many things that can make you do nothing, but when I had my little boy it gave me a different look on life. I had to look at the priorities I had to deal with and what I had to get straight in life. I had to do what I had to do. Certain charges right now on my record just for being around homeboys that influence me to do the wrong things instead of doing the right things when I'll say something about the right thing and they still talk me into doing what's wrong.

My first charge I caught at High School 1 with my homeboys. They talked me into leaving school. I said, "We can just wait after school to go do what we was going do." They wanted to go head on and leave so we went on head and left. Me, being dumb following up listening to em. I left right along with em. Not even 30 minutes to a hour later eight cops and the whole police department pull up on us. I had to go to jail. I caught some possession charge. I was about to have to go to jail, but I didn't. Only thing that saved me from going to jail was some little thing they had going on at the school, but I was going to go to jail that day and I took the charge for everybody and ain't nobody help me out on that.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jq: I had to pay everything by myself. I took the charge. They record clean right now. My record messed up.

Interviewer: Where are they now?

Jq: Not doing what I'm doing. One of em he sell gas. One of em selling food that they cook at they house. This all I know of them. I don't be around them to really know what they do or not, because I separated myself. Like ***, you won't see me with nobody. I be by myself. If you gone see me with somebody it's going be Cameron and Jennifer. That's every now and again, because she always working, I'm always working. I work at night and she work in the day time, so it's going be rarely that you see us with each other.

I go see her on breaks and stuff like that, but I stay to myself because when it come down to it at the end of the day only person got me is

myself. They don't got me. I had to realize that for myself. I realize that that day I caught that charge and when I had to go to court and all that stuff ain't nobody give me know money. I took the charge for them and it wasn't my property.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jq: Basically, I had to realize stuff on my own. My people talked to me about it and was telling me not to do it, but me being a hard head I ain't want to listen so these exact words came out they mouth, "Since you don't want to listen then you'll learn the hard way." I learned the hard way. Now, I gotta charges on my record that I'm trying to get rid of.

Interviewer: You probably can get some of em expunged.

Jq: I can it's just one of em it's mandatory for it to stay on my record for sevens years or plus.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jq: That's the possession charge that I had caught with. You're recording.

Interviewer: Yeah, you don't have to call names.

Jq: Oh, okay.

Interviewer: You talked briefly about your dad being incarcerated. Do you feel that that impacted your life at all?

Jq: Yeah, because I feel like I needed him there to say certain things to me that a lot of other males in my life said to me, but I ain't saying I don't appreciate them for saying it to me, but I wish it was him that did say it. I ain't going sit right here and talk like I ain't talk with my father before. I done talked to my dad before plenty of times. I just wish those conversations could have lasted longer and you know what I'm saying, stretched a little further. I wish he could have been able to meet his grandson and stuff like that.

I feel like if he was around more I wouldn't have been in the position that I'm in with certain situations. I wouldn't have did some of the stuff that I done did if he was around more. You know? But, every girl need it too, but really a boy, every boy needs his father in his life.

Interviewer: That's good.

Jq: It's a big impact on they life for real. They momma could say a lot of things to em, that the daddy could say too, but it's just something about hearing it come out of his mouth than rather hers. You will hear a lot of stuff come out your momma mouth. Ain't too much that you gone hear come out your daddy mouth. When it do come out it feel good to hear it come out and it make you look at stuff a lot different. I look at my uncle as my dad. My uncle did a lot of stuff with me that I feel like my daddy should have been there for.

Interviewer: That's good.

Jq: A lot of stuff and still to this day. God bless dad, I know he ain't here to do it, but he could have been here doing it if he wasn't doing what he was doing.

Interviewer: Was your dad killed or?

Jq: Yeah.

Interviewer: High speed chase with the police. Doing what he wasn't supposed to do, basically.

Jq: I had just got out the car with him too, five minutes before. Not even five minutes before it happened. Prolly like two or three minutes for it happened.

Interviewer: Really?

Jq: I was going stay in the car with em. He dropped me off to my cousin house. He was going my grandma. I was going ride with him to my grandma house, but he dropped me off and literally after he left from my cousin house. My cousin house right here. He went up the road and busted right on the next road. When he got on that road is when everything happened. Soon as he dropped me off. We was still out the door like, I heard the collision. I heard everything. I didn't think it was him though.

Interviewer: Was that in Eastover?

Jq: Mm-hmm (negative). This happened in the city of Columbia area like over there off South Kilbourne. It happened on South Kilbourne, matter of fact.

It was like a police officer was sitting right there in front South Kilbourne Elementary. You know where that's at?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Jq: A police officer was sitting right there. My dad was going up South Kilbourne and he must have been floating or something. It was something he was doing. Police started chasing him. He ain't had his driver's license and stuff. He was drunk. Probably had all kind of other stuff on me. ... or whatever. I went to the crime scene and if you ask me from the looks of everything. It looked like the police officer hit my daddy into the oak tree, but the story that they say is that he ran into the oak tree. He was going down this hill like 50 mph and he turned his lights off so the police wouldn't see him going down the hill and he went head on into a tree.

If you go to the crime scene and see everything, you could see the tire marks turning the curve and it stopped in front of the tree and the police officer that was on the scene she didn't show up in court and she left the scene. So, you tell me what that sound like to you? That sound like ... Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jq: It sound like she did that. That's why I think it happened like it happened. That's why my sister the way she is, my daddy. She ain't have no father figure in her life like she was supposed to. She off the chain now. I can't even control my sister. Ain't nothing I can do. I done tried. I done tried fighting her. That's my little sister. Can't nobody tell me I can't fight my little sister. I don't fight her like she a dude or whatever. I do what a big brother supposed to do. I ain't say I beat like ... I put my... on her to try to show. I don't do too much though. Jessica the type to fight back. Jessica going fight back and show you that she ain't scared of you. I won't even try to fight no police officer. I don't even got the guts to do that. You won't catch me trying to start no riot at no school, especially Alternative School at that. No, you will not catch me doing that.

Me and her got the same father. Me and her got the same momma and daddy. My oldest brother got a different daddy. Both of them worser than me.

Interviewer: I thought your older brother. I was going ask you, you had a older brother. You got one brother that's older than you.

Jq: Yeah, Jameel.

Interviewer: Then, it's you.

Jq: Then my little sister.

Interviewer: Than Jessica. I thought he was doing good.

Jq: Yeah, he is doing good, but my brother temper way shorter than mine. I got a bad temper, but my sister temper worser than all ours. It's to the point right now, Ms. Hursey, my sister ... The medicine that they give for ADHD, my sister had the highest that it don't work. It don't work and she had the highest that you can possibly get. It do not work.

Interviewer: What is she doing now?

Jq: She got a little job. She can't come back to high school. She can't even get her diploma.

Interviewer: She have to get her G.E.D.

Jq: She don't got enough credits to even come back to try and get it, because she just turned 19 Friday.

Interviewer: She can get her G.E.D.

Jq: Yeah, can get her G.E.D, but she can't get her diploma and it's sad, because she my little sister. She the youngest and you ain't got no credit at all. You don't even got no credit to come back to school get your diploma. That mean you was in school this whole time and not ... You was just in there just to be there. You wasn't in there doing what you gotta do. I was in there. I got in trouble too. I can't talk like I ain't get in no trouble, but I got work done to the point where I came back to school and I had ... She too old. She won't earn all the credits that she need to graduate before she turn 21. That's the reason she can't come back to school right now.

Interviewer: You're here completing yours in this setting, because you felt that you had too many distractions-

Jq: Yeah-

Interviewer: In traditional school. Okay.

Jq: I got some to live for. I got a child to think about, so a diploma is a big part of my life. Without a diploma knowing who in the chair now. Diploma you need that.

Interviewer: You need it, plus more.

Jq: I mean you needed it before, but now knowing who in the chair, Trump, it's going to be way harder for blacks to even try to get a job even his own kind, really, because he done turned against them too.

Interviewer: Yep.

Jq: I seen that myself. This a Republican state, but they like ... No man. I ain't trying to take no chances. I'm going do what I gotta do for my family and I want to get my diploma make my momma proud.

Interviewer: That's right.

Jq: My momma stressed about a lot of stuff. My momma just had an aneurysm not too long ago.

Interviewer: Oh, no.

Jq: It because of my sister. My sister ran my momma crazy man. My momma think about my sister dearly every day. I know it's on her mind 24-7. She ain't got to think about me and my brother. Me and my bro. I see my momma everyday. I don't stay with her but I see her everyday. My oldest brother live with my momma, but my sister ...

Interviewer: Wow. You said that this setting was proving to be more successful to you, because it's less distractions, it's smaller, you get better one-on-one attention.

Jq: Yeah and they don't go by the district. They don't teach how the district want them to teach. I ain't saying they teaching wrong, but they teaching in a better way. They teaching in a way that we can understand. You got some students ... I ain't saying some students dumb by saying what I'm bout to say, because I'm one of these students. I rather Jones teaching me

the way he know in his mind than teach what they know ain't out of the book. I know everything come from the book, but you can put stuff in your own words and in your own ways to make it sound better to the next person or to make it look better or make it more understanding.

Interviewer: Is it anything else in regular school that could have been put in place to help you? Any additional supports that might have been ...

Jq: I prolly would say if I had my own one-on-time with all my teachers that prolly would have helped. I rather, and honestly, I'd rather do work ... Say if Jones when I first started him it was just me and three other students in it. I can concentrate way more. I'll put myself in the little things that go on in class. Say if it's a class full of students. I'm not going act in none of the activities. I'm not, that's just me, but if it's like four people in there like Jones's classes just me and four other people. I'll participate in anything.

Interviewer: Okay. In regular school is there anything else could have been done to be more beneficial to you?

Jq: No, not really, at all. Like I said just now one-on-one time with my teachers prolly would have been the only thing to help me out. I would have got more work done. I would sat in class that whole day not doing nothing with the whole class and then later on that day after school when it's just me and him I get everything done, plus more if I had to.

Interviewer: Okay. What's your ultimate goal? I know you want to get your diploma, but what's next?

Jq: I wanted to go to tech or one of em just to get my certificate for my truck driver's license, my CDL.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jq: And do that. I ain't trying drive trucks, because I don't want to travel too much. I just want to fix on em, because I like fixing on cars and stuff like that. I do that all day at my house.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jq: That's all I do that's why I don't really come out like that. That'll take my attention away from a lot of things too. It's a lot of stuff take my attention away from doing stuff.

Interviewer: I'm can turn it off. Anything else you want to add about the interview?

Q and Jalen Focus Group

Interviewer: Okay. Tonight is Thursday, November 16th, is that right?

Q: Yes, ma'am.

Jalen: Yes, ma'am.

Interviewer: And I'm here with Q and Jalen, two gentlemen that are going to participate in this focus group for me. Can both of you take some time to talk to me about your education, what schools you attended, elementary, middle, high school? Just give me some information about the schools that you've attended.

Jalen: I attended numerous a bunch of elementary schools.

Interviewer: Tell me about your elementary schools.

Jalen: My first elementary school I started going to is Elementary 6. It was kind of sort of good because you got to take naps and stuff, and I like taking naps.

Interviewer: That's kindergarten.

Jalen: That's one. Then it taught me a lot of stuff that I needed to know until this day. Then I went to Elementary 4 . They taught me a lot, too. I used to be up on the morning news.

Interviewer: Really?

Jalen: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Where else did go after Elementary 4.

Jalen: Then I went to Elementary 7, and I left to Orangeburg, and went to another school up there.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of that one?

Jalen: It's called Elementary 8.

Interviewer: Yeah, I heard of Elementary 8. Okay.

Jalen: Then I went to Middle School 5. Then from Middle School 5, I came back down here, and went to Middle School 3, and I went to Alternative School. Then I went to High School 5, and then I came here.

Interviewer: That was your last high school, High School 5?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay. Jalen, how was your progression through school?

Jalen: I think it was, I guess it was like average. It was kind of straight.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, I got..

Jalen: I rate it on a scale like a 7, 1 through 10.

Interviewer: Okay. Q, how as school for you?

Q: For me, elementary school, my first elementary school I went to was Elementary 9 Elementary School. I did from like I think the third, I mean from like the first, maybe the second grade. Yeah, I started in the second grade at Elementary 9. I don't remember what school I went to ... Oh yeah. I went to Elementary 10.

Interviewer: Elementary 10. Okay.

Q: I went to Elementary 10 from like Pre-K all the way up to like second, first grade. In second grade they moved me over to Elementary 9 cause we moved on Briar Road. That's originally where I'm from too. I'm from Briar Road, so yeah, we moved to Briar Road and I started going to Elementary 9 Elementary School from like, I think from like second grade up to my ... Say from like second grade up to like my fourth grade year I think.

My fourth grade year I got kicked out cause I brought a ... first time I got kicked out I got sent to the hearing board in the fourth grade cause I set the bathroom on fire. Dumb stuff. Little kid stuff, playing with a lighter, set the bathroom on fire and set my desk on fire. They sent me to the hearing board. Me and my momma missed the hearing board meeting but they told my momma I can come back to school so I I think I got expelled for like

17, no for like 17 weeks, or 17 days. Something like that. Something. Something like that. It was so long ago.

Then went back fourth grade. Finished my fourth ... because I got expelled I had to redo fourth grade again, so redid the fourth grade. That put me a year behind and my birthday in January so I was already a year behind so that made me two years behind. I went to the fifth grade and messed around and got in trouble again. As a matter of fact, third grade was when that happened, when I did the fire thing.

So I got in fifth grade and got in trouble again. In fifth grade I brought a knife to school and somebody told on me and I got expelled for that too. Went to the hearing board again. They said I couldn't go back to that school. I couldn't go back to Elementary 9. So after that I moved to Florence with my daddy and I went to Elementary 11 in Florence. I stayed with him for like a year. I ain't like it down there so I moved back to Columbia with my momma.

My sixth grade year I started at MMBA, Midlands Math and Business Academy, over there in front of Adult Education. They closed now though, but it was in front of Adult Education by the police station. I went there my sixth grade year. I did sixth grade. I ended up doing a program where I was at Royal that got me skipped back up so I was in my right grade and when I got back down here to Columbia when I went to MMBA they messed around and didn't have the right transcripts so I had to do the sixth grade over again. So I did the sixth grade twice.

I did sixth grade, seventh grade at MMBA. I never did a eighth grade year cause I got skipped up. I got socially promoted cause I was already fixing to turn 16. I was 15 fixing to turn 16.

Interviewer: What school did that?

Q: Middle School 6.

Interviewer: Middle School 6. Oh you skipped Middle School 6. So you were at Middle School 6 too.

Q: Uh huh. I skipped Middle School 6.

Interviewer: So when you got to Middle School 6 you were socially promoted to high school. So you never really attended Middle School 6?

Q: No. I'm lying. When I came back from Royal I graduated from ... when I came back from Royal I graduated from Royal and then when I got back to Columbia I started going to Elementary 9. I mean, not Elementary 9, um-

Interviewer: MMBA.

Q: Middle School 1. I went to Middle School 1 my sixth grade year. When that summer came around and the next school year came around that's when I did the sixth grade over at MMBA, cause I got kicked out of Saint Andrews. They said I couldn't go there no more. I don't remember what I did, but they said I couldn't go there no more. So I did the rest of my years at MMBA. I did sixth grade over and I did seventh grade at MMBA. They had said since I did the sixth grade over and I wasn't supposed to, cause they didn't have the right district files at MMBA cause it was a charter, so they said cause I did that year over I could get socially promoted. I could get promoted up to the ninth grade, so I went straight from middle school, straight from the seventh grade to High School 2 in the ninth grade.

When I got to High School 2, boy it was a new experience. It was like more freedom and stuff. I got to High School 2 my ninth grade year. That's when I went ham. I just started doing crazy stuff, like skipping and all kind of stuff. I was skipping. I wasn't going to school. Then when I was there I wasn't ever in class.

Interviewer: So what are some of the school related factors that you feel impacted your decisions to come here.

Q: Getting kicked out of school. Getting kicked out of High School 2. I did ninth grade, tenth grade at High School 2. I was doing good but like every year, every year at High School 2 I'd just play around till it came till the end. Then I'd just do my work and go to summer school and I'd graduate to the next grade, and I did that for ninth grade and tenth grade. Then when it got to eleventh grade, the beginning of the last school year I got kicked out of High School 2 for selling weed. They kicked me out on the second day of school cause they had like evidence of me doing from the year before, so they kicked me out the second day of school, cause I guess they was already gonna kick me out the year before but they didn't catch me before the year was up. So they kicked me out and they sent me to....

I was like, I was gonna drop out after that, but then I was like nah, I'm just gonna stay and I'm gonna graduate. So my momma was like, the hearing board want to send you to Alternative School, but I refused to go to Alternative School. I ain't never want to go to Alternative School cause all my home boys went there. I ain't never want to go to Alternative School. They said it was like a jail so I aint never want to come here. So, my momma was like she gonna look around and it just so happens she came up on a paper one day in the mail for evening school. So she was like it's a night school. That way you could work in the day time and you could get a job, cause I always wanted to get a job but she said I was too young and I had to go to school in the day time.

She was like now you can get a job and you can go to school at night time. You get out at eight and it's only like four hours. It's from four o'clock to eighty o'clock. It's four hours, way less than regular school. With regular school you gotta go for eight hours. So I was like, I'll go to that school.

Interviewer: So Jalen. Let Jalen tell me, what factors impacted you coming here?

Jalen: What made me come here is, aight, to be for really, my probation office, he put me ... he said what kind of school ... he gonna lock me up. But now, I like it here cause it's kind of cool. It's kind of cool and I get my job, I mean I get my work done.

Interviewer: So that's my next question. What's different here than regular school?

Q: Yeah, that's what I was fixing to get to.

Jalen: Like the difference here between regular school is the hours.

Interviewer: The hours. Okay.

Q: The hours. You get more help. You get more help with your work cause there's less people in the class room.

Jalen: And then you ain't gotta worry about waking up at six o'clock in the morning.

Q: Yeah. I like the afternoon thing.

Interviewer: So you feel you get more individual attention, smaller groups, less distractions. What are some of the other things that-

Q: More individual attention.

Jalen: Less distractions.

Q: Less distractions cause it ain't really that many people in the class, so. But, that and this ... this a good school. I mean well it not really school cause this ain't our building.

Interviewer: More of a program.

Q: It's a good program. It's a great program. In fact, I'm not even gonna lie, it's a great program. I went from making all F'-

Jalen: I like it.

Q: Now I'm making A's and B's. I ain't never made A's and B's in my life. I'll put that on my grandma. I ain't made A's and B's in my life except probably elementary school. I don't remember none of that though. In high school when I was at High School 2 I was failing. Every year I was failing until I got to summer school.

Interviewer: Was it because you couldn't do the work or you just didn't do it?

Q: I wasn't in class.

Interviewer: You weren't in class.

Q: I wasn't ever in class.

Interviewer: The other group talked about people that helped them along the way. How do you all feel comparing your teachers here and there?

Jalen: Teachers at regular schools they don't like, there's more people in the classroom so they can't just give you that one-on-one teaching, and here they can really give you that one-on-one teaching cause there's like six people or seven people in your class.

Interviewer: What about you Q?

Q: I always been like a favorite teacher student. I was just bad cause I could be. I've always been a favorite teacher's student and you know these

teachers is the same teachers from all the other schools so I know these teachers already. I already knew the teachers.

Interviewer: Some of the students ... Okay let me ask you this. What about your guidance counselors? Do you feel that they helped you in any way?

Jalen: I never met them.

Q: I never talked to the guidance counselors. I ain't never been the type of person to explain my problems to nobody.

Jalen: I knew the guidance counselor from Flore, like she knew my name. I came and talked to her when she would fix my schedule and stuff, but I ain't never came to her class, went to her office and sit down.

Interviewer: What about your administrators?

Q: Yeah. My administrators helped me. See the thing about that, like I said, my administrators was always on me about doing dumb stuff, but at High School 2 they fired the whole staff at High School 2. They fired the whole administrative staff and they came over here to Alternative School. That's why like I said, when the next year came they kicked me out on the second day of school. They wasn't having it. The new administrators, they ain't know me so they ain't know what type of person I was. I guess the old administrators knew I was good or I could do good, I was just being bad.

Interviewer: What do you feel about administration?

Jalen: I feel like administrator, they like here to help you.

Interviewer: They're not are they are?

Jalen: They are.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jalen: Cause like if I'm up in the hallway they'll be like go to class or do your work. That's a good thing by telling me to class, cause in the hallway I'm not learning nothing.

Interviewer: Let me ask ya'll this one last question for the group. They talked about the age difference. Do you all feel you have a better relationship with the younger teachers or the older teachers?

Jalen: The younger teachers.

Interviewer: You feel like you have a better relationship with the younger teachers. Why is that?

Jalen: Because they can relate to some of the stuff you can relate to and the older teachers, they don't know the music that you listen to.

Interviewer: Q.

Q: Like I said, I always been a teacher favorite.

Interviewer: So it don't matter to you.

Q: It don't matter to me. I work at a club so I know how to talk to people. So as long as you respect me as a person, I respect you as a person.

Interviewer: That came out in other sessions. They mentioned respect and that they feel sometimes teachers don't always respect them so then that's when they shout back.

Q: They feel like we're not adults.

Jalen: They like...

Q: That's the one thing I hate, when somebody tell me I'm not. Not that I'm not an adult, but you feel me. Don't try to talk to me like I'm a sixth grader. I'm not a sixth grader. I work just like you work. You feel me. I pay bills just like you pay bills so respect me as a person, as an adult. You feel me.

Jalen: Like my teacher Mr. S I don't really like him like that.

Interviewer: But that's okay. As long as you respect him and do what you have to do to get out of the class.

Well that was it for the focus group questions, so I'm gonna stop-

Individual with Jalen

Now this is my individual interview with Jalen. Individual interview with Jalen.

Tell me about, we talked about the schools you attended.

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Talk to me a little bit about the geographical locations of the size of town that you lived on, and as growing up as a child.

Jalen: See, I grew up like in a wild neighborhood. It's called Godzilla's Garden. I heard gun shots.

Interviewer: What they call it, GG?

Jalen: GGP.

Interviewer: GGP. That's what I thought.

Jalen: I had been born and raised out there. I wake up every night. I hear gun shots. People can't even be outside at night time. They got a curfew out there now, but like, now they about to tear it down. Don't nobody stay out there anymore.

When I was growing up out there I lost my cousin. He used to always come to my house every day, till one day I had a basketball game. I came home. He ain't even show up. The next thing you know we find out he died out there. He got shot.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Jalen: He was 19. He was young.

Interviewer: Do you feel growing up in that area impacted your behavior or have an impact on you in school?

Jalen: I think it had an impact on me in school because people from the other side of town from Bluff Road or 48, if I come to school and they know I stay at Godzilla Garden, they'll try to fight me.

Interviewer: Just because.

Jalen: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Just because the neighborhood.

Interviewer: So did that have any effect on you with some of the behaviour things that you might have gotten in to?

Jalen: Yes ma'am. It caused me to to be in a lot of fights, and then it made me join a gang. But now I got out.

Interviewer: Good.

Jalen: Cause I ain't have time for it no more. Cause when got locked up, and none of those boys sent me nothing. Only person sent me something was my God-momma, and my momma, and my old teacher.

Interviewer: Wow. How long were you locked up?

Jalen: A whole year.

Interviewer: Really? Wow. Was it just Alvin S. Glenn or were you committed somewhere else?

Jalen: Alvin S. Glenn and then I went to SCDC.

Interviewer: Did you. So you feel once you got ... with the gang affiliation; did you get out of the gang before you went or after you came out?

Jalen: When I was back there.

Interviewer: When you were back there you got out of it.

Jalen: Yes ma'am, cause it met some other people like who was in the gang and they said if you want to get out now, it's your chance. So I just took that beating, have it jump me out.

Interviewer: Wow. At that point you realized that you were doing things with them in school, getting in trouble with your gang buddies in school, but then when the time, when you were committed to jail, they weren't there to support you.

Jalen: No ma'am.

Interviewer: What is it about being in the game when you were on this side that was enticing?

Jalen: All right. Like when you out, talking about like ...

Interviewer: Like before you went to jail and you were in the gang, what were the benefits of being in the gang?

Jalen: Oh. Like, there's really not no benefits.

Interviewer: Now you see it's not any benefits.

Jalen: It just be like you're a real gang banger. That's it. It still gonna feel the same. People don't even fight for you or nothing. They gonna fight you if they mad at you.

Interviewer: So then why join? That's what I'm trying to understand.

Jalen: I was young.

Interviewer: So get back into your young mind. As a young child, why did you feel that that as a good thing to do?

Jalen: I felt like they was gonna help me, cause I get bullied. I got bullied in elementary school by some big dude. I like in fourth grade. He was in fifth, but like I think he stayed back two times or something, cause when I got in middle school we attended the same middle school. He kept on messing with me till one day I told him straight up I'm a catch him after school. It was me, and my homeboy, and my cousin, and my brother. We found him down the street and started jumping him.

Interviewer: So that was like your gang group?

Jalen: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ya'll jumped the boy. Okay.

We talked about the different middle schools and elementary schools that you attended. What experiences you had in those situations that were good or bad that made you feel a certain way or school? Positive or negative.

Jalen: Positive.

Interviewer: What are some positive things that ... what are some of the positive things you that experienced in school?

Jalen: Some of the positive things that I experiences in school is when I had all A's on my report card.

Interviewer: So you were a good student.

Jalen: When I've been in seventh grade and I played basketball. I played sports for school and I ran track.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jalen: Then I was up in chorus, but I got out. I only been to chorus for like two days, and I got out cause I said I don't need no chorus. Cause I alread know how to seen.

Interviewer: Oh you are the one that told me you sing. You sing at church?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Oh, good.

Jalen: I be leading songs and all.

Interviewer: Really? Well you'll have to sing for me after this is all over.

Jalen: Okay.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you were supported at home? Did you have family support?

Jalen: Kinda, sorta. MY brother, he support me.

Interviewer: He's younger or older?

Jalen: Older. And then I'm kind of cool with my step=father, but then sometimes I'm not. Then my grandmother. She lead me positive ways, and my mother.

Interviewer: Well that is good.

How did they Middle School 7 you when you were getting into trouble?

Jalen: They used to tell me like they gonna take my game system away and tell me they ain't gonna give me no money. I used to try to be good to try to get money.

Interviewer: To gain it back.

Jalen: I ain't care about the game system. I wanted to money.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel you were supported at school? Did you have people at school to support you?

Jalen: Yes ma'am. My homeroom teacher, her name was something like ... at High School 5.

Interviewer: I've heard of her.

Jalen: She's very nice. She like, if I get into trouble in one class ... cause she had come up out the class to check up on me, and then she told my momma I need to sign up for anger management. So they put me in anger management classes, and I was up in there with a man named Mr. Love.

Interviewer: Did that help?

Jalen: That helped.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jalen: It helped for a little while, until they start making me be up in there all day so I stopped coming. I stopped coming to school.

Interviewer: You were changed to a self-contained class.

Jalen: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Oh.

Jalen: And I stopped coming to school. I told my momma, I don't think I'm a come back to school with they put me back in my classes, cause I gotta get my credit for my high school diploma.

Interviewer: Right.

Jalen: Then she been like, well you're gonna get charged with truancy if you don't go. I said well I'm a go, but I'm not gonna be in that class all day. I told my guidance counselor. She helped me change my schedule that same day. I been happy.

Interviewer: Wow, and you went back and earned some credits?

Jalen: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: So that teacher, that guidance counselor really, you feel like she supported you and helped you out?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jalen: Then they put me on 8-20-20.

Interviewer: To kind of get you caught up?

Jalen: Then they gave me some gym credits cause I ain't have my gym credit in ninth grade. Gym like the funnest thing, but I don't play volleyball. When they play volleyball, I don't like that.

Interviewer: You don't like volleyball?

Jalen: I play basketball.

Interviewer: What are some of the personal things that may have happened in your life that may have impacted or you know affected your school?

Jalen: When I lost my cousin. I went to school one day. He had clothes at my house. I wore his shirt and that made me sad because that been his favorite. He used to wear that shirt all the time. It got his grandma up on it, like a rest in peace picture. So I had to go buy one for him. I had to go buy a rest in peace shirt with his face up on it and then I got another part of the picture off his shirt and put it on the back of my shirt. That's his grandma.

Interviewer: Okay.

Jalen: When I wear it to school it feel like I be sad.

Interviewer: Wow. You mentioned step-dad. Did any of your movement or changes in school have anything to do with your mom and step-dad or where you live?

Jalen: Kinda. Like, if I get in trouble. When I used to be young he used to try to give me a spanking because he thought he my daddy. I say, uh uh, you can't hit me, cause you not my real daddy.

Interviewer: So you were raised by your mother and your step-dad?

Jalen: Uh huh. He tried to give me a spanking. I said no, but he gave me a spanking anyway.

Interviewer: You didn't like that.

Jalen: Uh-uh (negative). So I beat him up. I kinda beat him up, me and my brother. But we cool now a little bit.

Interviewer: Wow. So do you live with them now?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Well that's good.

Jalen: Sometimes I be gone on my own too. I be gone to the motel. I got this little house that this girl be making me come to.

Interviewer: What did your momma say about that?

Jalen: She be like, where you be at? I tell her I be at my homeboy's house when I really be at the girl's house.

Interviewer: So is the girl your girlfriend or just a friend?

Jalen: A friend.

Interviewer: Just a friend. Okay.

Now you mentioned, let me make sure cause I want to make sure I got it right, you went to ... So when you moved to these different schools where you living with your mom at that time and your momma was moving?

Jalen: No like, I moved from my momma's house and moved to my God momma's house in Orangeburg.

Interviewer: Okay. So your God mother is in Orangeburg.

Jalen: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Why did you go stay with your God mother?

Jalen: Cause she be taking trips. She be taking trips. She be going to Michigan and stuff and I like traveling.

Interviewer: Did that help you because when you were there, you didn't get in any trouble when you were there.

Jalen: No ma'am.

Interviewer: So why didn't you stay down there and finish out high school?

Jalen: It got boring in the country. It got real boring. I got tired of seeing chickens and cows and stuff. I got chased by a deer in the wood and so I couldn't deal with it no more.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jalen: She got this dog at her house. It change up on everybody in the house. It'll change up on her. It's a pit.

Interviewer: It's a pit. Okay.

Jalen: They'll change like at night time. If you go up int he kitchen at night, try to get a snack or something, it will get to growling at you. You will think the dog's asleep, but it get to growling. It chasing me all the way upstairs.

Interviewer: Wow.

Jalen: I been mad. I said I can't take it no more.

Interviewer: Wow. How involved was your mom in your education. You mentioned mom and your grandmomma. Who would come check on you at school? Who was there for your meetings?

Jalen: My mother, cause my grandmother she's elderly. She's like 70 years old.

Interviewer: Okay. So your mom. Well that's good. Why do you feel you're being more successful here?

Jalen: Because like I said earlier, this school it's like smaller, and then the time limit.

Interviewer: Okay. So do you work during the day?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Where do you work?

Jalen: Colonial Life Arena.

Interviewer: Oh good. So you get to see all the events.

Jalen: We got a new event on the 59th. The wrestlers come down here.

Interviewer: Wow. That's exciting.

Jalen: They had a famous lady came down here. The Pretender or something like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

What additional supports at High School 5 would have been beneficial for you? What additional things you think they could have done to maybe keep you there?

Jalen: They gotta give me some money. I just playing.

Interviewer: Do you think there's anything they could have done differently that would have kept you there?

Jalen: Uh-uh (negative)

Interviewer: So you think your transition to this location is all because of who you are and the things that you did.

Jalen: I like this school way more better.

Interviewer: You like this one. What's your ultimate goal?

Jalen: My goal is to ... I want like ... If I was at High School 5. I would have been playing basketball. I'd a probably got a scholarship.

Interviewer: Really?

Jalen: So now my goal is, I want to go to college and be a doctor, and I want to make music.

Interviewer: What are you doing now to work towards those goals?

Jalen: I put music up on YouTube and I attend school every day.

Interviewer: Okay, and you plan to graduate? Soon?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Do you know how many more credits you need?

Jalen: Two and a half, or three.

Interviewer: Oh that's not bad. Okay. Well make sure you invite me to graduation, okay?

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to add that you feel may help me with my research?

Jalen: Then, no ma'am.

Interviewer: Nothing else? Real quick, tell me about your grades. When you said you were in the seventh grade you made A's. So elementary and middle school you made A's. Your grades started dropping when you went to high school.

Jalen: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Okay, and that was because all the distractions.

Jalen: Yes ma'am. I stopped going to class and stuff.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Well I appreciate it. I really do thank you Mr. Burton.

Jalen: Yes ma'am. I can get some more candy?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Individual Q

Interviewer: Ride the city bus sometimes?

Q: Sometimes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Q: Get to work.

Interviewer: Oh, where do you work?

Q: I work at a club called Mynt Lounge and Bistro on Decker Boulevard.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know ... I heard of that.

Q: And now I'm finna start at Trojan Labor in the morning.

Interviewer: What's Trojan Labor?

Q: That's a labor company. They do construction work and stuff like that.

Interviewer: And how old are you?

Q: 18.

Interviewer: 18? Okay.

This is my individual interview with Quincy.

Stop it.

This is my individual interview with Q. Right?

Q: Yeah.

Interviewer: Q. Okay.

Tell me where you grew up as a child. Geographic location in Columbia.

Q: Broad River. Down Long Creek.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think growing up in this area had an impact on you in school?

Q: Everybody that went to my school was from that side. Was from Broad River.

Interviewer: Even though you went to High School 2?

Q: I ended up going to High School 2. After I got kicked out of Middle School 1, I ended up going to the alternative middle school and then my mom had to move, where ... She moved to... and that's when I started going to High School 2. I was going to Middle School 6, then I started going to ... Then I got socially promoted to High School 2. That was the closest high school out there.

Interviewer: Okay. Because you and I talked about it. You went to Elementary 10 as well?

Q: Yes, ma'am. Elementary 10. That was a long, long time ago, though.

Interviewer: Okay.

Q: That's when I was staying with my grandma for a little bit. When I was little, little, little. My mom was doing a ... She was working at ... The nursing home right there by Elementary 10, so I was going to Elementary 10.

Interviewer: Okay. So do you think where you grew up had any impact on your transition between schools and how you behaved, or how things went for you in school?

Q: Yeah, cuz the kids in the neighborhood ... I was always messing around with them in school, and getting in trouble and stuff.

Interviewer: Which neighborhoods?

Q: Broad River and Long Creek.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. What experiences have you had that have positively or negatively impacted your views about school?

Q: I don't know. My positive view was when I started coming to night school. They really want you to graduate, and so that make you really wanna graduate yourself. And seeing other people ... Watching other people graduate, man, it's just ... It's a good feeling. It's watching other people walk across the stage, and seeing all the love they get and stuff like that, that make you wanna walk across the stage yourself. Then my look at it, why would you even drop outta school if it's free? Cuz when you start ... When you gotta pay for it, then I understand, but it's free. You might as well go ahead and do it. That's how I look at it.

Interviewer: Who do you feel supported you at school?

Q: When I was at Middle School 1, Deputy Wilson. Deputy Wilson that work here. Him and Them two. They work here now. Them two, they always used to be telling me do good stuff. Other than that, it was my grandma. My grandma really, really smart person. She always ... She into reading and all kinda stuff. She always wanted me to do something good when I get out of school.

Interviewer: Anybody else in your family?

Q: My mama just wanted me to graduate high school. She said she don't care what I do after I graduate high school, but my grandma wanted me to go to college. My grandma wanted me to do something. My grandma wanted it. Cuz I guess ... Cuz she ain't do nothing, so I guess she wanted me to do something. She always been like that. She really-

Interviewer: What about your dad?

Q: My dad? I know my dad, and I see my dad from time to time. Just so happened I talked to my dad just a few days ago. Friday. I went to stay with him ... Only time I really stayed with my dad is when I went to Royall in Florence. But he moved back to Columbia. He don't really ... Other than me talking to him last week, he don't really ... He stay right down the street from us. He don't really talk to me or my brother, nothing like that. He don't really talk to us like that, so.

Interviewer: You mention your mom, and ... Were you raised with your grandmother too? Did y'all live in the same house?

Q: No. My grandma stayed with us for a little bit. For a little bit. I was in middle school then. She stayed with us for a little bit. My mama always been a type, you know, everybody in this family can come live with us, cuz that's how we was. If we ain't had it, we go stay with them. They ain't had it, they come stay with us. We're family, so.

Interviewer: Okay. You mentioned your brother and sister. How old are they? Are you the oldest?

Q: One brother is 15. On my mama's side I got one brother that's 15. He go to High School 2. He in ninth grade. He just started going there. He a good basketball player. Great basketball player. I got a little sister that go to a charter school. Her name Jasmine. She go to ... Imagine Leadership of Columbia. She.... Real smart. Good school, good school. She like ... I think Jasmine just turned eight. She been reading since she was like, two. She learned how to read when she was like, two. Right after she learned how to talk she learned how to read. Cuz my grandma taught her how to read, and then when she started going to Imagine, Imagine really ... She good. She smart. She smart. She just like my grandma. She smart.

Then on my daddy's side, I got a little sister that was just born. She one. And I got a little brother named Jason. They stay in Virginia. I think he seven. He younger than my sister. He seven.

Interviewer: Okay. Were there any family experiences you feel-

Q: Or he might be older than my sister. I think he nine. I think he nine. He older than my sister.

Interviewer: Okay. Were there any family experiences you feel affected your life in school?

Q: Yeah. Yeah. When my grandma died. My other grandma died. My mama mother, she died. When I was going to ... I think it was ... I was going to MMBA. The alternative school. She passed away from old age. That kinda hurt me for a little bit. I wasn't doing no work. I was being bad, acting out, stuff like that. Then my mama was talking about working some job where she'd go to Iraq or something like that, and be like a nurse, and she left do

the orientation, and I was acting out then too. I was acting out then. I was lying. I was telling them I was acting out cuz I was missing my mama. I was just being bad, just being bad. But I was telling them cuz I was missing my mama and stuff like that. Yeah. When my grandma passed that really hit hard to home.

Interviewer: Did your mom go to Iraq?

Q: No, she left outta town to go do the orientation and came back.

Interviewer: Who did you stay with while she was gone?

Q: My grandma.

Interviewer: Your daddy's mama?

Q: Yeah. My dad mama. Matter fact, we stayed with my dad mama for one whole school year, when she stayed on North Main. I was already going High School 2 then. That's when I was skipping and all that other stuff. I going to High School 2. That was my ninth grade year. My whole ninth grade year I stayed with my grandma. I forgot about that. I stayed with my grandma my whole ninth grade year.

Interviewer: And your mom had to drive you back and forth to school?

Q: I took the school bus.

Interviewer: Okay.

Q: The bus come pick you up from North Main.

Interviewer: What role did your mom play in your schooling? You mentioned your dad wasn't there very much, but how did your mom support you?

Q: My mom and my grandma. My mom and my grandma always helped me on my work, and stuff like that. Made sure and told me to go to class and go to school and stuff like that. But it wasn't up to them; it was always up to me if I wanted to do good and that. They was always behind me a hundred percent, all the way. My dad was too. Whatever I did, talked to him ... He didn't play about that, messing up in school, but it ain't like he was gonna come discipline me or nothing like that.

Interviewer: So how did you ... Why are you here? Was it your choice to come back here?

Q: This year?

Interviewer: Yes.

Q: Yeah, it was my choice. Me and my mama. We sat down. Like I said last time, when I was at High School 2, I was doing all kinda wild stuff. I was selling weed over there, I was skipping, I was doing stupid stuff. It just wasn't ... I wasn't making good grades. I was making good grades at the end of the school year. Every time summer school come round, I'd just go to summer school and I pass. I wasn't making good grades, but my grades is okay. I always pass with a C average, or something like that, but now over here, I'm making As. I'm making As and Bs. I ain't never made As and Bs in school. My mama says, "Since you doing good over here, you might as well stay over there". I said "Yeah, I might as well stay".

But just so happened I considered on going back to High School 2 this year. I was saying after January I was gonna go back to High School 2 for my senior year, cuz I wanted to do senior prom, and all that other stuff. We don't got senior prom over here. We don't got prom over here. We don't have no prom; we don't have ... I ain't wanna play no sports, but homecoming, stuff like that. We ain't got stuff like that over here. Pep rallies and stuff like that. We don't got that stuff over here. All there is over here is work. Work.

Interviewer: But someone from High School 2 can invite you to the prom and they'll probably let you come.

Q: Oh yeah, I know. I know, I know. I had invitations to the prom, but, just ... I wanted to be in school, man. It's not the same as being in school. Getting to see people that you went through ninth grade with, now you all finna graduate. It's over now. It's over. You all finna graduate. But I don't really care. I just wanna graduate. That's all I really care about now.

Interviewer: How many credits ... Do you know how close you are to finishing?

Q: I'm finna graduate. I'm definitely finna graduate. You guys ain't teach anything ... I'm definitely finna graduate. I'm gonna get my ... I'm accepted to two colleges. Hopefully, gonna be going on some more college tours,

it'll be some more. Every college I applied to, they accepted me. I done apply to Allen University. I knew that was gonna accept me. They just need my SAT score. I ain't took the SAT yet. And High School 2 C. Smith just told me ... came on a tour today was ... They looked at my scores and stuff and they said they might want me to come over there after they see my SAT score.

Interviewer: Wow. So why do you feel this location has been more successful for you?

Q: Cuz this a great school, man. Not this school, ...but night school. The program.

Interviewer: Right. The program.

Q: This program. ... If you wanna graduate.

Interviewer: Why> What is it about it?

Q: They help you. They help you with your work, and they wanna see you ... Other people wanna see you graduate and pass, and other people other than your family, cuz your family always gonna be behind you. That's unconditional love. But people that didn't know you before you came here? Now they look at you like they ... You they child. They want you to graduate. When you do something dumb outside of the school, they getting on you as soon as you get in here like they your parents. That just ... You can't find that nowhere else. I don't think.

Interviewer: That's good. That's good.

Is there anything additional that, say, High School 2, or High School 3, could have done differently to keep you there?

Q: I never went to High School 3. I wanted to. I wanted to go to Columbia High so bad.

Interviewer: So you only went to one high school? C.A. High School 2's been your only high school.

Q: Yes, ma'am.

Interviewer: Anything that High School 2 coulda done differently to keep you in C.A. High School 2.

Q: I don't think so.

Interviewer: That was all on you.

Q: Yeah, it was on me. It's a lot of stuff I coulda did differently. I could've went class ... Not been bringing drugs on their campus.

Interviewer: What's your ultimate goal? Once you finish here, you graduate, what's next?

Q: Get my business degree and my entrepreneurship. Get a degree in entrepreneurship and business, and probably get a master's degree in business, or something like that-

Interviewer: What kind of business do you wanna do?

Q: I wanna open up my own nightclub.

Interviewer: Okay.

Q: My mama is a great ... She used to be a manager at a few clubs. She owned her own club and she owned two or three clubs at one point in time. I feel like if I get the credentials to do it, she can set it up, and I know she could do it cuz that's how me and her live, breathe, and sleep, is work.

Interviewer: Wow.

Q: I know we could do it. That and a club ... People always gonna wanna come out and party. People always gonna wanna come out and get drinks. That's something that ain't gonna never end. I couldn't see it ending. People always gonna wanna come out, have a good time, so that's a ever spending money thing. You always gonna make money. That's like cars. People always gonna need a car. You always gonna make money if you do something with cars. You be a mechanic, you always gonna make money, cuz people always gonna be driving cars. People always gonna be going out to the club. I don't think that's never gonna end. It ain't never ended; I think it ain't gonna never end. So I feel like, if I open up a club, that's easy money. Already know what I'm doing. Already got the foundation to do it. Already got people behind me, people ... My bosses already said they'll put in money for me to go to college. They already said they'll set up my bank account and get my credit right, stuff like that.

Interviewer: Who's your boss for where you work now?

Q: Will Thompson. What's Tony last name? I don't know Tony last name, but-

Interviewer: That's who you work for now.

Q: That's who I work for, and the other one name DT ... I don't know his real name, but his nickname DT. DT owns several clubs in Columbia and Will own a tattoo shop on Two Notch and the club. Then Tony own a club and he the manager at Woodforest Bank. He the head manager at three Woodforest banks. They all graduated from college and all that other stuff, so I kinda look up to them, and then my mama.

Interviewer: Going to college is important. It's important.

Q: I know, that's why I wanna go. And it's a good experience. Even if I don't like it, it's a good experience.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Q: I don't care what college I go to to get the business thing, but after I leave ... After I do that college I wanna go to... University and get my ... Cuz I like music, and stuff like that. I wanna go get my studio technician degree. I wanna get a bachelor's degree in music production.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you talk to me about your friends? Cuz you didn't mention any friends, or people you hung out with in school.

Q: I ain't got too many friends.

Interviewer: No?

Q: They weren't friends. They was getting me in trouble.

Interviewer: So you don't communicate with them anymore?

Q: No. Unless they go here. Like...and them. I knew them since middle school. Somehow we all end up at the same school. We all usually get in trouble, cuz we all end up at the same school. But ... we finna graduate.

Interviewer: That's good. That's good. Anything else you wanna share?

Q: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you talk to me about your friends? Cuz you didn't mention any friends, or people you hung out with in school.

Q: I ain't got too many friends.

Interviewer: No?

Q: They weren't friends. They was getting me in trouble.

Interviewer: So you don't communicate with them anymore?

Q: No. Unless they go here. Like.... and them. I knew them since middle school. Somehow we all end up at the same school. We all usually get in trouble, cuz we all end up at the same school. But... we finna graduate.

Interviewer: That's good. That's good. Alrighty. Anything else you wanna share?

Q: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad Interviews

Interviewer: All right, this is an individual interview as well as an individual focus questions with Chad. So, we're going to go ahead and get started. Chad tell me about your educational pathway and what I mean by that is, the schools you attended elementary, middle, and high.

Chad: So, you want me to name the schools that I went to?

Interviewer: Uh-huh (affirmative), yes.

Chad: From elementary. Okay I went to one elementary school, I went toElementary.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: I went to two middle schools including Alternative School. I went to Middle School 4 and Alternative School. And I did my eighth grade year here twice and I did half my ninth grade year here and my eleventh year I went to High School 2. I got kicked out of High School 2 and then I went to High School 4.

Interviewer: When you got kicked out of High School 2 did you go anywhere after that?

Chad: High School 4.

Interviewer: So, you went straight from High School 2 to High School 4?

Chad: I got kicked out of there Friday and then Monday I was in High School 4.

Interviewer: But they didn't do hearing board, that's what I was trying to understand.

Chad: Oh no. Oh, I went to the hearing board like when I got expelled from, between those two.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. High School 4. What are some of the things, some of the related school factors that impacted your decision to come here?

Chad: See honestly, it wasn't a choice for me to come here. It was court, yeah it was mandatory that I come here because I was on probation when I got kicked out of High School 4. So, when I got kicked out of High School 4 I went to DJJ and when I got out of DJJ they sent me here and I've been going here ever since.

Interviewer: How long were you at DJJ?

Chad: Three months.

Interviewer: Okay, so that's just like the evaluation phase?

Chad: Uh-huh (affirmative) yeah. I was going to go back to High School 4 last year, no, yeah I was going to go back. I was going to go back this year but, I don't know why I didn't. Just use I thought it would be quicker for me to do it here.

Interviewer: So, what's different about being here then at High School 4?

Chad: The hours, first of all and the time. The time is a quicker pase. With High School 4 all our classes were year classes, year long classes. But the year long classes that are in regular high school, they're just half a year here so, everything moves quicker. You n get more credits.

Interviewer: Okay. What are some things that could of been done differently that might of impacted your educational pathway?

Chad: With me or in the school system?

Interviewer: Both.

Chad: With the school system I would have to say people judge me by my record.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: use the last two schools I went to they look at my record. Like High School 4, when they looked at my record to see the type of person I was, my first day at High School 4 they put me on contract then if I got anything like they n expel me. Like they didn't want me there from the jump so they got me out of there as soon as possible. But me, I would of changed my attitude and my disposition rather quick. That got me in a lot of the situations that I was put in.

Interviewer: Okay. Where did you grow up? Tell me about where you grew up. What area, size of town?

Chad: Greenview, born and raised. That's all I know.

Interviewer: Uh-huh (affirmative). So, do you feel being in that area had anything to do with your success in school?

Chad: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: That was all I knew.

Interviewer: Help me understand that.

Chad: When I said that was all I knew because my decisions that I made affected my school not because of the area I was in. Because the area I was staying in wasn't where my school was zoned for. So, I n't blame it on that.

Interviewer: So, you were staying there, so you were zoned for what school?

Chad: High School 2.

Interviewer: Okay. But, you didn't go to High School 2?

Chad: I went to High School 2. Okay, let me explain it to you. I was born and raised in Greenview. I stayed with my grandma for as long as I can remember. When I first left Alternative School.

Interviewer: You said your mom and your father and your grand mama?

Chad: Yeah. See, I didn't, it wasn't oh I did not even know if I could do.

Interviewer: Yeah you n do.

Chad: Okay but, so I didn't move with my mama until after I finally left Alternative School and went to High School 2. So, where my mama stayed she was zoned for High School 2. So, when I got kicked out of High School 2 I just went there with my grand mama.

Interviewer: Okay to go to High School 4?

Chad: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Interviewer: Okay. So, geographically where you lived had nothing to do with how things went for you in school?

Chad: No. It was all be because it wasn't, yeah it wasn't my environment or my surroundings it was just things in my head that I wanted to do.

Interviewer: That you wanted to do. And where did you, how do you feel you me to that point though? Was it association, experiences?

Chad: My past. A lot of things that I been through growing up.

Interviewer: Okay and that leads into my next question. What are some things that you've experienced, positively and negatively that impacted you?

Chad: Really the only, I'm going to give you an experience that both positive and negative. It's the same experience. I got shot in April, I got shot in my back. It was positive because after I got shot it made me look at life differently use before I got shot I was still in the streets, getting in trouble in school, not paying attention.

Interviewer: Why though? That's what I'm trying to understand.

Chad: Attention I guess. I don't know. When I was younger I was molested and raped and a few years after that happened I was admitted into the hospital and I was diagnosed with depression and post traumatic stress, that's the only reason why I n think that i'm like this or put in the predicament that I'm put in.

Interviewer: And so, I'll pick back up where you left off, you said being shot was good and bad because it helped you.

Chad: It helped me change my mental stability. Like it helped me really see what I really need to be focusing on like school. I was supposed to graduate in May. I got shot in April.

Interviewer: Wow.

Chad: Yeah. It just opened my eyes. Made me realize that what I was doing it wasn't.

Interviewer: The shooting, did it happen in your neighborhoods?

Chad: Not far from it.

Interviewer: Not far from it.

Chad: Not far from it.

Interviewer: Was it intentional or you just happened to be?

Chad: It was an accident.

Interviewer: It was an accident. Wow. So, it wasn't like you were in the wrong place at the wrong time or hanging out?

Chad: I really was in the wrong place at the wrong time but, hanging with the wrong people also. I should of never put myself in that predicament. When I got shot the whole situation was just wrong. I was never supposed to be there. First, I was in a stolen vehicle smoking. Yeah it was basically, yeah. It happened for a reason. Everything happens for a reason.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, that experience changed your views about school?

Chad: About life, period.

Interviewer: About life, period. Okay. Okay. All right. Who supported you at home? Do you feel you had support at home?

Chad: My mom.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: Sometimes.

Interviewer: How bout at school?

Chad: Yeah a lot of the administrators they were very supportive.

Interviewer: In regular school?

Chad: Oh, no. Like I said, my record it proceeds me.

Interviewer: Okay. But, what about before you, because you didn't always get in trouble.

Chad: I've been getting in trouble since seventh grade. So, I didn't really.

Interviewer: Go back.

Chad: Every year since my eighth grade year I been getting kicked out of school, every year. This year is my first time, this the longest I been in school since last year. I got kicked out of here last year. I was to press charges on me and all so, yeah getting shot that changed me a lot and I'm proud of myself.

Interviewer: Wow. So, you've come a long way.

Chad: Long way.

Interviewer: That's good. So your mom supported you to spite what all you were going through? Your mom still supported you.

Chad: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why do you think that was so?

Chad: I'm her oldest child and that's my mom. If nobody is going to be there for me, hopefully I would hope she would be.

Interviewer: When I say why, I know she should but, like you weren't disrespectful to her, she knew that.

Chad: Sometimes. Sometimes. I guess the reason why because she know what I was going through.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: And my mental.

Interviewer: So she knew that you needed that.

Chad: Yeah.

Interviewer: use sometimes parents will say, "I'm done." You know? And she didn't.

Chad: My daddy did. He said he was done. But my mama, she stuck with me.

Interviewer: Are your parents still together?

Chad: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting. That's interesting. What about when you were in school, let's think about a teacher, did you have any teachers that you feel supported you? You n think back to high school.

Chad: Miss H.

Interviewer: But that's here.

Chad: Not but, that's High School 2.

Interviewer: At High School 2. Okay. Why did you have a better relationship with her?

Chad: Like I said, I know I always been in trouble been getting in trouble but, some people they n see past that. They n see what potential I really have and what I'm capable of. She was my teacher so she seen what I n do and what I was capable of so she stuck with me.

Interviewer: That's good.

Chad: Even though I was still messing up, doing dumb stuff. But, she knew what I was capable of.

Interviewer: Why do you think you had a better relationship with her then say another teacher?

Chad: I don't know. She was just real cool and I guess she understood me.

Interviewer: Okay, that's what I'm hearing. You say she understood you so, do you feel that the younger teachers understand you better then the older teachers?

Chad: I don't know use she was kind of old.

Interviewer: You didn't say she old use we the same age.

Chad: I said kind of, well you all old. Man, I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No, I'm just kidding. use it depends on what peoples perception of old is.

Chad: I never knew how old she is so.

Interviewer: Like forty something.

Chad: Like forty something, okay well she's old use my mama is forty-one and she's old.

Interviewer: Oh, so you consider that old?

Chad: Yeah. Maybe use she's my mama.

Interviewer: So, the younger ones, the younger teachers would be somebody that's right out of college, with your understanding?

Chad: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Interviewer: So, you feel that the, her age range is been more understanding then the young ones?

Chad: Yeah because they, I guess she seen it a couple times. She's seen people like that. She n just pick it up, sense it I guess.

Interviewer: And having a relationship.

Chad: Yeah, Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: What do you think she did to develop a relationship with you?

Chad: I don't know. Help me with my school work. We just talk, we clicked right off the bat.

Interviewer: Okay. That's good. And you couldn't do that with some of the other teachers?

Chad: She was really like the only class I really went to, would go to.

Interviewer: Wow. You feel comfortable with her.

Chad: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: The next one you kind of touched on and you don't have to go into any detail. You don't even have to talk about it anymore, my next question was what personal family experiences you feel impacted your life and explain how these have impacted your education? So, if they had an impact on your life did it then in turn affect where you went to school or how things happened for you in school? And you've kind of eluded on it a little bit. Okay you don't have to go back over it. What role did your mom play and your dad in your education?

Chad: My dad, he was always the one that tell me I wasn't going to be nothing, I wouldn't graduate high school, I was going to be in jail until I was eighteen. I'm eighteen now and I'm still here. He was just the type that always down me, always. My mom, she would be the one to try to pick me up and be like, "Don't listen to what your daddy's saying, he's just mad." My mom, she's always been there. She's always been very supportive.

Interviewer: Good. Good. Why do you feel completing your education here is proving to be more successful? You mentioned the time, what are some other factors that help you here?

Chad: n you like explain a little more what your question is?

Interviewer: Like you weren't successful at High School 4, you had problems at High School 4, you had problems at High School 2.

Chad: Why am I a little bit more successful here?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Chad: I would have to say the environment. There's not as many people and a couple of people that's here, we're here for the same situation. We all have something to relate to. It's not a big group, it's smaller groups. Like I said, the classes and how they do it it's a faster process.

Interviewer: Okay, and that's what I was asking. What additional things you feel could of been done, let's just say in the perfect world you were back at High School 4, could High School 4 of done anything differently to keep you there or provide you any support?

Chad: Probably not.

Interviewer: How about High School 2?

Chad: A little more stricter. If High School 2 was stricter I would of last at High School 2. So, I got kicked out of High School 2 for truancy. It was so easy to leave off campus and come back on. It was too lenient.

Interviewer: Okay. When you talked about teachers, Miss H supported you and you don't have to ll anybody else's name but, how do you feel about guidance? Did the guidance counselors support you at either school?

Chad: I didn't really, and I was only at High School 4 for eight days.

Interviewer: Okay. How about High School 2? High School 2 was a smaller school.

Chad: But, I didn't really never went to, yeah. Never had to do that till I got kicked out.

Interviewer: What about your administrators? Do you feel that they supported you?

Chad: For the most part.

Interviewer: Okay. You didn't talk much about friends and socialization. n you talk about that a little bit?

Chad: I mean, I'm cool with everybody. Everybody know me, everybody knows my name but, I don't deal with everybody.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: I don't hate, but we n laugh or whatever but, as in like real cool sitting down having a conversation, none of that. I had one friend and she's in college.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you didn't have, like some students may say, "Me and so and so and I would leave, cut today. Cut class together."

Chad: Oh my sister. My god sister. We got a truancy charge together and that was it. Me and my god sister.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: Me and her.

Interviewer: So, being with someone else. You sometimes did things that you weren't supposed to do or leave school?

Chad: And then the crazy part is, it's the other way around. She would do stuff she didn't want to do because of me.

Interviewer: So you were the leader?

Chad: Yeah, basically. It always been like that.

Interviewer: And what is she doing now?

Chad: She graduated.

Interviewer: Good.

Chad: Trying to get in college. Trying to get a job.

Interviewer: And what's your ultimate goal?

Chad: To graduate, first and foremost.

Interviewer: What's next?

Chad: I'm going to take a year off of school most definitely. I need a break. I'm thinking about going to be an RN.

Interviewer: use we talked about nursing.

Chad: Yeah, RN nursing.

Interviewer: That's good.

Chad: use I'm already in the health re field so.

Interviewer: Because you work at night you said.

Chad: Yeah. I work all different shifts but, whatever time I'm a caregiver.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you have that passion for helping people which is a good thing.

Chad: Since I got shot yes because if it wasn't for the nurses dealing with me and my mouth while I was in the hospital.

Interviewer: How long were you in the hospital?

Chad: Two weeks.

Interviewer: Wow. Is the bullet still lodged in your back?

Chad: No. It broke in half and they took both halves out. I had two different surgeries. Yeah they got both halves out.

Interviewer: But it still uses you pain because.

Chad: Most definitely, I got shot dead in the center of my back. It missed my spine by like, how much is this seven centimeters? But if you look at gun shot it looks like it hit me on my spine.

Interviewer: Wow. You were in the hospital for two weeks? That's amazing.

Chad: The only reason I had to stay so long was because my lung had collapsed and they had to work it's way back up and get all the fluid off of it. They couldn't send me home like that.

Interviewer: Were the people charged or you never knew who did it?

Chad: I got shot by my homeboy.

Interviewer: Oh.

Chad: That's why I said it was an accident.

Interviewer: Okay.

Chad: So, no.

Interviewer: Okay. Wow. That's amazing. Do you, are you still friends with that person? Do you socialize?

Chad: We talk all the time, all the time. That's my birthday twin, we have the same birthday and all.

Interviewer: Wow.

Chad: I got shot literally a month before my birthday. I got shot April fifteenth, my birthday is May fourteenth.

Interviewer: Wow. That's, I n tell that that experience just changed your life completely.

Chad: It did.

Interviewer: That's good. That's good.

Chad: I'm glad something did use of how I don't know.

Interviewer: But, see you have a story to tell and other stuff that impacted you even before the shooting that when you finish and you have time you should go and talk to other young people.

Chad: Yeah.

Interviewer: To help them out.

Chad: A lot of people tell me that.

Interviewer: Uh-huh (affirmative) Because talking and writing, you know, you n take that journal and write it and you don't have to share it with me but, a lot of times

writing helps people deal with whatever it is that they. You know, just a way to release and reflect on things that have happened and you never know who you would of helped. You could turn it into a book. use you all got a story and that's what I said this is about me and everybody, listen to you all's story because every child has a story. Every person has a story. I have a story and you know, just hearing the stories and we could probably talk for an hour and go into a whole lot more detail and stuff like that. It's just interesting to hear things that have happened in somebody's life that have led them to where they are. Regardless if it's good or bad, any experience you have has resulted in who you are. And it's good that you have people around you to support you and help you make it through.

Chad: Well, it's not always like that though. But, you're right.

Interviewer: But, you said you always had your mom?

Chad: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Interviewer: Yeah.

Chad: But, my mama was always at work.

Interviewer: Oh.

Chad: So, I really just had me.

Interviewer: Okay. You had younger sisters or brothers?

Chad: I have a little sister, she's fifteen. She got to High School 4.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. Okay. Well I appreciate you talking to me Chastity.

Interviewer: I want to make sure I understand it, then. You went to Middle School 4.

Chad: I got kicked out in my eighth grade year for assault, so they sent me to ... I went to the hearing board, and they sent me to Alternative School. I was at Alternative School for a couple months, and I got kicked out again my eighth grade year.

Interviewer: From Alternative School.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), they didn't let me come back. I me back the next school year, and I was still in eighth grade. I stayed, and I got kicked out again, and they let me come back. That was my ninth grade year. I stayed for a couple of months, then I left.

Interviewer: You left Alternative School.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and went to High School 2.

Interviewer: See, that's interesting how you got kicked out of Alternative School, and then you automatically went back to High School 2.

Chad: No, I stayed there. Once I got kicked out of Alternative School, they brought me back and I stayed for a couple of months.

Interviewer: Into your ninth grade.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Got you.

Chad: Then, I went to High School 2.

Interviewer: At Alternative School, you might have stayed here from August to December or January.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Then, you went to High School 2, okay ... Then, you went to High School 2, and you did ninth grade at High School 2.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), ninth and tenth grade. I've been going here since my eleventh grade year ... Tenth ... And my tenth grade year.

Interviewer: You went to High School 4 for a hot minute.

Chad: Eight days; I got kicked out and went to jail.

Interviewer: Then you me back. From High School 4, you me straight to the evening school.

Chad: From High School 4, I went to jail and then the evening school.

Interviewer: The DJJ, they sent you to the evening school.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: You know, sometimes when people leave DJJ, they send them back to Alternative School, too. Maybe it's because of your age.

Chad: It's because they're tired of me going, probably.

Interviewer: Did you go back to the hearing office when you got out of DJJ?

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's why I ended up going to evening school.

Interviewer: Yeah, so then they sent you to the evening school, which was probably a better fit for you. You didn't want to come back to ... Coming back here, you would have been with the same administration you had there.

Chad: At Alternative School? I mean, at-

Interviewer: At High School 2, because that's who's here now.

Chad: Who?

Interviewer: Mr. White.

Chad: Mr. White? That's who kicked me out.

Interviewer: That's who's at Alternative School during the day.

Chad: Oh, no. That's crazy. I'm glad they didn't send me back there. That wouldn't have been pretty.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, he's the principal, Mr. M and Mr. W.

Chad: Oh, Mr. W, yeah, the little mini-me.

Interviewer: They're here during the day.

Chad: Oh, no. What happened to Mr. ?

Interviewer: He's at the career center.

Chad: What are you trying to figure out?

Interviewer: What is that? Who is ...?

Chad: It's my little sister's birthday, April 5th, 2001.

Interviewer: That's pretty.

Chad: I got blessed the second day I got out of the hospital.

Interviewer: You're blessed?

Chad: Very; everybody, "You lucky, you lucky." No, I'm blessed.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative), what's this one?

Chad: Which one, this?

Interviewer: This.

Chad: This is my mama's name, with a key and a heart.

Interviewer: Oh, that's nice. I n see you're close to your family.

Chad: Yeah, all my tattoos are family-oriented.

Interviewer: That's good. All right, Chad, you've got a neat handwriting, too.

Chad: That's ugly, but thank you.

Interviewer: No, it's not.

Chad: Thank you.

Interviewer: That's neat. Oh, you didn't tell me this, I'm sorry, the grades. The other kids talked to me about their grades. You said you were mostly doing Cs and Ds. What about elementary school?

Chad: As and Bs-

Interviewer: That's what I was wondering.

Chad: Then, Bs and Cs. Yeah, the trouble really started coming along in fifth grade. That's the first time I ever got in trouble, fifth grade.

Interviewer: Right when you were leaving grade school. Is that before you had your personal problems, or right after?

Chad: They was going on before and after.

Interviewer: I'll just put, that's when trouble started for you, in fifth grade, and just went back and forth from then on.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), I did good for two years, and then ...

Interviewer: Did you go to any anger management? Did you have any?

Chad: When I ught my assault charge in middle school, the charge I guess, it was so ... They really wanted to send me to court, but since it was my first offense I did youth arbitration. They had put me with ... I did anger management through them, but when I got to DJJ, I had to go through therapy for the depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and I went through the LRADAC.

Interviewer: That helps?

Chad: What?

Interviewer: Going through the LRADAC.

Chad: No, that was for drugs. It was drugs.

Interviewer: I thought it was counseling.

Chad: I went to LRADAC for counseling and for drugs.

Interviewer: The drug sessions that they have, that's right.

Chad: When I went to the jail, I tested positive for marijuana. That was the whole reason why I never went to school at High School 2. I wanted to skip school and get high.

Interviewer: I've heard that before.

Chad: At least I n remediate. I know why this happened. I know why I'm in the predicament I'm in.

Interviewer: It was easy, that's what I'm hearing.

Chad: High School 2, you n pop the door to get in or out. Just like, you pull it hard enough, it's going to open, even if it's locked.

Interviewer: It was easy to cut school?

Chad: The back door ... You ever seen High School 2?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chad: You know, the back way, you n just walk on campus. Now, they've got a gate up, they close it. That's why, because we used to leave so much, and my ex-boyfriend, he stayed right on the little side street right beside High School 2.

Interviewer: By the day re?

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so I just used to ... No, the other street, on the other side, right by the back parking lot. I used to leave and they'd be knowing, we'd we'd be right there at his house.

Interviewer: Were you ever put on an attendance improvement plan? No?

Chad: At High School 2, no; at High School 4.

Interviewer: When you first started there.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: They looked at you.

Chad: Yeah, they put me on-

Interviewer: Everything.

Chad: ... Everything, the behavior plan.

Interviewer: What did you do in eight days that got you put out of High School 4?

Chad: I got suspended on my second day. No, see, they was supposed to put me on a contract the first day, but they let me slide. Then, I got suspended on

the second day so they was like, “No, you’re going on a contract.” I got suspended for cursing out Ms. G and Ms. M. I got expelled because I didn’t want to give up my cell phone. I thought that was backwards.

Interviewer: You don’t have a cell phone at High School 4?

Chad: No, not out, but the crazy part, they say you n have it out in the cafeteria or I forgot, something else, but I was walking from the cafeteria on my way to class, and it was just in my hand. I wasn’t on it or nothing, and I just picked it up off the table and started walking. It was testing, I think it was [inaudible 00:07:40] and he was like, “Let me get your phone.” I was like, “Why? I’m not on it or nothing.” I could see if I was on it. I told him no. Because it was testing, he didn’t want to suspend me or nothing. Right after the testing finished, that Thursday, he found me and gave me my referral that said, “Recommended for expulsion.” I thought everything was okay, until two months later I got a motion in the mail to go to court.

Interviewer: That was for something else, though.

Chad: That was for truancy. When I went ... I got kicked out of High School 2 for truancy. They had sent me to court for it, but when I went to court, they put me on contract saying I couldn’t miss no more days or get suspended or none of that. Then, I went to High School 4 and got suspended, so I violated. I thought it was sweet, until two months later I got my court papers.

Interviewer: The probation officer probably checked on you and got it.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), I’ve been on probation since eighth grade. I just got off probation in March.

Interviewer: Wow, what did you do? Being on probation n be hard. How did you keep yourself from violating your probation?

Chad: My only ... When I started probation in eighth grade, they really wasn’t worried about me because I was still young. Once I did that in tenth grade, and they sent me to court, after I me home that’s when they really started giving me stuff. I had to go through anger management, LRADAC, and all that. That’s how I managed not to. If it wasn’t for them drug tests, I wouldn’t have messed up. It’s crazy, because my probation officer, her husband was my daddy’s best friend. I don’t know how that happened.

Interviewer: How about that?

Chad: I don't know how that happened, so she was looking out for me. When I failed my first drug test, she was supposed to violate me. I failed seven drug tests until she said something about it. I didn't start smoking until recently. I was using my little sister's pee the whole time. That was really how I stayed free, using my little sister's pee.

Interviewer: How did you do that? When I worked here, they would come and get the students and take them in the bathroom here.

Chad: See, because my probation officer wasn't drug testing me, LRADAC was. They have you out of nowhere, they just go over to LRADAC. I gave her \$5, she'd go and pee in the pill bottle, and there you go.

Interviewer: You do have a lot to tell.

Chad: I really do. I really have a story. That's why I didn't mind talking to you, because-

Interviewer: Wow, but you only tell if I ask. You're not just-

Chad: Yeah, because I wouldn't know where to start.

Interviewer: It's interesting. Tell me, when you were at High School 2, because I want to understand about school. Tell me about Middle School 4, then. When you got to Middle School 4, you were making good grades from elementary to middle school, right? Your grades started dropping once you got into high school. How did you handle your teachers when you ... What changed about your teachers when you go to high school?

Chad: The work; in middle school and elementary, it's easy. It's like one, two three.

Interviewer: Not really; you had to have some ... Middle school is not all easy.

Chad: For me, it was. I've always been bright.

Interviewer: That's what I'm saying.

Chad: I've got potential. I know I'm smart. I just was a jackass. I just was doing dumb stuff. That's what it really was. I was a tomboy, hanging around

nothing but boys. What they was doing, I was doing, too. When my little brother was stealing cars, I was stealing them with him. I was just always in the streets.

Interviewer: Even though you lived in Greenview, which was-

Chad: I was always in the streets. I used to stay out there, but that's not where I was at.

Interviewer: You hung out somewhere else.

Chad: Ames Manor.

Interviewer: That's over-

Chad: Right up the street, up that road.

Interviewer: That's where my students come.

Chad: Ames Manor and Prescott Road, yeah, you [inaudible 00:11:54], Ames Manor and Prescott Manor.

Interviewer: You hung out in that area.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative), and my grandma stayed at Ames Manor. My boy couldn't just stay with her, so I'd always be with him. He was still [inaudible 00:12:06] as shit, excuse my language.

Interviewer: It's funny you say that.

Chad: Whatever he was doing, I was doing it with him. That's the same with my whole destiny. That's crazy.

Interviewer: When you would always be with.

Chad: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: How much older was he than you?

Chad: I'm 18, he's 23, 24 ... 24.

Interviewer: That's a big age difference.

Chad: Yeah, he knew what he was doing. I didn't know, but he knew. It's crazy, because he's staying with me now.

Interviewer: That's a five-year difference.

Chad: He's staying with me now, staying at my house, right now.

Interviewer: With your mom and your-

Chad: ... And my daddy and my little sister. I've got a crazy life.

Interviewer: Do you communicate with him?

Chad: No, I don't got nothing to say.

Interviewer: That is kind of ... That would be hard, because you're having to see this person every day.

Chad: It is, but I blame it on crack. That is how I really ... He's a crack baby. My daddy and his mama are sisters and brothers, but his mama's a crackhead. She's in jail now. He and I, I used to steal from my grandma before she died. I used to take everything, but he didn't re. He just don't have it all. He's not right in the head. That's the only logical reason I can come up with. When it finally me out to everybody, it was years later. My mom wanted to press charges, but I didn't want to bring all that up no more, and have to testify in court. I just washed my hands with it.

Interviewer: I'm going to ask that you do something to help you deal with it, because it's still heavy on you, wow. You're a strong person.

Chad: Thank you, I try to be. I had a breakdown earlier today, but ...

Interviewer: Did you? Before you got here?

Chad: Right before I got here.

Interviewer: About?

Chad: About my situation, period, everything that I've been through. My granddaddy, he just had open heart surgery. He just went to the hospital yesterday complaining of chest pains. He's 82 years old. That's weighing heavy on me, too.

Interviewer: What do you do to help keep you level, do you know?

Chad: Pray.

Interviewer: Pray. Do you exercise?

Chad: My lung is ... I can't ... Walking from my classroom to here, I've been out of breath.

Interviewer: Really? Oh, because of what happened.

Chad: Yeah, my lung collapsed fully. It was full of fluid, so it's going to take a minute for me to ...

Interviewer: You've got to find some coping mechanisms to kind of help you relieve your stress. I exercise, and it helps me a lot. When I don't, I n tell. Maybe writing may be your therapy.

Chad: Yeah, I like to write.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative), you n write. Get you a nice journal, and just write.

Chad: It may be a good idea.

Interviewer: Sometimes when you n write, you n throw away what you're writing or you n save it, turn it into poems, short stories, a book. You have so much that you've done, that you n help somebody else. People n read your words and it may help.

Chad: I'm praying I'll help somebody one day with my story.

Interviewer: You n do it. You learn from your experiences, and you know what not to do. You know what things to look for. You know how to better treat people, because you feel these people ... Some people didn't support you, so you reach out to somebody else and help support someone else. That's good. You got anything else you want to share?

Chad: No, you have any more questions?

Interviewer: Hm-mmm (negative), I think I have enough to kind of write. I'm hearing some of the same things from you all.

Interviewer: You were saying family. We were talking about family factors.

Chad: A lot of families don't understand that words really mean a lot. My dad used to tell me I ain't going to never be nothing. I'm going to fail. I'm going to be on the streets until I started to believe it. I started slacking. It ain't no point of me doing it if ain't nobody believe that I n do it. Who I'm proving it to? I tell my mama that all the time. It's not what you say. It's how you say it.

Interviewer: In school though, you didn't have any teachers you felt that were trying to push you or did you push away from the teachers because-

Chad: I pushed away from the teachers because, like I said, I used to skip school a lot. If I felt like you was trying to give me too much work, I'm not going to go to your class.

Interviewer: Even though you could do it?

Chad: Yeah, even though I n do it. Weed, it was the weed because I used to go to school high every morning.

Interviewer: What grade do you think you starting smoking it?

Chad: I've been smoking since I was 14.

Interviewer: That was middle, 9th grade.

Chad: I would say my 9th or 8th, end of my 8th [inaudible 00:00:59] 9th grade.

Interviewer: How were you able to gain access, [well 00:01:05] your older [inaudible 00:01:06] your older cousin.

Chad: Gain what access?

Interviewer: Access to marijuana.

Chad: My mama. This is, there ain't no names named. My mom used to smoke it. She had this little tin n. She'd keep it out anywhere because she didn't think none of us

knew what it was. I knew what it was, and my older cousin knew what it was, so we used to just-

Interviewer: Take it.

Chad: Get it out of the n. She used to keep joint papers in the n, too, so we already had the roller to roll it up in. That's how it started. That's how it started. My mama.

Interviewer: It's hard to stop.

Chad: Once I got shot and my lung collapsed, I was done smoking then. Tried to smoke a cigarette the other day and threw up. I threw clean up because I've been smoking cigarettes for a long time, but I'm six months clean.

Interviewer: You might need to try the gum.

Chad: I got a little [bait pen 00:02:02] that works. That works.

Interviewer: Do you still have those cravings?

Chad: Yes. I just use my little pen.

Interviewer: Do you notice when ... Is there a certain time when you crave?

Chad: When I get out of school because, excuse me, before I got shot, I had a little routine. I'd go to school. When I get out of school, I go home, take a shower, smoke, eat, and watch TV. I used to do that same exact thing every day, so once I stopped smoking, it was like, "Ugh, now what am I gonna do to replace this?"

Interviewer: You didn't mention alcohol. You all didn't cut school to drink or anything?

Chad: Some people might have, but see, alcohol was always, never was for me. I don't like that feeling. That is not a good feeling.

Interviewer: That's good.

Chad: Can't balance, ain't got no equilibrium, no nothing. I don't know that would help. It was always the smoke.

Interviewer: Alrighty, Miss [Chad 00:03:09]. I appreciate it. What time? It's almost time for you all to leave.

Individual Niya

Interviewer: Okay, I'm sorry. Forgive me, okay? I'm sorry, let me back up. I've been taking notes so I won't relay through all of it. Please tell me about where you grew up as a child.

Niya: I grew up in Columbia.

Interviewer: Okay. You talked about living on the northeast side of town when you attended Bookman Road and then after that you went to Elementary 14 and Art which is around the Rosewood area. Okay. Then you went to Middle School 1, Middle School, and Middle School 7 and you said you began to struggle a little bit when you were at Middle School 7. High school you did High School 4, High School 8 and adult education. Do you feel where you grew up had an impact on you in school?

Niya: I think maybe if I wasn't moving around to schools, maybe I would have did better.

Interviewer: How do you feel that that impacted you, moving around?

Niya: I felt like when I moved from High School 8 to High School 4, I thought that I was going to do better at High School 4 but I didn't like it.

Interviewer: Okay, we answered the question earlier and maybe we didn't get it on tape, but you've attended three elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools, with adult education now being your last stop. Were you with your Mom throughout all of these moves?

Niya: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay at what point, Middle School 1 was when there was a change?

Niya: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Interviewer: Okay, so from Middle School 1 through high school, your Mom and Dad separated when you were at Middle School 1 and then you finished. Okay. Talk to me about experiences that have negatively or positively impacted your views about school. Negative. What are some of your negative views about school?

Niya: Negative views.

Interviewer: You talked about the teachers not helping.

Niya: And some of the students at High School 8. Half of them was aware of my education, some of them was.

Interviewer: Okay. What are some positive views about schooling?

Niya: I like how I get to learn something and-

Interviewer: What about your friends, did you hang out with a lot of different people?

Niya: Yeah, at High School 8.

Interviewer: So, not so much at High School 4?

Niya: Maybe like five.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel that you were supported at school?

Niya: No. Not high school.

Interviewer: What relationship did you have with your guidance counselor?

Niya: She ... I had a good relationship with her at High School 8 but she was to do some of the stuff, she didn't have time to call me in, talk to me about my grades and stuff.

Interviewer: What about the administrators?

Niya: No. They still come around to make sure you're not in trouble, most of us do.

Interviewer: Who supported you at home?

Niya: My Mom.

Interviewer: And in what ways do you feel that she supported you?

Niya: Like she came up to the school and she wanted to talk to my teachers and stuff about my grades and stuff.

Interviewer: Who were some people, if you were supported, we talked about your Mom supporting you. Did your Dad play any role in it at all?

Niya: No.

Interviewer: Okay. After middle school, then you kind of lost support from your Dad.

Niya: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Were there any people that you feel didn't support you?

Niya: I guess.

Interviewer: Who are some of the people that you feel didn't support you?

Niya: My teachers, my Dad and my Grandma.

Interviewer: They did not support you. Okay. And when you mention family, do you have any other siblings?

Niya: Yes.

Interviewer: Well who do you have?

Niya: I have a 13-year-old brother.

Interviewer: Okay, so you're the oldest.

Niya: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk about, and you briefly mentioned it, the fact that your Mom and Dad separated. Explain how you feel these experiences impacted your educational pathway.

Niya: Um, I feel that if my Mom was ... Maybe my Mom and Dad wasn't so like in and out of the relationship, maybe I would have been more on a...

Interviewer: Focused.

Niya: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Interviewer: More focused, okay, okay. So my next question is what role did your parents play so basically, what we gathered is that your Mom played a very strong role in your

education, not so much your Dad. Why are you completing your education in a non-traditional setting? This is considered a non-traditional setting, so if someone had to ask you why are you here, we've talked about a lot of different factors, how could you summarize why you're here, what would you say the reason is for you being here?

Niya: I think the reason I remain here is because so I can see another setting or this setting will help me better than when I was in high school.

Interviewer: And why is this one helping you better?

Niya: Because the teacher that I'm with, she is more caring and stuff and she walks around classroom to see how you're doing and stuff.

Interviewer: So this setting has proven to be more successful for you because it's smaller and you get more individualized attention?

Niya: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Interviewer: Okay. What additional supports do you feel you could have had at High School 4 or High School 8 that would have kept you there?

Niya: If my teachers would have like helped me with my work when I raised my Middle School 7 and put me in like a smaller classroom.

Interviewer: Anything else that you want to share and I apologize cause this is being recorded. I didn't press play, so the part of our focus group did not get recorded, but I was just going to do a quick recap of what we discussed and then move from there so that I make sure that I summarize your thoughts exactly the way that you articulated them. I was just looking for the sheet that had the first three questions that we talked about. So we talked about Niya's educational pathway, we talked about the school-related factors that affected your decision to come here and a lot of that dealt with the side of the school, where you not being able to get the help that you needed when you were in class asking for help and the difference here is that the teachers give you one-on-one attention and then we kind of talked about what are some things that could have been done differently that would have affected your educational pathway.

You moved around with your family which impacted the schools that you attended but also just having that individualized assistance that you would need in classroom to make sure that you were learning and being able to clarify any questions that you had. Niya, you also talked about the fact that you were on the

AB Honor Roll in elementary school and as well as middle school you were on the AB Honor Roll. It wasn't until you got to Middle School 7 that you started to struggle a little bit. Do you think the size of the school had anything to do with that?

Niya: Um-

Interviewer: Because Middle School 3 was a big school too.

Niya: I think Middle School 7, it was kind of big. It was like 900 something kids.

Interviewer: Okay. And you answered about your guidance counselor and they did feel that they were able to assist you. How do you feel the administrators assisted you?

Niya: They didn't really assist me just cause they just care about the kids that was fighting or getting in trouble.

Interviewer: But you didn't have any disciplinary issues.

Niya: Mm-mm (negative)-no.

Interviewer: Did you have any referrals while you were at school at all?

Niya: No.

Interviewer: No, good, good. So once you finish because you're working on your GED, your goal, once you obtain that goal, what are you going to do next? What are your next steps?

Niya: I want to ... when I get my GED I want to become a doctor or do hair.

Interviewer: Or do hair. Okay, so you've already started thinking about what schools you want to go to when you finish and what's going to be next.

Niya: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Well I appreciate you doing this, this ends our conversation Niya, I'm going to stop recording now and-

Individual T

Interviewer: This is an individual interview with T. It's Thursday, January the ...

T: 12th.

Interviewer: ... 12th. Okay. All right T, we want to get started. Tell me about where you grew up as a child.

T: I grew up in Columbia on Bishop, Leesburg, Broad River, everywhere in Columbia really.

Interviewer: You lived in a lot of different areas in Columbia. Do you feel that where you lived had an impact on school?

T: Yeah.

Interviewer: You want to talk to me about that?

T: Because neighborhoods I grew up in, I mean it wasn't nothing but violence. Like the Bishop, gang banging, drugs, stuff like that.

Interviewer: Did those things kind of get in your way? How did they get in your way? Because you said it impacted you, so tell me how.

T: Growing up watching people smoke weed and sell drugs, making fast money, I grew up wanting to do it. So I pushed school to the side.

Interviewer: Okay. You indicated that you attended three to four elementary schools. Tell me which schools you attended.

T: Elementary 7, Elementary 15, Elementary 16, and Elementary 17.

Interviewer: Elementary 17, okay. Those were your elementary schools. What were your middle schools?

T: My middle schools was Middle School 1 and Middle School 9.

Interviewer: Okay, and then your high school.

T: High School 3, High School 5, High School 1. I think that's it.

Interviewer: Okay. While you were in those different schools, talk to me about some of the positives.

T: Sports.

Interviewer: What sports did you play?

T: Football and basketball.

Interviewer: Middle school, elementary, high?

T: I played for gyms and I played for middle school. I tried out for high school, but I didn't get to finish because I went to Alternative School.

Interviewer: Okay, so you went to Alternative School. What are some of the negatives about school that impacted you?

T: Girls.

Interviewer: Girls, okay. Tell me about the girls.

T: I skipped school for them girls.

Interviewer: You would cut school and go hang out with girls?

T: Yeah.

Interviewer: What else was negative? Any other thing negatively impacted you?

T: I mean, gangs, hanging with the wrong crowd.

Interviewer: When you say "wrong crowd," tell me about the wrong crowd.

T: Hanging with the same people that I be with every day in my neighborhood.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you find that your experiences in different neighborhoods were different?

T: What you mean?

Interviewer: Like was one neighborhood more positive than the other? Did you get in less trouble when you lived ...

T: When I stayed in a home on Leesburg, I didn't get in no trouble because we didn't really have no neighbors.

Interviewer: When you were on Leesburg, that's when you were at what school, Hopkins?

T: I was going to High School 1.

Interviewer: You were. You didn't get in trouble at High School 1? How did you end up at Alternative School?

T: Because my prior year, my ninth grade year, I was going to Alternative School. No, not Alternative School. I was going to High School 5 and High School 3. I was getting in trouble there. When I went to the 10th grade, I was going to High School 1. Like at the beginning of the school year, they had a hearing board meeting for me because of what I was doing in my ninth grade year.

Interviewer: Okay.

T: They sent me to Alternative School.

Interviewer: Got you, okay. Who do you feel supported you at school?

T: Like teacher-wise?

Interviewer: Yeah, if you had teachers, administrators, any students, guidance counselors.

T: My teacher Mr. K did. He was my coach and all, kept me out of trouble.

Interviewer: How did he support you? How did he keep you out of trouble?

T: He stayed on me all the time. He helped me with my work. He helped me get As and Bs on the A/B honor roll when I was going to Hopkins.

Interviewer: Really? Okay, so at middle school you were on the A/B honor roll?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: A/B honor roll. How about at home, who supported you at home? Do you feel you were supported at home?

T: My mama ...

Interviewer: Your mother.

T: ... and my foster parents.

Interviewer: You indicated that you were raised by your mother and your father and then your foster parents. A what age did you make the transition?

T: I was in the third grade when I went to go stay with my daddy. Then things happened, and I went to foster care in the fourth or fifth grade until the sixth grade. Then I went back to my mom's.

Interviewer: First and second, who were you with?

T: My mama and my daddy, back and forth.

Interviewer: Okay, between your mom and dad. You said that you feel that your mom supported you. Do you feel that your dad supported you?

T: I feel he tried, but there really wasn't much he could do.

Interviewer: Why do you feel there wasn't much that he could do?

T: Because once a person got their mind set up to being what they want to do, it's kind of hard to change their mind.

Interviewer: Okay. You were with your dad mostly during ...?

T: The summer.

Interviewer: During the summer and third grade. What school was that in the third grade?

T: I was going to, I think it was Elementary 17.

Interviewer: Elementary 17? Okay help me out, and I know this is a lot to remember, you started out at Elementary 7 for kindergarten and first grade?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: When did you go to Elementary 15?

T: I believe it was second grade.

Interviewer: Second, okay. When did you go to Elementary 16?

T: When I stayed with my auntie, when I was first getting out of foster care.

Interviewer: Okay.

T: Because I went in foster care then got out and went right back.

Interviewer: Wow, okay. Were you with the same family or a different family?

T: Different families.

Interviewer: That makes it hard when you have to change ...

T: From house to house.

Interviewer: ... from house to house, yeah.

T: From school to school.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes a big difference. You can talk only as much as you want to elaborate about family factors because I have a question about what personal family experiences you feel impacted your life. We know being in foster care impacted your life.

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: You want to elaborate on that at all?

T: What you mean by ...?

Interviewer: Just talk about it. How did it impact you?

T: It really did. I mean, it messed me up. Being so young, not being able to stay with your parents, not knowing what's really going on and why you can't stay with them, that really makes it hard to go to school. You get to see other people's children going to school with their parents dropping them off.

Interviewer: Were you able to communicate with your parents while you were in foster care?

T: We go to like little meetings and stuff. We used to go to my little therapist. I could see them there. Just my mom. My dad wouldn't go.

Interviewer: Okay. While you were with the foster parents, did your mom still ... do you feel she supported you during that time?

T: Yeah, she did everything she could to get me out.

Interviewer: Okay. We've talked about your parents and what role they played. Are there any other people that you feel played a major role in your education? You're here, that means you're on track, you want to graduate. Who was some people that may have helped you get to being at this point? What do you feel pushed you to be at this point?

T: Getting locked up and myself.

Interviewer: How long were you locked up?

T: Three years.

Interviewer: Really? So you had time to reflect ...

T: Sit back and think.

Interviewer: ... and think. How long have you been out?

T: About a year and some months, like two months and a year.

Interviewer: How old are you?

T: 21.

Interviewer: 21. What did you do to get locked up? You were young then.

T: I was 17. Broke in somebody's house and robbed them.

Interviewer: Okay, and you did three years for that crime. Now you're out and you're able to look back on what you did. How do you feel that this setting is helping you more than regular school? What's different about being here?

T: Because like when you're in school, you're around a lot of childish people. Some people don't care about education. Some people don't care. Like when I was in school, when I hit high school I didn't care about learning nothing. I'd go to school just to go whenever I want to. I might distract people so it's hard for you to learn. You might have people like that up in school. Here-

Interviewer: You intentionally distracted people?

T: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

T: I might pull my phone out, listen to music.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

T: I did all type of crazy stuff. You got people like that in the environment around you and people that want to learn, it's going to be hard for them to learn. Because they still trying to block you out, and they can really barely hear what the teacher is saying. Here, I mean if you get to distracting, you're a grown person. I mean they can lock you up. They can kick you off the grounds. There's really not too much you can do here to stop a person from learning unless they just don't want it they self.

Interviewer: Okay, so this being here is a little more structured?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Do you feel you get more attention here?

T: They break it down more. I mean, they put you in levels like where everybody else on the same level. If I'm not getting it, somebody that's sitting next to me can break it down to me, like what's really to do and stuff.

Interviewer: That makes you feel a little more comfortable?

T: Yeah, because I might not get math. Then this next person might not get reading. You never know.

Interviewer: What are some other things that you feel traditional school could have done that would have been more beneficial? I want you to take a minute and think about that.

T: Like what could schools do to make people want to stay more?

Interviewer: Yes. Think about you as T. You said that you could sit in class and do things to distract other people. You talked about Coach K helping you and staying on top

of you to keep you out of trouble. What else do you think might have played into you being able to stay and finish at High School 1?

T: Something that they can do to make people stay in school, they can put people that don't want to be in school, don't make them come. I mean, I don't really know.

Interviewer: Just don't let them come to school?

T: If they don't want to, there's no need. Me, when I was up in middle school, I mean I was doing good but I still was getting in trouble. Then when I hit high school, I was like, "I don't want to come to school no more. So I'm gone."

Me telling myself I don't want to go to school and telling my mama I don't want to go to school, and she ain't doing nothing about it, then that's going to make me put it in my hands to do something about it. I'm just going to go to school and act up because I know you gonna suspend me. I know you going to expel me. I mean, I don't got to go to school.

Interviewer: Okay, all right.

T: People that don't want to go to school, I don't think you should force them to go to school.

Interviewer: When you say get in trouble in middle school, what happened in middle school?

T: I mean, like kid things. I probably might show up late to class, you never know. I was playing sports, so there really wasn't too much I could do. I was till getting in trouble.

Interviewer: Did you get in any major trouble?

T: No, not no major trouble.

Interviewer: Okay, just kid stuff.

T: When I got to high school, I wasn't playing in sports.

Interviewer: Do you think sports helped keep you on track?

T: Yeah, I believe it did.

Interviewer: Tell me why you didn't do sports in high school.

T: Because when I went to go try out for basketball for High School 1, I only went to High School 1 for like two weeks. They had that meeting about what I did in the ninth grade, so they sent me to Alternative School. I never left out of Alternative School.

Interviewer: In the ninth grade, you got in trouble at ... Okay, so you were trying, you got in trouble near the end of your ninth grade year. They didn't have the meeting until the following year?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Wow, so you went all throughout the summer thinking you were going to be at High School 1. Then they had that meeting.

T: They had it.

Interviewer: What did you do at the end of the ninth grade year?

T: I got in a fight. I was being bad my whole ninth grade year though. I was going to High School 3. They kicked me out of High School 3 like two or three months of me going there. That's when I went to High School 5. Then I got kicked out of High School 5 within like two or three months. Then I was homeschooled. Then when my 10th grade year came, we moved to a home on Leesburg, and I was going to High School 1. That junk caught up with me.

Interviewer: When you say homeschooled, did the district send someone out to do like home-based services for you?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: When your home-based was over, then they had to have a meeting and bring you back?

T: Yeah.

Interviewer: At that meeting they decided ...

T: That they going to send me to Alternative School instead of sending me to High School 1.

Interviewer: Yes.

T: But I was already going to High School 1.

Interviewer: For two weeks?

T: Yeah, and they messed around and had the meeting while I was going.

Interviewer: Then you weren't able to play sports. How long did you stay at Alternative School?

T: Until the end of my 10th grade year.

Interviewer: Then after that, that's when more trouble started?

T: In the summertime, yeah. Then I got locked up.

Interviewer: Okay. You said being locked up gave you time to reflect on ...

T: Think about ...

Interviewer: Think about, okay.

T: Think about the things that I did and what I should have done right.

Interviewer: Do you have any sisters or brothers?

T: Yes, a lot of them.

Interviewer: How many do you have?

T: I got two sisters and one brother on my mama's side. On my daddy's side, I don't even ... to tell the truth, I don't know. I know I got like four sisters and probably like four brothers. I don't know.

Interviewer: Wow. On your mother's side, are you the oldest of the four?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yes I'm the oldest on my mama's side and the second oldest on my daddy's side.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your ultimate goal when you finish here?

T: I'm going to get my GED here. Then I'm going to Benedict, probably for one or two semesters.

Interviewer: You gotta do more than one or two semesters.

T: I'm talking about then I'm going to get transferred to another college.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

T: I don't know which college I want to go to after that.

Interviewer: What do you want to major in at Benedict?

T: Cooking.

Interviewer: Okay, so have you looked at some of the other schools. Because you like culinary, I think Midlands Tech might have a culinary class or hospitality. Have you looked at that?

T: No ma'am.

Interviewer: Yeah, look at that. Then also there's a school in Charlotte, High School 2 & Wales, that focuses just on culinary. You can do that in two years. That'll save you from getting in debt with Benedict if you know you're going to transfer. Just to look at some of your other options. At this point now, you're 21. You're an adult. Are you still with your mom? Are you living on your own?

T: I live with me and my girlfriend.

Interviewer: You and your girlfriend, okay. Do you work?

T: Uh-huh (negative).

Interviewer: You don't work. You're just focused on school right now. Well good. You come here four days a week?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: When is your projected day to finish? Are you close to finishing?

T: Yeah, I supposed to have done my GED on December.

Interviewer: Wow.

T: My teacher, I think she quit or she went to another school. I had to get a whole new teacher, Ms..... Now I'm doing my work keys.

Interviewer: Ms. M is a good teacher, so she'll push you over.

T: I just gotta take one more test on my work keys and pass that one. Then I take my pre-GED, then my GED.

Interviewer: Academically, you said you made Bs and Cs, right?

T: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Mostly in elementary and middle school you were making Bs and Cs. When you got to high school, that kind of changed.

T: I don't even remember a report card.

Interviewer: Help me understand why you just didn't like school. Was it the size? Was it the people? What was it?

T: I was young so I didn't like being told what to do.

Interviewer: Okay.

T: I didn't like being told what to do. I didn't like to take people directions. I liked to do what I wanted to do when I wanted, how I wanted.

Interviewer: Got you.

T: Then when I got locked up I seen like, "Dang, boy I can't do nothing. My mama was right, Tight Josh should have stayed in school."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative). When you were little, like elementary school, your mama told you what to do. You had to listen to your mama.

T: My first time ever going to the hearing board, I was in the first grade.

Interviewer: You didn't tell me that. Why did you go to the hearing board in the first grade?

T: Pushed my teacher over the desk.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh. They did the hearing and sent you back to elementary school? What happened-

T: They did the hearing board, and I got expelled.

Interviewer: Really? You pushed the teacher hard enough that she fell over the desk?

T: Yeah, she was short. She wasn't but like this long.

Interviewer: Wow. Do you remember that teacher now?

T: Miss....

Interviewer: If you see her now, you think you'd recognize her?

T: Yeah, I'm pretty sure, I guess.

Interviewer: Wow, so that was at Elementary 7?

T: Yeah, and I stayed back.

Interviewer: Stayed back in first grade? Did you make it through second and third grade without going to the hearing board?

T: No, not second grade.

Interviewer: What happened second grade?

T: I did make it through second grade, but I still almost stayed back in second grade. I had to go to that thing. What's it's called? Summer school.

Interviewer: Summer school, okay.

T: In third grade, I stayed back again.

Interviewer: Wow, so third grade you were at Elementary 17?

T: That's when we was going through that stuff with my daddy though.

Interviewer: Okay.

T: Like what he did for me to go to foster care. That's why I stayed back on that one.

Interviewer: Okay, and then fourth grade?

T: I was in foster care. I was good. I stayed with foster parents. They ain't play that school stuff.

Interviewer: So you had to go to school?

T: Yeah, and they had me playing sports too long. I was really too tired. I think sports ... Because I always had ADHD so I was always hyper and stuff, I think sports is what calmed me down and took all my energy away.

Interviewer: You know it's interesting you say that because I'm principal at a middle school. Some of the kids come in, and I can see by the end of the day they're getting in trouble. They're doing stuff, boys. I made some of them start running in the morning. If I see them, if they had a bad day the day before, when they come in that next morning I say, "Okay, you're gonna go run some laps and give me some suicides." They would exert that energy in the morning. They told me it helped them.

T: Them suicides, yeah, it would help anybody.

Interviewer: Yeah, it helped them focus better and stay in school. I'm glad that you pointed that out. That's interesting that you said that the sports drained you, so it kind of helped you ...

T: I'd be so tired from running and playing sports that I come to school calm. I don't need you to go tell my coach because my coach ain't going to do nothing but make me run again.

Interviewer: Do you keep in touch with your foster parents?

T: I talked to them like two times since I been out.

Interviewer: Okay, well that's good. While you were incarcerated, who do you feel supported you during that time?

T: The most?

Interviewer: Yeah.

T: My little sister.

Interviewer: Okay, and how old is she?

T: At the time she was only 12.

Interviewer: Really?

T: 13, 12.

Interviewer: What did she do to support you?

T: Send me letters.

Interviewer: Good, okay.

T: My mama she tried, but she was working. She's got three other kids, so ...

Interviewer: You did your time at Alvin S. Glenn. Were they able to come visit you?

T: Yeah, my mama she came one day, my auntie, my sister.

Interviewer: Did you take classes why you were there?

T: Alvin S. Glenn, no. I mean I tried to take it but you got

Interviewer: Okay.

T: When I went to prison I was taking GED classes.

Interviewer: Do you think that kind of helped you get your footing here?

T: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah.

Interviewer: Where did you do your time? What prison?

T: Turbeville.

Interviewer: Okay, I know where that is. I've been there before. Anything else you want to share? You want to clear up anything? Think I got a good representation of school and your pathway and understanding. What about numbers? Because some of the other students talked about the size of a school. Do you think that distracted you in any manner?

T: By how many people there?

Interviewer: Yeah.

T: I mean, it could distract certain people. It didn't distract me though.

Interviewer: It didn't distract you?

T: No.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. One more question about the structure. Some of the students talked about the fact that they needed a structured environment, and that they didn't like the way ... They thought they were treated more as children and not adults, and that they-

T: I mean we is kids.

Interviewer: I'm just saying that's what some of the other students talked about. They talked about the fact that the teachers didn't talk to them in a manner of respect. They feel that the teachers didn't respect them, so they didn't respect the teachers. Did you experience any of that?

T: Yeah, I done had some teachers like that, hall monitor teachers, stuff like that.

Interviewer: You thought they were being too hard on you or just being negative?

T: Just being ... I can't say what I want to say.

Interviewer: You can say it. Nobody's gonna hear this but me.

T: A-hole.

Interviewer: Okay. Is it because they were trying to get you in class to keep you from cutting?

T: I don't know. I think they just had something against me.

Interviewer: Okay. All right, well we'll stop.