

EDUCATION, RACISM, AND THE MILITARY: A CRITICAL RACE THEORY ANALYSIS
OF THE GI BILL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology

DECEMBER 2010

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of BERNADETTE KRISTINE BUCHANAN MENCKE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the people that came before me to make this experience possible. As an African American scholar, I have found that without hope, change is not a possibility. I am eternally grateful to the veterans that allowed me to come into their homes and churches and share a little bit of their life with me. Thank you to all activists that put your lives at risk to make it possible for me and my family to enjoy the fruits of your labor. The struggle still continues, and I am excited to be a part of it.

To my nuclear family, Paul, Paul Danny, Carter J, and Coco; the sacrifices you have made to allow me to follow my dreams fills my heart with unspeakable joy. There were many nights when I was not around for dinner, bath time, or bedtime story, and I want to make sure you know that I made those sacrifices to give us a better life and I believe taking the time to learn our history will help us more than we'll ever know.

To my extended family, especially my mom and dad, Timothy and Bernice, the support I received from you my WHOLE life, has been awesome. To be able to call home and discuss every aspect of this dissertation with you really allowed me to understand the topic and motivated me to keep going. Also, thank you for letting me borrow the car... I really appreciated it. To my mother and father-in-law, thanks for taking Paul Danny and Carter during those tough weekends when we were busy with school. The support you've shown us as we took a big risk will always remind me of what family support really looks like.

Kaye, Faye, Kim, Eric, Timmy, Anthony, and Dorothy—all ya'll crazy! Crazy for loving me, even when I did not know how to show love to you. What I appreciate the most is you

listening to my poster presentation over Thanksgiving and Faye especially asking about “REPARATIONS!!” The only thing I can say about that is... I’m working on it.

Enzo, Willie, Juice, Lulu, Felicia, Nina, Toya, Amman, Renate, Nyeva, Monica, Kadeen, Chandra, Khalelah, and Angie. You guys make me feel “normal.” Thanks for listening to my topic and giving me honest-to-goodness feedback as well as understanding the mantra *work hard, play hard*. Cause I can honestly say, we have played hard. Thank you for that, and thanks for keeping me around. Good friends are hard to come by, and I am so glad that I have you. (hold up your glasses for a toast) To... the windows!!

And special thanks to all of my colleagues in the College of Education and student affairs. Especially Dr. Robert Mock, the advice you gave Paul and myself when we entered the program was without a doubt the best advice on completing the degree, and without your words of wisdom, I’d be still trying to figure out what to do next.

My most important acknowledgment, I would like to thank God. Because of my relationship with you, I was able to keep pushing and still have joy throughout this entire journey. Thank ya Jesus! Thank ya Lord! Proverbs 16:16 kept me going, and, again, I say thank you.

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Abstract

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December 2010

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This study examined the impact of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the GI Bill) on African Americans' quest for higher education. The central question guiding this study follows: Why has higher education been so elusive for African Americans? With reference to this question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. How can the "counter narrative" approach uncover "truths" about the GI Bill's lack of effectiveness for the African American community?
2. How did the racial climate of the 1940s and 1950s impact African American veterans and their pursuit of post-secondary education?
3. How did African American veterans counter instances when race and racism intersected during their pursuit of higher education?
4. How does the lingering influence of the GI Bill impact higher education for African Americans today?

This qualitative study followed a Critical Race Theory (CRT) design. This methodology uses five tenets to interrogate the intersections of race and racism and bring about social change:

counter storytelling, critique of liberalism, interest convergence, permanence of racism, and whiteness as property.

The participants in this study were four African American World War II servicemen who served in the 1940s. These individuals were eligible for their GI Bill benefits and used some of it for educational purposes.

In general, the veterans explained how racism had a direct affect on their educational level prior to being drafted into the military and thus limited their ability to use the GI Bill to pursue higher education after the war. The veterans critiqued the unequal distribution of GI Bill benefits, stating that race was the determining factor in their ability to use the GI Bill. Although, the GI Bill helped them continue their education, only one of the veterans used the GI Bill to complete a four-year degree; the remaining three used it to complete high school.

In addition, the counter-narratives presented in this study bring to the forefront inconsistencies in the majoritarian story about how the GI Bill made higher education available to the masses. Instead, the study enables African American veterans to provide another perspective on the underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education today.

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Dedication

To my family... muuuuahhhh!

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the development of American higher education, advancements in legislation have endeavored to promote African American access and achievement. For example, the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1890 led to the construction of Black colleges, and where most African Americans were afforded their undergraduate education especially in the South (Lucas, 2007). The Morrill Act of 1890, “strictly prohibited the distribution of federal funds to states that did not provide separate accommodation for African American if the primary state institution denied admission to African American” (Turner, 2002, p. 151).

Justin Morrill, a senator from the State of Vermont, led the federal charge to provide an education to newly freed African American slaves. His act stopped funding for any established land grant that used color as an admissions requirement, without the establishment of a separate college for African Americans. As a result, 17 colleges were established for the agriculture and mechanical arts (A&M) (Davis, 1933). These schools were primarily extension campuses from the previously established land grants in 1860. On many occasions, the main campus would keep up to 95% of the federal funding and give the remaining 5% to the 1890 school (Wennersten, 1991). This was the first of many shortcomings the 1890 schools faced, especially when it came to receiving the allotted funds from the federal government.

There were many states that established laws to keep African Americans out of the educational system, local government, and home ownership sector. For example, in Mississippi, the Mississippi Plan was set up as a system that purposefully excluded African Americans from state politics (Altman, 1997). Furthermore:

The Mississippi Plan (literacy and “understanding tests”) lasted until November 1st of that year and was later adopted with embellishments by other states: South Carolina (1895), Louisiana (1898), North Carolina (1900), Alabama (1901), Virginia (1901), Georgia (1908), and Oklahoma (1910). Southern states later used “White primaries” and other devices to exclude African American voters.

Once Whites regained control of the state legislatures using these tactics, a process known as “Redemption,” they used gerrymandering of election districts to further reduce African American voting strength and minimize the number of African American elected officials. In the 1890s, these states began to amend their constitutions and to enact a series of laws intended to re-establish and entrench White political supremacy (Altman, 1997, p. 1).

These types of laws did not allow for the political activism and legislative body to reflect the needs of all the citizens of the state. In terms of advocacy for African American colleges and universities to expand, there was no one there to lobby and suggest ways of implementing a plan to keep the schools expanding and continuing to meet the needs of its constituents. Turner and Bound (2002) conducted a quantitative study on the GI Bill and the educational outcomes of African Americans soldiers in 1944. They analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and noted:

A survey of historically African American colleges in 1945 found that 45 percent of institutions enrolled fewer than 250 students and 92 percent of the institutions had enrollment of less than 1,000 students (Turner & Bound, 2002, p.152).

Such numbers are staggering, and they are perpetuated as one seeks to understand why African Americans have been disenfranchised and are currently under-represented in higher education.

Wennersten (1991) explains that African American colleges established 25 years after the Civil War ended encountered many problems with recruitment. After a lifetime of slavery, going into a college specifically geared towards agriculture and mechanical arts did not sound appealing to college age students. As a result, trying to convince parents to enroll their children in the 1890 schools was difficult because many saw the curriculum as another way to keep them enslaved. At the same time, many African Americans bought into private and liberal arts schools that were established and funded by the Freedmans Bureau, northern religious organizations, and sympathetic Whites. These schools led in educating African Americans for that era.

Due to the high illiteracy rate of over 90% at the end of the civil war, and the lack of educational facilities available to African American people, the focus of the 1890 schools was to meet the needs of its student body. The student's curriculum was mainly focused on primary and secondary education. By 1916, there were only 12 students enrolled in the 1890 schools that were taking courses at the collegiate level (Davis, 1933; Jenkins 1991). Among data presented on African American employment, Wennersten (1991) found that at the end of the Civil War, there were 100,000 African American artisans. By the turn of the century, the skilled African American had been virtually eliminated from the southern labor market. Whites did not want to

compete against skilled African American labor, so they did what they could to eliminate African Americans from the labor markets. Many times, this meant that if an African American business was too successful, Whites would literally burn it down. In addition, White people with property wanted plantation tenets, not self reliant, property owning African American farmers.

As time progressed, the Reconstruction period was failing African Americans. The southern states were ignoring federal legislation in reference to funding educational opportunities from elementary to college. There was intentional elimination of the skilled African American labor force of the south, and the establishment of policies similar to the Mississippi Plan across the south continued to disenfranchise African American politics. One can deduce that African Americans were going to have trouble as they tried to establish themselves, post slavery, in a country that had a clear caste system.

Statement of Problem

There are a disproportionate number of African Americans in higher education. When the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, was introduced, college was seen as a place for the elite. Melissa Murray (2008) in *When War is Work*, points out that once implemented, the GI Bill was seen as a force that made modern America by expanding opportunities for social mobility as well as deconstructing the belief that college was for the elite. Moreover, the GI Bill is notably known for the creation of the middle class, thus transforming higher education into a place for everyone. At the same time, there were governmental policies and practices in place that kept thousands of African Americans from having the opportunity to fully engage in the pursuit of what is now known as the American Dream. Because of the legacy

of racism, then, schooling continues to be problematic for African American students, particularly those students attending predominately White schools (Anderson, 1988, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Shujaa, 1994). For such students, feeling culturally alienated, being physically isolated, and remaining silenced are common experiences. These feelings are often exacerbated when African Americans attend predominately White, elite independent schools (Dartnow & Cooper, 1998, 2000). Given the insidious and often subtle ways in which race and racism operates, it is imperative that educational researchers explore the role of race when examining the educational experiences of African American students (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 26).

Purpose of Study

Using Critical Race Theory, which will be explained in the research design, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 on African Americans' quest for higher education. A historical analysis of the GI Bill was conducted to investigate its equity. An examination of the GI Bill has presented three important findings. First, the Bill was presented to a segregated body of United States citizens; almost every aspect of life in the U.S. in 1944 was separated. The military, K-16 educational facilities, churches, and public transportation are only a few of the many venues impacted by segregation. Second, the legislation limited educational opportunities for African Americans because it opposed educating its African American citizenry. Third, when veterans tried to use their benefits earned from military service, there was a lack of resources available to them either because of: (a) existing segregationist principles and state and federal laws, (b) not being allowed to purchase property with their GI Bill in their neighborhood of choice, (c) educational level

prior to the military was not in the first year college level due to the lack of funding for African American K-12 educational facilities, (d) African American colleges at the time were very small and enrolled on average 250-1000 students (e) if a veteran had a Bachelors degree and wanted a Masters or Professional degree, most programs, especially in the South, were for Whites only or not available in their state.

The primary research question guiding this study follows: Why has higher education been so elusive for African Americans? With reference to this primary question, the following sub-questions were addressed by this study:

5. How can the “counter narrative” approach uncover “truths” about the GI Bill’s lack of effectiveness for the African American community?
6. How did the racial climate of the 1940s and 1950s impact African American veterans and their pursuit of post-secondary education?
7. How did African American veterans counter instances when race and racism intersected during their pursuit of higher education?
8. How does the lingering influence of the GI Bill impact higher education for African Americans today?

Significance of Study

The significance of the study was to gain insight into the experiences of African American veterans using the GI Bill in the 1940s and 1950s. During the pre *Brown v. Board of Education* era, racism and racial politics played a large role in setting the stage for African American education. This can be seen over time and particularly once the GI Bill was implemented, however, the majoritarian perspective has dominated the discourse about the

impacts of the Bill as well as served to influence perspectives on African American education and educational attainment today. Knowing this, it was important to create synergy around this topic and bring to light the facts that surround and influence perspectives on African American achievement in higher education.

Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative study followed the design as outlined by Critical Race Theory (CRT). This methodology uses five tenets to interrogate the intersections of race and racism and bring about social change. These tenets are counter storytelling, critique of liberalism, interest convergence, permanence of racism, and whiteness as property. In order to successfully implement CRT as a methodology one must fully accept and analyze these tenets. For this study I conducted one-on-one interviews, as well as investigated case law and public policies related to the implementation of GI Bill. The participants of this study were four African American World War II veterans. I conducted two interviews with each of the participants in order to get a rich description and understanding of their experiences with the GI Bill as it relates to education. My research was inspired by CRT and the idea of storytelling because:

Necesitamos terias [we need theories] that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries – new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods . . . We are articulating new positions in the “in-between,” Borderland worlds of ethnic communities and academies... social issues such as race, class, and sexual difference are intertwined with the narrative and poetic elements of a text, elements in which theory is embedded. In our mestizaje theories we

create new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of existing ones (Anzaldua, 1990, pp. xxv-xxvi).

Moreover, I have presented a number of challenges in this research that frame the research problem. As I will demonstrate in the review of the literature, despite the efforts of African American veterans and their desire to apply and enroll into post-secondary institutions, many were denied.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study became clear during the data analysis. The veterans shared a lot about their educational experiences, often times those experiences included being the recipients of racism. Not being alive during this time affects my ability to comprehend the intensity of the acts and therefore limits my ability to understand when they use the term racism. In the review of literature for this time period, discrimination and racism was mentioned in virtually all aspects. As I continued to comb through the narratives and began to analyze the information, it became very clear to me that I did not quite understand what exactly racism was or could be. In my case, I have experienced covert racism and therefore I thought that I understood racism and all of the emotions therein. Over time, as themes became more clear, the only thing I was clear about what that I really did not know, what I thought I did. The examples of when race and racism intersected in the narratives brought bigotry into focus and how it ruled their daily life. It was through trying to gain an understanding that I realized that my 33-year-old mind could not quite comprehend what they were giving up every day, just for a chance at getting an opportunity.

Another limitation of my study is that all of the veterans I found were currently living in Washington State. Before the Civil War, the United States was split into the North and the South. The South had the largest concentration of African American citizens, and this was the epicenter of acts of racism against African Americans. It would have been nice to interview a veteran that made their home in the South to see if there were any similarities or differences regarding how they were able to use the GI Bill.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1890 Schools

My research study delved into texts that illuminate the hegemony intertwined in the African American quest for higher education. For 240 years, from 1619-1863, African Americans in the United States of America were enslaved and served a dominant role in the development of the agrarian south. Slavery was a time when it was illegal to educate a slave in anything besides menial domestic work (McGee & McAfee, 1977). Once free at the end of the Civil War, there were four million people with a 90% illiteracy rate left to function in a capitalistic, mostly agricultural, region of the US. Looking after the interest and education of the newly freed slaves was left up to the Freedman's Bureau. The Freedman's Bureau, established in 1865, consisted of free African Americans, philanthropic Whites, and northern religious organizations; they made it their mission to assist this population in acquiring the skills to ensure servitude of this magnitude would never happen again.

After the Civil War ended, there was a large push by the Freedman's Bureau to educate African Americans. In 1865, the illiteracy rate was 90%. By 1880, it was 65%, and in 1916 it was down to 16.3% (Wennersten, 1991; Davis, 1933). These great strides, in such a short period of time, were needed to educate this newly freed population. There was also a natural inclination to develop colleges for African Americans. In 1933, Davis's study on *The Negro Land-Grant College* says that preceding the Civil War, there were 18 African American colleges established by philanthropic and religious organizations and between 1870 and 1890. An additional 13 colleges were founded by Southern African American church organizations. In that same vein,

Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont introduced the second Morrill Act in 1890. The purpose was to publically fund land grant colleges specifically for the education of African Americans. This Act noted that no state schools receiving land grant funds would be able to discriminate on the basis of color in the admission process and continue to receive federal funding; however, this legislation contained wording that outlined and supported a school's decision to establish a separate college for African Americans.

Williams and Williamson's (1998) study shows that, as a result of The Second Morrill Act, African American land grant colleges were established. Of the seventeen schools funded for African American students, sixteen land grants schools and the Tuskegee Institute were given 25,000 acres for public instruction. Many universities changed their extension campuses into their African American agriculture and mechanical arts college, hereafter referred to as 1890 schools. Some states gave their funding to existing African American private schools (Davis, 1933; Jenkins, 1991). Based upon this new legislation, the existing Southern land grant schools began the transition of their extension campuses into their 1890 school because their main campus funding would have ended if they did not establish a place for African Americans to be educated. This was a great establishment for African Americans education in America because it was beginning to provide government funded opportunities.

Davis (1933) notes that 1890 schools mostly served as land grant high schools due to the poor educational circumstances, the lack of elementary and secondary schools, and because of there location in rural communities. There was a need to get the people of the state educated; this desire worked towards meeting the needs of the citizenry. Jenkins (1991) reports that by the turn of the century, of the 4,875 students registered at the A&M colleges, approximately 2,500 were

at the high school level. Close to 2,200 students were at the elementary level, and only 12 were taking college level courses.

According to Wennersten (1991), many of the students found that the reputation and academic focus of existing private African American colleges were appealing and it was clear that these schools were leaders in producing graduates in the liberal arts. The 1890 schools were being promoted to the African American community as schools that would focus on agriculture, mechanical arts, and home economics. This did not fare well with many in the African American community. Because African Americans were recently released from 240 years of servitude in the role of a farm hand and a housekeeper, the curriculum in which the students would be educated was a tough sell to parents, especially with the rise of industrialization. In addition, many students wanted to be educated in the liberal arts, and saw the 1890 schools as a ploy by the federal government to keep African Americans in a service role.

There were two compelling and competing thoughts about the educational direction of African Americans during that time: liberal arts and agricultural education. Jenkins (1991) brings to the forefront that most African Americans wanted a liberal arts education; however, there were individuals like Booker T. Washington, President of Tuskegee Institute, that reinforced the beliefs of racist White people by supporting the work in agriculture and the service industry. Conversely, there were African American college presidents who had other ideals and wanted the students to have an accessible liberal arts education. At times, African American presidents were fired because they pushed for a liberal arts focus for their students, only to be replaced by another president with a similar view on liberal arts education (Wennersten, 1991). Eventually, the desires of those who wanted the liberal arts were heard and

Congress passed four very important pieces of legislation to expand the scope of the 1890 schools. This legislation also provided funding for these opportunities.

The first piece of legislation was the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. Davis (1933) outlines that this Act was passed to provide funding for those who were not enrolled in a college through demonstrations and instruction in agriculture and home economics. During this time, the main campus would receive funding, but little money was disseminated to the 1890 schools. This legislation was meant to encourage the states to increase spending and expand the scope of the A & M. One prime example of how the funds were divided is the University of Alabama, where the main campus was given sixty-five thousand dollars for their budget while their 1890 school was given four thousand dollars. Even as federal funding increased, the African American schools funding remained at four thousand dollars annually. Williams and Williamson (1988) summarize the attempt by the federal government to provide additional funding through the passage of the Adams Act of 1906 and the Purell Act of 1925. However, this money never made it from Washington, DC to the 1890 schools. It wasn't until 1935 that the Bankhead Jones Act finally outlined how the money needed to be disseminated. It was not until the 1930s that all of the 1890 schools received accreditation and were up to the educational level that was meeting the needs of African Americans trying to complete college level work.

The Second Morrill Act of 1890, Smith-Lever Act of 1906, Adams Act of 1907, Purell Act of 1925, and the Bankhead Jones Act of 1935, as a whole, did not meet the goal of educating African Americans in the agricultural and mechanical arts. There are three main reasons why these goals were not met: African Americans did not want to continue into higher education only to go into service related jobs, Whites held racist beliefs about the education and contributions of

African Americans, and the Acts designed to advance African American educational pursuits failed to provide funding and protection. The need for more legislation, in the form of the Acts previously listed, and forcing states to provide funding was futile. Furthermore, as the schools moved into the twentieth century, the segregationist principles were still at play and the schools never received more than 50% of their allotted funds (Wennersten, 1991; Davis, 1933).

This data suggests that the advancement of African Americans in higher education was impeded by the hegemonic practices of the dominant culture. Despite these obstacles, there were advancements. Although these schools are still facing the lack of funding and some have even closed their doors in recent years. The existance of these schools has always been important to the development and education of the African American community. It is unfortunate that at the time of the GI Bill's implementation, these schools were not growing at the same rates as their White counterparts. Simultanously, 1890 schools were not able to build and promote an African African middle class in the same manner that White land grants developed the White middle class.

Development of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act

In 1932, World War I veterans stormed the capital in Washington, DC due to the United States governments lack of payment for military benefits. When many of the WWI veterans came home, they came to find their jobs were replaced by civilians. Many veterans were disabled and could not work in the same occupations they had prior to the war. This frustration festered and soon, thousands of veterans gathered in DC for the Bonus Marches of 1932 in pursuit of their military benefits (Murray, 2008). In an effort to prevent another Bonus March, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, with the help of Congress, developed and enacted Public Law 346 also

known as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Hines, 1944). This Bill contained four major components accessible to all WWII soldiers except those that were dishonorably discharged. These four components include educational and vocational training, government backed loans for homes and businesses, on the job training programs, and unemployment benefits commonly called 52/20, which was twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks while searching for employment (Hines, 1944; Herbold, 1994; Clark, 1998). These services were very important in making sure that the 16 million veterans returning to work, with over half of them under the age of 25 years old, were minimally displaced in the civilian workforce (Turner & Bound, 2003).

Turner and Bound (2002) note that before the 1940s, a college education and home ownership was something that American culture deemed strictly for the elite and upper class. Through the development and implementation of the GI Bill, those beliefs were slowly changing. Consequently, the Army conducted a study using enlisted soldiers. Of the participants, 23% of the White soldiers and 46% of the African American soldiers said they were going to use the GI Bill for college or vocational training. The reality of the GI Bill was that out of the 15 million soldiers eligible for education and vocational benefits, 2.2 million actually ended up participating in this aspect of the program. The utilization of the Bill to acquire property, start a business, and get a college education led to the development of what historians and scholars call "The Greatest Generation."

According to Clark (1998), coming out of the Great Depression and leading into the 1940s, the American social stratification seemed set and social mobility was very difficult to achieve. The economic boom linked with the GI Bill has had many positive implications for

American society. As noted before, home ownership and education were now accessible to the average American. The chance for social mobility was now accessible for the average soldier, and most importantly, the GI Bill provided an opportunity for veterans to accumulate generational wealth. Middle class standing was something to be desired and achieved as a new type of cultural capital was gained, which could be passed down to the next generation.

In 1944, the GI Bill, “released literally billions of dollars to help underwrite the cost of a college education for millions of returning war veterans” (Lucas, 2007, p. 252). Moreover:

As generous as that sounds, the 1944 bill – among the most significant pieces of legislation ever passed by the U.S. Congress – included much more. Its education benefits threw open the doors of elite academies to the masses: in 1947, veterans made up almost half the nation’s college students. It also offered low-interest, no-money-down mortgages, backed by the U.S. government that allowed millions of families to purchase their first homes. The move helped spark the postwar baby boom and the suburbanization of America in the 1950s: it effectively created the American middle class. (Cruz, 2008, p. 1)

The GI Bill was established and granted to a segregated military, and the benefits were established for all military personnel. This Bill, in its entirety, was opposed by outspoken John Rankin, a Mississippi Congressman, and Senator Bennett Champ Clark from Missouri. These senators wanted the Bill to include special recommendations in terms of keeping segregationist principles as a part of the legislation (Roach, 1997, p. 2). The Bill passed in its original form,

was implemented in 1944, and the American higher education system saw a much needed increase in numbers of veterans returning home and applying to use their GI Bill benefits.

“The GI Bill of Rights, was a causal factor in the postwar educational boom in American higher education” (McMurray, 2007, p. 144). Military personnel who wished to pursue higher education were afforded unprecedented opportunities. Approximately 50% (7.8 million) of all US veterans took part in the program. Of those taking part, 700,000 received agricultural training and instruction, 3.5 million attended technical schools, and 2.2 million pursued higher learning at American’s colleges and universities. Furthermore:

The legislation on The GI Bill of Rights essentially offered qualified World War II veterans- those who had served on active duty in the armed forces for at least ninety days without a dishonorable discharge – four ways to improve their socio-economic conditions. The bill’s first benefit required the United States Employment Service (USES) to help veterans find jobs that would match their work skills. The second provision allowed unemployed veterans to receive up to a full year of unemployment compensation at the rate of twenty dollars per week. Under the third benefit, the Veterans Administration (VA) provided guaranteed home, farm, and business loans to veterans. And the fourth provision paid for a veteran’s education or vocational training for up to four full years (Onsikt, 1998. p. 518).

Bennett (1996) notes undoubtedly, that the GI Bill is characterized as the law that made modern America. In addition, it is praised for expanding opportunities for social mobility and democratizing elite institutions. The Bill was largely responsible for the development of a new

middle class, and it not only helped the returning veterans but also expanded American higher education. The greatest generation made its contributions as educated, resourceful and creative civilians in the 60 years following the end of World War II. Before that, only one in 16 Americans had a college degree, compared with one in five by 1970 (Wright, 2008). In total, the GI Bill's education and training provisions completely reoriented the tenor of higher education in the United States. Prior to the war, college, like home ownership, was the province of the elite. By 1947, veterans constituted "half of enrolled college students, doubling the number of males registered in pre-war times and increasing overall enrollment by 75%" (Clark, 1998, p. 187). In all, the GI Bill has been credited with transforming American society. Undoubtedly, it transformed the nation from a steeply hierarchical society divided by wealth and class to one in which citizens aspire and achieve middle class status (Murray, 2008).

Unquestionably, Patterson (1996) explains that rather than catering exclusively to the upper-middle class clientele that had comprised student populations before the war, faculty and administrators were suddenly faced with the prospect of many students from less prominent socioeconomic backgrounds, which included married students, as well as students interested in more pragmatic and career-oriented majors and courses. The impact of these new students on community colleges and four year universities was profound, not only to the institutions, but to the general public. This impact resulted in the establishment of the middle class, suburbanization, and a robust and booming economy.

African Americans and the GI Bill

Turner and Bound (2003) highlighted that 16 million American men and women participated in World War II; of those, one million were African American. The plight of the

African American soldier and their desire to contribute to the development of the greatest generation were stifled by segregationist principles and intentional denial of services by local government agencies (Onsikt, 1998; Herbold, 1994). When the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 was being developed, Senator Rankin of Mississippi was integral in the development and implementation of the Bill. He made his position on African Americans' servitude to the American public no secret, so when the programs contained in the GI Bill were being established, he and other Senators with the same beliefs pushed for local control of the resources (Herbold, 1994). His efforts paid off, but one aspect remained; the educational benefits were paid directly to the institutions in which each of the veterans attended.

The Veteran's Administration (VA) and the United States Employment Services (USES) were largely responsible for processing the requests of the veterans for their on the job training funding and their unemployment benefits. To get funds to purchase a home or open a business, the federal government guaranteed loans to African American veterans, but they did not give the funds directly; thus, the veterans had to find a bank that would lend to them. Working with local institutions had a profound effect on the African American veterans' ability obtain financial backing in a system that required more collateral from them as opposed to their White counterparts who possessed the same credentials. It is noted that one third of the veterans in the south were African American. This study includes the state of Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama (Herbold, 1994).

An audit performed by the Southern Regional Council (SRC) found that in 1947, just three years after the implementation of the GI Bill in Mississippi, only two of the 3,200 loans given to veterans were given to African Americans. In the south, 16 of the 1,000 career

counselors that worked for the USES were African American and 15 of those were located in Georgia. Many soldiers talked about the training they received in the Army to be truck drivers and a part of the engineering corps. Once they were dismissed from the Army, they went to the USES for job placement opportunities and were given jobs as agricultural workers, porters at hotels, and even dishwashers. If an African American soldier refused the position because of low pay or because it did not match their skill base, the USES would send a letter to the VA and request to “strip the boy of his benefits.” Many African American veterans came to the conclusion that it was better to work in substandard positions, which were underpaid and required 12-15 hour work days, than to have no job at all (Onskt, 1998). At least for the time being, the on-the-job-training positions were supplemented by the government for up to four years. This supplement was better money than the positions they could find on their own.

Some USES and VA employment counselors would only give benefits to the African American veterans who had been discharged. There were different types of discharges, like blue, which was reserved for soldiers that were considered defiant and spoke up about the treatment of African Americans in the military. This was not an honorable discharge, but it was still eligible for the benefits. More results for the audit by the SRC found that most of the jobs that the USES allowed African American soldiers to have were based in the service industry, especially if the skill the soldier possessed was not seen as a typical African American person’s job (Onskt, 1998; Herbold, 1994).

Between 1944 to 1947, there arose an opportunity for one million African Americans to participate in the development of “The Greatest Generation” through the utilization of the GI Bill. However, every aspect of the GI Bill held road blocks for African American men and

women who went and fought facism and communism abroad. The belief of coming home from war and being able to provide for family was something African American soldiers observed of their White counterparts. To add insult to injury, the federal government set up a program for African Americans that the local state government took away. This is where the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 falls short.

Turner and Bound (2003) discuss that in the 1940s, due to the need for additional assistance on the farms, many of the African American soldier's level of education was typically around seventh grade. Approximately one third of African Americans were eligible for college level work; however, in 1946, only 15, 000 of the 100,000 African American veterans that had applied for their educational benefits were enrolled (Onskt, 1998). For that same academic year, one million White veterans were enrolled across the country. During the ten years of eligibility to use the GI Bill, only 2.2 million soldiers, in total, used the Bill for educational and vocational benefits.

During that time, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) had a total enrollment of approximately 43,000. There were 93 colleges total and the average enrollment was 310 students. Some schools had a student body as high as 1,000 and others as low as 250. Of equal importance, HBCU's were already at their limits before the GI Bill was enacted and this was due to the lack of funding that each state was providing to their African American schools. In the state of Mississippi, 92% of the higher education budget went to the White state schools and the rest of the funding went to Alcorn A & M which enrolled the highest amount of African American students in the state (Onskt, 1998; Turner & Bound, 2003). During this time, it was not uncommon for there to be waiting lists at HBCUs. Before forced integration, the segregationist

principles of the day ruled and African American students were not admitted to the all White state schools, especially in the south (Murray, 2008).

The dialectical relationship between federal and state laws and African Americans exposes the hegemony that exists on all levels (local, state, federal). This study brought to the forefront the federal and local laws that prohibited African Americans from engaging in the benefits of being an American. The opportunity for African American soldiers to gain generational wealth and capital was denied by state agencies, not by the choice of African Americans, but by coercion. Martin Luther King Jr. once described the bootstrap theory in relationship to the African American plight and how many times African Americans went to get boots and were denied. It was obvious 80 years after slavery was abolished, the chains on the body were removed and then replaced by invisible ones on the mind and heart. These chains have had lasting effects on African Americans ability to gain equal standing, economically.

To be denied of personhood, stripped of all rights, and enslaved are experiences no human being should have to endure. But it continued, even after the abolishment of slavery. African Americans were placed under segregationist principles like Jim Crow until well after the 1944 GI Bill could have been utilized (veterans only had 10 years to utilize the benefits), which, in turn, brought about the burning desire for social change.

Many African Americans trying to use their benefits felt that the perks were racially exclusive. Because of this, many were prompted to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. African American's attempting to use their educational benefits seemed to have little difficulty compared to trying to use the home loan and unemployment benefits which had local oversight in their administration. In fact, local control over these programs was included in the Bill as a

standard operating procedure to Southern legislators who feared that the Bill's provisions would re-tool the Southern economy and society by extending to African American and women veterans unprecedented opportunities for occupational mobility, homeownership, and entrepreneurship.

Accordingly, both the loan program and the unemployment assistance program operated at the local level and were prone to parochialism and racism in the distribution of benefits (Murray, 2008). Though Congress granted the same benefits to both African American and Whites, theoretically, the segregationist principles of almost every institution of higher learning effectively disbarred a huge proportion of African American veterans from earning a college degree (Herbold, 1995). It can be concluded that the GI Bill was very difficult to use for African Americans, especially those living in the South.

The unfortunate results of institutionalized racism had a profound effect on the mobilization of the African American middle class in America. At the same time, the university came to define and ensure the ongoing production of a White middle class. Because African Americans had fewer opportunities to earn college degrees, with or without benefits, the African American middle class failed to keep pace. The Bill broke down class lines in higher education, but inequities of race remained difficult to dislodge. Although, in the legislation, the government would pay tuition that was of little help to African Americans who could not enter college, either because of overcrowding at African American colleges or inadequate preparation for college-level work (Herbold, 1995).

Onsikt (1998) writes about the Army's "Post-War Educational Plans of Soldiers" study, which claimed that only 8 percent of veterans planned to return to school full-time after the war.

However, the study proved unreliable; Army pollsters had conducted the study at the height of the war when most men had not even heard of the GI Bill or thought seriously about their postwar plans. Southern African American veterans who tried to enter universities under the GI Bill encountered many of the same problems as the men who were seeking vocational training – a lack of space and resources. African American universities had mistakenly estimated that very few returning African American servicemen would pursue a college education as a result of various Army surveys as well as the Armed Services' promise of the gradual military demobilization. Onkst (1998) goes on to say that:

Veteran enrollment at colleges and universities rose in direct proportion to the rapid demobilization rate and veterans' limited job opportunities. In the fall of 1945, veterans represented just five percent of the nation's college enrollment. However, within a year, that figure jumped to about 48 percent. But for Black veterans, the situation was quite different. Nationally, they represented just 30 percent of the total enrollment at Black colleges during the 1946-47 academic year and only comprised about 4 percent of all the former servicemen attending school under the GI Bill. By 1947, African American colleges had turned away between 15,000 to 20,000 Black veterans because of limited resources and facilities (p.530).

Herbold (1995) adds that those African Americans who did manage to enter White colleges were prohibited from playing on athletic teams, going to dances and other social events, and joining fraternities. In 1946, only one fifth of the 100,000 African American who had applied for educational benefits had been registered in college. What makes these numbers so

daunting is that they ask the question: what would higher education look like if even 50% of these individuals were allowed to enter colleges and universities to be certified for a trade or receive an undergraduate or graduate education?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The methodology used in this study is consistent with the research purpose and questions. Examining this topic through the counter narrative is best explored through Critical Race Theory (CRT). Furthermore, this methodology will analyze the legal rights of African Americans in the United States and their ability to use the educational component of the GI Bill. Therefore, I used a methodology that allowed me to investigate the federal policy and at the same time offer the space to present research grounded in the experiences of African Americans. Having the ability to bring race to the forefront and challenge many of the current research paradigms is important when trying to analyze the GI Bill's effectiveness in the African American community as it relates to higher education. CRT, as developed by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, brings the complex interplay between race and racism to the forefront as it relates to laws in America.

Edward Taylor (1998) describes CRT as:

[A]n eclectic and dynamic form of legal scholarship that evolved in the 1970s in response to the stalled progress of traditional civil rights litigation to produce meaningful racial reform. [...] Topics addressed encompass affirmative action, race-conscious districting, campus speech codes, and disproportionate sentencing of racial minorities in the criminal justice system (p. 122).

CRT's epistemological standpoint and theoretical framework are labeled *constructionist*. Constructionist is an epistemology that dates back to Socrates and Aristotle. It is grounded in the

ideology that reality is constructed (Tate, 1997). Because reality is constructed, everyone plays a role in upholding the social norms and practices of our cultures. When we investigate further, we understand that race is a construct. As a society, we allow the color of an individual's skin, an accent they may have, or a part of the world their ancestors come from to dictate how we see a group. We often adjust our behavior to match how the dominant discourse says we must interact.

In the United States, the discourse around race has shaped our country into what it is today (Tate, 1997). From its very inception, race has dominated how individuals interact, from the naming of indigenous peoples called *Indians* by Columbus, to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. In other words, constructing race and adjusting one's behavior to match the ideology has been around since the beginning of this country. The reality is, according to William Bell (1985), that racism is a byproduct of capitalism.

Karl Marx critiques capitalism when he discusses the dialectical relationship of the individual and society. It is important to keep this in mind when trying to understand a constructionist epistemology, because the individual does not make isolated decisions and society does not have a culture of its own. Dialecticism analyzes how the individual interacts with society; therefore, the individual's relationship with society is dynamic. As a result, if the need for capital is important in society, the individual will change behaviors in order to gain the desired sum. Occasionally, there may be an opportunity to make great gains, and that may mean taking advantage of an individual to gain capital. The reasons for doing so may be magnifying slight differences between groups such as gender, geographic location, and skin color (Tucker, 1978).

Over time, legal scholars have explored the notion of meritocracy through Critical Legal Studies (CLS). CLS allows one to investigate social norms through the misconception that merit is the reason why someone has achieved social status or capital. This is where CRT claims that CLS falls short, because if one only investigates meritocracy and does not bring into account race, then there is a minimalization of the experiences of people of color, especially in the United States, who have been discriminated against (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

CRT shows how issues of race and racism intersect (Tate, 1997; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). When a scholar decides to use CRT, one has to accept that racism is a part of American society. One must also begin to bring race to the forefront through the investigation of social phenomena as it relates to law and how law is played out in education. The collection of data is through the narrative of a person of color and how it gives voice to the silenced experiences that have been ignored by the majority (Solórzano & Yasso, 2002; Taylor, 1998).

As a theoretical framework, CRT was the lens through which the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 was researched. This lens allowed a closer analysis of African Americans' role in regard to the establishment of the middle class, which changed the scope of higher education. There are many theories that could be used to investigate this cultural phenomena and how it has been attributed to the establishment of the middle class and made higher education accessible; however, CRT allows the GI Bill to be researched through five different aspects, thus, allowing the research question to be fully analyzed.

DeCuir and Dixon (2004) discuss five separate areas of CRT. They believe that the end goal is to interrogate Whiteness and to bring about progressive social change. These tenets are:

Counter-Storytelling, The Permanence of Racism, Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence, and Critique of Liberalism.

Counter Storytelling

Counter storytelling is the most powerful aspect of CRT. This is where the experiences of people of color are explored as they intersect with the law. Narratives are collected through autobiography, interviews, or a third source (Solórzano & Yasso, 2002). It is through these stories that individual experiences will allow the majoritarian story to be critiqued and not branded as the only story that exists (Taylor, 1998).

Through the use of narratives from African American WWII veterans, I explored the racism that existed in having a segregated Army that was developed and used to address fascism and communism abroad. Some themes that could be explored included: inquiry into the treatment of African Americans by the US government, housing requirements, access to education, the ability to vote, and the opportunity for employment. The narratives were important in bringing to light what the majoritarian story leaves unsaid.

Whiteness as Property

Bell's (1985) explanation of the concept of whiteness is important to understand, because whiteness and White people are not synonymous. Whiteness is a construct of identity, and White people are a paradigm of race. Although very much related, whiteness can be seen as a legal property. If one has the identity constructed of whiteness, this allows that person a chance to gain access; it gives them an opportunity. In the United States, whiteness allows the

majoritarian perspective to dominate the discourse around laws and ways in which they are interpreted and implemented (Gilborn, 2005; Tate, 1997).

The Permanence of Racism

In CRT, the intersection of race and racism are paramount to understanding how this theory looks at the law, especially in regard to education. Ideally, one can be of a certain background and live just fine. However, when one's background is "raced" and bombarded with societal norms through acts of dominance, judgment occurs, which creates an intersection. Most of the time, these intersections negatively effect the person who has been *othered*. In education, we see this played out in the curriculum as it relates to colonization and western imperialism (Gilborn, 2005; Solórzano & Yasso, 2002; Tate, 1997).

Interest Convergence

Bell's (1985) argument explores many scholars' work as he discusses the interest convergence. Tate's explanation of Bell's theory explains that when the wants of African American people are converged with the needs of Whites, progress will be made. During the Cold War, Russia justifiably brought to the attention Truman that the ways the United States treated its African American citizens was deplorable; therefore, the US should not impose their views about communism because it was clearly double speak. It was at this point that the US decided to blame the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) for the mistreatment of African American people. Interestingly enough, under Truman, the military was desegregated, and *Brown v Board* was passed. Overnight, however, the death of one of the conservative Federal judges during the *Brown v Board of Education* trial and Truman appointing a liberal from California to replace him

and put segregation on the chopping block. Situations like the aforementioned one echo Bell, as he would argue that the United States was at risk of losing its policing power. Bell also says that one should not get over-excited about the results, because the gains for African American people were slight compared to those of Whites.

The unfortunate part of what is detailed above is all of it happened after African American's participation in WWII. Once the war was over, the military dismissed many of the African American soldiers. The government had full knowledge that the ability to use the GI Bill was going to be difficult, especially for those soldiers living in the South (Herbold, 1994).

Critique of Liberalism

Tate and Taylor explore colorblindness, neutrality of the law, and whether the implementation and interpretation of the law was equal for people of color. When language like colorblindness is a part of the discourse, there is a tendency to minimize the history and experiences of the individuals involved. Colorblindness assumes that everything is currently equal, and the past is history that does not impact the present. Having accepted the four tenets of CRT, a scholar must understand that racism exists and that if there is anything that interrupts the positionality of someone's whiteness, it can be seen as problematic; at that point, a person has to make a choice about whether they are going to exert and defend their whiteness as a property.

Racism was a blatant force that impacted African Americans as they attempted to access services provided by the GI Bill (Onkst, 1998; Herbold, 1994). As reflected in the implementation of services by individuals that worked in Veterans Affairs (VA) and the United States Employment Services (USES), many of the African American soldiers who attempted to utilize their benefits were denied or given jobs that did not meet their training or qualifications. It

was intentional mistreatment of African American veterans by the USES and VA employees which paralyzed the growth and opportunity of African Americans. This handicap is best seen when African American soldiers are compared to White soldiers who served at the same time and were applying for the same government funded benefits. Edward Taylor (1998) in his description of CRT notes:

As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of Whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color. This call to context insists that the social and experiential context of racial oppression is crucial for understanding racial dynamics, particularly the way that current inequalities are connected to earlier, more overt, practices of racial exclusion (p. 122).

Through the lens of CRT, I articulated the interplay of race and racism during the 1940s, what happened when the two intersected at USES and VA, and how it affected the African American veterans in their educational pursuits. The most effective way to do this is through counter storytelling, one of the major features in CRT. Tate (1997) explains that the purpose of legal storytelling is to engage the reader in the ironies and contradictions associated with laws constructed to pacify White self interests rather than deal with notions of equity.

Methods and Procedures

The research questions posed in this study required interviewing individuals that experienced racism and segregation during World War II. For this study, there was a need to find military personnel discharged from the military that did not lose their ability to use the GI Bill

with a dishonorable discharge. In an effort to answer the research question, interviewing veterans and having them reflect on their educational experiences as they pertain to their legal rights to an education, serving in a segregated military, and inquiring if the laws and practices of the 1940s had an effect on their ability to use the government programs the GI Bill had to offer (i.e. unemployment, business loans, educational benefits, and home loans) had to be done.

For this study, Critical Race Theory's method of narrative/counter-storytelling was an integral part of the research design. Using a narrative research design, there are two ways in which one can conduct a study: autobiography or biography. For this purpose, it was important to conduct individual interviews to investigate and learn about African American WWII veteran's lives and experiences. Creswell (2008), author of *Educational Research*, describes a biography as a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of other people's lives. Through learning their stories, I record and present the information as a personal experience story. Creswell (2008) states, "a personal experience story is a narrative study of an individual's personal experience found in single or multiple episodes, which can be both personal and social" (p. 514).

While engaging in the counter-storytelling as suggested in CRT, I share the experiences of people who are not part of the majoritarian discourse. Solórzano and Yasso (2002) talk about the importance of counter stories and how they shatter complacency and challenge the dominant discourse. Most importantly, this approach shows how the counter narrative does not need to be created because of existing majoritarian stories. As scholars, we need to tell the stories and strengthen the discourse around experiences of people of color. At the same time, the research

reminds us that telling stories is essential to our own survival and liberation (Solórzano & Yasso, 2002).

Role of the Researcher

The cultural heritage and historical landscape of the participants in my research are similar to my own. Almost all of the African American men and women were children of slaves in the United States and joined the military during a time when there were few professional opportunities for African Americans. It was possible that many of the men and women thought the military uniform would validate them as American citizens.

Moreover, the contextual nature of race in my research was explored through government policies that were put in place that appeared to be equally available to all veterans. When the GI Bill was being implemented, many African Americans found that utilizing this program was not easy due to gatekeepers, Jim Crow laws (written and unwritten), limited housing options, inequalities in K-12 educational opportunities as well as limited opportunities for advancement through higher education. It is because of these laws that the White middle class was beginning to develop and the African American middle class could not grow at the same rate.

Historically, we know that there were many times when African Americans tried to fight being put in the margins, only to have the voting districts changed. Sharecroppers were intimidated by landowners into not getting involved in local and national politics, and this led to a lack of representation on the police force, on the jury, lack of lawyers, and judges. The government set up from the local to national level was developed for the African American to lose. For example, there were very few law schools in the nation that were accepting African American applicants to practice law.

As a researcher, I was aware of these social systems that were intentionally created to marginalize African Americans and other people of color. During the interviews, when I heard of the segregationist principles that were in place, it provided me a historical perspective of the 1940s. Also, the interviews presented a narrative to the history that was not mentioned in textbooks or that was over-generalized in lectures. These social systems being contextualized by a witness to history allow me, as a researcher, to test my ability to bring African American veterans' voices and perspectives to the forefront. This representation was the paramount challenge of my research.

In terms of researcher bias, I am a woman of color whose father is retired Air Force. This bias guided the direction for finding such an interesting topic. Using CRT allowed me an opportunity to investigate a part of America's narrative that was not told to me during my educational experience prior to graduate studies.

Critical Race Theory scholars Bell, Solórzano and Yasso, Tate, and the like, explain that, by using this theory, scholars must accept the notion of social justice and take it a step further to become an activist with new findings. I have accepted this requirement because my mom was a strong activist in the 1950s and 1960s, and my grandfather before her was as well. Their actions set an intergenerational tone of individuals willing to take chances and risk their lives to dispel the myth that African Americans are inferior. My cultural system of activism may have biased my way of experiencing the world, but it was integral in the usage of my theoretical framework.

Participants

As Table 3.1 shows, the participants in this study were four African American World War II servicemen who served in the 1940s. These individuals were eligible for their GI Bill

benefits and used some of it for educational purposes. Inclusion of only African Americans is vital to the study as it specifically focuses on African American interactions with the GI Bill.

Table 3.1: Participants demographic and educational information

Name	Age	Education level during the draft	GI Bill used for	Branch of Military
King	86	8 th grade	High school completion and barber school	Army
Houston	86	8 th grade	High school completion (GED), and farming classes at the local university	Army
Dubois		9 th grade	High school completion and the beginning of his bachelor's degree	Marine Corps
Marshall	90	Not available	High school completion and business college	Air Corps

Marshall entered in the military in 1945 and served in the 5th Aviation Squadron based out of Stockton, CA. He was 19 years old when he was drafted into the Air Corps while living in Montana. During his service to the US military he earned three metals—one for Good conduct, the next was the WWII victory metal, and the last metal was the American Campaign. Marshall's educational background, before entering the service, consisted of one or two years of high school, and after his military service he did use his GI Bill to complete high school and began taking classes at a Business school in Billings, Montana.

King was drafted into the Army Tank Corps to join General Patton's army in July 1943 and was discharged in December 1945. He was 19 years old and had only completed the 8th grade before entering the service. While in the service he earned five victory metals and five battle stars for conflicts throughout France, Germany, and Belgium. After his military service was completed, he used his GI Bill to attend barber school in Yakima, Washington.

Dubois served in the military from August 9, 1943, to February 8, 1946. He was drafted into the segregated Marine regimen called the Mumford Pt. Marines, the 99th Pursuit Squadron. During his service, the U.S. concentrated its efforts on the South Pacific where he was in battles in places ranging from Saipan to Okinawa, and over to North China. Before his service began, he had not finished high school. Dubois used his GI Bill to finish high school and also for the first two years of his bachelor's degree.

Houston was drafted into the military in 1943 and was discharged from the Army in December 1945. He was 19 years old when he entered the service and served in Normandy, Belgium, Luxemburg, France, and Central Europe. Houston's role as a trucker in General Patton's army led him to receive 5 bronze stars, as well as a good conduct metal. Houston used his GI Bill to complete his high school degree and also take farming classes at the local university.

The age demographic of the participants is important to note because these individuals were between 86 and 90 years old. This is of particular importance because I intentionally interviewed each of them two times. Once aware of the age range of the participants, I wanted to follow an interview schedule that would work best for both of us, so I decided on two visits, not including member checking. Because I used purposeful sampling, when I asked individuals if they knew of anyone who fit the criteria for my study, checking the potential participant's health and soundness of mind was of the most importance. In particular, I needed to investigate the subject's senses and memory function (Reid, 2004).

According to Turner and Bound (2002), an individual's geographic location is influential in their ability to use their benefits as well as attend post-secondary education. For the purpose of

this study, then, I found individuals who enlisted in the military from Northern and Southern states because thereto lies differences of military participation. Individuals in the South were more likely to have advocates that allowed them to do more than service related jobs (i.e., cook, janitor, etc.), and those who lived in the North were more likely to use their benefits for employment and education. By looking at the two regions, I was able to uncover the similarities and differences in their ability to use the GI Bill.

Data Collection

In this study, answering the central question about the phenomenon of the experience of African Americans and their capacity to use the GI Bill required the collection of qualitative data. Recruitment of participants was through purposeful sampling and, more specifically, snowball sampling. I used purposeful sampling to select the individuals for the study in order to develop a deeper understanding of what may be useful information. Simultaneously, I gave voice and perspective to a silenced aspect of the WWII veteran's experience. Due to the inclusion/exclusion criteria that I established for the participants of this study, there was a possibility that the resulting members would have experienced homogeneity in treatment received during their military service, as well as heterogeneous experiences in using their benefits, which I found to be true.

Creswell (2008) explains critical sampling as well as opportunistic sampling which are very similar by definition. The definition of *critical sampling* is “a qualitative purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher selects an exceptionally vivid case for learning about a phenomenon” (p. 638). Because of the association of this topic to case law, federal laws, purposeful intimidation, and racism, this data collection process used critical sampling. The data

collection may, however, did turn into opportunistic sampling; by definition, *opportunistic sampling* is “purposeful sampling undertaken after the research begins, to take advantage of unfolding events” (p.638).

For the purpose of this study, I asked open-ended questions so the individuals would have the opportunity to be descriptive and open about their experiences with the education system. In these one-on-one interviews, I recorded and discussed many of the topics that the veterans felt relevant in order to get a deeper understanding of the discussion topic. Although, it is understood that one-on-one interviews are the most expensive; it was important that I find outside sources to fund the required travel. The Graduate School and the Graduate Professional Student Association announced an application process for applying for travel funds for studies, and I was awarded a small stipend which helped pay for travel for the face-to-face interviews.

In terms of the historical data that could be collected, most of my participants shared pictures of them and their families and artifacts that added depth to their storytelling. The documentation added value to this topic and helped me understand segregation and their patriotism.

Data Reduction and Analysis

After I completed the interviews with the veterans, I analyzed the qualitative data. Creswell (2008) notes that this analysis initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding descriptions and themes about the central phenomenon. The analysis of the data proved to be the most involved aspect of the whole study. Because qualitative research is interpretive research, it was important to organize the data into appropriate themes.

Joseph Maxwell (1996) in his book, *Qualitative Research Design*, discusses ways to start analyzing the data collected from interviews, and I followed Maxwell's suggestions:

[L]istening to interview tapes prior to transcription is also an opportunity for analysis, as is the actual process of transcribing interviews or of rewiring and reorganizing your rough observation notes. During this reading or listening, you should write notes and memos on what you see and hear in your data and develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships (p. 78).

Maxwell suggests that the purpose of coding is to rearrange the data into categories that facilitate comparing the data within and between categories that will aid in the development of theoretical concepts. The main aspect of qualitative research is coding the data through analysis. In data reduction, it was important to identify connections between categories and themes because it was very helpful in contextualizing the data. Maxwell continues to explain how important it is to contextualize during the analysis stage, because it helps build theory at the same time it is needed to provide a well-rounded account (p. 78). A way to do this is electronically through use of the NVivo 8 program. This program helps researchers organize themes and analyze the data collected; using this program helped immensely during the data analysis phase of this research.

The way in which this study was framed to the participants was important, especially when trying to establish connections with themes in regard to their experience working with the federal government. In addition to exploring their treatment by government agencies, question development was crucial to the effectiveness of my study. It was important when collecting the

data to be ethical and show respect to the individuals and to their sites. Obtaining permission before starting to collect data is not only a part of the informed consent process, but is also an ethical practice (Creswell, 2008, p. 179). As an aside, it was interesting having them look for their glasses as they were in the process of signing the consent forms.

The Washington State University Institutional Review board (IRB) and my committee chair and other knowledgeable professors were important when I chose interview questions. Working with an older adult sample to complete the narrative research design, as a researcher, it was important to take an active role in getting to know my participants and their families or co-workers. During this process, it was very important to maintain a level of consideration for each person represented, because, ultimately, it was through conversations with one of their co-workers that I found another participant for this study.

The participants in this study took the lead in determining the research sites. Several different locations were considered for the purpose of these interviews: the first place being in the participant's home; the second, a local church; and the third, a phone conversation. For this study, the age of the participants was key in determining the research site, since I wanted to make sure they were not inconvenienced in any way. When the topic of interview locations came up, I was flexible when choosing where the interview took place. The four participants chose where they wanted to be interviewed; two were interviewed in their homes, and two were at the churches where they were the pastor.

Additionally, I considered the duration of each interview as well as the time span during which they would occur. Because I worked full time during this process and then was on maternity leave for other parts, there was not a consistent span of time between interview one

and interview two. Some of the individuals' age at the time of the interview had no effect on the interview process. At the same time, there were differences in participants and their health. In any case, respecting a veteran's home or community agency was important because, as a researcher, I represented myself and Washington State University.

I realized that the topic of educational rights for African Americans focuses on historical content that might be difficult for participants to discuss. There was also the possibility that a veteran and their families may be quite "up front" about their experience working with government programs that are specific to veterans' needs. In writing about the interviews, it was important to present their stories as they shared them with me. I used their words when reporting their experiences and only covered what they shared; and I did not make inferences from their interviews.

This aspect of research is important because, for many years, the stories of these veterans have been muted, down-played, or completely overlooked. This research was a joint contribution to knowledge as I developed a document that holds a family's genealogy, expectations, hopes, and fears; thus, it greatly benefited both the voice of the veteran as well as the research to make sure that the document expresses what the veterans intended.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The interviews summarized in the following sections were conducted with four African American men, all drafted from different parts of the country to serve in the United States military during World War II. The participants were all honorably discharged and were therefore able to use the educational aspect of the GI Bill, and they did so. The age range of the participants was from 86 to 89 years old, and all were reasonably healthy and able to complete the interviews.

After WWII, there was a large number of veterans trying to use their GI Bill for educational purposes. This large group of individuals working to get enrolled in school created a large impact on the demographic makeup of the American educational system. This major movement of veterans continuing their education included African Americans, and its impact will be discussed in this chapter.

As the war effort began to elevate abroad, the need for more soldiers to participate became more imperative; therefore, the draft was implemented in October 1940 (“Selective Service,” para. 2). This draft was another example of the US government directly impacting African Americans and their ability to choose their own future. Although, non-African Americans were also impacted by the draft; for many, the segregationist principles did not apply to them.

This time in American history was riddled with racism, segregation, and global turmoil. In addition, the draft added yet another layer of insecurity for African Americans. The experiences of the African American soldiers that were drafted into the military during World War II is the focus of this study. Specifically, the veterans were interviewed about their

educational experiences with the GI Bill. Prior to World War II, the participation of African Americans in the military was in smaller numbers and selective branches. Once the draft included African Americans, the number of African American soldiers increased to approximately 1.2 million of the 16 million serving during the period of 1939 to 1945, which opened up participation into all branches (Onsikt 1998).

Table 3.1 presents a synopsis of the participants in this study that were drafted in WWII. The individuals interviewed have been given the pseudonyms: Houston, King, Marshall, and Dubois. Each veteran's unique narrative represents a background of experiences, branch of service, and use of the GI Bill. As a result of this analysis four themes emerged:

- “Reality” regarding the *permanence of racism*, these are personal experiences with the intercentricity of racism and other forms of oppression.
- “Perception” of *whiteness as property*, what the veterans perceived they could choose to do with their lives with the assistance of the GI Bill and what they heard others were experiencing.
- “What’s the use” also known as *interest convergence* and *critique of liberalism*; this theme acknowledges the racialized oppression and the layers of subordination that were present before, during, and after their military service.
- “Hope” explained through the *counter narrative*; this is the veterans’ actions to challenge the dominant ideology and their efforts to strive for equal opportunity.

Permanence of Racism:

“And we'd been used to being mistreated. But we were proud. We were anxious to show the world that we were good as anybody, and we did. Whatever they assigned us to do, we did it well.” – Houston

From the time the African American soldiers were drafted for full participation in World War II, segregation was a major part of their experience. The irony of their request for full participation is that these soldiers were assigned subservient roles based on their racial identity. The experiences of these soldiers and their beliefs about the treatment they received are echoed throughout each of their stories. When describing their experience with racism and segregation in the military, the veterans discussed personal incidents with White military personnel, banks, local businesses, and government agencies. Here, for example, Dubois talks about his first experience in the Marine Corps.

I was in the US Marine Corps, and we are called the Mumford Point Marines who are the Black contingency or Black men who went to the Marine Corps. They called it “integrating the Marine Corps,” when really and truly we were segregated like we weren’t Marines. At one time, they didn’t even have Black people in the Marine Corps.

Dubois' experience with segregation and racism was not an uncommon experience for the young men that were drafted during that time. Again, the incongruity can be seen that they were drafted as Marines, and in his own words Dubois points out the African American soldiers were segregated like they were not Marines. This would lead one to ask the question, are they or are they not Marines? Occasionally, an individual experienced even more direct instances of racism in the military, as Houston describes in the following:

Oh, they just let know you know you're Black. They sometime tell you that. Sometimes, they out right tell you that. See, 'cause, at that time, Blacks back in America, here, --your folks couldn't sit in the front of the buses and all that kind of stuff. [...] They treat you like you was Black. The White soldiers would see to that. That's a hit against you and all that kind of stuff. And then, of course now, officers that gives us the last word in command, they were White guys.

I guess, a hundred and some of us Black troops with five White guys, that had the bars, the captain, the lieutenants, majors, and stuff like that. We fellas weren't up there. We fellas, Black soldiers, were the non-commissioned officers. We were the sergeants and things like that. And we took our orders from these White guys. They didn't take our orders.[...] You always knew you were Black. They kept that before you. You knew you was Black... You knew you were Black. Uh-huh, we non-commissioned officers, we enjoyed a certain class of treatment, because, you know, our rank and so on like that. But never like Whites, never treated like the Whites.

Houston and Dubois' experiences are similar and illustrate the military's expectation to keep the soldiers serving in a segregated manner; in addition, this directly speaks to what Houston references when he says, "You knew you were Black." The treatment of African Americans in the military, in particular, appears to give individual Whites permission to go out of their way to create turmoil and actively cause distress for the African American soldiers during this time. As Houston notes, they were overseas and the White military personnel would instruct pub workers on how to interact with the African American soldiers. This appears to

reinforce Dubois' point earlier that there were two groups of Marines, one African American and the other White. Similarly, Marshall describes his role in the military and discusses the interconnectedness of his race and the job he was assigned to do:

Well we was segregated, and we was, I was in a segregated unit and what we did mostly, just service work, is what we did in the military. Just know, I was in the Air Force, but I didn't fly a plane, so we weren't involved in planes we would do the service part of the work on the base. Well, painting the barracks and different things and officers training when officers were going to school we would take care of those sorts, all of those menial things we called them menial things that anybody could do, you know, but we knew most of the time we did it --it was service unit on the bases. But that was, it was my first base experience, but then I worked . . . I remained in the service unit until I retired. I retired as a staff sergeant in 1945, and it was, -I was discharged from the military. It was a regular discharge it wasn't a dishonorable discharge or anything like that.

Segregation during the 1940s was a part of American hegemony. The 1940s for African Americans was a time when their voice was legally silenced, by way of restructuring the voting districts, implementing poll taxes that only applied when African Americans went in to vote, and having all-White legal representation, judge, and jury for all matters criminal and benign. Serving in the military, African Americans soldiers experienced similar treatment. What makes this even more disheartening is that these soldiers could not quit or would be less likely to speak up on their own behalf about the ways in which they were being treated for fear they could be placed in a military prison, receive a dishonorable discharge, lose rank for insubordination, or

just be publically humiliated; all of these were discussed in the interviews. The following are two examples of how the soldiers interviewed were faced with racism. First, Houston describes an unpleasant incident:

But they – we got on the ship coming back home, bounce around that Atlantic Ocean for 16 days, 'cause some storm was raging. We headed for Norfolk, Virginia, but because of the storms, we had to redirect and come to New York. And those White troops . . . there was thirty-some hundred of us on that little boat. We called that a little one. It only held 32, see, 'cause the big boats, they have the Queen Mary, the Queen Elizabeth, they have 10,000 troops. This one was called little ship, 'cause it only held 3,200 and that's the one that I was on. Well, when we come back, we had to come to New York. These White troops said to us when we got to New York, “Bye, niggas.” And we'd been out on that stormy ocean...

Similarly, King recalls several examples of the mistreatment he and others received:

Like I said, we were segregated from the Whites, and I guess we had the same thing and all of that, I guess. We had the same people, as long as we were segregated. Now, one thing that happened in Fort Knox, Kentucky, we went on a battle train, what's called a battle train, that's out on the field, just like on the frontline, for about two weeks. And you're just out there and you didn't shave and you had no place to take baths or nothing. You're just out like you do in real battle. And so, before we got ready to come back into camp, they set up a temporary PX [Post Exchange], temporary showers out there, so we could clean up to come into town. Now, they kept all the Blacks back and let

the Whites go first. And when we got in, the water was cold. They let them go and get the stuff out of the PX they wanted before we went in.

So there were a lot of times you were mistreated in the military because you was Black, and that hurt me, I guess, worse than anything else. How they expect you to do such a good job, and then they treat you like you was a nobody, and that was in the military in World War II. That was in there. And you just had to be tough. You had to be tough and you had to lay with it, and you had to realize who you were and what you were. And that's the way I survived. And I never let nothing or nobody get over it.

These examples provide proof of the blatant disregard for the personal sacrifices the African American soldiers made in order to serve their country. The attitude of the Whites serving during this time was almost as if they did not realize they were fighting the same enemy; the overt racist practices against the African American soldiers makes it appear as if the White soldiers were fighting three enemies: Hitler, Mao Tse-tung, and African American males. Everything these soldiers had to give up in order to serve did not seem to matter to some Whites. To many of them, the African American soldier was no different than the enemy they were engaged with currently. They were going to inflict wounds, not by using military assault weaponry, but by using the mental stronghold that could create more problems than an atomic bomb ever would.

Whiteness as Property

Well, as far as that goes we were . . . segregation existed. In the camp, I mean, you were a GI, you had the rights of a GI, and that was that. But when you left that,

don't think by you having that uniform would cut any mustard anywhere. You find that you were segregated on the train. Sometimes you had trouble getting food. And the train would stop in Wilmington, North Carolina, which I'd never been in a place like that, and then you got to go and find someplace where some Black folks could get thus and so. But on the base you would demand your rights and you got them. But then there were times when you can hear stories about some Black officers being kicked out of their quarters, and there were German prisoners and Italian prisoners riding in style. I mean, that's a fact. That's a fact it existed, and so you'd have to swallow quite a bit.

But you see the main thing is you have to be wise enough to know that you're protesting against a system you don't win. So you have to just be wise enough not to get your records messed up by going to jail or whatever, the brig or whatever you call it. So you just cooperate. And I think we did the right things when the people started supporting the Civil Rights Movement. But it shows you that there were other people, non-Blacks, who believed that such a system should not exist, and that's why it's gone. That it is different.

As Dubois explains in the preceding, being White trumped being an African American soldier in the United State military. The above example shows just how far Whites would go to push their agenda of subordination of all African Americans, even the ones who were drafted into the service by the federal government. It is very important to note that the individuals in this study did not choose to be in the service; Uncle Sam forced their participation. A quick review of African American history tells us that Africans were brought to North America by no choice of their own and forced to serve in subordinate roles as slaves and treated like personal property

while given the mathematical equivalence of 3/5ths a person for voting purposes. As we see history repeating itself, African Americans were forced into the military and required to serve and meet the needs of Whites even if it included kicking them out of their racially segregated train cars for Italian prisoners of war, as Dubois noted in his interview. These interviews chronicle the treatment of African Americans and how they were pushed around, stepped on, discounted, and treated horribly—all at the behest of other White soldiers. Similarly, King explained the treatment he received on several occasions, and it did not seem to matter the time or place; the lack of care and appreciation for the African American soldier was demonstrated through their interactions with White people. As the previous examples illustrate, the link between race and segregation was displayed throughout the duration of their service. In this study, all of the veterans shared many examples of the difference in their treatment and discussed how being African American was the common denominator for the poor treatment. Applying critical race theory tenets reminds us of the ways in which Whiteness as property is central to these particular historical and political circumstances which have lead to the disenfranchisement of African Americans.

King shared his story and a few of the instances of the endemic nature of racism. He highlights an example of White soldiers using their authority over African American soldiers for entertainment purposes and also shared the ways he responded. Although he took a major risk, it was clear he was beginning to assert himself as his mistreatment continued to happen.

I remember once, and I felt it wasn't right, in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Now, they had a big field like a football field, and they had a flag on one end and a flag on the other end, so they got a big group of soldiers on this end and a big group over -- and just like

playing football, but only you had on boxing gloves and you had to fight your way to the other end, and whoever who got to the flag was the winner.

Well, now I didn't see the White boys doing that. And so I had those big old fellows hitting them, knocking them out. You know? I told the captain, I said, "I ain't going out there." He said, "Well, you..." I said, "I'm not going." I didn't. I didn't go. I said, "I ain't going out there." Because I knew that wasn't the rules, and I didn't go, and they didn't do nothing to me neither.

Because they had the Blacks, a lot of stuff, you know, unnecessary to the Blacks. And these officers had their girlfriends up there, and they were just laughing on us, and I stood right up there and looked up and said, "I ain't going out there myself," and I didn't go. Well, that was the officers. Our captains. The captain, he was in charge. And they said this is in the training process, but I didn't see the Whites doing that. So why did we have to do it? They didn't do it.

King simultaneously tried to make sense of the system and protest against it, as the following illustrates:

And this is in Richmond. And so we'd just come from overseas, so I went into the station to ask a ticket agent or somebody something. We was all standing outside waiting on a train, a bunch of soldiers, you know, and when I walked in there an old White man on a walking cane walked up to me and said, "Boy, the color waiting room is on the other side." And I got mad right there. I told him, I said, "If you wasn't an old man, I'd

whoop you to death.” And so we had a big ruckus that they had to call the MPs and stuff, so we had a big ruckus there.

And the incident I had in Shreveport, Louisiana, I came home on a vacation and I had to stop in Shreveport and then I got on a trolley. It was late. Nobody on the trolley but me and the driver. And when I got on, he said, “Oh, you’ve got to go in the back.” I said, “What?” He said, “You have to go in the back.” Now, I’m a soldier. You didn’t go in no civilian clothes then. And he said, “You’ve got to go in the back.” I said to him, I said, “Well, since I’m in the military and I’ve got to fight, I’m going to start my rights and I’m going to kill you now and be through with it.” That boy drove that bus so fast.

And another incident I had while I was in the military, me and one of my friends, we was coming home one time on the train, and we left Clarksville, Tennessee. Clarksville, yeah. And we rode, come into Jackson, Mississippi, and the next morning, well, they had what they called the USOs and the station where the soldiers could go in and get coffee and donuts and stuff on their traveling, so we started in and we had to go pull -- this is in Jackson, Mississippi.

This gray-haired, big, old police says, “Where you all going?” And my friend Joseph, “We’re going in to get some donuts and coffee.” He says, “No, y’all ain’t going in there.” And we were soldiers. He said, “You niggers ain’t going in there. There’s White folks in there.” And I said, “No, sir. Would you tell us where we can go?” He goes, “Go across the street over there. There’s a place over there.” We were soldiers. That’s how much they cared about you in the South and some parts of the military, so you had to be confronted with all that stuff.

Beyond the centrality of race and racism intersecting in daily life, these narratives shed light on the mistreatment that the African American soldiers were going through on a daily basis. Racism was a part of the African American soldier's daily life so much so that the racist experiences started to become normalized. Also, instead of the federal government addressing the institutional and interpersonal racism, they had a tendency to push forward with the mission of the war. Houston explains a situation that provides one example of a race riot, suggesting that White soldiers may have had a normalized way of doing things; at the same time, the African American soldier's actions are expressing ways that suggest they are beginning to resent and resist the treatment they are receiving.

We were proud. We felt like somebody wearing their United States Army uniform we felt that we's as good as anybody. Yeah. Had a lot of 'em – had some riots, Black against Whites. Riots. – The military had riots. One that I know of, just before we left the states. A riot in Virginia. That's where it was, right in Virginia. About the buses. They beat up one of our boys. He got on the bus with a White soldier. They beat him up. I saw him. I went – I was married. I just had gotten married. So, I left at that Sunday morning. I saw him bloody. I was just glad to get outta there. I don't know where it was when I come back his story had broke. They beat him up. So, he told one of the friends about it, and they come fellas broke into that armory and got the weapons and everything. [...] But he posed as one man. Stood at the bus stop. And got a bus for the Whites to stop. They thought there was just that one Black and the rest of the guys hid. And they rushed in to the driver. Put a knife on him. And you're not supposed to leave your door open. They

filled it up with Black troops and took him and made him drive to the backside of the camp. Then, that's where they did their dirty work. Cutting, cutting, fighting – Um-huh. So, what it did was just made 'em speed up sending a unit to Europe. They speeded us up. Um-huh. At the end, they had real shootouts in Louisiana and places like that.

Interest Convergence:

This is the thing that the Black people were asking for all along, a chance to participate.

-- King

Besides highlighting how racism and segregation was central to the experiences of the protagonists, it is also important to analyze their stories and the language they use to describe their educational experiences. One of the ways the veterans connected with their level of attainment in school was by describing how and why they discontinued their education long before they were drafted. Here is an example from Houston:

So it's very easy when you drive up to that point to quit and you just quit. Okay, this is far as you – they stop issuing you books at that age. You had to start buying anything you wanted to go beyond that. In that state, at ninth grade, you had to go outside and buy it. You'd get the White students used books – after they tear them and fool around, then you got them. You can't imagine.[...] You had to think. I know what it meant to be absent from school because of the lack of a pair of shoes. You can't go to school because you don't have shoes.

Dubois linked his level of education not only to the physical location of the school, but also the ideas of White people who lived nearby:

It was easier to finish to go to college then to go to high school where I was. They did not, we were in a farming area, and I was walking . . . we had to walk to school. The White kids rode buses, but we walked to school, and one day the principal was taking me to Southern University for a weekend seminar. And he was a White guy, and he didn't have as much as my father had, but he had married this French woman from the Depre family. An old Cajun. He's trying to get a horse, like a big shot, but he had this grey horse, it wasn't White, and he's riding that thing. And I'm walking with my little suitcase where I could take the Greyhound bus – no, no, if I got to the school, the principal would come down there, so I was trying to get to the school.

And "Hey Dubois, you got your suitcase Dubois, where you going? I say I'm going to meet the principal and we're going to go to Baton Rouge. "Baton Rouge, what's you all going to do there?" I said "Well we're going to, I don't know, meet with some other kids and we talk about how to be a good farmer." "What grade you in Dubois?" I told him. "Don't you think you know enough to be able to sell your cotton?" I said, "Well I don't know. He told me to get as much education as you can." "Oh that could make you just be troubled." I said "I don't know if a person should, worry themselves with all those things." I said "Well I don't know."

I went on and I said to myself this son of a gun is trying to hold me back, but what it was I remember when they changed that school from a elementary school to a junior high, the farmers said we want more, we want more. At least you can give us a junior

high and they got to the old principal, who I guess was scared and trying to keep his job and he said “Well I think everything’s all right. I think 7th grade is ok.” When those farmers and my father and the rest of them found out that he had said something like that they said “we don’t want to see his face.”

When those farmers told the superintendant of education, yeah, they didn’t want to see his face anymore, he took them seriously. So it took effect and moved them to Vache and took Ballard from Vache and brought him to Miserie and they raise it to 9th grade.

And so here you are 8 miles from the city where the high school is. And you know, no way that you can get it, you don’t have a car and the weather was too severe, those rains and storms, that you wouldn’t be able to ride no bicycle on that highway to Appaloosa to get an education, you know, that be too strenuous.

The physical location of the primary school in comparison to the location of the high school made a stark difference in one’s ability to attend high school. In addition to the location, we can see that Dubois’ neighbor who is White and has less than the Dubois family is telling him that an education will only “make you troubled.” Dubois’ neighbor asserting his Whiteness may ultimately lead into interest convergence. What could be troubling about an education? The trouble could be that because White people actively dictated African American achievement getting more education was not necessary for someone who was going to ultimately sell cotton all of their life. It is possible the White neighbor was not being judgmental, in asking why he wanted more education during a time that African Americans were born and died farmers.

There were many complexities presented around education. One of the most definite was the physical location of the high schools, particularly during this time in US history, as most African Americans lived in the rural South. For example, Marshall discusses this in the following:

Well it was just a nice school; it was Johnson High School in Virginia. It was in Johnson County, it was mostly Black I don't think we had any White students there that I could remember and I didn't go out for I was on track team for a while wasn't very good but I was on the track team (laughter) on the track team [...] Well yeah it was in the rural section I mean the grade schools were but the high schools was in the city in Buchanan County High School was in the city... I lived in the country. I lived on a farm. Oh about 4 miles I think... No, no, we walked to school... Right, yeah we walked past the White high school to go to the Black school. So that those things were always about a day you know when I was growing up in Virginia while we passed the White school and our teachers were Black, all Black, and it was schools weren't that great you know they were run down, they weren't well kept.

There is a link that can be made between the racial climate during the 1930s and the educational attainment of the veterans during their primary school years. During that time, many Whites had the same opinion as Dubois' neighbor—that African Americans needed just enough education to sell their cotton; therefore, there was little or no push from Whites in the positions of power to educate African Americans beyond middle school. This resulted in the lack of initiatives to build high schools for African Americans in rural areas.

The presentation of the GI Bill in 1944 began to allow African American soldiers some opportunities that were not available prior to their service in the military. According to CRT, if we look at interest convergence specifically, it can be seen that White business owners' interests in making money and their concerns about educating African American soldiers appeared to be in sync once the business owners learned of the monetary benefits their company could profit from if they began to offer programs where the soldiers could use their GI Bill for payment. For example, Houston shares his experience with a White business owner that offered formal vocational training that was covered under the GI Bill:

I started just getting practical education, just trying to have a decent education standard, just regular education, but then they came forth with a thing that they were paying you to train on jobs. They'd also pay you for that, and these entrepreneurs were supposed to give us the opportunity to become machinists and things like that – become skilled workers.

They found some way to get by. Uncle Sam was paying them. He was, the government was subsidizing wage. They only had to pay so much as for what this particular job required in the market what they were supposed to pay you when you're finished, but as an apprentice, they got a break, and then they took advantage.

They would know the days that the government reps were going to visit the plant, and they put us upon machines as if we were teachers or something like that, but that was just for eye wash. So when those reps would leave, most of the time, not all of us, but most of the time, we'd have to go back to the jobs that were common for Black folks – janitorial work. They would have you running a power saw when the government rep is

there, but when they were gone, then you go back to things like janitorial work. So they were getting a break – the entrepreneur was getting a break. He was getting his work done cheap because the government subsidized it, and we wanted jobs, so we didn't argue too much about it.

We knew what was happening, but we went along with it. Put you back doing janitorial work – stuff like that. Yeah. I discovered. I worked for a guy that had – what was he doing – he was making things like yard[toys], some were swings and a whole lot of stuff like that. He wouldn't let you cut the metal and piece together in regular time, but he'd let you fumble with it when the rep was there – the government rep, but most of the time, your day was spent doing janitorial work. It probably paid more than just the regular janitorial work that you'd be doing anyway. You understand what I'm saying? You get a little bit more – make their record look good. They want to reflect that they were paying you an apprentice wages for that kind of skill, and in reality they weren't.

But I don't ever remember any organized resistance on our part because it was a job, and you are probably, as I said, to reflect on their records that you are being trained as a machinist. That probably would be more than what a regular janitor was getting you see. No investigations to my knowledge was ever – because we didn't complain. We found that stuff hadn't changed like we thought it had.

Veterans described a few incidents where their ability to make their own decisions about their future was compromised. The encounters described by the protagonists remain consistent throughout all four narratives. As Dubois explains in the following, the unequal distribution of resources based on race caused him to rethink his choice of career.

And so I'd come in every month and sign up. And the guy who was handling the books, every time he'd see me he started grinning. And as more kids would get into class, my name would get closer to being in his class. And I had a job in the Todd Ship Yard as a ship scaler or something like that, and I wasn't but 22 years old, and I met some guys who I'd graduated from Odie High School, and they were talking about the graduation and the prom and all of that. I said, "Doggone, I missed all of that." "You did?" I said, "Yeah." "Where were you?" I said, "In the military." I said, "I wish I was finished." "Don't you know that down at Broadway Edison, don't you know they've got a bunch of GIs down there and they have changed that school so that GIs can get their credits?" I said, "You're kidding." "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

The next day I was down there at Broadway Edison, Broadway and Pine. And you know, sooner or later, you find that you have nothing, and so I concentrated on work, but then sooner or later I went back, used my GI Bill, and even while working at the Post Office I used a GI Bill of Right[s]. Seattle University was good. I graduated from Seattle University with a degree in business and a major in accounting.

As the veterans spoke of their experiences, they brought up examples of interest convergence and how the financial interests of Whites were furthered by allowing African American GI's educational trainee opportunities only because it benefited them financially. Moreover, if there would have been no economic reason to offer an education to the soldiers; one could deduce that these soldiers would not have been able to use their benefits in the limited way they did.

What is most troubling is how the perceptions of Whites had a direct effect on the educational attainment of African Americans, therefore influencing African American economic growth potential. Below, King discusses his experience with the GI Bill; the significance of White people's ability to influence the African American soldier's career path can be seen when he discusses the circumstances that surrounded him during his pursuit of a vocational degree after the war.

Well, I never tried to get GI Bill. I talked about it. I met about it. They said, yeah, I could get it, but I never tried to use it. I never did use it. The only GI Bill, the only part I used, I went to barber school. And I had no problem at all. I had no problem. I don't think there was no difference. Now, from my understanding, the only thing, it was much harder for Blacks to qualify when they was buying homes and stuff like that on the GI Bill. And last few years, if you check on real estate, there was more GI Bill homes lost and repossessed than any other. Yes. And for what reason, I don't know – 'cause I never used it for that. The only thing I ever did, I went to barber school. That's all I did. And that was back in 1949. Yeah, we got money. And they paid us while – and I coulda went to other schools or I coulda – if I'd a knowned, I went to college. That's what I shoulda did. But I don't know why I went to barber school.

At one level, these are stories of systemic and institutionalized racism. The narrative of these soldiers' experiences range from a societal action to a variety of African American responses. The African American veterans' efforts to disrupt the dominant culture's ideologies and remove many obstacles that were in their path to success were important in establishing

themselves within their own lived experiences. It was still difficult for the soldiers to understand why they were treated so poorly by Whites. For example, in the following, King acknowledges the White privilege at the same time that he has a critical perspective.

It always was tougher for the Blacks to get anything, just like it is today. It was tougher for you to get qualified, even to get the GI Bill back in those days.

And it's always been different, but it's some better now, but it's got a long ways to go. And I pray for the soldiers in the military now that they would be treated better than I was treated in the military, because they didn't seem to care. They didn't care. Well, I guess they didn't care about anybody, but it looked like to me in World War II, Blacks just wasn't nothing. They were just there, you know? The Blacks weren't nothing. But I'd seen it coming on then.

Critique of Liberalism

When I say we, I mean our troops, White and Black mixed. And everything there was free, except for – what you call it? From Mississippi, [Senator Theodore G.] Bilbo and all them guys come and told us Black troops, say, "This is Europe. The war is over. You guys did a good job. Getting way back to America. You're gonna have to get back in your place." That's right. So, you had to get back in your place.

And we'd been used to being mistreated. I said, but we were proud. We were anxious to show the world that we were good as anybody, and we did. Whatever they assigned us to do, we did it well. I, shamefully, I bought a thousand rounds of ammunition. I got ready. I'm fearing, well, it ain't gonna matter. War. And I've seen my

lead truck driver get killed. They killed him. The Germans shot him up, in the air. And I said, well, it ain't gonna change. So, I went and bought myself a thousand rounds of ammunition. And I told myself, all I'm asking you to do is respect me. And so, that's what I tell the White people. They fell in line. They did. They respect me. That's our social system. All I'm asking you guys to do, I said, I've been exposed to too much. I've seen too much. Now, please show, don't force me to do just to opposite of what I've stood for. And said, just respect me. They did.

Theodore Bilbo, was a senator from Mississippi who is known as one of the most outwardly racist Senators to ever serve. (“Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938-1947”. Para. 1) The Mississippi Historical Society has documented him as saying, “I call on every red-blooded White man to use any means to keep the niggers away from the polls[;] if you don’t understand what that means you are just plain dumb. (“Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938-1947”. Para. 1) It was this type of rhetoric that kept him in office in the Deep South and also the same language that was responsible for him not getting seated after he was re-elected in 1946. In the meantime, the policies he initiated had a direct impact on African Americans’ ability to get an education. Although, African Americans were not slaves anymore, this is still 10 years before *Brown v Board*, still a very racist and scary time for African Americans, when a Senator is calling for every White person to make sure your ability to vote is interrupted. It is almost guaranteed they do not care about African Americans getting an education either. As citizens of this country, the Constitution affirms the rights and responsibilities of the individuals that live within its borders; however, the local government had a different idea. This time in American history, African Americans were still holding true to the

notion “there has got to be a better way.” In the following, for example, King discusses the importance of education and citizenship:

But I knew that education, learning about people, that it would change over time. [...] I could see that it was going to change over time, but I even knew then that it would take a long time. And, of course, when I got out of the military, it was yet bad in the South, and so I got out of the military in December '45, and I came to Washington State in March of '46, and I thought that it would be really nice, you know, I thought it was different.

But I found out it was just about as bad in Washington State as it was in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. I had to fight. I was denied in places to be served the food and all that right in Washington State, over in Eastern Washington, over in Pasco, Washington, Yakima, and of course I fought for my rights and so it was a lot of things. And I found out even like today we have people working for us [sic] start to feel that the White folks all was against us. That's not the truth. You have somebody working for you, but it's a tough fight.

And as I said, we're going up. But it's going to take education. That is the reason why I plead with the young Blacks to get an education, keep going, keep going. This is going to open up to let you know who you are, because most Blacks don't know who they are, because they settle down for what folks issue out. And you can't do that.

See, I feel that I'm as much of an American as anybody in here, except the Indians. I feel that the White men have no more rights than I do, yet he defends his own men, so don't tell me about this is not my home. Yes, it is.

As King points out about African Americans, “most Blacks don’t know who they are, because they settle down for what folks issue out.” Taking Kings statement a step further, it could be said that, because educationally African Americans have been limited in their choice of educational prospects, they have been robbed of an opportunity to figure out who they are, without the government influence. Thus, there have been many times African Americans have found themselves settling for what society tells them they should be. As discussed in the review of literature section of this study, as well as confirmed by the protagonists, laws during the 1930s and 1940s were not neutral and showed who the federal and local government believed should be educated and in what field of study. Because all citizens of the United States were not treated the same under the law, we have a caste system that continues to perpetuate stereotypes and reproduce itself. As King states, getting an education is going to, “open you up and let you know who you are.” Similarly, Marcus Garvey has been quoted many times as saying that “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.” If African Americans do not take the time to educate themselves, there is a large chance that our history will be written for us.

Counter-Narrative

According to the veterans interviewed, going beyond the inequities in daily life, their counter-narratives uncover the challenges within the racist government structure that influenced

their ability to get an education during the late 1940s early 1950s. Veterans described the demoralizing conditions and treatment they received each day which shows they were not equal citizens or soldiers. Surprisingly, they shared, without hesitation, the belief that the GI Bill had positively affected their lives, and they spoke positively about the government sponsored program. For instance, Dubois described his experience as follows:

My life. Oh it [the GI Bill] had a heck of an impact on my life, by this inroad into moving from a kid [to] just a little bit above junior high to getting a degree. I mean, I had to use some of my own funds at the end of it because I had such a long run in getting there. After awhile, I found that working was necessary for my age. I was trying to keep the needs of a 26-year-old along, with my being 26 years old and still I knew that the educational part was lacking, so I tried to mitigate both of working and studying.

And I encourage people to, even if you're just getting one class, go ahead on and get it, and that's what it is. I said, "Yeah the Bill of Rights opened the door for me to start thinking of going to a college. And the tuition, how can you pay for such thing and all? There were no government loans in those days. So it was the [unintelligible] that was available to GIs to move them from poverty on up to the good life.

According to Houston, there were inequalities in the distribution of certain programs under the GI Bill umbrella that had a direct effect on him, particularly his ability to purchase a home. In the following he discusses the experiences two African American soldier had when trying to use their benefits on a local level.

Now that's the way that bill helped me. I didn't buy property, but that even up to today, I got a bunch of houses, but none of them are bought through the GI Bill. I bought them just through the conventional type situation. But where the GI Bill helped me was to go to school. I wasn't rejected any place that I tried to school.

See before the integration, the Martin Luther[King Jr.] spearheaded movement that really came to a noticeable situation historically, and they had to march and go on buses like that. I did not try to break the racial barrier, but I went to Black schools, and everyone of them accepted me, and I got an education which I so much needed. Because, see, I dropped out of school before I was drafted when I was in eighth grade, and so I really needed education.[...]

I didn't go to college under the GI Bill, but I could've. I could've gone – Black colleges, and after I come out here naturally, everything was open. We could've gone. But that's the way the GI Bill helped me. I got my education with no interference, and they paid us. They paid all the tuition. They paid everything. They paid it. So they kept their word there. Just this particular incident when I spoke about making a loan to venture into buying property and so on that they turned thumbs down on that in a sophisticated way, and so I was interested in trying to progress, I just didn't lose no time with it. I went to school instead.

All of the veterans critiqued the unequal distribution of benefits, stating that race was the determining factor in using the GI Bill. Throughout the interviews, all the veterans discussed how they had no problem using it to further their education. Although the GI Bill helped them continue their education, it is important to note most of them were using their benefits to

complete high school. As the narratives show, in order to explore a race-based distribution of benefits, the veterans had to discuss how important it was for them to continue on with school because of their prior educational opportunities, which, in many cases, were prematurely curtailed.

[I]t was beneficial for those people who had an opportunity to use it. Just like now they're still increasing the benefits now; it's nowadays they are great; it's outstanding. You are almost guaranteed a college education when you come out of the military now with all the other benefits that are involved. But at that time there weren't that many, but what there were it was so many people that took advantage of all the benefits. There are some people who took advantage of those benefits so often times, we don't; lots of times we don't realize that they are there until they're gone. You know, we don't get the communications that well as we should, or we don't seek them, you know.

Marshall's preceding comments stating, "We don't realize that they are there until they are gone." This is not an accident. Many African Americans have been in situations where they did not hear about legislation that benefits them—not hearing about it until well after the time of implementation. Using "Juneteenth" as an example, as many have heard through stories passed down over the generations, that June 19, 1866, is the day that the word made it to Galveston, Texas, about the end of slavery. The unfortunate thing to note is that the slaves were freed on December 6th of the previous year. One would argue that Whites were intentional in keeping important information away from African Americans, especially if the news would affect Whites negatively. Despite the poor treatment of African American soldiers before, during, and after

their service in the US military, their narratives are consistent with each other and their construction of themselves, and their allegiance to the U.S. was unwavering. For example, Houston explains his perspective on what it means to be American:

Okay. Yeah, but that's the way it is. My experience as a Black trooper in a segregated army, back in World War II, is a matter of record and it's in a miscellaneous way, that's the way I explain it, because that's – that was reality. But they did something like what you're doing and really about two years ago. And they wanted to know how did we survive? I said, because we were proud. We were proud to be American soldiers. We was youngsters anxious to prove that we was good as anybody. And we did our job. Whatever they asked us to do, we did it.

Houston's statements illustrate how his perceptions, as an African American trooper, enabled himself to serve nobly. However, his statements also reflect a form of rhetoric that demonstrates his desire to be recognized for his service during the war. When describing his beliefs about service to the country, King's sense of pride is demonstrated:

It would learn them something. It would make a man out of them if they want to be one. Because it do learn you, at least when I was in it, it learned you how to be a gentleman, it learned you how to be a man, it taught you something. It taught you something. It made you a lot. And I appreciate that I was in the military, and I may have said something, it may have seemed like something that was stupid, but I love this country as well as anybody else, and I'm going to always stand up for my rights in this country, because I am an American, and I'm always going to stand up for my rights.

And I think a Black can pick that up anywhere. I think that we can help ourselves better by realizing that this is our country, too. Not that I'm a second-class citizen. I don't play it second-class citizen. They may say I am, but I don't. I don't say that. I'm a first-class. I'm just as first-class as anybody here. And I love my country.

I've been to quite a few countries, and believe it or not, there is not a country like America. Not one like America. People can go there and have a good time and all of that, but go there and try to live. There's not a country like America. And I've been to a lot of countries.

And I'm glad for the military for that. What I didn't like is how they ignored most of the Blacks, and some of the Whites got benefits when they got out that the Blacks didn't get, such as Blacks had to fight to get -- when they come out all messed up, they had to fight to get anything. I was out just about 50 years before I got anything, 50 years.

It appears for that, for White people during the 1930s and 1940s, no matter how much African American veterans gave to this country, they were not going to allow them to achieve anything that was not going to benefit them financially. Because the institution of slavery benefited Whites financially, there was a push to keep it going as long as possible, and later because it benefitted Whites financially to participate in offering educational programs to the African American veterans they obliged. Not forgetting that even some of the Whites who were offering educational programming were still taking advantage of the caste system in America; as Houston pointed out, they were not offering programs to African American veterans, contrary to what they told the federal government.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The preceding analysis presented insights and beliefs about how race influenced African American veterans' experiences with the GI Bill. Moreover, understanding their experiences and how they relate to education is key, especially if we are to dissect the complexities of the state of higher education today. Critical race theory reminds us that the perpetuation of racism through curriculum and legal policies happens every day, even if Jim Crow segregation has been outlawed; the results of those policies still resonate throughout higher education.

The purpose of interviewing African American veterans was to illuminate and bring perspective to the current state of higher education. The narratives offer a race-centered approach in the investigation of the hegemony that lies within the American meritocracy. In addition, the use of counter-narratives brings to the forefront the inconsistencies in the majoritarian story of the GI Bill, and therefore provides an opportunity for African American veterans to bring in another perspective that influences the demographic makeup of American higher education today.

When examining the lack of African Americans in higher education in 2010, we need to accept that racism has existed in the United States since its inception, and what we are seeing now are the results. Since slavery, life for most African Americans has been complicated with overt racism in governmental policies that intentionally created difficulties for African Americans' progress and social mobility. Moreover, the four veterans who participated in this study indicated that there always seemed to be "road blocks" to their advancement through education. These road blocks included lack of high schools in rural areas that served African

American populations, segregation in the military, and Jim Crow laws put in place by the federal and local government.

Subsequent to the examination of the permanence of racism during the 1940s, the realization of the government control on the lives of African Americans was appalling. Power and oppression were intertwined with the implementation of government policies and displayed through their practices. As a result, Whites had the law to back up their oppressive behavior, and many proceeded in showing their perceived superiority by actively interfering with African American advancement. As Houston noted, “they let you know you were Black.”

By having Whites “remind” the soldiers that they were Black, one could deduce that the African American soldiers not only saw themselves differently, but also performed their jobs in a manner that conflicted with how Whites were perceiving them. The fervor and pride with which African Americans went about doing their jobs confirms there were two perspectives on what an African American is and how they live their professional lives. Their performance in the military proves that they deserved respect, as Houston stated:

And we'd been used to being mistreated. I said, but we were proud. We were anxious to show the world that we were good as anybody, and we did. Whatever they assigned us to do, we did it well.

This could be the exact reason why Whites did not want African Americans to participate, because they knew that the same people they were trying to oppress could do a good job, if they were given the opportunity. What would Whites lose if African Americans were allowed to be educated? On the other hand, for Whites to win, they would have to state that

Black is not a color, it was a behavior or a station in life; which is exactly what they did. White Americans created a caste system where African Americans were given the title of “Black,” and they were treated accordingly.

The caste system in America says that Blacks steal, Blacks murder, Blacks rape White women, Blacks are dumb and don’t need an education because... Blacks are not worth it. So when a White person in the military tells a soldier, “you’re Black,” they are proclaiming the social status in which they view Blacks. By doing this, they are putting up road blocks to halt progress. Through these actions, they forced African Americans into the behaviors they believe are attributes for the Black caste.

When a group of people is denied the ability to accumulate wealth for several generations, it has an extremely harmful affect on the upward mobility of African Americans and an even more detrimental impact of the mentality of African Americans. Denial of the ability to be able to pass down wealth to the next generation is what has ultimately crippled African Americans from moving forward at the same pace as Whites. One of the most unfortunate byproducts of the implementation of road blocks and the Black caste system is the inability to create generational wealth. In a capitalistic economy, one of our main purposes in life is to be able to pass down what has been accumulated for the next generation. Many African Americans have been denied that opportunity because of the amount of racism permeating society in the U.S., at the same time the GI Bill offered a way to advance. There was now “opportunity.”

Internalized racism is another byproduct of the Black caste system. The right to be White in the United States had its privileges, especially during the 1930s and 1940s. The laws dictating to African Americans which water fountain they could drink from or where they could live lays a

foundation that is difficult to erase. Whiteness as property has no boundaries. It is about denying access to resources.

Being educated was something reserved for Whites, and that is the agenda they pushed forward. All African Americans needed was enough education to sell their cotton. This ideology was from the era of slavery when it was widely known that a slave should not be educated; if a slave was found to have been educated and they were subject to punishment or death. The Jim Crow laws were always present, and this law pushed forward the idea of Whiteness as property. However, Whiteness as property included much more than law enforcement making sure all African Americans were staying in their place.

Internalized racism is stronger than the law. Carter G. Woodson in his 1933 book, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, stated:

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.

Internalized racism will make a person cut a back door when they are shown the front. Not everyone is as strong and willing to take the risks King did when he was presented with racism. As he shared, Whites were trying to exert their perceived power over him, most likely because they thought he was a part of the Black caste. In the situations King shared, he let the White people know, that he was not a part of the Black caste and he was not going to be treated

in such a manner. At the same time, for his personal safety, he knew when he was in a position of harm and would not assert himself; the example he provided was when he and his friends were stopped by a police officer. That situation is an example of the fine line African Americans had to walk between two worlds. One world they were proud to be American citizens, and in the other world, where the Black caste system existed, they had to pretend to be dumb and act subservient.

During his interview, King explained that, because we do not know who we are, we accept a lot of poor treatment; and that's why we need to get an education and learn our history. An important aspect of African American history was that African Americans needed to "play dumb" in order to survive. They were performing "dumbness" for the White people, and at some point their performance became real and many began to internalize the Black caste system. That is how powerful Whiteness as Property is, as well as racism. And because African Americans were driven out of the education system in rural areas, it resulted in there being virtually no way to challenge the status quo. It is difficult to challenge anything, much less the status quo, without a high school or college education.

Interest convergence describes how the dominant group allows advances for the subordinate group only when it benefits the dominant group (Bell, 1992). In the 1940s, when the GI Bill was introduced, the education system represented the White expectation for African Americans. During this time, schools were segregated and there were African American teachers and administrators in the schools, and they did the best they could with the resources they were given.

The protagonists of this story explain their desires to go to school and brilliantly illustrated the roadblocks put in place while in pursuit of their education. For African Americans, it appears that they spent an inordinate amount of their time trying to go around the roadblocks set in front of them by White people. It is difficult to ascertain all of the difficulties African Americans had to endure as citizens, but at the same time we can see the results of always trying to “work around” the racist policies. Those results were reflected in the lack of elected public officials in the areas with high concentrations of African Americans during the Reconstruction era, due to the gerrymandering of voting districts including poll taxes. The lack of African American representation in local law enforcement agencies and court systems, therefore resulted in the high number of African Americans in the prison systems. In addition, because of intentional changes in local elections, often times African Americans were driven out of opportunities they would have had if they were just given the same options as their White counterparts.

In general, many people think that the GI Bill worked for African Americans the same way it did for White people. White people were able to use all aspects of the GI Bill a lot easier than an African American with the same economic background (Shaw, 1947). The reality is that for many African Americans the GI Bill was used to complete their high school education and obtain some type of vocational training. For example, among the four participants in this study, only one completed his four-year degree; the others used it for vocational purposes. Therefore, when we look at reasons why the number of African Americans entering higher education during the late 1940s and 1950s did not compare to the rates of White people, it was simply because there were White veterans with similar economic backgrounds who were afforded the

opportunity to finish high school and then easily went into college. Due to the South being rampant with racism, it would be hard to find any African Americans whose academic progress had not been blocked by racist practices.

The most important thing to remember about African American progress is as a people we were enslaved longer than we've been free. Slavery began in the US in early 1600's and the slaves were freed in 1865, so for approximately 260 years the US descendants of Africans were enslaved. The emancipation proclamation freed the slaves in 1865 and it is now 2010, so African Americans have been freed from slavery for 145 years. We were slaves longer than we have been free. The progress made has been phenomenal and as pointed out in the chapter prior there were laws preventing African Americans from making the same progress as White people even after slavery. It has never been easy for African Americans in the US to progress, but they have continued to press towards a good life and attempted to accumulate generational wealth.

The counter stories about the African American experience and the GI Bill allowed me to examine the intercentricity of race and racism. In the quest to understand the causal factor for the differential between the African American higher education growth rate and that of Whites, I found there to be one simple answer: racism. When racism is present, all aspects of a person's life are affected. This is because so many components are interconnected and therefore dependant on one another. In this study these components included race, class, geographic location, and military experience; I could not examine one without seeing how it was connected to something else; because of the era, it was hard to dissect one component from another.

It can be concluded that, without the GI Bill, the African American middle class would not be where it is today. The GI Bill meant gaining access to education—access to several types

of education that was not there before, including high school equivalency, vocational training, and college. The GI Bill was a passport for getting a chance at becoming middle class through education; this is because Whites found the African American soldier more valuable because there was an opportunity to make guaranteed money from training African American veterans. The White man's desire for money outweighed their need to completely oppress; I am not stating that those with the GI Bill were not discriminated against, because they were. However, the GI Bill presented ways for African Americans to make capital while getting an education, when before this program was implemented, this opportunity was not present. Most people had to choose; either get a job and make money or go to school and delay having an income. It really made sense for everyone who could take advantage of it to do so, and they did.

Suggestions for further Research

The GI Bill was an excellent tool for African American soldiers to use in order to further their education. Because the bill paid them while they were completing their degree, it really allowed them not to worry if their family would be taken care of while they went to school. Not all African American veterans were able to use their GI Bill to enter an educational program. A quantitative study could be done to find out how many African American veterans were able to use their GI Bill, and a qualitative study could be used to investigate the results of this study.

Although this study focused on African American males, we know that there were African American females that also served in WWII. It would be interesting to hear from them and find out about their experiences from the perspective of being a woman and being African American. Additionally, finding out if programs like the GI Bill assisted them with continuing their education and what factors might have prevented them from continuing their education.

Being able to complete high school for many African Americans was not about intelligence, it was about geographic location. As this study revealed, many of the rural communities did not have high schools nearby, and therefore many of the students were unable to complete their high school degree. A study could be done to investigate if there was a difference in the high school completion rate between students and their proximity to an African American serving high school. A quantitative study could also be done to see if there is a correlation between distance from school and completion rate. Additionally, a qualitative study could be done to substantiate the results of the quantitative study.

The last phenomenon that could be investigated is the “drove out” phenomenon. Because White law makers intentionally placed high schools physically out of reach for those that lived in rural areas as well as made the African American students purchase their own books to continue their education. It appears as if the students were “driven out” of the educational system as a viable student body. A study could be done on how common this “drove out” phenomenon is and what parents of the affected children tried to do to educate their children. Did they use alternative ways of educating them? Did they try to exercise their rights with local legislative bodies? Or, did some families move closer to the cities where African American high schools were?

Presently, there is a commonly known fact that there are a lot of students struggling to be successful in schools all across America. Perhaps the reason is that many are not connecting with the materials presented. Because many African Americans were not seen as a body that could contribute to the creation of new knowledge during a time that could affect the children of today, there are a lot of things presented in the classroom that do not reflect the contributions of African Americans.

In closing, this study is my contribution to knowledge about the influence of the GI Bill on African American servicemen's quest for higher education. It is my hope that the results will be presented to children so they can know about how African Americans tried to be successful and how they were prevented from doing so, but still kept going.

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APPENDIX - A

IRB APPROVAL

MEMORANDUM

TO: D. Michael Pavel and Bernadette Mencke,
FROM: Patrick Conner, Office of Research Assurances (3005)
DATE: 4/20/2010
SUBJECT: Certification of Exemption, IRB Number 11372

Based on the Exemption Determination Application submitted for the study titled "African Americans and the Post-World War II G.I. Bill," and assigned IRB # 11372, the WSU Office of Research Assurances has determined that the study satisfies the criteria for Exempt Research at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

This study may be conducted according to the protocol described in the Application without further review by the IRB.

It is important to note that certification of exemption is NOT approval by the IRB. You may not include the statement that the WSU IRB has reviewed and approved the study for human subject participation. Remove all statements of IRB Approval and IRB contact information from study materials that will be disseminated to participants.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted to the ORA. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review (this Certification does not expire). If any changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes to the ORA for determination that the study remains Exempt before implementing the changes (The Request for Amendment form is available online at http://www.irb.wsu.edu/documents/forms/rtf/Amendment_Request.rtf).

Exempt certification does NOT relieve the investigator from the responsibility of providing continuing attention to protection of human subjects participating in the study and adherence to ethical standards for research involving human participants.

In accordance with WSU Business Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM), this Certification of Exemption, a copy of the Exemption Determination Application identified by this certification and all materials related to data collection, analysis or reporting must be retained by the Principal Investigator for THREE (3) years following completion of the project (BPPM 90.01).

Washington State University is covered under Human Subjects Assurance Number

FWA00002946 which is on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

Review Type: New

Review Category: Exempt

Date Received: 4/14/2010

Exemption Category: 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2)

OGRD No.: N/A

Funding Agency: N/A

You have received this notification as you are referenced on a document within the MyResearch.wsu.edu system. You can change how you receive notifications by visiting <https://MyResearch.wsu.edu/MyPreferences.aspx>

Please Note: This notification will not show other recipients as their notification preferences require separate delivery.

APPENDIX - B

Participant Consent Form

Attention: Study Participant

Date: November 28, 2009

Re: African American perspective on the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill)

From: Michael Pavel, Professor, Principle Investigator
Bernadette K. Mencke, Graduate Student, Co-Principle Investigator

This letter is regarding the research project that Michael Pavel Ph.D and Bernadette K. Mencke are conducting through the Washington State University, College of Education. We are asking your consent to conduct this research as approved by the WSU institutional review board as an exempt project; this qualifies the research as having the lowest possible risk to the participants. The purpose of the research project is to gain an African American perspective on the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 also known as the GI Bill.

The project will be conducted during summer 2010 and fall 2010. During the summer 2010, data will be collected from African American WWII veterans. All participants will be given this document outlining the description of the research and a consent form. Any participant not giving consent will not be used in the research project. Participants consenting to the study will be informed that they may discontinue their involvement at any time.

Each interview session may be audio and video recorded and individual interviews will be conducted at the convenience of the participants. Any additional historical documents provided by the participants may be used as supplemental data. It is the goal of the researcher to conduct at least three interviews one week apart.

Participant confidentiality is of utmost importance to the project; therefore, participants' names will be coded to ensure confidentiality throughout the study and into any publications that may come from the data. Benefits to the participants may include understanding their life experience as an asset to the American culture. Benefits to society may include a better understanding of the African American experience utilizing the GI Bill. Although the research project is considered low risk, any psychological effects that become problematic to the participants will be referred to the National Association of Black Veterans (NABVETS) or the Veteran's Administration.

Please review this form and contact Bernadette K Mencke (bmencke@wsu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research project. After review please sign the form to verify your consent as a participant in this research study.

Researcher _____ Date _____

Participant _____ Signature _____ Print _____ Date _____

APPENDIX – C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Problem:

The question guiding this study is why has post secondary education been so elusive for African Americans?

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to learn the counter-narrative of the WWII GI Bill experience and how it relates to African American achievement in higher education.

Research Questions:

1. How did the GI Bill influence African American male postsecondary access and achievement?
2. How did the racial climate of the 1940's and 1950's impact African American veterans who attempted to obtain post secondary education?
3. What have African American veterans done to counter instances when race and racism intersect?

Interview Questions:

1st interview (reflecting on experiences)

- Tell me a little about yourself and how did you first come to the decision to join the military? When did you join? Explain your educational background? (2)
- How did your family feel about your choice to join the military? (2)
- How were you treated during your service in the military? Did it change over time? How so? (3)

- How was your experience similar/different from the experiences of many other African American servicemen who served in segregated and integrated contexts? (3)
- What do you recall about the talk surrounding the GI Bill? How did Whites and Blacks talk about it? (1,2)
- Tell me about your experience using the GI Bill after leaving the military? (1,2,3)
- How do you think the GI Bill has had an impact on your life? Your family? (2)
- Tell me if you believe the GI Bill was fair compensation for your service? Why or why not? (1,2)
- Do you believe you had the opportunity to use the educational aspects of the GI Bill? Why or why not? (1,2,3)

2nd interview (making meaning of your experience)

- In 1946, 100,000 black veterans applied for school, by fall only 15,000 were enrolled. Can you recall why so many veterans were unable to enroll? (1)
- How accessible was college during the 1940's for African Americans? (1,2)
- Tell me about your educational background. (1,2,3)
- During your educational experience was there someone who helped to navigate the process? (1,2,3)
- Did your utilization of the GI Bill have an impact on your children's ability to attend college? (1)

- When you were getting out of the service were you looking to use the GI Bill why or why not? (1, 2, 3)