Resurgence of Maroons: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis on Black Students Who Remove Themselves From School

D'Andrea Ashley Heggs

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RESURGENCE OF MAROONS: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BLACK STUDENTS WHO REMOVE THEMSELVES FROM SCHOOLS

by

D’Andrea Ashley Heggs

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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Dedication

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim.

All thanks and praise are due to Allah. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah. And I bear witness that Muhammad, Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him, who lived one thousand four hundred and forty-four years ago, was The Seal of the Prophets and the Last and Final Messenger.

This dissertation is dedicated to every student and Black child suffering in or suffered through anti-Black environments.
Acknowledgments

All praise and thanks are due to Allah. May the Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon the Prophet Muhammad Sallahu Alayhi wa Salaam.

I want to acknowledge my family, all of them! My Umi, whose love has filled me in a time when I was empty. Her awe and confusion about my journey have rejuvenated my endurance. To my siblings, who validated my journey, I am forever grateful. Specifically, to my brothers, who make me feel like the smartest person in the room, the four of you have shaped my Woman-ness. To my sister, I appreciate and value you immensely. To my Muslimah’s, Alhamdulillah, WE DID IT!

To my committee: Dr. Gulosino, I am grateful for your inspiring me to keep my head up. Pointing me in directions that scare the hell out of me; but sharpen my skills. Dr. Griffin, the woman who answers for me every time I call and has mentored me during times when I was unsure, thank you. Dr. Anderson, thank you for making space for me. I appreciate your guidance and feedback. Dr. Platt, this has been a journey, thank you.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge myself. I made the decision to remove myself from school without the support of anyone on Earth. I am thankful that I listened to myself. That I trusted myself. To myself: YOU ARE DOPE!
Abstract

Dropping out of school is often viewed as a self-sabotaging event at any age or grade level. From afar, dropping out of school looks as if the decision was impulsive and unintentional. However, for students, the action of dropping out is not a casual decision. This study examines how power and discourse affect the schooling experience of Black students. Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis this study seeks to highlight how students reclaim their agency by leaning on the historical knowledge of the Black community and its rich moments of resistance. These experiences are evaluated using the Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) as its protocols encapsulate the watershed moments of students’ decision to remove themselves from school. Given that current literature is marred by its own theoretical and conceptual limitations, this study relies heavily on Marronage in Education to provide a framework that fused the historical connection of slave resistance to oppressive chattel slavery and Black students’ resistance to oppressive school systems. This study seeks to resurrect a tradition of resistance by defining the milestones of their journey. The hope is that understanding students’ resistance will lead to acceptance and support of alternative education methods.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Emergence of the Problem

America has a preconceived concept about urban youth in the United States: they are uninterested in or unengaged in resistance and civic life, especially children of color. Racial injustices are ever-present in U.S. schools and should open our eyes to alternative methods of existence. According to Ross (2020), “in order to fully understand Black students’ ongoing racialized experiences in schools, we have to understand the ways Black people, including children, are positioned in the larger world—the way Blackness marks a particular ontological position.” It is not uncommon for researchers to examine how Black students’ educational experiences and outcomes differ from their white peers due to inequitable educational outcomes and experiences (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2018). However, there is little work on how students resist the ontological position of their Blackness and reject the flimsy attempts of educational systems.

Studies concerning youth resistance against oppression have an unquestioned belief that resistance can lead to progress, which is frequently seen as the growth and education of youth, their communities, and the nation as a whole (Noguera & Cannella, 2006; Raby, 2005). It is not uncommon for resistance to be idealized, as well. It is considered a raw force that must be harnessed and trained on a route to responsible democratic civilization (in countries) and adult democracy (Raby, 2005). Therefore, it is necessary to reengage in a critical dialogue on the complexity and sophistication of teenage resistance and the relative obscurity of theories of change within youth resistance research at this moment in the global appropriation of youth resistance (Dumas, 2013). It perhaps requires a reconceptualization of what we identify as resistance behavior.
Although scholarship examining the phenomenon of dropping out of school (Abar, Abar, Lippold, Powers, and Manning, 2012; Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey, 1997; Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Cornell, Huang, Gregory, & Fan, 2013) largely agrees that students are pushed out of school via school practices and policies, dropping out may represent one such form of resistance. Existing scholarship, however, fails to consider black students who have withdrawn from school as agentic in their actions and connected to a long lineage of Black peoples’ resistance, rejection, and refusal to be or remain subjugated and under systems of captivity. What little research that positions dropouts as agentic views the act of dropping out as self-defeating (Fine, 1991; Solòrzano & Bernal, 2001). Whereas removing oneself from harm is historically sound and more aligned with the historical actions of Black people than sitting idle (Drewry & Burge, and Driscoll, 2010; Fine, 1991; Knesting, 2008). To understand why the dropout gap persists, we must understand how race and racism in the educational system have structural concerns for social relationships (Duncan, 2002).

**History of Oppression**

For instance, according to Ogbu (1978, 1991; as cited in Akom, 2003), people from historically oppressed groups show their disdain for the dominant group by rejecting superimposed educational aims. As a result, many students from minority groups, including Black Americans, Latinx, Caribbean, and American Indians, drop out of school because racial prejudice limits their access to high-paying employment (Akom, 2003). It is also important to note that the ontological view of Black students being viewed and characterized by the larger society influences their perception of self. For students in the study, it is within the ontological view of Blackness that they find strength in their
Blackness. The participant’s knowledge of racial differences and Black students’ trajectories catalyzes their self-preservation quest.

Similarly, due to America’s persistent and institutionalized racism, many Black students struggle with school authority systems. They see the power structures in schools as an attempt to subjugate them further. Students frequently blamed principals and instructors for perceived abuses of power. Students of color frequently found links between issues of power and respect (Dei et al., 1997). Furthermore, researchers postulated that Black pupils were disappointed by the lack of consideration for respect problems when individuals made discipline or choices in leadership positions. According to a study by Dei et al. (1997), many male and female students expressed the need to resist school authority due to racist or oppressive behavior acted on them. Dropouts, particularly, expressed anger and the desire to take action against a system they perceived as oppressive and diminished them. Thus, due to the racist environment in schools, Black students are forced to drop out of school or get pulled out for violent behavior (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011).

**Family and Social Relationships**

According to various dropout studies, a student’s family background plays a significant role in his or her decision to drop out of school. The low socioeconomic position has been linked to several factors contributing to school dropout, including a low GPA, inability to participate in extracurricular activities, and poor social ties (Zaff et al., 2002). Black and Latino children are likelier to drop out of school than white peers. Black students (17%) dropped out at nearly three times that of white students (6%)
dropout rates (Zaff et al., 2002). Similarly, our participants admitted that socioeconomics affected their quitting school to earn money.

**Schooling Practices**

Additionally, a critical examination of the disparities within our education system between Black students and white students reveals the role racism plays in the socioeconomic status of Black students and how this inevitably affects their education and school retention (Howard, 2013). Black students are also underrepresented in most schools and overrepresented in schools with inadequate funding, which means that they, like many other people raised in economically impoverished places, face enormous life obstacles right from the start (Gordon, 2012). In addition to fewer resources allocated to poor urban districts by the funding systems, schools with high numbers of low-income and “minority” children receive fewer teaching aids and instructional resources than other schools. Research studies identify the disparities in schooling during their pre-pubescent years.

Furthermore, tracking systems exacerbate these disparities by isolating students of color and low-income households within a single institution (Howard, 2013). Parallel to Bradley & Renzulli’s discussion on the quality of educational experiences Black students face, our participants reveal that they were given lower-quality textbooks and highly budgeted educational resources during their schooling. They also witnessed higher student-teacher ratio class sizes and experiences with ill-trained and inexperienced teachers.
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This examination deserves a critical eye, particularly as it relates to facilitating anti-deficit frames for Black student dropout behavior. The proposed study aims to explore the phenomenon of Black students’ withdrawal from school through Marronage in Education and Foucauldian discourse of Power and Knowledge.

Black Learning as Marronage

Black learning as ‘marronage’ builds on the theorization of Black fugitivity that point to the pursuit of education akin to the powerful history of Maroons, African descendants of natives who escaped capture during the transatlantic slave trade to establish free societies (Nevius, 2020). These Maroon communities, first founded in South America during the 17th century, were never colonized nor enslaved. More recently, scholars use the term Marronage in Education to showcase Black students’ agency, psychology, and grit (Roberts, 2015). The scholarly works are from diverse fields such as anthropology, history, genealogy, sociology, and education. I will leverage the term Marronage as a counter-hegemonic schooling response to Black student dropout behavior and a response to society’s demands for self-determination.

Through this lens, I will attempt to connect students’ actions to those of the Maroons. Pedro Noguera, an acclaimed education scholar and activist, applies the theory of “freedom as Marronage” (Roberts, 2015)—a reference to the promise of freedom that enslaved peoples found in escape, flight, and in liminal and transitional spaces against their white masters. In the same way, the crux of my study argues that Black student dropout behavior is an example of schooling as marronage—a liberatory student resistance grounded in autonomy and freedom for communities of color.
Foucauldian Discourse of Power and Knowledge

Although Foucault was not a racial scholar, recent research (Sonu, 2020) has connected the essence of Foucauldian discourse, the use of bodies as instrument of surveillance, as another tool to manipulate power balance. Like Sonu (2020), other scholars have applied Foucauldian discourse in framing African American students in schools to examine the emancipatory potential of interrupting and resisting structural forces of race-making and social reproduction in education (Brown & Brown, 2012; Stinson, 2008, 2013). The critical and emancipatory potential of Foucauldian discourse resides in challenging established practices by bringing to the fore the perspectives that anti-Blackness assumptions have excluded. Positioned permanently as the “other,” “the periphery,” and the “inferior,” the schooling systems, structures, practices, and processes that shape schooling norms and expectations serve to marginalize and alienate historically oppressed populations. A case in point, Foucault’s metaphor of panopticon, a kind of prison that draws a similarity to panoptic surveillance on students, offers a holistic understanding of disciplinary power and resistance to it in a secondary school.

Purpose Statement

Much of the prior research on Black student dropout behavior is taken from a deficit lens rooted in dominant classism and racist ideologies (Davis & Museus, 2019; Solorzono & Yosso, 2001), which seeks to understand assumptions about a lack of agency and engagement that keep them from fitting into the dominant cultural norms of K-12 education. Deficit thinking is anchored in institutionalized racism, supported by educational policies and laws that perpetuate beliefs that Black students’ environments are responsible for their failures (Woodson, 2021). It is important to note that, since the
1980s, deficit thinking has converged with colorblindness to facilitate the negative portrayal of Black students’ educational outcomes, which intensifies early research on Black students leaving high school without acquiring the skills they need to immediately succeed in postsecondary education. This study offers an anti-deficit lens of Black student dropout behavior.

**Research Questions:**

1. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their decision to drop out?
2. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their regard for education and their future?
3. What possible paths of action or alternatives and assumptions did Black students who dropped out hold?

To fulfill the research purpose, I will explore the phenomenon of Black students’ withdrawal from school through marronage in education and Foucauldian discourse of power and knowledge. I want to examine the presence and importance of agency and resistance in Black students’ relationship with the educational system. To be precise, I explore the extent to which the choice to withdraw represents an act of meaningful and intentional resistance, rejection, and refusal to participate in a system founded on anti-Black oppression and violence. I want to critique the deficit nature of the existing research by reinforcing the voices and experiences of Black students who drop out before completing high school. Furthermore, learning about and challenging deficit thinking to inform critical research can minimize the likelihood that such student resistance would be
misunderstood in ways that devalue the dynamics of Black students’ withdrawal from school.

**Research Design**

Critical Incident Analysis (CIA) is applied in this study because it gives access to personal experience and facilitates a deeper understanding of the personal narratives of students who dropped out of high school. Cardwell et al. (2020) claim that to conceptualize critical incidents, it is essential to understand that individuals involved in situations they believed were relevant or vital to a future outcome find these critical incidents as crucial and essential moments in their lives. Scholars who focus on critical racial incidents in schools argue that Black students' experiences are shaped by their interactions with the educational environment and their experiences as Black people (Dancy et al., 2018; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). As a result, our lives are shaped by our experiences and the people we meet.

A study by Kellogg and Liddell (2012) decoded critical incidents relating to addressing racism, responding to definitions of race from outside sources, preserving racial legitimacy, and upholding one’s race as crucial components of Black college students’ experiences. In addition to memorable messages, critical incidents can also be actual occurrences, for instance, events or conversations that were not viewed as noteworthy but had a profound effect on the participants after the fact. To put it simply, Kellogg and Liddell (2012) assert that a critical incident perspective on Black experiences in schools focuses on both general encounters and critical discussions and dialogues that Black students regard as influential in establishing their identities.
Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault was a French Philosopher, historian, writer, political activist, and literary critic. Foucault theories and writings mostly address and challenge our thinking regarding power and knowledge. Specifically, how power and knowledge is a form of social control tool utilized by our societal institutions. As schools are public places, in particular, places where children are legally bound to attend as well as parents are forced to send their children, the use of Foucault’s research to examine the relationship of power and knowledge was succinct. Since schools, and to a larger context school district, are deemed places of knowledge, we must examine the relationship of power and knowledge within these spaces. The use of Foucauldian discourse allows this research to focus on the power relationships within the context of schools and how this is expressed through language and practices surrounding schools.

Significance

Scholarly

This dissertation extends the discussion of anti-Blackness in education to include Black students’ response to anti-Black oppression in education. The goal is to help us engage in a more critical dialogue about the Black student experience and those who remove themselves from the educational system. The significance of this extension of the conversation is that mainstream literature remains focused on generalizability, but that does not suit disadvantaged groups well. Their cultural and lived experience creates unique conditions that make them a distinct population worth studying and understanding. The goal is to blend mainstream and critical theory to move both works of literature forward.
Practical

This work will facilitate a reexamination of the stigma and treatment of black students who withdraw from school, perhaps helping to restore their dignity. Many applaud those who revolt or escape oppression, therefore, by placing the response of Black students seeking to combat the terror inflicted on them with historical figures will elevate our literature. Reframing dropping out to take their unique cultural perspective and lived experiences into account. By reframing Back student dropout as a purposeful mode of resistance to a system that perpetuates oppression, we can better understand the systemic failures we need to address within our educational system.

Assumptions

It is assumed that research participants (students who dropped out of high school) are truthful about their personal narratives. There is an assumption that research participants will articulate the incidents they believe to be critical to themselves or others.

Delimitations

The research participants are limited to Black students who dropped out of high school. I have limited this study to students’ perspectives, not the perspectives of teachers and administrators in schools.

Limitations

The design of the research has created some limitations. This study requires that some of the research participants recall experiences from several years ago. Examination of critical incidents from personal experience from the past related to dropping out of
high school may be influenced by cognitive biases and emotional judgment. Another limitation of this study is that it cannot be generalized.

**Summary**

Existing scholarship focuses on identifying the determinants of Black student dropout to the detriment of the process, framing the phenomenon as a consequence instead of intentional behavior, thus diminishing the impact of student agency. This gap in the research is critical since we have yet to understand the essence of dropping out of school as a student’s response to educational systems’ dilatory remedies of educational malpractice. What little research that does position dropouts as agentic beings unilaterally views the act of dropping out as self-defeating (Fine, 1991; Solòrzano & Bernal, 2001). To incorporate the idea of agency into our understanding of Black student dropout, it is necessary to consider *how* or the process by which the determinants already identified within the literature affect Black students’ choice to withdraw from schooling from a behavioral perspective.

**Definition of Terms:**

**Maroons** are descendants of African Americans who formed settlements away from slavery (Diouf, 2016).

**Marronage:** According to Ortiz (2019), Marronage was a particular method of expressing freedom since it proved to be a conflict for life and an assertion of existence inside the material constraints of the sociopolitical environment of those subjugated. In unity, dominated persons of African origin partnered and interacted with native inhabitants, forming new customs and organizations (Bledsoe, 2017; Carroll, 1977; Lockley & Doddington, 2012; Sayers, 2006). In all their richness and variety, the
geopolitical setting where both communities threatened extinction prompted this blending of cultural components. As a way to survive, this cultural diffusion also included adopting cultural features from the prevailing culture, as seen in the varied historical insight of Maroon groups.

**Foucauldian Discourse Analysis:** how the power dynamics of any given situation are based on the discourse surrounding the subject. Those who yield power control any subject's language, writing, and research. Also, it is the examination of resistance and what resistance actions may look like (Pembroke, 2018; Gallagher, 2010). This analysis examines the struggle of power relationships within schooling and how teachers and school administrators use language within policies and classrooms to control students, and how students drop out to resist such power.

**School dropout** has been defined as leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential, most often a higher secondary education diploma (De Witte, 2013).

**Critical Incidents Analysis (CIA)** is a strategy to facilitate reflective learning. It involves thoroughly describing and analyzing an authentic and experienced event within its specific context. (Fitzgerald, K., Kerins, C. & McElvaney, R., 2008). It is a systematic effort to gather and analyze specific incidents of effective or ineffective behavior concerning a designated activity. In this study, the emphasis on events that made the difference between success and failure (completing school or dropping out)—the “critical incidents”—provided an objective—gaining freedom from anti-Blackness within schools (Radford, 2006; Sharoff, 2008)
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature that examines the phenomenon of dropping out of high school through the perspectives and experiences of African American students. There is a limited amount of research covering the perspectives and experiences of African American dropouts, which suggests that further research is needed. Because research in this area remains frustratingly scant, it is important to foster genuine research inquiry to help fill in the gap that currently exists in literature. This chapter identifies theoretical and empirical literature that include themes such as marronage in education, student resistance, and Foucauldian discourse of power and knowledge.

Standing on the work of Neil Roberts’ Freedom as Marronage, I highlight the emergence of the scholarship of marronage. The theoretical connection to marronage and education is to showcase Black students’ agency, psychology, and grit. This theoretical lens seeks to accommodate concepts such as students as ‘agentic beings’ and student agentic engagement. Marronage in education extends notions about agentic learning and self-directed actions through the less acknowledged history in African American genealogy – the recent histories of marronage in the Caribbean, the Global South, and in early North America (Nevius, 2020). Drawing historical parallels to slave resistance and rebellion is an attempt to draw out explicit thematic connections to the complexities of Black students lived and cultural and social experience in schools.

Although marronage in education seeks to fill the gaps in practical and conceptual understanding of how students arrive at their actions of dropping out of school, it is a new
approach. Since marronage in education is a new lens, the literature review will focus more on the works of scholars and historians on which the lens stands. These scholarly works are from diverse fields such as anthropology, history, genealogy, geology, sociology, and education. A significant part of this literature review will be on the concept of marronage and maroons. I will expound on the literature which places students as idle beings who are either pushed out of school or thrown out due to erratic behaviors. Through these scholarly lenses of marronage, I connect students’ actions to those of the Maroons.

However, the connection of Black students and marronage stands on knowledge is a form of power that supports resistance. Scarce literature addresses subtle, covert, and micro-actions of resistance. Research frameworks that acknowledge the myriad ways of student resistance open how we can examine students’ experiences and shift the way educators respond to students’ actions.

**Marronage in Education**

In a conceptual sense, marronage has been the challenge of white authority and the proof of consciousness and agency among Black people who suffered enslavement (Price, 1992). To be a Maroon, a person must have rejected the existing options for freedom and liberation when such a denunciation was seen as an unlawful act. Marronage in and of itself altered what it meant to exit a place or a condition (Gordon, 2017). Marronage was not simply acts of self-determination; it reflected a long-term critical consciousness that developed from the lived experiences and ontological existences and positions of Black peoples who experienced bondage through chattel slavery (Sayers, 2012). Marooning has historically represented the most extreme form of
defiance and resistance for Black people. It entailed opting out of systems of oppression and forming alternate, more liberated forms of society (Johnson, 2012; Sayers, 2012). Marronage was the individual and collective resistance to enslavement and bondage (Sayers, 2014).

For Black peoples held in bondage, marronage was an alternative to rebellion; it served to provide a strategic outlet for those seeking to avoid rebellion (Geggus, 1992). Marronage was nearly universal among Black peoples who suffered enslavement (Sayers, 2014), and much like rebellion, marronage – or the act of fleeing captivity – existed wherever slavery occurred (Weik, 1997). Although marronage in the United States is understudied and undertheorized, it did, in fact, occur in the United States (Bledsoe, 2017). Moreover, marronage in the United States was both extensive and intricate (Sayers, 2012). Marronage in the United States was also highly effective (Carroll, 1977).

Marronage was and is aimed at seeking freedom by altering and reconfiguring state institutions and society – at large – through the act of revolution (Roberts, 2017). Thus, some forms of marronage seek structural change, while other forms of marronage seek full flight from systems built on whiteness. Marronage, particularly marronage in education, is a flight from dehumanization and antiblackness (Ortiz, 2019). Marronage is a valuable framework for understanding contemporary flight from oppression and flight to a space and pace that is amenable to self-determination (Ortiz, 2019). However, marronage goes further than the mere concept of diaspora in that marronage gets to the heart of choosing agency to flee over being a mere migrant, exile, refugee, or immigrant (Gordon, 2017; Roberts, 2017; Weik, 1997).
Furthermore, the term *marronage* presents Black peoples as active parts of our freedom-seeking journey as opposed to passive recipients of white benevolence (Rashid, 2000). Put more simply, marronage is “a new way of thinking about freedom as a concept”; it “is about the escape from coercion and domination” (Mills, 2017). In using the term *marronage*, this dissertation highlights how Black students engage in radical self-liberation rather than positioning the participants (and to a greater extent, Black peoples) as passive participants in our liberation (Sayers, 2012).

Marronage in education allows scholars to consider how students view freedom as they experience schooling as dynamic and unsettled. Currently, scholars are considering how to best extend and build upon the concept of marronage as an act of freedom-seeking (Dilts, 2017). Even marronage, however, is limited in that it – as a concept – is unable to fully theorize or conceptualize how restricted freedom has been in relation to human inhabitation on earth (Mills, 2017). Different than diasporic movement, marronage – or to leave this world for some vastly or perhaps entirely different world – is “the best source for a radical reconceptualization of what it means to be free” (Ciccariello, 2017). To fully understand the concept of flight to freedom one must fully conceptualize the Black experience (Mills, 2017). In this context, freedom is a process; it is a state of being that involves fleeing from an actual place or a condition. Freedom, by necessity, includes, “active refusals, resistances, and rejections” (Dilts, 2017). Scholars are considering, nevertheless, how to best extend and build upon the concept of marronage as an act of freedom-seeking (Dilts, 2017). In this vein, I build on the concept of marronage by positing that students who dropout of primary and secondary schools are freedom-seekers, or new age maroons.
Drawing from Neil Roberts’ (2015) four pillars of marronage, marronage in education illuminates those within educational systems with four important tenets: Purpose: Historically, Black people have engaged in purposeful and intentional acts of resistance. Black peoples are constantly pursuing ways to disrupt the oppressive environments. Movement: Black people’s daily flight and engagement in self-possession. Within the educational context, movement is displayed in myriad ways, and researchers should seek to interrogate Black students’ unsettling and movement away from the spaces of schooling. Distance: is the physical distance Black people place between themselves and oppressive environments. Property: seeks to reconstruct the understanding of Black students’ engagement with property and wealth. With this framework, students choose not to utilize anti-Black structures or edification from school systems that do not have their best interests.

**Historical Roots**

Dropping out of school is often viewed as a self-sabotaging event at any age or grade level. The act of dropping out of school looks from afar as if the decision was impulsive and unintentional. Using the Critical Incidents Technique (CIT), I elaborate on the critical incidents of participants’ schooling experiences and their lasting effects. CIT allowed for a more precise interview which encapsulated the watershed moments of students’ decision to remove themselves from school. Given that current literature is marred by its own theoretical and conceptual limitations, I rely heavily on marronage in history to fuse the historical connection of slave resistance to oppressive chattel slavery and Black students’ resistance to oppressive school systems. Educators, policymakers,
and the academy must understand the varied and radical ways students engage in resistance.

In this literature review, I attempt to find sources to resurrect and make plain a tradition of resistance, thereby welcoming new-age Maroons. The connection to history solidifies the ever-present racial injustices in U.S. schools. It should open our eyes to alternative methods of existence. To our amazement, removing oneself from harm is historically sound. It is more aligned with the historical actions of Black people rather than sitting idle. Dropping out is not a new phenomenon. Instead, it is a bold escalation from past events of removing oneself from the blatant subjugation of slavery to contemporary times as self-governance and repudiation of daily oppression.

Research on student resistance supports the understanding of the process of dropping. Marronage in education is a new concept that stands on multiple strands of resistance. Here, I choose to review the literature on students’ resistance to oppressive schooling.

**Student Resistance**

America has a preconceived concept about urban youth in the United States: they are uninterested in or unengaged in resistance and civic life, especially children of color. Studies concerning youth resistance against oppression have an unquestioned belief that resistance can lead to progress, frequently seen as the growth and education of their communities and the nation (Noguera & Cannella, 2006; Raby, 2005). It is not uncommon for resistance to be idealized, as well. It is considered a raw force that must be harnessed and trained on a route to responsible democratic civilization (in countries) and adult democracy (Raby, 2005). It is, therefore, more necessary to reengage a critical
dialogue on the complexity and sophistication of teenage resistance and the relative obscurity of theories of change within youth resistance research at this moment in time of global appropriation of youth resistance (Dumas, 2013).

The most outstanding critical analysis of youth resistance against capitalism was in 1977 by Paul Willis. He made a remarkable assertion of working-class boys’ opposition to schooling, particularly to unfair educational practices, which sent shockwaves across the fields of education and sociology (Tuck & Yang, 2011). After more than three decades of emergence, resistance continues to be used as a prism through which the social environment in communities and schools and the educational experiences of teenagers can be seen and understood (Raby, 2005). The same author heightens that critical ethnography has been concerned with resistance for several decades, and authors have published numerous works on this topic.

In various literature, resistance among students is not limited to students’ critical comments about school policies and the ambition of underprivileged youth to defy stereotypes through academic achievement (Raby, 2005). It touches on various forms of resistance, for instance, clowning around, skipping class, defacing school property, wearing uniforms incorrectly, etc. (Raby, 2005). Black student activism has become widely popular alongside popular resistance movements like; #StudentBlackOut, #FeesMustFall, and #BlackStudentsMatter, which have made Black student activism a new reality throughout the world (Turner, 2020). According to Ransby (2018), the social movement, the Movement for Black Lives, was used by Black students between 2014 and 2017 to succeed in protests against racial injustices in academic institutions and
surrounding communities. This growing trend of student movement has helped defeat the stereotype that students are uninterested in political and civic life.

Colleges and universities in the United States are usually caught up in the current political climate, affecting faculty members and students (Turner, 2020). College students are at the heart of American politics, regardless of whether the current social problem is freedom of speech, sexual abuse, violence, or racial justice. Students, particularly students of color, have a long history of organizing against injustice (Dumas, 201). Because ideas like “Black power” and “Black self-determination” are ever-present in Black, the fight for Black studies has influenced Black politics as well (Turner, 2020). Students’ motivation to effect social change, particularly in racialized ways, is strongly influenced by their immediate political environment, sometimes referred to as the “political field” (Turner, 2020). The Black students’ mass mobilization in over 86 schools and universities in the 21st century is evidence of their participation in a more significant movement for Black Lives.

The current political climate also influences higher education students to participate in student organizing (Erevelles, 2019). Due to the growing trend of privatization of universities, universities are forced to understand concepts of race and ethnicity, employment practices, and interaction with the broader marketplace due to the changing relationship between the institutions and students to students as consumers (Noguera & Cannella, 2006).

With the Black Student social movement gaining popularity, there is a need for research on Black students organizing in response to police violence. However, many academics are concerned that “student resistance” has become meaningless due to its
wide application. On the other hand, Raby (2005) claims that restricting the scope of resistance to collective, directed acts can overlook other disruptive behaviors. The idea of resistance, despite its difficulties, should not be disregarded because it identifies and rewards opposing behavior as political and informed (Erevelles, 2019). According to Raby (2005), theorizing about resistance demands situating it within broader theoretical viewpoints on power and agency from both modern and post-modern perspectives.

Tuck & Yang’s (2011) study examines the youth resistance theories, their possibilities, and limitations in educational research while offering new theories of youth resistance to injustices in schools. Tuck & Yang (2011), in their discussion on theories of youth resistance, draw from a range of perspectives from various researchers, especially in the field of educational research in health, criminal justice, sociology, and is further not limited to critical theory, decolonization theory, political science, and other aspects like critical race theory, among others. As a result, they urge researchers and readers to view educational injustices differently that do not consider the universal distinction of resistance. They provide assessments that categorize youth resistance as a concept beyond actions made to cause change and educational transformation. These are actions based on the determination that injustices are present in every area, and those dismantled in education are only the beginning.

As the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies shows, subcultural studies are the most highly recognized category of the modernist resistance approach. Subcultural studies have focused primarily on working-class youth’s expressions of resistance, especially through symbols and behaviors that were prevalent at the time (Tuck & Yang, 2011). Working class teens were previously seen as classless, however
the link between working class subculture and its impact on youth activities changed the commentary of teenage behaviors from simple teenage obsession to a valid form of resistance. According to Raby (2005), appropriation as a form of resistance is another concept of youth resistance under cultural studies. It is via the disagreements on interpretations and meanings that subcultures oppose hegemony and ideologies to the connections of production.

To represent the inconsistency of class through visual puns, subcultural youth take over the dominant material things and symbols to reconstruct them and attach to them the newly created resistance meanings (Raby, 2005). For instance, Punks like to attach a British flag onto new clothes while using baby soothers during celebrations to show their identity in a critical approach to mainstream culture. Consumption generates culture but with a reluctance to adhere to established norms. This challenge to hegemony is negotiated indirectly at the surface level of appearances (Raby, 2005). Many other researchers, like Leong (1992), believe such an initiative is unlikely to achieve societal change. This is because the resistance is based on the deformation or restructuring of oppressive environments. However, students who dropped out did not seek to restructure environments; on the contrary, student Maroons seek to remove themselves and recreate their own space by taking respite from oppression.

**Black Student Drop Out**

Despite the numerous attempts at school reform, students of color, including African Americans and other “minorities,” in the United States continue to face educational challenges that cause many to drop out or be expelled from school altogether (Howard, 2013). According to various studies, few Americans know how uneven the
educational system is and how pupils are given varied learning chances based on their socioeconomic status and race (Alexander et al., 1997). Home and community contexts and school factors unrelated to teachers’ competence play a role in the disparity in school dropout rates between Black and white students. To understand why the dropout gap persists, we must understand how race and racism are structural concerns for social relationships (Duncan, 2002).

Many African Americans’ pathways have been influenced by the history of black people, particularly the history of racism, social movements, and institutions. One cannot dispute that a person’s history influences their present and future behavior or outcome. For instance, according to (Akom, 2003), people from historically oppressed groups show their disdain for the dominant group by rejecting superimposed educational aims. As a result, many students from minority groups, including Black Americans, Latinx, and American Indians, drop out of school because racial prejudice limits their access to high-paying employment (Akom, 2003).

Similarly, due to America’s persistent and institutionalized racism, many Black students have difficulty dealing with school authority systems. They see the power structures in schools as an attempt to subjugate them further. Students frequently blamed principals and instructors for perceived abuses of power. Students of color frequently found links between issues of power and respect (Dei et al., 1997). Furthermore, researchers postulated that Black pupils were disappointed by the lack of consideration for respect problems when individuals made discipline or choices in leadership positions. According to a study by Dei et al. (1997), many male and female students expressed the need to resist school authority due to racist or oppressive behavior acted on them.
Dropouts, particularly, expressed anger and the desire to act against a system they perceived as oppressive and diminished them. Thus, due to the racist environment in schools, Black students are forced to drop out of school or get pulled out for violent behavior (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011).

Additionally, a critical examination of the disparities within our education system between Black students and white students reveals the role racism plays in the socioeconomic status of Black students and how this inevitably affects their education and retention (Howard, 2013). African Americans are also overrepresented in schools with inadequate funding, which means that they, like many other people raised in economically impoverished places, face enormous life obstacles right from the start (Gordon, 2012). In addition to fewer resources allocated to poor urban districts by the funding systems, schools with high numbers of low-income and “minority” children receive fewer teaching aids and instructional resources than other schools.

Furthermore, tracking systems exacerbate these disparities by isolating students of color and low-income households within a single institution (Howard, 2013). Parallel to Bradley & Renzulli’s discussion on the quality of educational experiences Black students face, our participants reveal that they were given lower-quality textbooks and highly budgeted educational resources during their schooling. They also witnessed higher student-teacher ratio class sizes and experiences with ill-trained and in-experienced teachers.

According to various dropout studies, a student’s family background plays a significant role in his or her decision to drop out of school. The low socioeconomic position has been linked to several factors contributing to school dropout, including a low
GPA, inability to participate in extracurricular activities, and poor social ties (Zaff et al., 2002). Black and Latino children are more likely to drop out of school than white peers. Black students (17%) dropped out at nearly three times the white students (6%) dropout rates (Zaff et al., 2002). Similarly, our participants admitted that socioeconomics affected their quitting school to earn money.

One of the most puzzling aspects of this disparity is the severity and persistence with which adverse social events negatively impact African Americans well into adulthood (Howard, 2013). Black males have consistently high unemployment, are overincarcerated, suffer from differential health issues, and ultimately have poorer life expectations than any other racial/ethnic grouping in the United States. Therefore, these participants, who removed themselves from oppressive schooling environments, have matriculated into thriving careers. This eye-opening result suggests that students who drop out are not impeding success; they are pruning away the cancerous impact of white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

Fugitivity

The evolution of Black education is intertwined with a lengthy history of fugitive scheming. Teaching Black children meant more than just improving basic academic knowledge for African American instructors. This aspect was primarily about challenging and overcoming the anti-Black prejudices that governed the entire globe. While some instructors may have begun by excelling academic areas, the primary learning goal for Black educators as an intellectual community was to assist pupils in realizing the urgent need to reshape the world. While studying the practice of Black schooling, this disparity must be acknowledged. This point was where they began; this
social coherence was a mutual understanding and the cornerstone of their activity. Notably, across the Black education history, Black people have participated in resistance and transgression, spiritual creativity, interconnectedness, and Black fugitive thinking to perpetuate Blackness in the wake of continued institutionalized racism socially. Throughout this analytical and conceptual review, I present the conceptualization of Black emancipation in teacher education based on an interdisciplinary study to re-envision the growth of schools that resist Black pain and uphold Blackness.

Academic programs are intrinsically intertwined in perpetuating anti-Blackness and white supremacy in schools (Woodson, 2021). In an era of neoliberalism, primarily white prospective educators who graduate from programs are expected to educate Black students and ensure their humanity is upheld. Researchers specifically identify ubiquitous white supremacy within the planning and functions of education systems (Woodson, 2021; Stovall, 2020). For example, the lack of intentional hiring and recruitment of teachers whose racial identity match Black students (Player et al., 2020; Coles et al., 2021; Zaino, 2021) and a lack of racially inclusive instructional strategies (Jarvis, 2021) serve as significant contributors to the experience of Black students in classrooms. Education systems have always been aligned with white supremacy ideology and sensibility (Player et al., 2020). Therefore, it is clear that such classrooms are saturated with white-washed ideologies, pedagogies, and pigeon-holed curriculum.

Most schools are dominated by white teachers and learners, whose sentiments dictate material and programmatic choices (Woodson, 2021). Despite the addition of diversity and social justice classes in many curriculums, these systems are vulnerable to white comfort instead of investigations of antiblackness in schools, white privilege,
and supremacy (Trafí-Prats, 2020.). Another critical issue in education systems is the persistent marginalization of Black teacher applicants from leadership or policy related positions. Tailored recruiting methods, tuition assistance, assistance for certification examinations, and culturally aware mentorship are all lacking, creating needless barriers for prospective Black teachers (Woodson, 2021). As a result, Woodson (2021) and Jarvis (2021) suggest that prospective Black teachers must deal with white fragility from colleagues, social alienation within cohorts, and a lack of social validation in the school.

**Black Fugitivity**

Blackness is defined by the rationales of captivity and confinement (Sojoyner, 2017). According to Bledsoe (2018), participating in Black fugitivity via fostering a lifestyle that rejects such a punitive existence has become an integral element of Black people’s ways of life. Bledsoe (2018) uniquely contributes to the topic of Black Pedagogy by extensively highlighting the marronage ubiquity.

However, a white colonialist framework of American society that has always had an anti-Blackness connotation has created Blackness as ever enslavable and has attempted to perpetuate such a construct using anti-Black aggression (Bledsoe, 2018; Woodson, 2021; McKittrick, 2011; Marsh, 2016). Woodson (2021) asserts that Black people’s enslaveability is a foundation of white supremacy that roots all acts of anti-Blackness and generates a whole atmosphere whereby anti-Blackness is a constant feature. He reveals that it is also a continuous construct that devastates and horrifies Black people (Woodson, 2021). Other pieces of literature define Black incarceration as an aspect that is more than just a symbol of anti-Black tyranny; it captures the real and physical ways in which Black people are monitored, alienated, and
governed (Coles et al., 2021; Jelks, 2021; Stovall, 2020; Trafí-Prats, 2020). Such an element is the outcome of repeated anti-Black violent strategies that sustain Black subordination and are based on the concept that Black people and Black students are inferior to other human beings.

It is critical to underline that the framework of confinement produced by anti-Blackness is not just the outcome of racist ideology, even though this is the structure’s foundation. Instead, Black imprisonment in the United States is structurally rooted and institutionalized inside its institutions, supported by policy and law that validates Black people’s detrimental treatment in implicit and explicit ways (Woodson, 2021). Ranging from what is termed as Jim Crow legislation written in the post-civil revolution to election integrity, American culture may be described as a nation-state that is conceptually and logistically based on suppressing the liberties and freedoms of Black people, either born in the United States or not (Marsh, 2016; Coles et al., 2021).

Schooling, as a primary socialization entity born in this broader framework of anti-Black constraints, directly mimics civilization, producing and perpetuating the suppression of Black freedom in inhumane ways (Navarro, 2020). Navarro (2020) perceives Black children’s education as actually occurring inside a violent system of punitive confinement and curriculum dismantlement, which he blames for schools operating as contained institutions. McKittrick (2011), as previously noted, conceived Black children’s education in the aftermath of Black slavery. Teachers and the greater educational system engage Black pupils here using a variety of violent languages and technology. Acknowledging the ubiquity of school-based abuse, Black fugitivity has contributed to resisting and acting on such violent behavior (Florio et al., 2020).
Therefore, Navarro (2020) reminds everyone that fugitivity will always remain present in learning institutions where there is colonization or the African Diaspora.

While researching Black youth makings, Givens (2019) described how fugitive thinking motivated their subjects to oppose confinement via their defiance and resistance to a curriculum that compels their death. The development of Black space turns into a manifestation of how Black learners and teachers execute academic fugitivity (McKittrick, 2011; Marsh, 2016; Player et al., 2020). This aspect is indeed key to Black fugitivity in school. Therefore, Black space, geared toward the teaching process beyond the confined space, becomes a means of constructing Black educational futures that react to the reality and facts of colonialism, imperialism, and antiblackness.

Conclusively, Black fugitivity and pedagogy may thus be seen as a continuing, forward-looking exodus from anti-Black educational institutions motivated by optimism for a liberated future and activities to achieve that autonomy. By involving teachers in literature and practices, it enables them to identify the education narrative as a site of captivity for Black children, impeding Black liberation attempts. Thus, teacher educators may assist in Black fugitivity endeavors in addition to striving to build and sustain established Black spaces, which might also take the form of preserving curricular space to highlight Black teacher concerns.

Unfortunately, Fugitivity can only be viewed or achieved as a liberation pedagogy, if educators dedicate themselves to constructing curricula and courses through the rationales of Black delight and revival. It would require a large buy-in on behalf of districts and fellow parents. However, Fugitivity favors making educators aware of antiblackness through contexts that entice them to develop counter frameworks
like policies and activities to suppress the violent system and not dismantle or eradicate. Students should be given an option to determine how much engagement with oppressive environments they desire to endure. Although scholars of Black fugitivity provide a blend of Black humanity, ecstasy, rejuvenation, and liberating illusions; all of it is based on how resisting while participating or the belief that the system is salvageable.

**Foucauldian Discourse of Power and Knowledge**

*Epistemological Underpinnings*

In Michel Foucault’s rich discussions of resistance as an epistemological framework, three core features of Foucauldian discourse makes his body of work an important and productive resource for contemporary discussions of educational marronage and multiple strands of student resistance (Black fugitivity). These include the following: first, his rich and complex theorization of power, which is one of the most influential analyses in contemporary philosophy and social and political theory. Second, his specific analysis of power and the concept of the panopticon (of which Foucault uses as a metaphor for the ‘gaze’) help us to think more critically about the role of the white gaze in public schools as an important site of white racial power that is predicated on a white epistemic order that seeks to dominate and subordinate African American students. Third, and finally, his conception of resistance is a kind of counter-hegemonic tool, articulating that while the pervasive white gaze has resulted in the marginalization of African Americans in educational institutions and displayed deficit notions of Blackness, it has not destroyed their agency.

In daily life, power relations rely on tactics centered on strategies, maneuvers, and procedures rather than a sense of ownership. Since the start of
the nineteenth century in Europe, there has been no physical penalty for disobedience against power, according to Foucault’s Disciplinary practices: The Creation of Prison. A toolkit of creeping control over the bodies and brains of individuals is in place instead (Luchies, 2015; Opfer, 2001). Surveillance is a discipline tool used to rank, organize, and standardize people. Traditional and modern surveillance techniques can be used in a school (Page, 2016) since it is an important aspect of the way things work illustrating the power that strives to raise individuals who will serve the power itself in the long term. The panopticon is a jail initially established by Jeremy Bentham (Gallagher, 2010). For the purpose of this essay, the panopticon is used as a metaphor for school observation and control.

The panopticon is typically represented as a circular structure with a viewing platform in the center (Simon, 2002). Both a worker and a schoolboy can serve as perfect examples monitored under the situation. Small prisoner shadows in the outer cells can be observed from the watchtower, standing out exactly against the light. Power has the ability to provide freedom and also enslave (Wang, 2011; Gallagher, 2010). Enlightened thinking’s panopticon collects data on individuals by monitoring them in institutions where they are monitored, classified, observed, documented, and compared to one another’s actions and behaviors. It is easy to see how the panopticon and schools share several similarities. Modern schools must be seen against the backdrop of the growing and spreading disciplinary power in Europe (Gallagher, 2010).

A school can be a prison in disguise through physical monitoring, attendance records, exams, progress reports, body-belongings research, and seclusion units in schools (Brent, 2016). In other words, schools are supposed to be a place where no one
can slip through the cracks, where strict rules apply, and where everyone is constantly under the watchful eye of the authorities. Students are being encouraged to feel the need to enhance their self-control as a precaution against being watched. Being tracked and monitored is normalized because they have been raised in a surveillance society (Simon, 2002; Page, 2016). Therefore, the panopticon capitalizes on individuals who have been punished for being disciplined and uses that ambiguity to its advantage. It is safe to say that pedagogy was born out of a necessity for disciplinary authority (Gallagher, 2010). Resistance to surveillance culture may be possible, but it lacks mass efficacy; instead, this resistance relies on individuals’ knowledge of power manipulation and control.

Students who refuse to compromise face a variety of current punishments, including threats, reprimands, penalties, seclusion, suspension, and expulsion, if they continue to resist (Brent, 2016; Page, 2016). Individuals who are submissive, non-questioning, irresponsible, or authoritarian will rise in society because of this case. Control, discrimination, regulation of space, and classification are all terms used by Foucault to describe discipline (Gallagher, 2010). Disciplinary power does not belong in the hands of one individual or group over another, nor is it something that is shared by those with and without sovereignty. Instead, disciplinary power is the power characterized by fighting parties engaging in bodily, face-to-face conflicts, and finally oppressing a bodily opponent (Luchies, 2015). It was defined by Foucault as something that was constantly being exercised and rotated. The manifestations of power are found at
the depths of conflict (Simon, 2002). The human body is particularly susceptible to circulating power, making it ripe for exploration, destruction, and reorganization.

When power relations are sought outside institutions, they become more tangible and more crystallized (Wang, 2011). Social institutions, including jails, hospitals, mental institutions, and schools, all play a role in instilling and enforcing discipline through surveillance. Panoptic power has dominated modernity for most of its history, establishing discipline through constant surveillance (Gallagher, 2010; Wang, 2011). Individuals’ bodies, actions, sentiments, and daily social behaviors are regulated and reshaped via power relations centered on discipline and subjectification. The use of panopticon monitoring as a disciplinary authority includes soul training and allowing convicts to reflect on the complexities of their behavior to change themselves (Simon, 2002). To put it another way, the knowledge that one can be watched at all times encourages the subject to exercise self-control even when no one is looking.

According to the panopticon discourse, which is the focus of this research, schools are similar to prisons (Jackson, 2013; Simon, 2002). Schools in this area are likewise influenced by the penal system. In today’s schools, kids are expected to be on time, obedient, and memorize all that they are taught without making their own decisions. In the same regard, racism and ableism finds its way into the classroom. Rules must always be enforced at schools, and the teaching staff is responsible for overseeing such enforcement. Schools under this type of society form a concentrated version of society.

Discipline, according to Foucault, is an idealized system wherein the tiniest elements are scrutinized (Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011). This portrayal is accurate from a programming perspective. School districts can achieve an acceptable level of order and
instructional efficiency by simply developing a more genuine level of surveillance. Rather than dealing with minor disruptions like youngsters conversing while sharpening pencils, teachers may have simply “turned a blind eye” or “turned a deaf ear” to them in favor of more serious threats to classroom order (Page, 2016). Surveillance may be viewed as an attempt to create the perception of authority amid a chaotic environment.

Schools are unique among political situations in that they are directly impacted by societal change and serve as the first formal step for people to normalize adherence to disciplinary authorities (Opfer, 2001). The emergence of pedagogy was inevitable precisely because of the need for control over whether or not people do as they are taught. Schools are particularly crucial in this process since they are the primary hubs for the transmission of product information (Gallagher, 2010). Attendance records, report filing, uniforms, following regulations, and adhering to timetables are just a few ways that students are subject to constant panoptic monitoring in educational environments.

People are examined, monitored, and taught how to accomplish things by institutions under truth frameworks based on scientific ideologies. When power is in the hands of those who oppose it, resistance is inevitable (Sarofian-Butin, 2001; Allen, 2017). But resistance is never external to power; rather, it is always a part of the process. People who want the freedom to make their own choices can think of resistance as a reversal of power, adopting the same strategies that oppressors use against them (Sarofian-Butin, 2001; Anderson, 2013). Resisting disciplinary measures can take many forms, including avoidance, the reiteration of statements,
and undermining the norms that are supposed to keep people in line. Resistance tactics like stalling, slandering, mockery, passivity, treachery, ignorance, avoidance, and evasion could also be used to negate disciplinary authority.

Punishment for disobedience has been shown by Michel Foucault as the role of the school as an institution of order and has been the case since the beginning of public education (Gallagher, 2010). The level of harshness in implementing order in schools has changed drastically over the past few decades to match the increasing harshness of the justice system (Hirschfield, 2008; Gallagher, 2010). Students’ delinquency and other school-related problems have decreased despite the perception of an increase in these issues.

The employment of increasingly restrictive educational procedures, such as more instructors reporting to the principal, more exclusions from class time, and more detention, suspensions, and expulsion of students, is becoming more common (Luchies, 2015). The term “misbehavior” is used to describe a wide range of student activities, from simple infractions of school regulations like interrupting class or failing to turn in homework; to more serious infractions like vandalism or drug abuse (Basile et al., 2019; Sarofian-Butin, 2001). In addition to being labeled as misbehavior, a breach of the law is also a kind of juvenile delinquency. The majority of in-school misbehavior have been dealt with by schools themselves in the past. However, in recent years, schools have engaged the police when students get involved in specific misbehaviors, such as fighting or graffiti.

Despite the lack of consensus among academics, there is a belief that conformity could be viewed as a peaceful protest method (Brent, 2016). Students intentionally
making noise in the classroom is an example of their resistance to the instructor, who represents the symbol of power (Anderson, 2013). The relationship between rewards and punishments could be considered for another school-based resistance example (Opfer, 2001). Disciplinary power could be undermined if an individual’s relationship with punishments and rewards is negotiated. The imbalance of effect of behaviors between school leaders and students causes confusion. Although these behaviors may cause a student to be reprimanded, the same behaviors may increase students’ popularity (Luchies, 2015; Opfer, 2001). As a result, some disobedience may offer a reward which could promote resistance.

Many scholars who have focused on Foucauldian panoptic monitoring and resistance in schools affirm that in the context of ‘No Child Left Behind,’ the surveillance machine of standardized tests is appropriate for matching students with insufficient educational services with manageable low-paying jobs oriented by a growingly overcentralized and layering national and global economy (Jackson, 2013; Simon, 2002). This is a skeptical impact of neoliberal policies on education: without knowledge, ‘there is no power relation, nor any understanding that does not require and imply at the same moment power relations. As a result of this research, we may claim that power relies on knowledge to maintain control over obedient bodies (Simon, 2002). These institutions have access to this information thanks to resources like intelligence tests and standardized exams.

Students are expected to abide by the school’s policies to maintain a peaceful and conducive learning environment (Gallagher, 2010). An effective
method for this is to make it clear that students are expected to fulfill their responsibilities to school administrators, professors, and other members of the faculty. As soon as students realize that they must abide by laws, they attempt to correct their behavior (Simon, 2002). As quoted by Foucault, self-restraint is a part of the corrective process. The powers of Disciplinary Power shift the focus of discipline from physical punishment to a message that punishment will be more painful for them than the pleasure of doing something illegal (Simon, 2002; Page, 2016), which encourages them to avoid unlawful activities as reasonable investments so that the body can be disciplined without physical punishment being applied.

Power dynamics, according to Foucault, cannot exist without the formation of a domain of knowledge, and there can be no understanding that does not assume and generate time power relations simultaneously (Jackson, 2013). Surveillance practices as disciplinary power are effective at schools that use three main instruments: “hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination” (Page, 2016). Observing students, teachers, or security cameras in hallways, the school garden, or even classrooms during class can easily produce the same results.

**Panopticons in Relation to Mistrust in the Medical Gaze**

According to Foucault, power is not all about governments or organizations exerting influence on society from a macro perspective (Zaidi et al., 2021). Doctor-patient and teacher-student relationships are all examples of power dynamics at the micro level (Zaidi et al., 2021; Halman et al., 2017). When presenting dermatological difficulties, for instance, medical educators are more likely to use images of white skin.
Such privileged acts normalize the sickness in white skin, according to Foucault, which disadvantages the other races.

There are several ways that medical education and healthcare are affected by institutional racism. Zaidi et al. (2021) suggest that medical education’s depiction of race is an essential component in preparing physicians to serve underrepresented groups. They highlight how racism is positioned and hidden in health, such as doctors’ miscalculations in rating pain in patients of color, physiological tests that are adjusted incorrectly for patients of color, and medical education testing techniques that perpetuate racial prejudices. Medical institutions and query banks should be updated to reflect the fact that race is not a biological construct but rather a social one (Halman et al., 2017). This transformation may enable clinicians to address racialized health inequalities and look at bigger contextual concerns that result in poor health outcomes.

**Mistrust of schools and Racism**

Increasing punishment is sanctioned for pupils who teachers and administrators believe are on the “school to prison link.” Schools are increasingly using suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary measures to deal with students who flout school rules or break the law (Pembroke, 2018; Gallagher, 2010). Students who engage in illegal behavior, including drug or alcohol abuse or weapon possession, must now be reported to law enforcement institutions instead of being dealt with on campus, thanks to recent changes in the legislation. Teachers, administrators, and legislators who escalate disciplinary actions to legal systems increase the risk of their students becoming involved in the criminal
justice system in the future. Students who are victims of severe types of social rules have common attributes as those most likely to be tried and convicted of a crime; are poor, male, and in many cases affiliates or members of the Black community (Zaidi et al., 2021). This is not surprising bearing in mind the current tendency toward more prohibitive instructional strategies and punitive student discipline.

Statistics have indicated that those in power feel that Black students are involved in more unacceptable behavior as compared to white students (Welch & Payne, 2010). Increasingly severe approaches to student discipline are widely accepted in American public schools, especially in urban areas. For example, schools may impose clothing regulations or uniforms, and students may also be issued student ID badges so that they may be identified and deterred from breaking school rules. Over 80% of institutions, and nearly all metropolitan schools, now have some kind of security and monitoring system in place (Simon, 2002). Security and monitoring systems used by most schools include Metal device detectors, guarded or monitored doors or gates; adult monitoring of hallways; uniformed security officers, cameras; locker searches; clear school bag rules; and drug-sniffer dogs.

The racial danger is not the same as the threat posed by the race of an individual student, which has been used in previous studies to predict harsher disciplinary measures in schools (Welch & Payne, 2010). With its roots in a conflicting viewpoint, the racial threats theory predicts a rise in control measures as the number of African Americans grows in ratio to whites, as a result of an increasing unprovoked fear from proximity to minorities (Feldman, 2018). Using the term “power threat,” Hubert Blalock asserted that the imagined risk to white individuals by people of color was both economic and political
at the macro-societal level. Findings from this perspective support the idea of race-based competition, which is caused by an increase in the number of people of color and the accompanying concerns about financial constraints and political standing, leading to more social regulations (Welch & Payne, 2010; Craig et al., 2018).

The severity of punishment laid out to minority students is inversely proportional to their racial status, which is another important predictor of student punishment (Welch & Payne, 2010). Now, it is well accepted that Black children are most likely to be subject to intensive school control than their white counterparts and are punished more frequently and harshly for minor transgressions (Welch & Payne, 2010). Suspension and even corporal punishment show this discrepancy. As a result, Black learners are much less likely to be given light disciplinary measures. More restrictive measures, including metal detector checking and zero-tolerance sanctions for pupils of color, are also far more certain to be imposed on these children (Skiba et al., 2008). Inequalities in student treatment worsen as sanctions grow harsher, adding to the already existing racial imbalance in school discipline.

Punishment, counseling, and tests are all examples of disciplinary power’s role in establishing norms that are either destructive or manipulative (Welch & Payne, 2010; Feldman, 2018). Disciplinary authority is also defined by Foucault as the ability to rank, order, and normalize persons. In Foucault’s panopticon, the watcher in the tower is aware of what the prisoners are doing in their cells, but they have no idea whether he is present or not (Gallagher, 2010). Knowledge is
what sets the observer apart from the detainees and students of color, as they are mostly subject to schools with stricter measures.

More recent studies have applied Foucauldian discourse in framing African American students in schools to examine the emancipatory potential of the epistemological framework underlying Foucault’s work more fully (Brown & Brown, 2012; Stinson, 2008, 2013). The critical and emancipatory potential of Foucauldian discourse resides in challenging established practices by bringing to the fore the perspectives that hegemonic practices have excluded. A case in point, Allen (2020) observed that Black celebrities’ embodied resistance in mainstream pop culture has converted cultural spaces into social movement scenes, thereby transforming moments of entertainment into opportunities for political activism. Power/agency was also a key theme in Stinson’s (2013) study of African American male mathematics students. Stinson subverted the contemporary discourse that tends to position African American students as academically and mathematically deficient, by noting how the four students in his research negotiated the ‘white male math myth’ discourse by motivating themselves to obtain mathematics knowledge.

Summary

In this study, I have worked to anchor on the Foucauldian discourse of power/resistance as I reflect on the lived experiences of African American students dropping out of school. Much of the research is centered around the perceptions of adult thinking. Specifically, research is the thoughts, feelings, and measured success of adult researchers. In searching for students who dropped out of school, there was a huge gap of researchers who were previous dropouts themselves. As the research is absent, this
topic is ripe for an investigation. Before the outcomes of students can be changed, we must understand the experiences of all students, even those who leave our institutions.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This study aims to shed light on the experiences of Black students who drop out of school. The study expressly affirms that Black students remove themselves from schools as forms of resistance. When examining how race and racism impact the educational experiences of Black students, it is crucial to explore methods that offer a reflective lens (Nassif et al., 2016, Chang, 2017, Montgomery et al., 2021). The choice to proceed with the critical incidents technique (CIT) is due to the technique’s ability to capture lived experiences. With CIT, in-depth interviews focused on eliciting facts and identifying problematic encounters are fundamental in participants making sense of their actions within the world (Radford, 2006; Sharoff, 2008; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Cardwell et al., 2020; Cunningham et al., 2020).

Connecting to the genealogy of resistance by Black people, participants are expected to discuss their opinion of the history of maroons alongside their actions. All participants are expected to equate their response to leave school as Black resistance. By critically examining their incidents and actions, students can reclaim their agency by laying claim to the process of marooning. This connection gives meaning to their critical incidents as acts of freedom-seeking by reconfiguring, disrupting, or revolting an establishment. In addition to memorable messages, critical incidents can also be actual occurrences. For instance, conversations with counselors and educators that may seem insignificant can alter their sense of belonging, profoundly affecting the participants. In this study, critical incidents aim to achieve intersecting research directions: (a) to highlight the ‘wisdom’ of Black children who remove themselves from oppressive
environments and (b) to identify power and resistance in Black students’ choice about withdrawing from school.

**Research Questions**

The research question guiding this study addresses the experiences and choices of Black students in public schools who make the bold decision to remove themselves. The research questions are:

1. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their decision to drop out?
2. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their regard for education and their future?
3. What possible paths of action or alternatives and assumptions did African African who dropped out hold?

**Critical Incidents Technique**

The Critical incidents theory (CIT) was developed by J. C. Flanagan and the members of the Aviation Psychology Team during the peak of World War II. According to Flanagan, this method has been used to identify and interrogate critical incidents of participants (Radford, 2006). According to researchers, an incident is any specifiable human activity that is sufficiently complete to permit inferences and predictions about the person performing the act (Radford, 2006; Sharoff, 2008). To be critical, the incident must be where the purpose or intent of the act seems clear to the observer, and its consequences are sufficiently definite. CIT is employed in this study to make sense of the memorable messages found within critical incidents. CIT is used here because notable occurrences, such as conversations or interactions with teachers, administrators, and other
educational staff, that are not viewed as noteworthy during the incident, profoundly affected the participants’ future.

In the same fashion, as participants discuss the interactions they identified as critical, they can connect to how those incidents shape their perceptions of themselves and the world around them. Reviewing the interview, participants discuss and explore their feelings about the critical incidents. The effectiveness behind the technique is drawing accounts and experiences from the participants and evaluating the outcome of each critical incident. Since it is during the evaluation of incidents and decisions is where participants may determine if the selected solution solved their problem or caused further problems, or whether the decision to remove themselves from anti-Black and oppressive schools is the best solution.

Cardwell et al. (2020) posit that conceptualizing critical incidents is essential to understand that individuals involved in situations they believed were relevant or vital to a future outcome find these critical incidents crucial and essential moments in their lives. Scholars who focus on critical incidents in schools regarding race argue that the experiences of Black students are shaped by their interactions with the educational environment and their experiences as Black people (Dancy et al., 2018; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

When examining how race and racism impact the educational experiences of Black students, it is crucial to explore methods that offer a reflective lens (Nassif et al., 2016, Chang, 2017, Montgomery et al., 2021). Through CIT, students are expected to be able to connect their actions to marronage. This connection is assumed to give meaning
to their critical incidents as acts of freedom-seeking by reconfiguring, disrupting, or revolting an establishment.

**Procedures of Previous Study**

*This data was collected by a previous scholar for a separate study. I have received permission from the scholar to use this data.*

Potential participants were contacted via email or telephone about the researcher’s interest in their participation in the study. The initial correspondence provided information about the study’s purpose, the data collection process, and how the data will be used in the future. If the potential participant wanted to participate in an individual interview, the potential participant would be offered dates and locations for the interview. Participants were allowed to review their own interview transcript for feedback, clarification, and accuracy.

Open interviews were conducted via telephone and captured via audio recordings. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed by software. Each participant was given a consent form that explains the research process for the study. At the start of each interview, the participants were made aware that the interview would be recorded, and that the researcher would use the interview guide to ask the participants questions pertaining to the study. The list of participant’s names was destroyed and pseudonyms assigned prior to transcription. The interview recording has been secured in a secure digital file that will only be accessible to those doing direct investigation.
Previous Scholar Selection of Participants

The data sources are eight adults who self-identified as people who dropped out of primary or secondary education. The previous scholar selected participants who identified as African American and living at or below the poverty line. Participants must have removed themselves from school via the method of not-attending school or non-reporting to school. The participants needed to be available to complete the entire interview.

Previous Scholar Recruitment of Participants

Recruitment of potential participants were conducted via “word of mouth” referrals. Participants assisted the lead researcher in identifying other potential participants. Thus, this study used snowball, or chain referral, sampling to identify other Black students who dropped out of primary or secondary schooling. Snowball or chain referral sampling yields a study sample through referrals made among “like-minded people” who share or know of others who possess similar attributes that are of research interest.

Current Scholar Justification of Using Data

Use of the previous scholar’s data is justified for this research study because as the current scholar who shares a similar background with the participants was familiar with the population of the study. Unlike the initial scholar, my connection to dropping out of school allowed for a more robust analysis. Additionally, as a current graduate student with a lack of financial resources, it was a cost-effective strategy as the previous scholar also paid the cost of transcription services. Also, as a Hijaabi in Memphis, TN, I suffered from being socially isolated as my Hijaab was a barrier for recruitment of
participants. The time needed to gain participants trust and increased comfortability to share their lived experiences prior to the version of themselves present day would have taken longer than the amount of time allotted for the completion of the dissertation.

**Data Analysis**

A goal of this qualitative research is to inductively produce themes to understand the decisions to drop out of schools; the research also focused on connecting the students’ actions with explicit thematic connections in educational marronage (e.g., futility). The interview allowed for sharing lived experiences and the participants’ conceptualization of how these lived experiences resulted in life-changing choices. Qualitative research uses small samples to achieve depth. The sample size of 8 participants is large enough to elicit various perspectives, but small enough to achieve saturation that leads to themes. In addition, the participants in this study are self-identified as Black or African American. All participants attended urban schools.

The transcripts of the interviews were assigned a pseudonym. Participants will be identified as P1-P7. The transcripts will be coded using Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA). QDA is a recursive process of noticing, collecting, and thinking about exciting things (Saldana, 2014). Coding allows for words, short phrases, or even sections of data to be determined meaningfully, identify patterns, and organize them into categories. The patterns and codes can be distinguished from a part of a transcript or observation field notes (Saldana, 2014). Following the advice of Saldana, the categorizing upheld the language use and inferences found within the research by connecting to the” ‘heart and mind’ of an individual or group’s worldview as to what is important, perceived as true, maintained as opinion, and felt strongly” (Saldana, 2014).
Using open coding, the data will be broken down into pieces examined closely, compared for relationships, similarities, and dissimilarities. These parts will then be marked with codes to identify them for further analysis. Concepts will be developed based on repeating statements or sentiments. While open coding, I will manually highlight lines within the transcripts for demographics, socioeconomics, school environments, and disciplinary mentions. This will allow me to use the raw data to group into conceptual categories. I will use memoing to record reflective notes on emerging concepts to create core categories. These notes will allow me to infuse my knowledge of the population’s culture to make inferences about language use and attitudes.

When analyzing the interview data, identifying markers will be removed. Only the transcripts with pseudonyms will be uploaded to data analysis software. Additionally, axial coding will be used to illicit deductive themes from the data. The data is expected to reveal multiple codes expressed in various ways. A semi-structured interview guide is shown in Appendix A.

Summary

This previously collected data allows me to inductively analyze and locate themes related to the participants’ experiences. The inductive analysis is aimed to create categories aligned with the pillars of educational marronage and Foucauldian discourse of power and knowledge. It hopes to develop descriptions of the phenomenon by developing subcategories within the broader theme of students who drop out and student resistance. The process of moving between sampling, data collection, and analysis will continue until reaching data saturation.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a synopsis of the participants, and then it presents and discusses the themes that were identified in the participant interviews through thematic analysis. Guiding this study, which is the attempt to address the experiences and choices of Black students in public schools who make the bold decision to remove themselves are these research questions:

1. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their decision to drop out?
2. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their regard for education and their future?
3. What possible paths of action or alternatives and assumptions did African Africans who dropped out hold?

Three themes, each with multiple subthemes were identified: (1) Knowing; the ability to use historical knowledge (2) Incident; the watershed moment to catapult movement (3) Scarification; the residual effect of the incident.

The themes and subthemes are presented in Chart (1) and are described in more detail in the chapter.
Figure 1

Organization of Theme and Subthemes in this Study

Participant Profile

Table 2 provides a synopsis of participants and selected information. Anonymity was of the utmost importance to this study. At initial receipt of data, participant names were destroyed, and pseudonyms assigned prior to transcription. To further remove identifiers, the candidates’ names were then replaced with serial numbers. During coding, a sense of liberation emerged from the connection of the findings to the data. This connection of liberation and freedom expounds on the knowledge of self and power that results from knowledge. In that light, it seemed fitting to remove serial numbers, as numbers do not represent humans but rather are a replication of the uncaring, rough, and un-empathetic environment the participants sought to remove themselves away from. This re-naming also signifies the current researcher’s thematic analysis. Therefore, the participants have been assigned emancipatory pseudonyms.

The chart illustrates the participants’ last grade attended in formal schooling. The institution of attendance was listed to show context as to the type of schooling they interacted in. Students who attempted to re-enroll, at any point, to an institution with the attempt of earning a designation of completing the requirements of high school are listed
as yes or no. The reason for the initial contemplation of dropping out is illustrative of the experience of the participants. More than half of the participants dropped out during high school. An overwhelming amount placed maltreatment of school administrators and teachers as the reason for initial contemplation of dropping out of school.

**Table 1**

Synopsis of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Last Grade</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Re-enrolled? Yes/No</th>
<th>Reasons for contemplation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maltreatment/Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Multiple Suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Parochial</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teen pregnancy/Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maltreatment/Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwame</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Poverty/Multiple Suspensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aziz</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Multiple Suspension/Maltreatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amirah</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Teen Pregnancy/Maltreatment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The radicalization of students to remove themselves takes a distinct trajectory this study has identified as Knowing, Incident, and Scarification. Using the participants’ experiences, I delineate and reify the process of dropping out as the operation of the students’ agentic spirit. For a minor, to rescind trust and reclaim power from adults is a significant task and is even greater with no support or guidance. Essentially, students who take this route are seen as radicals.

Each participant displayed similar behavior patterns concerning schooling practices. Noticeably, the behaviors manifested as a keen awareness of the socio-political climate of their school environment which led to self-possession. These students, however, feel that schools should undergo extreme social or political change. However, the extant hegemonic powers embodied by administrators quash student agency by not supporting the idea that a student knows best how to navigate and attend to their needs.
In this moment of reprieve, the knowing is cemented, and students are radicalized to remove themselves. Fortunately for the participants, this pivotal shift has proved to be advantageous. The findings of this paper suggest that there should be no shame in quitting school because it is an act of agency. Connecting with the spirit of Marronage, we transcend shame and arrive at respect.

**Theme 1: Knowing; Ability to use Social, Political, and Historical Knowledge**

This research uncovered Black students’ ability to use social and historical knowledge to navigate an oppressive environment. The interviews captured the ontological phenomenon of *knowing*. *Knowing* is the critical moment that students understand schools are political. It is an acute awareness that develops within the students’ consciousness and fosters understanding. The understanding is that their experience in school is predicated on their racial identity. The participants went through the stage of knowing, like a rite of passage. This *knowing* is unshakable and propels the student to watershed moments.

Crystal stated that while at work, she felt a sense of camaraderie that was missing from school. Citing how at work, “we'll just help each other, you need help I'll go over there and help them, it's like a teamwork.” To Crystal, camaraderie is akin to a sense of belonging. Crystal was asked if she felt this sense of belonging within her interactions with school officials and she responded “no.” The knowing Crystal is experiencing is the knowledge that she will not connect with school officials in a meaningful way. Crystal stated, “It was like we didn't see eye to eye. It was always a problem with everything that I did. School [wasn’t] really helpful enough and I felt like the teachers, like they just throw us work but not really teach.”
Jamal experience of Knowing started very early. He stated, “School was always bad for me, I don't know, from the moment I started. I ain't going to say the moment I started, I'ma take that back. It was more of the times once I became conscious.” The development of a consciousness Jamal discussed is the understanding of the social-political powers of the educational system. Placed into the context of schooling, this knowing is a nexus that transferred the participant from student to observer. Jamal, a minor, now understands that his interactions with school officials were not for his betterment citing, “Most of the teachers that I've run across was all about a paycheck and I've heard it on several occasions like, "I'm going to get paid whether or not you learn or not."

Like all the other participants, Jamal was astutely aware that life at home was not as simpler, “I already knew what I was lacking there, and school was supposed to be a place of mentors or teachers and educators or whatever.” Knowing, however, is the lightbulb moment that causes the student to reevaluate what society proclaims schools to offer and the materialization of what the participants receive. This knowledge is the separation between those who continue to remain in school and those who seek to remove themselves.

Sandra found that the teachers’ lack of motivation was a sign for her that school officials were not advocating for her success, “It was like the teachers didn't care. They couldn't get my attention, nothing that they taught.” Sandra connected the quality of teaching with the sense of belonging stating, “But gradually, once I was in the public school, seeing all the bad going on, running from the principal, cutting class, just wasn't
my thing, was not my thing. So, I decided not to go there anymore, because I wasn't learning.”

Contrary to the literature on student dropout, Sandra cites the lack of learning as a determining factor for removing herself from school. Asked if she ever considered schooling as a means to advance in life she stated, “With going to school? I loved going to school. I loved my education because I wanted to become something. I wanted to be a teacher, and I knew I had to get my education. So applied myself, and I wanted to learn.”

Unfortunately, for Sandra the road to dropping out took various turns while still in school. Like many participants, removing themselves from school was a process and not a rash decision, “Oh, like the teachers not teaching. So, I coped with that not going. You know?”

Adam revealed that he had a short time enjoying school, “I had a lot of fun and it was worth waking up to every morning and meeting with all of the students and all the other kids and stuff growing up and stuff. So, I was excited to go to school.” However, the onset of the ontological knowledge of Blackness at the age of nine propelled his understanding that his experience would be different, “till about nine years old, and then things changed in the system, which means that I started realizing how they would separate the blacks from the whites in the school and made us feel some type of way about being Black.” The “some type of way about being Black” is the exposure of anti-Blackness in education that does not align with the students own personal beliefs about themselves, culture, community, or is an accurate representation of Blackness. Knowing comes with the realization of the hypocrisy of society. Society boasts about schooling being a place of learning and the potential advancement of the future. This misalignment
between rhetoric and the actual experiences with school systems incites students’ keen awareness and forces them to tap into historical survival strategies. Adam states, "I thought maybe they're supposed to treat us all the same, so we make sure we all get our education, but they just push us to the side, and it's not fair.”

Kwame revealed while in the seventh grade, he noticed the difference in treatment given to him by adults outside of school. Adults outside of school systems valued him and made space for his talents “the people hired me they liked that I worked, they'd seen something in me.” The “something in me” he is referring to was described by many participants as a form of acceptance and a sense of belonging. When educational officials do not “see” the ‘something’ the participants referred to as an intrinsic value they independently possess, that signals the knowledge that the officials do not have the participants’ best interest at the forefront. This knowledge is based on the historical connection of Black people and the inability to shake this hindsight.

Aziz lent to the experience of other participants when saying, “My feeling in special education. I had a feeling that it's like my feelings towards that I wanted to be there, but then I didn't want to be there.” Aziz made a distinction between the teachers’ effort towards students’ progress during his middle school years in general education classes, “The teachers they was showing more authorization far as helping us and really putting in time to wanting to see us.” Aziz paralleled teachers being careful to take effort in his learning as the teachers wanting to “see” him.

However, moving into high school he was placed in special education courses and his experience negatively changed. Citing, “As far as going into the 9th the 8th grade going into high school the teachers, they don't really care about us. They just wanted you
to come there slap a couple papers on you and tell you to do it and if you get it right you get a right, if you don't—you don't, they didn't care.” Aziz is moving into the space of knowledge that his time in public school is futile.

Amirah revealed that teen pregnancy was the moment that caused her to want to gain an education. She cited, “I found out I was pregnant, and we also, again, were in between homes at that time. So I was like, I just want to make sure I'm okay. I found out I was a high risk pregnant.” She then resolved to take care of herself and her unborn child stating, “I just want to focus on making sure I'm okay, the baby's okay." That was my main focus. So that's what I did. I was like, "I'm not coming back." I told my teachers what was going on, and I was like, "I'm not coming back." Amirah then shared that she thought the school official’s support meant they would make provision

Unfortunately, the knowing is part and parcel of the maltreatment and anti-Blackness in U. S. schooling. Knowing is an agentic tool for navigation and self-discovery. The participants use their knowledge to inform their decisions and interpret their experiences. We must understand that literature and research support the notion of students’ varied experiences in several scholarly journals. The Knowing is an experience that binds to the students and can only be confirmed or denied by educators. To offer a better understanding of the complexities of Knowing, it has been extrapolated into two subthemes: Implicit and Explicit.

**Subtheme 1: Knowing Implicit**

This is the knowledge of the ontological position of Blackness and that of Black struggles. For students, it is the understanding of what Blackness means to themselves and the conflicting meaning of Blackness within the context of schooling. According to
political activist Steve Biko, being Black is more than skin color. For the participants, being a Black student in a state-run school is a complex relationship. In the lived experiences of participants, school systems through their agents were inflictors of suffering and violence in their community. The participants questioned the authenticity of districts’ means to educate them unbiasedly. To that extent, participants’ ability to acknowledge their Blackness is the beginning of a life journey to emancipate themselves from the forces that seek to mark Blackness as subservient or less than being (Biko & Stubbs, 1987).

Jamal remarked how he “became conscious of being humiliated” by teachers at an early age. Amirah echoed her sentiments and cited severe educational neglect by administrators who reduced her issues to “more of her shit.” These are examples of how the knowledge of how Blackness is placed within a society shaped the participants’ opinions of their treatment. Sandra connected her teen pregnancy and removal from school as the stereotypical response to young Black mothers. The school superimposed that Sandra would be a better fit at another school not because of her academics but because her pregnancy tarnished the parochial school’s image.

Similarly, Adam revealed he felt his only place in school was with athletics and that he faced many microaggressions from the coaching staff. Adam’s knowledge of Blackness’ position was made plain when a coach called another student the n-word, and he knew that speaking out would cause more harm to himself and the other student than to the coach.
**Subtheme 2: Knowing Explicit**

These are direct actions that confirm to participants that their Blackness has sociopolitical consequences. Jamal stated his onset of knowing was when he realized the codes of conduct, disciplinary actions, and school resources were out of reach for him. At an early age, Jamal grappled with the reality that school was a place of suffering, citing, “school was always bad for me, I don’t know, from the moment I started. I ain’t going to say the moment I started, I’m a take that back. It was more of the times once I became conscious of being humiliated or how people ... the way you dressed, the way you looked, all that stuff like that. Fitting in.”

Similarly, Crystal shared that teachers making her feel inadequate contributed to the distance and lack of connection with her teachers. Students remark that teachers’ isolation and lack of care caused the participants to question the entire schooling process. Crystal says, “It was like we didn’t see eye to eye. It was always a problem with everything that I did’ school was(sic) really helpful enough and I felt like the teachers, like they just throw us work but not really teach.” As Crystal recalled her experience, she disclosed her feelings and emotions and how that informed her decisions, “I felt like I was basically, I ended up feeling like I was wasting my time, but I was young and I didn’t really know any better. I just was like, forget it.”

For Kwame, he knew his time enjoying childhood would be shorter than his white peers stating, “I had to get a job so that's to me that was like I took a choice of trying to take a man position at a younger age”

Jamal and Crystal use incidents and knowledge of Blackness to formulate an opinion about schools. Hence, the knowing is confirmed or denied by educators. Adam
revealed he felt his only place in school was with athletics and that he faced many microaggressions from the coaching staff. Adam’s knowing was made plain when a coach called another student the n-word, and he knew that speaking out would cause more harm to himself and the other student than to the coach. School brought challenges, many of which the participants believed were racially motivated. Jamal revealed that he felt his white teachers “just didn’t care and showed up for the paycheck.” However, the confirmation of knowledge is the radicalization that transforms students from docile beings into agentic Maroons. This awakening is followed by the next stage of incidents: the casualty of remaining within oppressive schooling over time.

**Theme 2: Incidents, watershed moment to catapult movement from school**

Participants consistently identified incidents that galvanized them to question the authenticity of educators’ claim that school was a welcome for all. Students’ incidents are akin to Bradley and Renzulli’s assertion that students are pushed out of school. The incidents are actions, events, statements, and emotions to or by the student that materializes the knowing (examples-behavior, grades, following policy (attendance, dress code, zoning).

Crystal reported that her expulsion from school and subsequent transfer to the local alternative school was the incident that determined her to remove herself from school. Revealing, “they just sent me there to get rid of me,” and “That place was even worse than the high school. I really just made my mind up.” Kwame reported that his tendency to remove himself while in the building caused disciplinary actions against him “I got suspended like three or four times for being in the bathroom.”
The incidents participants face are part and parcel of the anti-Blackness researchers argue are commonplace in U.S. school systems. When discussing Special Education placement, Aziz’s isolation was furthered by his feeling that special education was merely a holding cell. He connected the incident of special education to his need to remove himself because, in his opinion, “They just sent me there to get rid of me.” Kwame connected the lack of concern for his lengthy suspensions by his content teachers as a signal that school was pointless stating “It was more of like, “Okay, well that’s one less that I have to deal with.” The participants talked about how the incidents within Special Education caused an unescapable embarrassment. Aziz stated, “stuck in that special ed class like that, if I could have been moving around and doing something, I wouldn’t have been so ashamed.” Although special education is nothing to be ashamed of, students connected the teachers’ lack of motivation while instructing to the insignificance of the class.

In addition to structural deficiencies, the lack of evidence or formal explanation of how the schools’ policies would benefit the participant added to the disconnect and made interactions with school official’s critical moments. Sandra and Amirah cited how the school’s ill-thought decision to extend their time until graduation interfered with career opportunities. Sandra shared how she was forced to decline a job offer at the police academy, “If I would have graduated like I was supposed to on time, I could have been a police officer.” Amirah teachers accused her of “not following the rules” when she adjusted her schedule to earn money for her family. Jamal revealed that his decision was not ill-though, and was a long process, some of which he feels he expedited, “It wasn't all

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of a sudden, nah because my last two years of school I was expelled, and then I was expelled from all public schools.”

The sentiment that teachers did not care about the students forced the students to question the intentions of the teachers and the educational system’s ability to guide the participants’ lives adequately and accurately. Essentially, the trust was broken. The adverse incidents leave a trail of scars or residual traceable artifacts on the student’s academic and criminal records, known as scarification.

**Theme 3: Scarification, the residual effect of the incident**

This lack of trust on behalf of the student towards the educational system increases as incidents increase. The impact of the incidents forms scars or identifiable residual effects of previous incidents. **Scarification** is the residual effect of the incident, which causes the student to determine the value of school and bear the scarification. The scarification informs distance and determines the space between oneself and the concept of schooling. Participants essentially decided that the repair of the scars obtained by schools cannot happen within schools.

Crystal scarification manifested when the burden of being labeled a “bad kid” was greater than she could bear. “Because, to me that was a waste of time too because, I was something they just pawned off kids that they thought was bad just to send them somewhere to get away from the other students so really I just was like forget it.” Crystal understood there were other options that did not cause the same trauma and could yield a positive outcome.
“I was fine, that's why I said it wasn't nothing that I really thought about it just happened I just said you know what, forget it I'm just about to just go try another alternative because this is not working for me. That's how that happened.”

Crystal then went on to work jobs that met her immediate needs. “I was working at a fast food restaurant I was working at Sonic and I was at the time I did another job at McDonald’s,” Crystal realized that her experience at work was greatly different than at school. Besides the compensatory element of work, this participant found that environments outside of school, even as a minor, were not places of trauma or suffering. In fact, she encountered fewer negative experiences stating, “I never really had any serious problems at work [like] I did at school. I didn't get in trouble at work, it wasn't about me it was just different.”

When Jamal was asked about his distance from schooling he stated, “I just didn't feel like I belonged so I was rebellious to the point to where I made them put me out of school just with all the things I was doing.” He further elaborated that his family moved around a lot. These frequent moves were never examined by school officials, “So in the time of all that I was basically in this school one day, in the next school the following, and I guess maybe hopping around so much, like I said, I guess the teachers didn't pay too much attention to me.” The lack of accountability was construed by Jamal as the school not paying attention to him or his educational needs.

Sandra, who eventually became a teen parent, revealed her battle with education started in parochial schools. While in a Catholic high school, Sandra became pregnant. Sandra discussed the school’s response to her teen pregnancy as the scaring that incited her to remove herself from school. It was not the pregnancy itself that caused her to drop
out; it was the schools’ lack of care and concern, citing, “at that point, they had nothing to
do with me at St. Mary’s.”

Sandra reveals that the lack of attention translated as the school not caring for her
or her future. This shunning caused her to decide if being in a school that shunned her
instead of reaching her was better than focusing on her family.

Sandra’s family decided to give public schooling a chance. The reason being that
since teen pregnancy was rampant in public school the family felt she would not be
shunned for being a teen parent as she had experienced during her time at the ultra-
religious parochial school. However, the public school system did not foster an
environment that included Sandra as a student-parent either. In fact, the school did not
offer educational counseling to Sandra she states, “But the [public] school, they didn't
show anything. They didn't have no conference, no talking to a counselor, or any of that
about me not going to class or anything like that. They didn't show it.” Sandra reveals
that the lack of attention was accepted by her as the school did not care for her needs or
her future.

Acting on agency, Sandra decided to remove herself from school and focus on
financially supporting her family, “I decided not to go there anymore because I wasn’t
learning anything.” She also revealed the school did not communicate with her or her
family after she had stopped attending.

Adam revealed how not to participate in the senior year activities as his peers
weighed heavily on him. He could not bear the embarrassment, “I’m behind my peers,
that’s embarrassing, right? I wasn’t applying for colleges like everyone else.” He shared
that his inability to catch up to his peers was a social burden too great to bear. His
scarification was the inability to re-enter school and participate like his classmates. To many of the participants, schooling without social benefits is unbearable. Remarkably, outside of school settings, participants find camaraderie and community.

Kwame cited constant suspensions that required his mother to attend parent-school conferences as a major factor in his inability to attend school. About the suspensions, he said, “I did a lot of fighting in school, got put out a lot and they suspended me.” A school policy requiring parents to check students back into school before they could return from suspensions exhausted his mother. This caused a strain on Kwame’s ability to see school as a positive resource. Kwame stated that the requirements to be admitted into school after an out-of-school suspension were just as great as what was needed to remain outside of school. Kwame began to feel that using time towards earning money yielded more immediate positive results than the constant parental conferences held at the school. He relays, “You had to have a job my mom wasn't able to afford that just for me because I had other sisters and brothers. I went and got me a job.”

Aziz cites the scars of special education caused his distance from school via disciplinary infractions, “I was expelled a lot from schools, I was expelled from all schools.” The mandated time away from school allowed him to find a community of friends who accepted and aided him in finding suitable work. Early on he dreamed of being in a different environment, “So, when I got a little older I wouldn't have to be in this, stuck in that special ed class like that.” Aziz referred to special education classes at a time when the classes were self-contained for the entire day. He also spoke about the shame of being isolated inside the classroom as well as outside of the overall school
community, “Could've been moving around and I probably wouldn't have to worry about be shamed or just standing and chatting probably letting people see me to talk about me.”

His scarification was the inability to rebound from the special education classroom citing that he had to skip class to hide from being ostracized due to being in special education classes. “Now, the friends I had, now the friends I had, like they really didn't know what class I was in. Two of my friends from school, we knew each other from the band room and that's how we had got cool. But, whenever we see each other at lunch time or on the yard we always hooked up and talked to each other and have a good time. So, that's how a lot of people didn't think that I was in special ed.” Aziz revealed that the strain of hiding became too great, and the decision to remove himself was made based on the desire to be free of ridicule.

Amirah recalled that the events that scared her were during her attempts to re-enter school. The school district she transferred to did not accept her credits. School officials decided that she would need to complete two additional years of high school to graduate and that her mother could not appeal the decision. Amirah recalled being so frustrated that a simple email could have prevented what she called, “a waste of time” citing, “Just send an email. You do what you need to do for your students. These are grown-ups. But you still have that drive and that push to want to help them and want to help them better themselves.” Amirah decided to calculate her time spent in school and the investment it would cost to “Like, I’m not spending two extra years in high school for this.”

These scaring sentiments of placing a monetary value on time were also shared by Jamal, Adam, Kwame, and Aziz. The participants realized that working provided an
immediate income without the anti-Black suffering found in schools. Overwhelmingly all participants stated they decided they did not “need the turmoil” since none of them felt they “could ever catch up.”

**Summary**

The Black students who removed themselves from school in this study were armed with the knowledge of their standing in society as Black. This suggests that students have a keen awareness of the commonalities of being Black in the United States and how their Blackness does not shed when they enter school systems. Therefore, these participants have used the same survival techniques as many Black peoples in the present and historical times. Black people have had to use creative ways to survive in the United States.

However, akin to Black people in historical times, the participants, being minors in a country with compulsory attendance laws, had to maintain a relationship with the schooling systems. Like historical times, the movement within anti-Black systems required multiple layers of knowledge. For the participants, their freedom was due to applying various layers of knowledge. The next chapter will focus on the historical connection between freedom-seeking students and their slave counterparts. This chapter will be sealed with the understanding that power rests with those who contain the knowledge and that is why the participants found success.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the phenomenon of Black students’ withdrawal from school through marronage in education and Foucauldian discourse of power and knowledge. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on education marronage and Foucauldian discourse on power/knowledge, the presence and importance of agency and resistance in Black students’ relationship with the educational system, and what implications may be valuable for critical perspectives on social and educational institutions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s findings, areas for future research, and recommendations.

This study examines an anti-deficit lens of Black student dropout behavior.

Research Questions:

1. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their decision to drop out?

2. How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their regard for education and their future?

3. What possible paths of action or alternatives and assumptions did Black students who dropped out hold?

This study has identified three emergent themes—namely, Knowing, Incident, and Scarification. Using the participants’ experiences, I delineated and reified the process of dropping out as the operation of the students’ agentic spirit. For a minor to relinquish trust and power from adults is a significant task with little to no support or guidance. Essentially, students who take this route are seen as ‘radicals.’
Each participant displayed similar behavior patterns concerning schooling practices, which manifested as a keen awareness of the socio-political climate of their school environment that led to self-possession. These students, however, feel that schools should undergo extreme social or political change. However, the extant hegemonic powers embodied by administrators quash student agency by not supporting the idea that a student knows best their needs.

Connecting the Findings to the Research Questions

Question 1: How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their decision to drop out?

Black students’ school experiences cemented their beliefs that Black people traverse contrasting lives than the lives of other races. The school environment propelled the participants to seek refuge from the onslaught of anti-Blackness tactics and policies. Overall, the school experiences and environments caused students to use defensive strategies in a system that outwardly presents itself as a safe space for student achievement. This misrepresentation of spoken ideals and actual actions presented a challenge for the participants to navigate. The hypocrisy the participants experienced alerted them to a sense of danger and a need to escape.

Question 2: How did Black students’ school experiences and school environments affect their regard for education and their future?

The participants revealed that they did not regret their decision to remove themselves from school. They all remained steadfast that education is a great tool for personal as well as societal advancement for Black people. They did express their displeasure with the idea of placing the future of Black children under the trust of
educators who are not understanding or invested in the nuances lives of the Black community. The participants unanimously agreed they valued knowledge of self and placed the knowledge of practical survival and socio-political facts as a major tenet of education.

*Question 3: What possible paths of action or alternatives and assumptions did African Africans who dropped out hold?*

The participants held assumptions that Black students are better served by educators who value their heritage, lived experiences, culture, history, and accept these things as facts that affect the future outcomes of Black students. Several participants are strong educational advocates for their own children. One participant currently home-schools his children which suggests the strategies for marronage may be passed to another generation. Many participants stressed the need for educators to place themselves in the shoes of their students.

Additionally, the participants suggested educators find empathy for their future students by way of connecting to the students’ community. All the participants fully accepted their decisions and viewed themselves as success stories. The participants expressed they wished there was a direct path to removing oneself from schools that was acceptable and supported.

**Connecting the Findings to the Theory & Literature**

Many scholars have considered the phenomenon of dropping out of school. Most of these scholars have conducted quantitative research and analyses to understand the causes and consequences of dropping out of school (Abar, Abar, Lippold, Powers, and Manning, 2012; Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey, 1997; Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Cornell,
Huang, Gregory, & Fan, 2013). Still, others have applied qualitative research and analysis to examine the act of and the student outcome(s) of dropping out of school (Drewry & Burge, and Driscoll, 2010; Fine, 1991; Knesting, 2008). In general, scholars have concluded that students are pushed out of school by school practices and policies. The literature on dropping out of school is missing something: an analysis of the act of dropping out that views dropouts as both agentic in their actions and connected to a long lineage of Black peoples’ resistance, rejection, and refusal to be or remain subjugated and under systems that are not aligned with the student’s needs.

The findings of this study broaden the research with the experiences of the participants. The study centers on the actions of dropouts like the agentic Maroons, instead of merely dropping out as self-defeating individuals. The findings situate the participants amongst a community of resistors. This intertwining is a purposeful combination seeking to uplift a marginalized group via a shared history of and connection to Black peoples’ resistance, rejection, and refusal to enslavement.

**Marronage in Education**

The themes encompassed Marronage in education were more than the students fleeing. It was the process of fleeing or Maroon-ing that connected the themes to marronage. For example, the theme of *knowing* or that they intrinsically felt they did not belong spawned from the participant's shared use of terms like *knew better, felt weird, and nothing worked*, which was a connection to the pillar *purpose*. Students’ knowledge of being out of place connection to purpose stands on the idea that marronage, as a pathway to freedom, must start from the position of bondage (Patel, 2016).

Similarly, *incidents* were through highlighting phrases such as “*ever since I was*
in Special Education.” “Each time they suspended me,” and “I was always trying” overlapped a connection to movement and distance as these are the spaces where students felt un-free and oppressed. Expounding on a pillar of Marronage in Education is movement, students’ experiences were major impediments and precursors to dropping out of school. Gilkes-Borr (2018) posits that Black students are constantly on a quest to sustain harmonious relationships in school.

Finally, scarification encompassed all four pillars in that it is the culmination of experiences weighted against the solution of dropping out or marooning. Scarification was categorized as statements or sentiments of participants’ belief that their efforts were futile. Statements like “I don’t need this,” “It was some bullshit,” and “I was like fuck it!” it was evident that these statements broadly aligned with the pillar of Marronage in Education property. Participants revealed they used school property for personal reasons like selling drugs, dating, or starting cliques.

Black students endure the hardships of disciplinary actions to reconstruct school systems that promote harmonious environments (Gilke-Borr, 2018). A tenant of Marronage in Education is property, this entails understanding Black students’ acrimonious relationship with schools and viewing school property and spaces as sites of suffering. Scarification is the by-product property, whereas there is no longer a need to endure the schools’ assault. This weighs on the students and forces the student to rely on agency, thereby shifting into self-possession.

**Connection to Slavery**

According to Hartman (2007), further scholarship is needed to understand life after slavery. Similarly, scholars insist that acts of resistance are ever-present in Black
people’s daily lives and all areas of the economy (Rolle, 2018; Roberts, 2017). Although schools advertise as places invested in the learning of all students by eliminating gaps, Black students reported that schools recreate societal gaps (Patel, 2016). Therefore, there is a pressing need to examine how Black students resist anti-Blackness and terror in education.

To understand the concept of marronage, one must fully conceptualize the Black experience (Mills, 2017). Drawing from the historical concept of marooning, Educational Marronage seeks to explain how Black students who drop out of school are new-age Maroons, i.e., Black people seeking freedom from anti-Black oppression and violence sites. Chiefly, marronage is a process, not a rash decision.

In a conceptual sense, marronage has been the challenge of white authority and the proof of consciousness and agency among Black people who suffered enslavement (Price, 1992). To be a Maroon, a person must have rejected the existing options for freedom and liberation when such a denunciation was seen as an unlawful act. Marronage in and of itself altered what it meant to exit a place or a condition (Gordon, 2017). Marronage was not simply acts of self-determination; it reflected a long-term critical consciousness that developed from the lived experiences and ontological existences and positions of Black peoples who experienced bondage through chattel slavery (Sayers, 2012).

Marooning has historically represented the most extreme form of defiance and resistance for Black peoples, for it entailed opting out of systems of oppression and forming alternate, more liberated forms of society (Johnson, 2012; Sayers, 2012). Marronage was the individual and collective resistance to enslavement and bondage
(Sayers, 2014). For Black people held in bondage, marronage was an alternative to rebellion; it served to provide a strategic outlet for those seeking to avoid rebellion (Geggus, 1992). Marronage was nearly universal among Black peoples who suffered enslavement (Sayers, 2014), and much like rebellion, marronage – or the act of fleeing captivity – existed wherever slavery occurred (Weik, 1997).

Marronage, as a conceptual framework, allows scholars to consider how freedom is experienced as dynamic and unsettled (Dilts, 2017). Different from the diasporic movement, marronage – or to leave this world for some vastly or perhaps entirely different world – is “the best source of radical reconceptualization of what it means to be free” (Ciccariello, 2017, p. 193).

**Connection of Theme 1 Knowing to Maroons**

There is an ever-present reality of being racialized as other, or something subhuman, directly impacts the ontological existence of a person (Ortiz, 2019). To that end, many of today’s oppressive tactics, as applied to Black people, were developed during the slavocracy (Kaplan, 2016). Parents and students who seek out Black spaces that have and promote Black ideologies are modern-day maroons (Johnson, 2012). The themes Knowing-Explicit and Implicit, are the underlying assumptions about spaces configured without Black representation which are used to activate strategies to survive anti-Black environments.

Freedom is shaped by flight that is influenced by our individual and collective experience with and in the world. “According to Roberts (2017), “Freedom encompasses moments that are episodic, durable, and overlapping. Freedom, therefore, is not a place at which one arrives but rather a condition that one experiences (Roberts, 2017).
Extending Robert’s definition of freedom, Hooker (2017) adds: “If freedom has been a central concept in Western political thought, slavery has long been the dominant metaphor for unfreedom, and since the advent of popular sovereignty the denial of representation, in particular, has been framed as a condition akin to enslavement.”

**Connection of Theme 2 to Incidents to Maroons**

Freedom is shaped by flight that is influenced by our individual and collective experience with and in the world. “According to Roberts (2017), “Freedom encompasses moments that are episodic, durable, and overlapping. Freedom, therefore, is not a place at which one arrives but rather a condition that one experiences (Roberts, 2017). Extending Robert’s definition of freedom, Hooker (2017) adds: “If freedom has been a central concept in Western political thought, slavery has long been the dominant metaphor for unfreedom, and since the advent of popular sovereignty the denial of representation, in particular, has been framed as a condition akin to enslavement.”

Incidents are the continual experiences of anti-Blackness akin to unfreedom the participants lean on and examine that radicalize them to remove themselves from schools.

**Connection of Theme 3 Scarification to Maroons**

Current literature on student dropout aims to quail the action. Researchers should accept that the act of marooning proves that Black people don’t have to have major means to resist oppression (Sayers, 2012). Marronage as a pathway to freedom must start from the position of bondage if the purpose of marronage is to pursue self-possession (Patel, 2016).

Agreeably, students who remove themselves are seemingly vulnerable because the widely promoted view of success for minors lies within the reliance and connection to
a state-run education agency. However, aligning with Marronage, the conditions from which one is escaping must be greater than the conditions on the road to freedom.

Scarification, the residual effects of negative schooling environments, is the process and events around the calculation of the cost of freedom in the realms of educational settings.

**Foucauldian Discourse of Power/Knowledge**

*Connection of Theme 1 Knowing to Power/Knowledge Discourse*

Michel Foucault’s rich discussions of resistance as an epistemological framework has led to post-modern approaches that embrace personal experience, emotion, intuition, imagination, and feelings in research. The theme *knowing* facilitates multiple understandings of how knowledge, truth, meaning, and power are constructed by participants in this study. The former students are keenly aware of the contradictions between their academic learning and lived experiences. The alienation these students experience is real.

*Connection of Theme 2 to Incidents to Power/Knowledge Discourse*

The theme of *incidents* brings to the fore the ongoing individual and collective concerns due to exposure and re-exposure to adversity, discrimination, and stress. Dropping out of school is a critical incident, indicative of the participant’s ability to act (agency), akin to qualities such as intentionality, voluntarism, choice, and autonomy.

The human body, as the ultimate local site on which power is concentrated, is a prominent element in Foucault’s critique of the human subject. The human body serves as the target of disciplinary techniques, the object by which a person is manipulated into acknowledging itself as ‘a docile, productive subject.’ Disciplinary power, the form of regulatory power found in a modern social formation such as high school graduation,
functions through practices of observation, surveillance, and examination—practices which render subjects ‘knowable.’ By becoming knowable, they become sites of intervention. For the former students selected in this study, this process can be seen in the increased scope and impact of profiling, assessment procedures, and mechanisms of evaluation and appraisal.

Dropping out of school, as a critical incident, resonates with Foucault’s emphasis on the nexus between power and knowledge. Foucault is adamant that education must be nonmanipulative and must permit us to change it at will. To do that we must be able to disassociate ourselves from the ‘regimes of truth’ (e.g., meritocratic belief about high school graduation) that have classified, objectified, normalized, and constituted the identity of students who dropped out of high school as delinquent, helpless, trouble making, among others. Such labels delegitimize the criticisms of schools and critical incidents voiced by participants in this study who did not graduate from high school.

**Connection of Theme 3 Scarification to Power/Knowledge Discourse**

Scarification, a social metaphor depicting the personal trauma of negative schooling environments, is represented in this study in terms of the student’s acknowledgement of their disillusionment, while they attempted to locate (re-orient) themselves to possible paths of action or career alternatives and opportunities. The scar metaphor enabled the students to work through the blend of psychological and ideological disquietude of the high school dropout as “loser” and “radical” and therein lay Foucault’s discourse on power as the capacity to resist domination. The students’ realized power from within brought an opportunity to bounce back, to pro-act. Power implies freedom since without freedom, power is just a constraint or force. For students
interviewed in this study, their freedom does not lie in discovering or being able to determine who they are, but in ‘rebelling’ against those ways in which they are defined, categorized, and classified. Thus, the critical and emancipatory potential of Foucauldian power-knowledge discourse aligns with how the scar metaphor (scarification) facilitated the process of healing and working through (e.g., rebounding from adversity; calculating the time spent in school and being a wage earner).

Foucault’s metaphor of panopticon offers a holistic understanding of how schooling and graduation pathways do not reflect the lived experiences of students who dropped out, nor provide much encouragement for ‘agentic’ struggles. The fusion of personal and exploitative ideology surrounding dropping out becomes especially salient within the process of healing described in the Black students’ ‘scar’ stories and sentiments. The scarification experience of students in this study resonates deeply with the Foucauldian discourse on resistance, represented by specific agents struggling to modify the physical, social, educational, and historical conditions that impinge upon them at specific sites.

**Recommendations Based on the Study**

Marronage in education is a fresh way to examine the phenomenon of dropping out of school. However, the students were never asked why they were not engaged, and the movement away from schooling went unnoticed. Participants revealed they had a keen sense of knowing the socio-political undergirding of school systems. As educators, we must understand that young minds are still minds, and students can learn and grasp the tense climate surrounding race and class in the United States.

We must make ourselves vulnerable to the idea that Black people’s history of
flight from oppression is still a viable option for Black students in today’s times. Much research has been conducted on the racial disparities within our schools. Unfortunately, researchers are slow to accept leaving school as the students’ agentic response to what participants in this study unanimously referred to schooling as ‘bullshit.’ The ‘bullshit’ is defined as the promulgated idea that schools are a space where Black students can find the answer to daily sociopolitical problems.

The participants were radicalized by educators’ blatant and failed attempts to delude them into not trusting their people’s history of forced oppression for someone else’s gain. Like Maroons who removed themselves from chattel slavery without seeking permission or a consensus that agreed with their disobedience-our Black students’ crucial decision does not need approval or validation. Simply put, our Black students deserve a restoration of respect and honor for making a pivotal decision on their own.

During this study, the negative behaviors current literature seeks to decrease were recategorized. The recategorization analyzed the same actions as preventive, responsive, or defensive in some instances. In this process, dropping out was re-established as a thoughtful process of stages.

The promotion of this study that identifies schools as what radicalize the Maroon behaviors is because these behaviors were only activated within school settings. The participants also noted that these incidents within educational spaces were the inaugural moment of marooning but not the last. Research tells us but the stories we tell contribute to the many ways that we move forward into the unthinking as we reimagine our futures (Gagne, 2006). Sayers (2012) instructs us that “The words used to label, describe, and
signify phenomena have direct connections with the way in which phenomena are conceived.”

Thus, it is important to conceptualize high school dropouts as Maroons because the term indicates the agency of marginalized, disenfranchised, dispossessed, and contained students. Perhaps high school dropouts already know or have already realized that schooling structures not only support but create societal gaps in academic, occupational, and social trajectories although these structures purport to attempt to eliminate the same gaps that they create (Patel, 2016).

**Recommendations Based on the Study**

Based on the interviews, the following recommendations should be considered:

- Establish clear methods and practices for collaborating with families and community members regularly, and act ethically with integrity and fairness when working with families and community members.

- Intentional recruitment of Black educators and Black educational leaders from backgrounds and lived experiences that reflect the student populations and their caretakers for direct instruction and school initiatives.

- Restructure the mindsets and skills of the educators currently teaching students through professional development and support.

- Develop inclusive discipline and dress code policies that start with a equity mindset, seeking out how students could possibly be disenfranchised or pushed-out by induction of policies or the continuation of policies and practices.
• Ensure equitable access to rigorous, culturally sustaining curricula that represents the desires and needs of all students.

• Provide a career and technical education that prepares students in a manner comparable and acceptable to other programs so they can compete with others in the industry.

• Penalize educators whose student’s dropout of school without having conducted a series of attempts to support the student toward the pathway they are seeking.

Personal reflections

This section is written in the first person as it reflects my personal experience in this research. As a high school dropout, I worried that I would be biased because I dropped out of school. However, as a current educator, my goal is to reach the whole child. I am guided by the professional field and the larger community of education to ensure best practices and ethical behavior. Yet, I cannot ignore that our community of educators and our education systems need a serious reset or complete dismantling.

As both a current educator and former student who removed herself from schooling, I experienced moments of despair as well as inadvertently causing despair. As an educator, I have been required to accept policies like mandatory deductions in grades for late submissions, removal from school for dress code violations, use of anti-Black curriculum, and professional developments that do not address the racism and anti-Black policies and practices thrust upon students. I have counseled teachers on their racialized microaggressions while being forced to remain silent about it while trying to aid a teenager in making sense of an experience that makes no sense.
Overall, I have learned that I am a Maroon. After a moment of respite in the swamps of my community, I returned to the larger society to continue my journey. Like many of the participants, I returned to the larger society to make a difference. During this time, I acquired the required credentials to allow me entry into the larger discussion.

Throughout my tenure in post-secondary institutions, I have spoken about the experience of students who remove themselves from school. I have witnessed how our educators view those who drop out as lazy or destined to fail. Each time I reveal that I am a high-school dropout the conversation shifts. It is in that moment that I understand my purpose. I am here to be an example of how schooling is bullshit. High school does not indicate how you will perform in a nation that is dealing with racism.

Unfortunately, my success has been due to Allah and those who have aided me like those who aided Maroons in history. In the 1800s, support of a Maroon would have been to provide them with medicine or fabric; today it is by accepting an applicant with a G.E.D. or criminal record. Likewise, in past times Maroons would pillage white spaces out of anger and spite; and in today’s time, Maroons return to white spaces seeking new community members.
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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Tell me about how you felt about school when you were younger and your earliest memories of school.

Tell me about your experience in schools. Focus specifically on the times between starting elementary and the time that you decided to drop out of school.

What process or processes did you use to drop out of school?

Tell about what happened during the time that you decided to finally drop out of school.

How did you cope with school while you remained there?

What actions, if any, did your school or its employees commit that aided in your decision to drop out of school?

What did you do once you dropped out of school?

Would you say that dropping out of school was you fleeing from captivity?

There is an idea that people who drop out of school were resisting oppression that happens in schools. Would you say that your experience fits with that? And if so, how?
APPENDIX B

Permission to Use Data

Hi, Eric:

I am writing to memorialize the conclusion of our conversation about D’Andrea Heggs’ use of my qualitative dataset on students who dropped out of school. To be most clear, I am granting permission for D’Andrea to use the data for her dissertation work in a limited manner. Specifically, D’Andrea may use the data that she has already coded for the completion of her dissertation. I do not grant permission for D’Andrea to continue the use of the data to develop new codes, themes, to expand codes/themes, etc. To my knowledge, D’Andrea has coded seven themes. My permission stops at these seven themes and the information from the transcripts that she has already used. Finally, I am granting permission for D’Andrea to use this data for the completion of her dissertation ONLY. I do not grant permission for D’Andrea to publish or present this information in any form beyond her dissertation.

Policy
Department of Leadership

The University of Memphis
APPENDIX C

Ethics Approval

Institutional Review Board
Division of Research and Innovation
Office of Research Compliance
University of Memphis
315 Admin Bldg
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

February 13, 2023

PI Name: D’Andrea Heggs
Co-Investigators:
Advisor and/or Co-PI: Charisse Gulosino
Submission Type: Initial
Title: A Resurgence of Maroons: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Black Students Who Remove Themselves From Schools
IRB ID: PRO-FY2023-285

Based on the information provided on your determination review request for “A Resurgence of Maroons: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Black Students Who Remove Themselves From Schools”, the IRB has determined that your activity does not meet the Office of Human Subjects Research Protections definition of human subjects research and 45 CFR part 46 does not apply.

This study does not require IRB approval nor review. Your determination will be administratively withdrawn from Cayuse IRB and you will receive an email similar to this correspondence from irb@memphis.edu. This submission will be archived in Cayuse IRB.

Thanks,
IRB Administrator
Research Compliance
Division of Research & Sponsored Programs
The University of Memphis