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# Minority Female Students and Graduates Perceived Value of Their For-Profit College & University (FPCU) Technical Education

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MINORITY FEMALE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES PERCEIVED VALUE OF THEIR  
FOR-PROFIT COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY (FPCU) TECHNICAL EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

The higher education institutions of for-profit colleges and universities (FPCU) have been sources of much controversy the last few decades. Research on their inception, quality of education, government funding and their threat to the traditional educational models of higher education provides a wealth of knowledge regarding FPCU's demographics and explains what they are, who they serve, how the function, and how they make money. This relevant and rich data explains the phenomena of FPCU's and how they are integral tools within higher education. However, research is limited on why the population that they serve chooses to attend them.

Current data indicated that minority women are the targeted population for these institutions. This research explored and explains why this population is recruited and why the population chooses to attend FPCU's. Focus groups with and one-on-one interviews of current FPCU students and recent graduates were conducted to obtain their lived experiences and their perceived value of their degree. This research fills the gap in literature concerning FPCU's and garners a more holistic knowledge and view of the institutions and their students and graduates.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Upon successfully completing and graduating from an eighteen month Criminal Justice Associate Degree program, the For-profit College and University (FPCU) [also referred to as Career Technical Education (CTE), proprietary schools, technical colleges] graduate rejected job placement assistance from the Career Services staff. When questioned why she was not interested in assistance, she simply stated that she was happy in her position with a national pizza restaurant chain and was not interested in working in the field of criminal justice. Baffled, but not surprised, it was clear that this was a common scenario. Many of the graduates expressed disinterest for working with the department and indifference for working in their field of study post-graduation.

As the previous Director of Career Services at a national FPCU, my team and I were tasked with ensuring that graduates were professionally prepared for post-graduation employment. Resume writing, mock interviews, dress for success days, and other activities were implemented outside of the classroom to ensure that the students and graduates received much information and practice regarding professional preparedness. The activities were implemented in 10-15 minute increments during or between class times, as they were not interwoven into the curriculum. To me, however, the successful placement graduates necessitated interjecting any amount of time to provide the students and grads with the pertinent tools to be successful post-graduation.

The workshops were mandatory for two reasons: to prepare students and grads and also to meet national and organizational standards of placement. To meet national career technical education accreditation standards dictated by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), sixty-six per cent of all graduates had to be placed in a position directly

related to their respective program within six months of graduating. Programs that did not reflect a placement rate of 66% were placed on evaluation and then the program under standard was taken away from the college if rates did not increase. The goal of my institution was to place eighty percent of its graduates within six months of graduation, a goal that clearly exceeded the accreditation's minimum standard.

Attaining an 80% placement goal was an inconceivable charge for a plethora of reasons. Primarily, it was challenging due to the national employment crisis. Secondly, it was difficult because of the job market in the capital city and surrounding areas, and especially regarding the fields of studies offered by the career technical institution. Finally, it was a daunting mission because the majority of the graduates were towards working in general, and/or specifically, working in the field from which they had graduated. Once a trend was recognized regarding the graduate's dismay of working in his/her field of study, it was imperative to examine all aspects of the institution including the organization, the faculty/staff, the students and graduates, to determine the cause of graduate's apathy toward working post-graduation. The lack of desire to obtain employment in their chosen field of study post-graduation can occur for various reasons in isolated situations, however, the percentage of students across programs expressing the same disinterest within this intimate collegiate environment sparked intrigue and interest. The pattern began somewhere and it was not, and still is not, clear as from where it stems.

### **Statement of Problem**

Deciding which institution to attend and in which program to enroll is a personal process that occurs in various ways and for various reasons. Students who choose to attend FPCU's generally are searching for a specific trade in a particular field that will result in obtaining entry employment, and that can all be completed in a short period of time. Traditionally those students

are from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and are of color. Dalton, Lauff, Henke, Alt, and Li (2013) agreed, “CTE (career technical education) and occupational studies provided low-achieving or academically disengaged students with courses that prepared them for immediate entry into the labor market” (pg. ix). The premise is that the students who were disengaged during their foundational K-12 education would choose a major and acquire the career specific knowledge and skills within 18 months or less, depending on their program of choice. Upon completing the program, they would be expected to obtain entry-level employment in their field of study with the assistance of the Career Services Department. In theory, the process seems simple and straightforward, however, after examination, it is clear that there is a gap that hinders this process for a significant percent of the graduates.

Apling (1993) explained proprietary schools – sometimes termed “Private career schools” – are for-profit institutions that offer mostly occupational training for post-high-school students (pg. 379). These institutions offer a large portion of postsecondary occupational training and their students receive about 30% of federal student financial aid funds under Title IV (Apling, 1993). Closer examination of the process clarified that this environment can be viewed as a financial trap for the students that FPCUs enroll.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Exploration of the problem must begin with the institution, move to the process, and finally examine the students/graduates. A close examination of all three tiers allowed insight into the broken process of the FPCU of this study. The process was broken because of retention issues, student completion of the programs, and the placement rates of the graduates in their particular field. However, the focus of this study was on the graduate placement rates. Placement

rates were identified as a problem and were layered also. As a result, an examination at both the institutional and student/graduate level was explored.

In the United States, formal vocational education in schools began early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with roots in the traditional techniques of preparing young individuals for work. In the last hundred years, vocational education has evolved from its original inception in response to changes in society, technology, education and educational philosophy, and the workplace (Wonacott, 2003, pg. 3).

Wonacott stated that vocational education, now referred to as CTE, was designed to address a population in the community who were interested in obtaining employment in blue collar fields. Though some motivations have changed from the initial creation of technical career colleges, the task of equipping individuals with entry employment in “hands-on” type careers has remained the same. On the surface, the theory behind the creation of proprietary schools can be is positive and harmless, however the implementation and the processes of some have been maliciously and predatorily misleading. Creating an institution for “Low-achieving or academically disengaged students” (Dalton et al., 2013, pg. 2), is a remarkable idea at the foundational level. In theory, it is articulated to this population that no matter your educational past, there is still a chance at a bright future. Apling (1993) expanded, “Proprietary school students are more likely to enter postsecondary education without a high-school diploma or its equivalent” (pg. 395). Initially this theory is innocent and promising, however, the inner workings and outcomes can be completely dissimilar. My experience at a CTE institution at which I was employed for close to four years was that theory did not and does not match reality in most cases. Dalton et al. (2013) stated that “Secondary education during the bulk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was organized and largely functioned as a way to “sort” students into different life pathways, with major educational distinctions being between a (traditional) college bound and non-college bound pathway” (pg. 2). Present day CTE can be viewed as the continued process of “sorting” individuals through education on a

secondary level, which is simply a continuation from the sorting that has continued through the K-12 system for years for marginalized groups.

### **Reflexivity**

Most proprietary schools specialize in one or two fields of training and offer a few programs related to that areas. About two-thirds of all schools offer either business or cosmetology training. Nearly 80 percent of all proprietary school students pursue training in business, cosmetology, or technical occupations such as computer programming. Although some proprietary schools offer programs longer than two years, many programs are relatively short. Thirty-four percent of all programs are shorter than 6 months, and 23 percent are shorter than 3 months (Apling, 1993, pg. 384).

At the proprietary school in which I was employed, I witnessed firsthand how the promise of education and a brighter future resulted in great financial debt and despair for the students/graduates. While employed, I worked in three different departments- Admissions, Recruiting, and Career Services- and thus I gained perspective on the entire process from both the organization and students' view. In Admissions, the numbers driven sales environment was geared to enrolling as many students as possible to maintain a bottom line. Budget, not education, was the primary focus and that was clearly articulated in weekly meetings. The Admissions team was instructed to enroll as many students with a "by any means necessary" approach, without blatantly break ACCSC rules of course. Prospective students were guided to enrollment in a program of their interest, but also in programs for which seats needed to be filled for that enrollment period.

Potential students were urged to enroll to become the first in their family to attend and possibly graduate college, a sales tactic geared to play on their emotion and to meet the enrollment quota. Once students were enrolled they were quickly pushed through the financial aid process that was completed online and thus there was no department on campus to answer

any questions or concerns. The students were mostly confused about what they were signing but were continuously urged to move forward by “keeping their family in mind” Apling (1993) expounded:

Moreover, proprietary school students are more likely to default on their federal loans...given the number of proprietary schools, the portion of students served, and especially the amount of federal aid provided to proprietary school students and their high default rates on federally guaranteed loans, it is important to understand basic information about these schools and the students who attend them (pg. 380).

Understanding the enrollment and financial aid processes is necessary to understand that the targeted students were previously identified as disengaged in academic settings. Thus, it is clear how the quick admissions and financial aid processes target their lack of education savvy. Portraying the ideology that their low performances during their previous academic career will not hinder their future academic career is simultaneously encouraging and problematic. CTE is not designed to incorporate remedial classes nor offer supplemental classes to ensure that the students are prepared to succeed in the job market. The students were enticed to enroll because of the brevity, the ease, and the intimacy of the programs, as well as the easy access to the institution and funding. It is clear how predatory these types of environments can become as environments created by individuals with power that promise an end goal without truly offering a solution. It is a perpetual cycle. “Therefore, it is important to consider how well intended institutional processes and procedures can potentially promote racism when working toward improving an institution’s plan for diversity and inclusion” (Hiraldo, 2010, pg. 55). Freire (1970) elaborated:

Any attempts to “soften” the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity,” the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this “generosity,” which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty (pp. 28-29).

## **Research Question**

To provide insight on the targeted population and largest percentage of attenders at FPCU's it was imperative to obtain their stories. The following question guided this research study:

1. How do minority female students and graduates of FPCU's perceive the value of their education?

This research question provided insight on the lived experiences of the students and graduates of FPCU's and filled the gap in the literature regarding these higher educational institutions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

CTE was created and promoted as a way to address the public need for a solution to the dropouts and other disregarded populations in the nation. Wonacott (2003) denoted, "Advocates of vocational education in the public schools believed that vocational education would make schools more democratic" (pg. 4). Conversely, Hiraldo (2010) stated, "Systemic reality works against building a diverse and inclusive higher education environment because it supports the imbedded hierarchical racist paradigms that currently exist in our society" (pg. 55). "For example, cosmetology programs, which enroll a substantial percentage of all proprietary school students, are preparing their students for a job market that is projected to experience below average growth and produce about 34,000 jobs in the next decade, or only about two-tenths of one percent of all new jobs" (Apling, 1993, pg. 931). These two dissenting opinions illustrate the debate between what is articulated and what actually occurs.

Anderson (1988) explained, "Appropriately, it was Thomas Jefferson who first articulated the inseparable relationships between popular education and a free society" (pg. 1). In 1787, the argument of true freedom aligning with education was the foundation for creating an

educational system. Unfortunately, who received education was a contradiction of the ideal of ensuring a free society. Eventually legislation passed, but the access to quality education was still a contradiction. Marginalized groups were and continue to be given access to education but it has and is not always coupled with quality. This historical reflection illustrates the systemic issue of the challenges within education. It is imperative to denote this continuous educational oppression to understand the issue that FPCU graduates face in their inability to gain and ascend employment because of the education they receive at these institutions.

Critical race theory emerged from law as a response to critical legal studies and civil rights scholarship. Critical race theorists are concerned with disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that work to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people and that attempt to maintain the status quo (Milner, 2008, pg. 2).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used to assess the problem within this particular career technical environment. CRT's purpose is to extract what is taken for granted when examining race and privilege, as well as the profound patterns of exclusion that exist in U.S. society (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Therefore, CRT can also play an important role when higher education institutions work toward becoming more diverse and inclusive. Hiraldo (2003) found, "The various tenets of CRT can be used to uncover the ingrained societal disparities that support a system of privilege and oppression" (pg. 54). Because CRT begins with the notion that racism is standard, not abnormal, in U.S. culture, it is appropriate for examining this problem. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) expounded with three propositions: "(1) race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States, (2) U.S. society is based on property rights, (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity" (pg. 48).

The CRT framework has five tenets (whiteness as property, interest convergence, counter-story, racial realism, and social change), however this research used the CRT framework

using two of the five tenants, Whiteness as property and interest convergence. Both provided support of the premise that racism and oppression “controls the political, social, and economic realms of U.S. society” (Hiraldo, 2010, pg. 54). Ladson-Billings (1998) provided insight by explaining, “In the early history of the nation only propertied White males enjoyed the franchise. The signification of property ownership as a prerequisite to citizenship was tied to the British notion that only people who *owned* the country, not merely those who *lived* in it, were eligible to make decisions about it” (pg. 15). Milner (2008) expounded that interest convergence “Can serve as a tool to explain and operationalize race and racism in education and help make sense of the salience of race and racism in educational policy and practices” (pg. 1). The lenses of interest convergence and Whiteness as property give credence to the argument that CTE was created to entrap marginalized communities into financial debt by providing the illusion of access to higher education and gaining employment in positions not necessarily suitable for the targeted population.

Traditionally marginalized students, specifically Black women, were the majority population at this particular campus and at the other campus locations of this particular institution. Apling (1993) supported, “When compared with their counterparts attending other postsecondary education institutions, *proprietary school students are more likely to be women, minority group members and poor*” (pg. 391). The CEO and other leaders of the organization deemed them the “type” of student the college sought. As a result of their background they were pursued and ensnared into enrolling into the program of their “choice”, enrolled without hesitation. “Not only do higher proportions of proprietary school students come from low-income families, but their parents’ education levels (which are related to socioeconomic status) tend to be lower” (Apling, 1993, pg. 394). Choy (2001) expounded that students whose parents

did not attend college, “Are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing postsecondary education, and those who overcome barriers and enroll in postsecondary education remain at a disadvantage with the respect to staying enrolled and attaining degrees, even when there is control for other factors” (pg. 11). Thus, upon entering the college these students were at a disadvantage, unknowingly.

Students entered into an enrollment agreement without fully comprehending the challenges. Previous academic challenges caused many of them struggled through their program of choice, in part because there were no supplemental classes to assist those who needed more training after class. The programs were designed to provide only the required courses that would assist them in their field of study. Classes that honed speaking skills, writing, computer, grammar, and professionalism were not offered in the program, a clear indication that the programs were not designed to fully prepare them for the workplace.

Employers want employees to possess generic skills, employability skills, essential skills, and applied general education skills. These include knowing how to learn, interpersonal skills (e.g., teamwork, leadership, customer service, computing) to workplaces, effective listening and oral communication skills, information gathering and analysis, problem solving, critical/creative thinking, organizing, planning, decision-making, and personal attributes (e.g., motivation, integrity, dependability, self-management) (Kraebber & Greenan, 2012, pg. 15).

“Another concern about proprietary school programs is how well they match current and future labor market needs. No matter how good the training, if there are no jobs for graduates, training resources and opportunities will be wasted” (Apling, 1993, pg. 408). The graduates become aware of their expensive mistake post-graduation. Although it is believed that education is never a mistake, these graduates were not fully equipped to enter into a new professional environment, yet they had incurred thousands of dollars of debt. Even when they meet with Career Services, many have figured out that they are not prepared to enter the job market and/or

there are no jobs available, and the department has little to offer them. Frustrated and disappointed they reject assistance and usually remain in the low-wage paying jobs they were in throughout their collegiate experience.

### **Significance of the Study**

“Proprietary schools have become an increasing vexing policy issue. On the one hand, there has been a lot of bad news; high default rates on federal loans among proprietary school students, instances of fraud, allegations of high dropout rates, uncertainty about their employment benefits” (Grubb, 1993, pg. 17). Despite the public skeptics, marginalized students enroll in large numbers. These students are wooed into enrolling in programs that require not only technical skills but also interpersonal and social skills; these skills are not taught and this lack is the basis of an unexamined problem within the CTE institutions. That the majority of students who attend these type institutions are of color and from other marginalized populations aligns with Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) article where they surmised:

In schooling, the absolute right to exclude was demonstrate initially by denying blacks access to schooling altogether. Later, it was demonstrated by the creation and maintenance of separate schools. More recently it has been demonstrated by white flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice. Within schools, absolute right to exclude is demonstrated by resegregation via tracking, the institution of “gifted” programs, honors programs and advanced placement classes. So complete is this exclusion of black (and other marginalized) students often come to the university in the role of intruders – who have been granted special permission to be there. (p. 60).

The creation of CTEs was a way to ensure that a certain population remained in the lower employment market to guarantee that the distribution of wealth, knowledge, and property does not shift. Giving marginalized groups access to a shot at education in a post-secondary institutional type perpetuates the illusion of not only access to better jobs but ascension in the job market.

Mills (1997) further explained the disparity of wealth, income, and property which can be correlated to the lack of, an, access to, quality education:

By contrast, the economic dimension of the Racial Contract is the most salient, foreground rather than background, since the Racial Contract is calculatedly aimed at economic exploitation. The whole point of establishing a moral hierarchy and juridically partitioning the polity according to race is to secure and legitimate the privileging of those individuals designated as white/persons and the exploitation of those individuals designated as nonwhite/subpersons (pp. 32-33).

The Racial Contract referred to by Mills (1997) was an explanation of how the systemic issues of racism and White supremacy negatively affect marginalized groups, specifically through education for hundreds of years. Mills (1997) clarified that this unnamed system of White supremacy has been omitted from texts and conversation; however it reflects how the system works, a system designed by Whites and accepted by minorities, with neither group fully aware of its effects and impacts.

CRT is the best theoretical lens through which to view this particular problem. “One of the course values of the movement, as described in the legal literature, is the theme of active struggle” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, pg. 22); this perspective is why CRT and Whiteness as property were used when researching the problem plaguing CTE. The historical perspective and the current state of education support how the systemic power of White supremacy has perpetuated a cycle of oppression to marginalized populations. More precisely, *Brown vs. Board of Education* is a historical account of how in 1954, and now, 60 years later, “It triggered a revolution in civil rights law and in the political leverage available to Blacks in and out of court... *Brown* transformed Blacks from beggars pleading for decent treatment to citizens demanding equal treatment under the law as their constitutionally recognized right” (Bell, 1995, pg. 20). Minorities have consistently had to stand up and fight for “alienable” rights available only to Whites for centuries and the struggle exists today.

Acknowledgement, critique, and discussion have the power to change this reality. Bell (1995) explained that, “Criticism, as we in the movement for minority rights have every reason to learn, is a synonym for neither cowardice nor capitulation. It may instead bring awareness, always the first step toward overcoming still another barrier in the struggle for racial equality” (pg. 26). Racial equality is everyone’s concern, one that not only those in academia should strive. However, racial inequality is so deeply rooted in today’s society that those who oppress as well as those who are oppressed are often apathetic towards change. It is imperative to challenge what is “normal” to move towards a better society.

### **Summary**

Nelson Mandela said, education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. This statement resonates within the educational system and perpetuates inequality. The fear of marginalized groups becoming powerful is why the majority population has ensured that the minorities are sorted to subpar schools. The creation of CTE was a great opportunity to train and contain a working class. The illusion of a generous opportunity for those who were labeled academically low achieving was false charity, as described by Freire (1970), “False charity strains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’ to extend their trembling hands” (pg. 29). This marginalized group has been given an illusion of another chance at academic success but only has acquired debt as a result, an injustice that perpetuates a society fueled by White supremacy.

Proprietary schools can provide a myriad of benefits if designed and implemented on a more humanizing and student focused model. “It may not be appropriate simply to eliminate proprietary schools from federal aid programs, tempting thought it may be, but it is not clear quite how to respond” (Grubb, 1993, pg. 17). Both skeptics and supporters have negative

perceptions of some proprietary schools. Grubb (1993) agreed that, “Allegations about fraud and abuse are rife, and exposes of low earnings common, but – in a widely used metaphor – these may simply describe the “bad apples” rather than the average or the exemplary schools” (pg. 17). However, it is and should be a priority to structure all proprietary schools to ensure that the students/graduates receive equitable education that allows them gainful employment opportunities, without incurring unmanageable debt.

The lack of current research on today’s proprietary schools supports the relevancy and significance of this research. Grubb (1993) wrote that information regarding proprietaries was sparse at that time of his research. Because of the number of low-income students attending them, the amount of student aid being distributed to them, and other negative portrayals in the news (Grubb, 1993), it is imperative to take a closer look. Any examination must focus on how the institution functions, its statistics, and the views and thoughts of the students/graduates.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The perpetual cycle of entrapping double minorities (women of color) in lower class jobs coupled with financial turmoil through increasing debt from FPCU's is a valid and widespread issue. There is a myriad of ways to utilize literature to address the problem itself as well as the theoretical framework. This literature review addresses: the history education; emergence of proprietary schools (FPCU and CTE); intersectionality of the minority female; Critical Race Theory (CRT) of education; capitalism; and Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and counter-storytelling, tenets of CRT that are used as the lens of CRT. The holistic examination of the literature in these various categories illustrates the urgency of addressing the current problem within proprietary schools, especially in regards to minority females.

On the surface, it would seem strange that a nation that identifies itself as democratic should have such a long history of racial and cultural conflicts and would have adopted deculturalization policies. These seemingly contradictory beliefs have had tragic results, as measured by the number of lives lost in racial and cultural conflicts, and represent a deep flaw in the unfolding history of the United States and American schools. It is important to understand that for some Americans, racism and democracy are not conflicting beliefs, but they are a part of a general system of American values (Spring, 1994, pg. 9).

### **Education and Minorities**

To clarify the systemic nature that the roles White supremacy and oppression play in education, it is important to review the literature of the history of education, especially in the South, which is the focal area of this study. Historically, Blacks were denied access to many resources because they were viewed as property. Any type of property, education, homes, lands, etc. were unavailable. As Anderson (1988) noted,

The history of American education abounds with themes that represent the inextricable ties between citizenship in a democratic society and popular education. It is crucial for an understanding of American educational history, however, to recognize that within

American democracy there have been classes of oppressed people [Blacks and women] and that there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of oppression (pg. 1).

Education and freedom were synonymous for those who created public policy, and who were the only group that had access to both attributes. Anderson (1988) continued, “These two [education and free society] contradictory traditions of American education emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century and clashed with each other until well into the twentieth century” (pg. 1). This historical ideal still represents the heartbeat of the nation, and the illusion of access did not affect the scuffle between the two social systems.

Even with the emancipation of slavery in 1863, freed slaves were able to enter into the new social system as citizens but soon were callously alienated and trapped in laws that hindered their true freedom (Anderson, 1988). “From the end of Reconstruction until the late 1960s, Black southerners existed in a social system that virtually denied them citizenship, the right to vote, and the voluntary control of their labor power” (Anderson, 1988, pg. 2). Spring (1994) stated,

The difference between freedom and equality quickly became apparent in efforts by African American leaders and abolitionist groups to provide education opportunities for freed slaves in the northern states. Unlike in the South when the Civil War ended, there existed in the North free, literate, and educated African Americans who could provide support to enslaved Africans as they made the transition from slavery to freedom. Education, particularly in reading and writing English, was considered key to this effort. In addition, education served to replace African cultures with the dominant American culture (pg. 17).

Arguably, there is little difference for marginalized groups today, over 50 years later.

Freed slaves entered their newfound freedom with an unquenchable thirst and certainty for education. Anderson (1998) explained, “This belief was expressed in the pride with which they talked of other ex-slaves who learned to read or write in slavery and in the esteem in which they held literate blacks” (pg. 5). Blacks’ zeal for education was met with great resistance that continues today, although covertly. “In other words, policies and practices intended to formally

expand people of color's access to quality educational environments are deemed unfair because they run counter to the American ideal of individualism and the capitalistic principle of choice" (Donnor, 2013, pg. 195).

Blacks were eventually given access to education, although that access should not be confused with quality education. The buildings were dilapidated and access to qualified teachers and resources were limited, however Blacks were encouraged to accept what was offered. Spring (1994) clarified, "The school committee was appointing inferior teachers to the all-black-school and was not maintaining the building" (pg. 49). Eventually the dominant group realized that its overt racism and public policies were considered taboo and Black men received the right to vote; eventually women were allowed to attend school and subsequently vote. Public policy could be viewed as inclusive, however it was simply an illusion. Gillborn (2005) expounded, "There is a pressing need, therefore, to view policy in general, and education policy in particular, through a lens that recognizes the very real struggles and conflicts that lie at the heart of the processes through which policy and practice are shaped" (pp. 486-487).

Spring (1994) wrote, "Despite school segregation and harassment from the white population, the African American population of the United States made one of the greatest educational advancements in the history of education" (pg. 57). There is no denying that progression from the slave years was made, however there is still much work to be done today. Schools are still subpar in communities that have a large percentage of minorities; thus, students of color are sorted from those who are able to attend traditional educational institutions and sent to institutions that were created to keep them working in lower quality jobs. Parson and Plakhotnic (2006) concluded:

Education has been one of the primary, if not the primary, site of the civil rights struggle in the modern era. Legal scholars might claim that the law is the primary site, but the courts have merely been an instrument in the battle over education. It is in the schools and colleges that economic and social relationships have been reproduced. Access, admissions policies, curriculum, instruction, assessment, funding, promotion and tenure, and the production of knowledge are questions that please for a CRT analysis (pg. 164).

### **Racial Capitalism**

The gross inequality between the economic levels of minorities and White America can be explained through understanding the fundamental principle of capitalism on which the country was founded. Capitalism is an economic and political system in which private, for profit owners control a country's trade and industry. The majority has justified capitalism by an altruistic claim that it is the best way to achieve the "common good" for all. However, it is clear that economic inequality is deeply rooted and an inevitable product of capitalism. Harriss-White (2006) explained:

From its start as a project of capitalist industrialization and agrarian change, the political direction and social transformation that accompany this process – and the deliberate attempt to order and mitigate its necessary ill effects on human beings and their habitats – development has been reduced to an assault on poverty, apparently driven by international aid, trade and financial agencies and festooned targets (pg. 1241).

German economist and social scientist Karl Marx laid the foundation for understanding capitalism; Marx's theories regarding society, economics, and politics are referred to as Marxism. Marxism posited that class struggle, a conflict between the dominant class that controls production and the laboring class, is how societies progress. Marx's 1800's views predicted that capitalism would create internal strife and would lead to disaster. Though Marx was ignored in his lifetime, scholars agree with his stance and directly connect the continued oppression of minorities through capitalism as a systemic issue that must be exposed, evaluated and eliminated.

Scholars of Marxian theories have created the term 'racial capitalism', a unique term that explains how value is a consequence of race in relation to capitalism. Leong (2012) defined

racial capitalism as, “The economic and social value derived from an individual’s racial identity, whether that by an individual, by other individuals, or by institutions” (pg. 2190). Historically, minorities, more specifically Blacks, have been exploited; Blacks physically built the nation and today, capitalism and other systemic forms of oppression strategically position them to remain, disproportionately, the low working class.

Coupled with education, and as explained by Marxian and other scholars, capitalism is yet another tool to ensure that the perpetual cycle of keeping minorities in their place, at the bottom. This research used a multi-layered approach to understanding how CTE funnels double minorities into a false sense of equality through education and to prove that this is a ploy to continue a classist society where minorities are the backbone of labor production.

### **Intersectionality**

Women of color are seen by many as a group with “Cumulative disadvantages that accrues to people with multiply subordinate-group identities” (Purdie-Vaughn & Eibach, 2008, pg. 378). This group has been labeled “double jeopardy” and “double minorities” which indicates that they have suffered, to some extent have suffered more, than their minority male counterparts. Crenshaw (1991) explained the intersection of race and gender makes minority women’s experiences qualitatively different than White women as well as Black men. Enduring the wrath of racism while facing the prejudice of misogyny places this population multiple devalued identities.

Intersectionality of any devalued identity requires a multi-dimensional approach to understanding its views and experiences. It is important to note that, “There is no hierarchy of oppressions” (Lorde, 1983, pg.), however, specifically for minority women, battles with racism and misogyny have been fought since they were brought to the United States. This dichotomy

illustrates how challenging the educational environment can be for people of color, especially Black women.

The historical context of the education of minorities and women is vital in connect the challenges and experiences of being a Black woman in higher education. Crenshaw (1991) surmises, “Race and gender converge so that the concerns of minority women fall into the voice between concerns about women’s issues and concerns about racism. But when once discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations that each attempts to challenge are strengthened” (pg. 1282). Feminism contributes to propaganda regarding the “achievement gap” and the illiteracy of minorities when it fail to acknowledge race’s role in allowing large percentages of Black women to attend and graduate from proprietary schools that lead to no jobs, lower paying jobs and insurmountable debt,

Traditionally marginalized students, specifically Black women, were the majority population at the institution of this research, as well as at the other locations of this particular institution. Apling (1993) supported, “When compared with their counterparts attending other postsecondary education institutions, *proprietary school students are more likely to be women, minority group members and poor*” (pg. 391). They were deemed the “type” of student the college sought out by the CEO and other leaders of the organization. As a result of their background they are pursued and ensnared into enrolling into the program of their “choice”, and unfortunately, they enrolled without hesitation. “Not only do higher proportions of proprietary school students come from low-income families, but their parents’ education levels (which are related to socioeconomic status) tend to be lower” (Apling, 1993, pg. 394). Choy (2001) expounded that students whose parents did not attend college “Are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing postsecondary education, and those who overcome barriers and enroll in

postsecondary education remain at a disadvantage with the respect to staying enrolled and attaining degrees, even when there is control for other factors” (pg. 11). Unknown to them, these students were at a disadvantage when they entered college.

This group of students did not comprehend the challenges they would encounter when they entered into an enrollment agreement. Because of previous academic challenges, many of them struggled through their program of choice without the benefit supplemental classes to assist those who needed more training after class. The programs provided only the courses that assisted them in working in their field. Speaking skills, writing, computer, grammar, and professionalism were not offered, a clear indication that the programs were not designed to prepare them for the workplace.

Employers want employees to possess generic skills, employability skills, essential skills, and applied general education skills. These include knowing how to learn, interpersonal skills (e.g., teamwork, leadership, customer service, computing) to workplaces, effective listening and oral communication skills, information gathering and analysis, problem solving, critical/creative thinking, organizing, planning, decision-making, and personal attributes (e.g., motivation, integrity, dependability, self-management) (Kraebber & Greenan, 2012, pg. 15).

### **Proprietary Schools**

Proprietary institutions in the United States continue to evolve. From modest colonial origins, these institutions have emerged as key players in the preparation of the U.S. workforce. Growth was spurred by the G.I. Bill after World War II and again by the student aid policies of the 1970s and 1980s, as explained by Clowes (1994). Honick (1994) elaborated that “Industrial expansion fueled business sector growth to which the proprietary school responded” (pg. 34). This illustrates that these schools were created to put people to work. In pre-and post-Civil War, they were created to assist white men with jobs in response to building the economy. Today, they serve another purpose as well.

Proprietary schools before the 1980s were silent partners in post-secondary education. Whereas today they are common and well known throughout the nation. Although one may know someone who attends a proprietary school, few understand the details of how the institution operates. Most commonly knowledge of proprietary schools ties a negative stigma to this type of institution. This may be due to the negative publicity or the fact that many see an institution labeled other than traditional as being illegitimate. “As proprietary schools move into the limelight as an element in the public policy discussion over student loan programs, the limited information about the institutions and their relationship to other sectors of postsecondary education becomes important. Federal, regional, and state policy makers have distressing history of treating all institutions of higher education as if they were alike, despite the Carnegie classification scheme” (Clowes, 1995, pp. 5-6). Some may view this differential treatment as a way to ensure that these institutions continue to operate like a business without adhering to educational rules and standards. These colleges are more about ensuring that there is a working class than educating individuals to create more opportunity for their futures.

Proprietary schools can provide a myriad of benefits, if designed and implemented with a humanizing and student-focused model. “It may not be appropriate simply to eliminate proprietary schools from federal aid programs, tempting thought it may be, but it is not clear quite how to respond” (Grubb, 1993, pg. 17). It is quite clear that the current perception of proprietary schools is very poor for some skeptics and supporters. Grubb (1993) agreed that “Allegations about fraud and abuse are rife, and exposes of low earnings common, but – in a widely used metaphor – these may simply describe the “bad apples” rather than the average or the exemplary schools” (pg. 17). However, it is and should be a priority to align all proprietary schools to ensure that the students/graduates no longer suffer educationally nor financially.

Little current research on proprietary schools exists and, thus, this research is truly relevant and significant. Grubb (1993) explained that information regarding proprietaries was sparse at that time of his research. Because of the number of low-income students attending them, the amount of student aid being distributed to them, and other negative portrayals in the news (Grubb, 1993), it is imperative to take a closer look. Examination should be focused not only on how the institutions function and its statistics, but also on the views and thoughts of the students/graduates.

There are 122 proprietary schools located and operating throughout Louisiana and licensed by the Board of Regents. There is a \$5.00 charge to obtain a list of schools and their locations as nothing is free from these institutions. Marabella (2014) explained that anyone could open a proprietary school:

Inquiries for the initial application packet for proprietary school licensure are processed upon request and receipt of a \$25 money order/business check/person check made payable to the Board of Regents. Each applicant must complete the licensure application which is composed of a 22-point checklist. When the proprietary school staff determines that an initial application is complete and compliant, the application is referred to the Louisiana Proprietary School Advisory Commission for consideration. The Commission then determines if a recommendation for licensure will be made to the Planning, Research, and Performance Committee of the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents is the ultimate licensing authority for proprietary schools in Louisiana (pg. 2).

The ease of opening a proprietary school is indicative of subsequent challenges the students and graduates face. Anyone with \$25 and a loan can create a post-secondary institution, which aligns with the historical struggle of educational quality and access for students of color. Historically, education was created as a tool for economic growth and development for the majority population, i.e. White people. Then and now, “White people, and by default whiteness (i.e. White racial hegemony/White supremacy), have played a central role in determining Black people’s access to education in the United States” (Dubois, 1973/2001, pg. 123). These CTE’s

were created under the guise of allowing students, primarily African American females, who are labeled “low-achieving or academically disengaged” a new chance to have access to higher education (Dalton, Lauff, Henke, Alt, & Li, 2013, pg. ix). Creating an institution designed for minority females who were denied access for years may seem, on the surface, as a step in the right direction, however the underlying truths are horrifying and dehumanizing.

### **Critical Race Theory**

DeCuir and Dixson’s (2004) article explained:

CRT [Critical Race Theory] was derived during the mid-1970s as a response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to adequately address the effects of race and racism in U.S. jurisprudence. CRT developed initially from the work of legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado. Although CLS challenges the “meritocracy” of the United States, CRT focuses directly on the effects of race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of White supremacy on the “meritocratic” system. In addition, CRT differs from CLS in that it has an activist aspect, the end goal of which is to bring change that will implement social justice (pp. 26-27).

As explained by DeCuir and Dixson (2004), CRT was created to challenge racism within the legal system, however other areas such as education used it as a lens. “The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that included economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, pg. 1). CRT encompasses five tenets: the critique of liberalism, interest convergence, Whiteness as property, permanence of race, and, the most popular, and counter-storytelling (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, 2012). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explained, “Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better” (pg. 2). CRT

was the theoretical framework used to examine proprietary schools and the targeted student population of minority women who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This leads to the foundational argument that CTE, more specifically proprietary schools, are an extension of systemic White supremacy through education channels. Through creating vocational education opportunities, specifically targeting minority women, it can be concluded that the institutions create opportunities to perpetuate the lower working class by keeping those students and graduates in debt. In addition, Brown and Jackson (2013) explained that, “The concept of discrimination is so limited that remedies for it cannot adequately recognize all forms of discrimination nor overcome the continuing effects that it has had on our society” (pg. 14). The systemic oppression of minorities is innate and the oppressed are unable to recognize when they are being taken advantage; this is the lived reality of proprietary schools that victimize their students/graduates.

The CRT lens provides the best view of the intricate way proprietary schools encapsulate their prey and often leave them with additional debt and no improved way to survive financially. This is due to the theory’s focus on “The victim’s perspective” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, pg. 15) through storytelling. Ladson-Billings (2013) explained that “Critical race theorists use storytelling as a way to illustrate and underscore...principles regarding race and racial/social justice” (pg. 42). Thus, the problems of proprietary schools and their dehumanization of minority females should be examined through CRT to allow the students/graduates to be heard. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) defined, “The essence of “voice” – the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge” (pg. 10). Their perspectives illuminate their experiences of being taken advantage of through the appearance of postsecondary education. “CRT scholars believe and utilize personal

narratives and stories as valid forms of ‘evidence’ and thereby challenge a ‘numbers only’ approach to documenting inequity or discrimination from a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, pp. 10-11).

CRT has been used as a tool to theorize race in order to understand school inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As a result, a foundation has been established that vividly paints the picture with more perspective, while adding CTE into the conversation. To understand how clearly CRT correlates with the current problem in proprietary schools, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) expounded that inequity within schools is based on three propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. U.S. society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently school) inequities (pg. 48).

These propositions can be applied to education and CRT. CRT tenets also provide a deeper examination and thus insight into the dehumanization proprietary schools project on unsuspecting marginalized groups.

### **Counter-storytelling**

Whiteness as property, a tenet of CRT, was used to analyze this problem along with the commonly focused and utilized counter-narrative. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) agreed, “Educational researchers have commonly focused on counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism and have yet to focus on the other aspects of CRT. It is important to note that an emerging interest within educational research and among those who utilize CRT is the interrogation of

Whiteness” (pg. 27). Counter-storytelling, as defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2012), describes a method of storytelling that “Aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (pg. 3). Counter-storytelling is synonymous with Smith (1999) and other Indigenous scholars’ demands of challenging historical issues and problems with new theories and ways that help us to better understand marginalized communities. Thus, counter-storytelling has become popular in various areas of critical research. CRT scholars are concerned with “A more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices” (Smith, 1999, pg. 142). Is important to understand the difference between counter-storytelling and Whiteness as property? They both can provide depth and insight into the identified problem, and one cannot contend without the other. To understand both perspectives, that of the dominant White male and the double jeopardy standpoint of the minority female, both counter-story telling and Whiteness as property were used to provide a holistic vantage point.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) advised that stories and narratives can be used in education to give insight to marginalized communities experiences to assist with clarifying the past and present, and to assist with positive movement in the future. Matusuda (1995) suggested:

The technique of imagining oneself black and poor in some hypothetical world is less effective than studying the actual experience of black poverty and listening to those who have done so. When notions of right and wrong, in justice and injustice, are examined not from an abstract position but from the position of groups who have suffered through history, moral relativism emerge. This article, then, suggests a new epistemological source for critical scholars; the actual experience, history culture, and intellectual tradition of people of color in America (pg. 63).

DeCuir and Dixon (2004) concurred that the “Use of counter-stories allows for the challenging of privileged discourses of the majority, therefore, serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups” (pg. 27). Hearing directly from the marginalized group helps in the

understanding of their experiences rather than formulating personal opinions. Much of the history of marginalized groups has been written and told by the dominant population. Smith (2012) described the same aversion when explaining the dominant narrative of Indigenous populations:

It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know if us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appall us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations (pg. 31).

This has been an issue for all marginalized communities. The past aids in identifying current trends such as globalization and “post-colonial” discourse and can be addressed through new ways of researching marginalized groups. Thus, as a critical methodology, the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling is an interdisciplinary avenue for allowing these populations to “re-create” their histories and provide insight into their plight, past and present.

Obtaining experiences directly from minority women’s accounts with proprietary institutions is a novel idea. Most of the literature regarding CTE and more specifically, proprietary schools, report the quantitative findings such as data regarding student attendance rates, graduates rates, curriculum, popularity nationwide, and governance. Though there is plenty of information regarding this realm of higher education, interest has dwindled within the last few years. It can be surmised that because of the target audience of minority females, proprietary schools’ threat to traditional education and the property [*right*] of education is no longer the grand issue it was initially assumed.

### **Whiteness as Property**

Leong (2012) explained:

American history reveals a long tradition of assigning value to race. Whiteness and property are intricately related. Historically, whiteness both allowed possession of property and itself functioned as property, while nonwhiteness was a source of value only insofar as it allowed possession of a nonwhite person as property. That is, whiteness was valued itself, while nonwhiteness provided whites with justification for deriving value from another person. For nearly a century after the Civil War, this function of nonwhiteness continued, though without the official label of slavery (pg. 2158).

To fully conceptualize the explanation and argument being made, educational policy as property must be understood. According to Harris (1993), although the popular conception of property is in the terms of some tangible object – a home or a car – the position held by many theorists is that historically, within the US society, property is a *right* rather than a physical object. Dixon and Rousseau explained (2011), “The legal legitimization of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination” (pg. 8). Therefore, Whiteness and Whiteness as property are interchangeable in that they both demonstrate power.

The notion of Whiteness as property is about *rights* and power. The narrative is understood to begin with the dominant culture and its consistent denial of marginalized populations’ access to everything. That concept leads to the understanding that Whiteness as property can be used to describe a myriad of things. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) expounded:

In schooling, the absolute right to exclude was demonstrated initially by denying blacks access to schooling altogether. Later, it was demonstrated by the creation and maintenance of separate schools. More recently it has been demonstrated by white flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice. Within schools, absolute right to exclude is demonstrated by resegregation via tracking, the institution of “gifted” programs, honors programs and advanced placement classes. So complete is this exclusion of black (and other marginalized) students often come to the university in the role of intruders – who have been granted special permission to be there (pg. 60).

As a result, “Sorting [or tracking] is a way in which the property rights of whiteness is asserted in education” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2011, pg. 8). Minority women are sorted from their white counterparts and funneled into jobs of lesser means and into schools that lack quality to ensure

that they remain lower class citizens. Harris (1993) enlightened, “Through this entangled relationship between race and property, historical forms of domination have evolved to reproduce subordination in the present” (pg. 1714); Harris elaborated about the “emergence of Whiteness as property” and “evolution of whiteness as progression historically rooted in white supremacy and economic hegemony over Black and Native American peoples” (pg. 1714). It is important to denote that the power of Whiteness as property is about exclusivity, as explained by Fasching-Varner & Mitchell (2013):

The first condition is that whiteness has a particular inalienability, precluding it from transfer to racial others. This exclusivity represents whiteness’s absolute value. Inalienability often precludes property from having value, as value is believed to be garnered from one’s ability to sell, trade, or otherwise negotiate the transfer of property. Whiteness, however has been given full regard as property given that white people have vested interests in protecting whiteness and keeping the benefits of whiteness from others while simultaneously experiencing a high sense of value for their own whiteness (pg. 357).

Consistently, Harris (1993) wrote, “The hyper-exploitation of Black labor was accomplished by treating Black people themselves as objects of property. Race and property were thus conflated by establishing a form of property contingent on race – only Blacks were subjugated as slaves and treated as property” (pg. 1716). These illustrations present a clear correlation of how Blacks [and Latinos] in today’s society are vetted still to carry the labor market as demonstrated through the creation of CTE.

CRT’s Whiteness as property combined with the issue of minority women’s perceived value of their education and experiences at proprietary institutions allow the historical systemic perpetual cycle of oppression to come to the forefront. Documentation of denied access to education, land, jobs, wealth, and other “civil liberties” did not end during the Civil Rights movement or the election of a Black president. These issues exist today and it is an underpinning of CRT to bring social justice to the forefront of all disciplines.

Utilizing Whiteness as property and counter-story telling as theoretical lenses of CRT illuminates both sides of the spectrum: the dominant and the marginalized. The oppression of the dominant culture can be traced throughout history, thus creating a sense of property that was withheld from minorities. “Research for social justice expands and improves the condition for justice; it is an intellectual, cognitive and moral project, often fraught, never complete, but worthwhile” (Smith, 1999, pg. 215). As explained by Smith (1999), it is imperative to revisit the concept of struggle to ensure that current events are exposed and to alleviate future injustice. Dismissing the dominant population’s counter-narratives of marginalized populations can be through counter-storytelling, stolen voices can be recovered that express the experiences, opinion, views and concerns of the oppressed.

### **Interest Convergence**

Milner (2008) explained, “Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites” (pg. 1). Using the tenet of CRT with the research problem supports the understanding that education is not meant to elevate all to a higher standard of living. For the minority group to gain higher standing in the socio-economic community, the dominant group has to negotiate and relinquish a portion of its stakes. This is unlikely as Milner (2008) continued, “Self and systematic interest and the loss-gain binary are intensified by a permeating pace imperative, which means that convergence and change are often at the moderately slow pace of those in power” (pg. 2).

Bell (1980) posited that minorities’ achieving equality would be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of Whites. Critical race theorists explain that the creation of illusions are the dominant group’s attempt to support and implement change without altering its

status. This perspective also “Suggest that the ability, will, and fortitude of Whites to negotiate and make difficult decisions in providing more equitable policies and practices might mean that they lost something of great importance to them, including their power, privilege, esteem, social status, linguistic status and their ability to reproduce these benefits and interests to their children and future generations” (Bell, 1980, pg. 2).

Interest convergence coupled with Whiteness as property further denotes the rationale for thwarting certain populations from quality education and higher paying employment. Specifically, education is property in which Whites have maintained power and allowing minorities to have access to quality education would intrude on the majorities’ privileges, thus creating a shift. To create an illusion of access to college, CTE was created to entrap those seeking for solutions to financial and education turmoil and to perpetuate the cycle of a society separated by the haves and have not’s.

### **Conclusion**

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) concluded, “Culture continues to be cited as the leading cause of the low socio-economic and educational failure of students of color” (pg. 31). Gillborn (2005) concurred, “Although race inequity may not be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy neither is it accidental” (pg. 486). CRT scholars acknowledge the pervasive presence of White supremacy and its systemic hold on American culture. Regardless of whether the systems in place are deemed intentional or not, it is clear that they are currently operate and continue to keep marginalized populations suppressed. “Most of our research asserts that U.S. educational institutions marginalize people of color. Often, educational marginalization is justified through research that decenters and even dismisses communities of color – through majoritarian storytelling” (pg. 36). This cycle is at the core of how, currently, proprietary schools inflict

financial burdens and inadequate education on marginalized women of color without raising alarm. Women of color experience “double jeopardy” and as a result, are not seen as a population of concern for the White male dominated society.

Gillborn (2005) clarified:

The process of racial critique should not be confused with a prophecy doom. To identify the complex and deep rooted nature of racism is not to assume that it is inevitable nor insurmountable. Neither is such an analysis an attack on the progress already made in the struggle for greater equity: recognizing how far we must yet travel, is not to deny that we have already moved. This perspective, however, insists on recognizing the scale and difficulty of the task ahead. Critical race theory is frequently accused of pessimism but its recognition of contemporary white supremacy is intended to advance and inform the struggle for greater equity, not to detract from it (pg. 497).

Freire (1970) agreed, “[True] freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly” (pg. 31). To bring about true systemic change there has to be dialogue and action. Innate actions are difficult to alleviate but it is imperative to continue to bring social injustice to the forefront. Gillborn (2005) concurred, “Even well-intentioned actions can have racist consequences” (pg. 499). However, these realities should not thwart the critical race movements in every arena.

The proprietary movement must be examined to expose educational inequities and to bring about social justice. On the surface, CTE can be viewed as simply another opportunity for underachieving and academically challenged individuals to nontraditionally gain access to higher education. Operationally, many proprietary schools target minority women to enroll into programs that have no benefit to them professionally or long-term. Consequently, the cost of tuition is not covered with federal grant money and requires the majority to take out student and/or parent loans. Upon graduation, securing employment in their field creates frustration and may necessitate returning to low-wage employment, which hinders the ability to repay student

loan debt. Debt keeps minority populations suppressed. Only through research can this perpetual cycle of oppression and suppression be exposed and solutions found to stop the cycle.

### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

There is a plethora of literature concerning trends in career and technical education as examined by Dalton, Lauff, Henke, Alt, and Li (2013), which explains proprietary schools and their students as compared to tradition educational institutions. Recent literature also delves into comparing and contrasting “who” attends these types of institutions and “why” they attend, in the rise of for-profit colleges. The literature indicates that scholars have varied the various aspects of the phenomenon regarding FPCUS’s being on the rise and that they are here to stay. Thus, understanding that there is plenty of literature on the “what”, it is reasonable and plausible to investigate the “why” and “how”, since, at this preverbal fork in the road, it is clear that there is a gap in the literature.

The systemic racial discourse throughout the U.S. and specifically within education warrants a closer examination into the CTE phenomenon. FPCU’s target minority women as their “type” of student, which triggers a myriad of questions. Based on the literature and the historical perspective of race, oppression, capitalism and education, it is safe to surmise that there is a motive that will only socially benefit the majority. As a result, it is important to speak with the targeted population to obtain their perspective. A qualitative research study is required to attain the lived experiences of minority women students and recent graduates of FPCU’s in CTEs and their perceived value of their education.

A large pool of participants would provide the best data to understanding trends and statistics of growing admissions at FPCU’s, however, to understand the thoughts, motives, and desires of those students and graduates of for-profit colleges, a study of a few persons or the most active could be more purposive, as explained by Myerhoff (1979). Fueling the desire to

obtain depth requires a qualitative method of research (Creswell, 2014). When searching for depth, a natural setting is desired allowing the observer to be the instrument, co-participating as an engaged part of research that yield rich and contextual results.

In qualitative inquiry, initial curiosities for research often come from real-world observations, emerging from the interplay of the researcher's direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interest in practice, and growing scholarly interests. At other times, the topic of interest derives from theoretical tradition and their attendant empirical research. Beginning researchers should examine reviews of literature found in journals specifically committed to publishing extensive review articles (e.g., *Review of Educational Research*), peruse policy-oriented publications to learn about current or emerging issues in their fields, and talk with experts for their judgments about crucial issues. They might also reflect on the intersection of their personal, professional, and political interests to ascertain what particular topics or issues capture their imaginations (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, pg. 25).

Exploration of the problem must begin with the institution, proceed to the process, and end with the students/graduates. A close examination of all three elements provided insight into the broken process of the selected FPCU. The process was deemed broken due to retention issues, student completion of the programs, placement rates of the graduates in their particular field, and the high loan default rates of FPCU graduates. For the purpose of this study, the focus remained on the student and graduates, their experiences, and their perceived value of their education.

In the United States, formal vocational education in schools began early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with roots in the traditional techniques of preparing young individuals for work. In the last hundred years, vocational education has evolved from its original inception in response to changes in society, technology, education and educational philosophy, and the workplace (Wonacott, 2003, pg. 3).

Vocational education, now referred to as CTE (Wonacott, 2003), was designed to address a population in the community who were interested in obtain employment in blue-collar fields. The idea behind technical career colleges filled the void of equipping individuals with entry

employment in “hands-on” type careers. It is imperative to note that, on the surface, the theory behind the creation of proprietary schools was positive and harmless, however the implementation and the processes of some institutions became maliciously and predatorily misleading. Creating an institution for “low-achieving or academically disengaged students” as explained by Dalton et al. (2013), is, at the foundational level, a remarkable idea. In theory, it is articulated to this population that no matter your educational past, there is still a chance at a bright future. Apling (1993) expanded, “Proprietary school students are more likely to enter postsecondary education without a high school diploma or its equivalent” (pg. 395). This theory initially is very innocent and promising, however, the inner workings and outcomes can be completely dissimilar. In my experience at the particular proprietary, CTE institution in which I was employed for close to four years, that theory did not match reality in most cases. Dalton et al. (2013) stated that “Secondary education during the bulk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was organized and largely functioned as a way to “sort” students into different life pathways, with major educational distinctions being between a (traditional) college bound and non-college bound pathway” (pg. 2). Present day CTE can be viewed as the continued process of “sorting” individuals through education on a secondary level, which is simply a continuation from the sorting that marginalized groups have experienced for years through the K-12 system.

### **Motivation**

#### **Observation & Experience**

Through real-world observations, practitioner experience and educational knowledge, I posit that the FPCU’s, similar to the one where I was previously employed, target minority women. Working in various areas within the FPCU, I observed the recruiting tactics, classroom activities, placement challenges, and pre- and post-graduation challenges for the students. I was

able to establish a holistic view of how this particular institution operated. Engaging with the students and graduates was a major component of each position; additionally my personal desire was to become a resource and ‘go to’ person for the students/graduates. These various perspectives created an inquisitive desire to understand all aspects of CTE: the students, graduates, and the institution.

Initially, as the High School Recruiter/Presenter, I was trained to understand the “type” of student who should be targeted and the “type” of school to visit each school year. I was advised to speak to predominately White schools but not to “waste too much time” there. It was clear that my primary goal was to focus on predominately minority schools where students struggled educationally overall. Schools taken over by the state and turned into charter schools were “gold mines”. The populations of those schools were predominately minorities and the schools that were deemed failing by the state (usually all the same schools) were the ones where I worked the hardest to recruit. This experience was my primary motivation for this study as I desired in-depth insight into the thoughts, motives, and perceptions of those students/graduates.

## **Literature**

Historically, minorities and women have been marginalized in the U.S. Intersectionally, being a minority and a woman is a unique perspective that provides two dimensions to oppression and marginalization. Coupled all of these elements with capitalism, ‘the American way’, and all are intricately synced with racism and White supremacy (Freire, 1970; Harris, 1993; Mills, 1997; Crenshaw, et al, 1995). “A strict racial classification system and bondage, slavery, and servitude that accompanied it [oppression] were constructed by economic elites to satisfy their demand for exploitable labor” (Valoochi, 1994, pg. 349). The plantation mentality of

the dominate group did not cease with the abolishment of slavery. Today, the systemic oppression thrives, covertly woven into the fabric of American society.

Capitalism, race, racism, and oppression are synonymous and can be coupled with CRT to analyze the research topic. CRT provides a clear theoretical lens. “Theories provide complex and comprehensive conceptual understandings of things that cannot be pinned down: how societies work, how organizations operate, why people interact in certain ways” (Reeves, Albert, Kuper & Hodges, 2008, pg. 631). To illuminate the issues of capitalism, racism, and oppression through education, research literature was used to support the theory that marginalized groups are targeted in order to maintain a classist society.

### **Methodology of Research**

Freire (1970) articulated, “[true] freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly,” (p. 31). To bring about true systemic change there has to be dialogue and action. Innate actions are difficult to alleviate but it is imperative to continue to bring social injustice to the forefront. Gillborn (2005) concurred, “Even well-intentioned actions can have racist consequences” (pg. 499). However, these realities should not thwart critical race movements in every arena.

To bring to light continuing educational inequities and social justice, the proprietary movement must be examined more closely. On the surface, CTE can be viewed as simply another opportunity for underachieving and academically challenged individuals to gain access nontraditionally to higher education. Operationally, FPCU’s target minority women to enroll into programs that will not benefit them professionally long-term. Consequently, the cost of tuition is not covered with federal grant money that requires the overwhelming majority to seek student,

and often, parent loans. Upon graduation, the challenge of securing employment in their field creates frustration and necessitates returning to low-wage paying employment, which hinders the ability to repay student loan debt. Debt is the primary insurance for keeping minority populations suppressed. The perpetual cycle of oppression and suppression deserves research and resolution.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) concluded, “Culture continues to be cited as the leading cause of the low socio-economic and educational failure of students of color” (pg. 31). Gillborn (2005) concurred, “Although race inequity may not be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy neither is it accidental” (pg. 486). Critical race theory (CRT) scholars acknowledge the pervasive presence of White supremacy and its systemic hold on American culture. Regardless of whether the active systems are deemed intentional or not, it is clear that they are currently operate and keep marginalized populations suppressed. “Most of our research asserts that U.S. educational institutions marginalize people of color. Often, educational marginalization is justified through research that decenters and even dismisses communities of color – through majoritarian storytelling” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, pg. 36). This cycle is at the core of how proprietary schools currently inflict financial burdens and inadequate education on marginalized women of color without raising alarm. Women of color experience “double jeopardy” and as a result, are not seen as a population of concern for the White male dominated society.

There is little research on FPCU and its students/graduates today, which make this research truly relevant and significant. Grubb (1993) explained that information regarding proprietaries were sparse at that time. Because of the number of low-income students attending them, the amount of student aid being distributed to them, and other negative portrayals in the news (Grubb, 1993), it is imperative to take a closer look at FPCUs. An examination must focus not only on how the institutions functions and its statistics but also on the views and thoughts of

the students/graduates. Thus, CRT was the theoretical framework used to examine proprietary schools and their targeted student population of minority women who came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This led to the foundational argument that Career Technical Education (CTE), more specifically proprietary schools, are an extension of systemic White supremacy through education channels. Through creating vocational education opportunities and specifically targeting minority women, it can be concluded that the institutions create opportunities to perpetuate the lower working class by keeping those students and graduates in debt. In addition, Brown and Jackson (2013) explained that, “The concept of discrimination is so limited that remedies for it cannot adequately recognize all forms of discrimination nor overcome the continuing effects that it has had on our society” (pg. 14). The systemic oppression of minorities is so innate that the oppressed do not recognize that they are being exploited and thus, as students/graduates, they are of the horrible realism of proprietary schools.

CRT is the best lens through which to view the intricate way proprietary schools encapsulate their prey and, in many cases, leave them with much debt and no way to survive financially. This is due to the theory’s focus on “The victim’s perspective” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, pg. 15) through storytelling. Ladson-Billings (2013) explained that “Critical race theorists use storytelling as a way to illustrate and underscore...principles regarding race and racial/social justice” (pg. 42). Thus, CRT is the lens through which the problem of proprietary schools dehumanization of minority females should be examined so that the students/graduates can be heard. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) stated, “The essence of “voice” – the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge” (pg. 10). Their perspective illuminated their experiences of exploitation through the appearance of postsecondary education. “CRT scholars believe and

utilize personal narratives and stories as valid forms of ‘evidence’ and thereby challenge a ‘numbers only’ approach to documenting inequity or discrimination from a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, pp. 10-11).

### **Counter-storytelling**

Multiple tenets of CRT were chosen to analyze the problem, starting with the commonly focused and utilized counter-narrative. DeCuir & Dixson (2004) agreed, “Educational researchers have commonly focused on counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism and have yet to focus on the other aspects of CRT. It is important to note that an emerging interest within educational research and among those who utilize CRT is the interrogation of Whiteness” (pg. 27). Counter-storytelling, as defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2012), is a method of storytelling that “Aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (pg. 3). Counter-storytelling is synonymous with Smith’s (1999) and other Indigenous scholars’ demands of challenging historical issues and problems with new theories and ways that assist with a better understanding of marginalized communities, and thus has become popular in various areas of critical research. CRT scholars are concerned with “A more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices” (Smith, 1999, pg. 142). It is important to understand the difference between counter-storytelling and Whiteness as property as both provide depth and insight into the identified problem, but one cannot contend without the other. To understand the perspectives of the dominant White male and the double jeopardy standpoint of the minority female, both counter-story telling and Whiteness as property were used to provide a holistic vantage point.

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) advised that stories and narratives can be used in education to give insight to marginalized communities experiences to assist with clarifying the past and present and to assist with positive movement in the future. Matusuda (1995) suggested:

The technique of imagining oneself black and poor in some hypothetical world is less effective than studying the actual experience of black poverty and listening to those who have done so. When notions of right and wrong, in justice and injustice, are examined not from an abstract position but from the position of groups who have suffered through history, moral relativism emerge. This article, then, suggests a new epistemological source for critical scholars; the actual experience, history culture, and intellectual tradition of people of color in America (pg. 63).

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) concurred about that the “Use of counter-stories allows for the challenging of privileged discourses of the majority, therefore, serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups” (pg. 27). Hearing from the marginalized group enhances the understanding of their experiences rather than formulating opinions on your own. Much of the history of marginalized groups has been written and told by the dominant population. Smith (2012) describes the same aversion when explaining the dominate narrative of indigenous populations:

It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know if us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appall us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations (pg. 31).

This has been problematic for all marginalized communities. Reflecting upon the past helps to identify current trends such as globalization and “post-colonial” discourse that can be addressed through new ways of researching marginalized groups. Thus, as a critical methodology, counter-storytelling is an interdisciplinary avenue for allowing these populations to “re-create” their histories as well providing insight into their plight, past and present.

The idea of obtaining experiences directly from minority women enrolled in low hiring fields of study at proprietary schools is novel. Most of the literature regarding CTE and more specifically, proprietary schools, reports the quantitative findings; data regarding their student attendance rates, graduates rates, curriculum, popularity nationwide, and governance is available. Although there is plenty of information regarding this realm of higher education, interest has dwindled within the last few years. It can be surmised that because of the target audience of minority females, the threat of proprietary schools to traditional education and the property [right] of education is not as grand an issue as it was initially presumed.

Much of the literature on CRT in education has focused on the theory's application to 'qualitative' research. Qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography, are certainly consistent with particular elements of CRT. However, CRT is probably more accurately described as a problem-centered, rather than qualitative approach. Within the problem-centered approach, the problem determines the method, not the other way around (Dixon & Rousseau, 2011, pg. 22).

Matsuda (1995) explained that CRT is neither inherently 'qualitative' nor quantitative but should be viewed simply as way to analyze inequities in education (Dixon & Rousseau, 2011).

To understand marginalized populations experiences in education, critical race methodology offers distinctive perspectives. CRT, a unique methodology, allows the systemic social justice issue of racism to be addressed and to be exposed in hopes of forging awareness and fostering change. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) elaborated,

Using critical race methodology confirms that we must look to experiences with and responses to racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism in and out of schools as a valid, appropriate, and necessary forms of data. Critical race methodology contextualizes student-of-color experiences in the past, present, and future. It strategically uses multiple methods, often unconventional and creative, to draw on the knowledge of people of color who are traditionally excluded as an official part of the academy. Critical race methodology in education challenges biological and cultural deficit stories through counter-storytelling, oral traditions, historiographies, *corridos*, poetry, films, *actos*, or by other means (pg. 37).

Qualitative data can be viewed as rich, full, and unique tools to assist in further research and knowledge in the field of CRT in education. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) wrote that the progress made by CRT in education has been promising, however there is more work to be done to continue to “Develop CRT as a framework and method of analysis” (pg. 30). They noted, “Researchers must remain critical of race, and how it is deployed. CRT implies that *race* should be the center of focus and charges researchers to *critique* school practices and policies that are both overtly and covertly racist” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, pg. 30).

Participants for this research were selected through purposive sampling of minority women who were proprietary schools graduates. The criteria for sampling included having been enrolled and/or graduated from a proprietary institution in the South. Questions regarding their experiences in education in general and their experiences while attending and/or post-graduation were composed and posed. After a predetermined frequency and duration of interviews, participants who ‘stood-out’ were interviewed individually for clarification and insight; this application aligned with the CRT premise of counter-storytelling. It was believed that during the group interviews, participants would share their positive, negative and/or indifferent experiences, sparking openness within the group. Also, as the researcher and former employee of a proprietary school, I hoped that my presence would ease their perceptions and make them feel comfortable. Despite the available demographical data of and literature about proprietary schools, the oral experiences of students and graduates were missing. This research filled a void in the CTE information research arena and, simultaneously, addressed social injustices hidden in the operation of proprietary schools.

## **Interest Convergence**

The CRT tenet of interest convergence CRT was also used in the methodology of the study. When considering education inequities for minority females within FPCU's, interest convergence gave insight into understanding the factors of self, systemic interests, and a loss-gain binary, are inherent concerns of the dominant population. The creation of an illusion of equality and equity within higher education, specifically CTE, is the trap used to snare the targeted group into this predatory environment. Marketing to minority females who are socio-economically lower, academically inferior, and ignorant to higher education operations is a significant piece to the larger goal. Alluring this population to attend a college when they were told in K-12 that they were not college material is the first step to the bait. Ultimately, after acquiring large amounts of financial aid debt and the inability to obtain quality employment, the cycle of a low working class is perpetuated and sustained.

Interest convergence can only happen when racial equality and equity for minorities align with the interests of Whites (Milner, 2008, pg. 2). Thus far this convergence has not aligned. The only solution offered by the majority is to provide an illusion of equality that only entraps the minorities into remaining the majority in the low working class. This aspect of interest convergence through predatory education is interwoven in the capitalistic society created by Whites. The interest of the majority population, to ensure that the distribution of wealth does not change hands, thus ensures that a workforce is necessary so that classism thrives.

## **Participatory Action Research (PAR) and CRT**

Action research and participatory action research genres stipulate *taking action* as central to their work. These researchers should argue that the proposed inquiry and its attendant action

would be valuable to those who participate and to the issues raised. “The challenge here is to identify how and in what ways” (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, pp. 37-38.).

In an effort to conduct ethical research, I acknowledge that as the researcher, I, too, am an active subject, and thus using participative inquiry as a research methodology. Stinson (2008) explained, “Participative inquiry acknowledges both participants and researchers as active subjects” (pg. 982). This can be seen as a type of participatory action research. Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008) clarified, “Action research assumes that the act of doing research helps consumers develop new capacities and it’s empowering” (pg. 424). Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008) explained that action research seeks social change but more specifically, “Seeks change across individual behaviors, group, and national behaviors and develop solutions in collaboration with consumers [participants] that are sensitive to their needs and desires” (pg. 424). Seeking change through research alludes to laws or the development of local industry [or education] (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008).

Action researchers and critical theorists share commonalities regarding the social construction of reality (Gillborn, 2008; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008; Matsuda, 1995). Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008) posited:

They [critical theorist and action researchers] assume that specific historical interests drive current social practices. Historical, reflective, and change-orientated methods are preferred since they reveal that current social practices are neither natural nor inevitable; society is a human construction to be critique and changed on the basis of more-inclusive interests (pg. 425).

When considering the purposive nature of research and its call for socially engaged questions that demand to be answered collectively through research and action, the intersectionality of critical race theory and participatory research overlap (Torre, 2009). “Possibilities for research embedded in the theoretical, ethical and methodological overlaps between the two [CRT and

PAR],” (Torre, 2009, pg. 106). Using the combination of the CRT and PAR as methodologies will allow the marginalized groups to become “More than a site of deprivation” but rather become “The site of radical possibility, a space of resistance” (hooks, 1990, pg. 149) Using the same methodologies that silenced marginalized populations to have an adverse effect is a unique idea. Connecting CRT’s counter-storytelling with participatory action research allowed a holistic view of marginalized groups within CTE, more specifically proprietary education. Stinson (2008) concurred, “In short, applying an eclectic array of theoretical concepts and methodological processes to the participants’ counter-stories illustrates the complexities of how particular sociocultural discourses affected their agency as they negotiated those discourses in their pursuit of success” (pg. 1001).

### **Reflexivity**

To link research and practice, the researcher maintained reflexivity as an active participant. Action research qualified the researcher as a participant and thus simultaneously, revealing the probability of personal biases.

Reflexivity means that researchers reflect about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretative formed during a study, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data. This aspect of the methods is more than merely advancing biases and values in the study, but how the background of the researchers actually may shape the direction (Creswell, 2014, pg. 186).

I must state my biases in the study; I am a Black woman born in low-socioeconomic status, was previously employed at a proprietary school, and had family members who had successfully (and unsuccessfully) attended proprietary schools. Admitting my personal biases is not unique. Lorde (1983) openly, directly, and primarily conceded:

I was born Black and a woman. I am trying to become the strongest person I can be to live the life I have been given and to help effect change toward a liable future for this earth and for my children. As a Black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, poet, mother of two

including one boy and member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself part of some group in which majority defines me a deviant, difficult, inferior or just plain “wrong” (pg. 1).

Lorde provided a clear and concise example of the definition of reflexivity. She articulated how she self-identified to inform the reader of her personal biases in regards to her views and stance on oppression. Her proclamation did not hinder her ability to be a reliable contributor to social injustice, however it gave her a unique perspective that others in various critical theory movements did not have.

Conversely, there are cynics who discount scholarly work as ‘ranting’ once reflexivity is stated. “Most of the complaints are variations on a single theme, that these sociologists were overly anxious to appear radical and that their strategies for achieving distinction were to emphasize their differences from previous generations, and to emphasize the dramatic and surprising elements in their findings” (Bourdieu, 2004, pg. 1). Bourdieu admitted that reflexivity aids in objectivity but is unable to endure criticism. Marshall and Rossman (2010) contended:

The qualitative researcher’s challenge is to demonstrate that this personal interest will not bias the study. A sensitive awareness of the methodological literature about *the self* in conducting inquiry, interpreting data, and constructing the final narrative helps, as does knowledge of the epistemological debate about what constitutes knowledge and knowledge claims, especially the critique of power and dominance in traditional research... It direct experiences stimulates the initial curiosity, moreover, the researcher needs to link that curiosity to general research questions. The larger end of the conceptual funnel, if you will, contains the general, or “grand tour,” questions that the study will explore; the small end depicts the specific focus for the proposed study (pg. 28).

Regardless of how reflexivity is viewed, it is imperative that the researcher maintains an ethical mindset. All research can be viewed as biased, even quantitative, as cited by Slife (1999). Any research conducted and/or analyzed by humans may be influenced by innate beliefs, morals, ideologies and experiences, and even the most well intentioned researcher is challenged to

eliminate fully personal biases. Thus, adding a reflexivity statement is an aid to transparency and adds integrity and professionalism to the body of work.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to obtain the experiences from the posited primary targeted population of FPCU students, minority females. This population was identified as disengaged in academic settings, and therefore was targeted to attend CTEs to perpetuate systemic oppression and capitalism. A qualitative methodology was utilized to obtain their perspective, thus adding their experiences and views to the literature regarding FPCU's, more specifically, Career Technical Education (CTE).

This chapter presents the findings from participant interviews that included the following research questions: How do minority female students and graduates perceived value of their for-profit college and university (FPCU) technical education? This chapter includes the following sections: (1) participant profiles to introduce the participants who shared their experiences and contributed to this research, (2) common themes that emerged from each participant, and (3) conclusions based on a summary of group characteristics coupled with research commonalities.

The study participants were a group of minority women who embodied strength and tenacity. In some way, they all illustrated perseverance and dedication to bettering their lives and the lives of their families. This was captured in their responses to the interview questions concerning their educational and personal backgrounds, their explanations for choosing to attend a FPCU, their experiences while pursuing a technical education, and their perceptions of the value of their education. The participants attended different institutions within the same city and had different stories, yet, foundationally, their responses revealed commonalities.

## Participant Profiles

### Gina

Gina, a 2012 high school graduate, graduated from technical college in May 2014 with an Associate Degree in Business Office Management. Gina self-identified as a double minority, being Black and female. She had no children and was a first-generation college graduate. Gina said that her mother also attended a technical college when she was younger and that was one of the reasons she, too, wanted to go to college.

### Educational Foundation

When asked about her K-12 educational experience, Gina explained:

[The elementary school attended]...was a good school, there were very good teachers. I went straight through, I didn't fail anything. Middle school I went to...we called it "CSAL". It was a really good school, they helped, they put in the right grade if you were behind and it was a small setting in the classrooms. If you needed help you could get one on one help. And high school, my first, my 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, I went to... ABC Lab...and the rest of my years I went to... [Another high school]. That's where I graduated from.

Gina attended a newly formed charter school in her 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. Due to its instability she transferred to another high school that had been taken over by a local business organization. She commented that both schools had high teacher turnover which affected the learning environment. However, Gina successfully completed high school.

### CTE

Gina was motivated by her mother to attend college but also explained that her attention was drawn to a particular technical institution because of the commercials she saw on television and her interactions with people around her. When asked to explain why and how she chose to attend a FPCU, Gina stated:

I used to see “RC” on the TV a lot and I said maybe this is a good school. I see a lot of people go to “RC” so I said I wanted to try it out. I wanted to try out a technical college before I go to a big college to see if the college life is for me, being that “RC” was only an 18 month program. When I was in, um, middle school and high school, they had a lot of teachers that used to come in to like help and sub, they used to go, and I used to see them with the “RC” book sack. I used to ask questions ‘cause I was curious and wanted to know. They said that “RC” was a good school.

As we discussed her experience while enrolling into “RC”, she spoke highly of the different departments that she visited during the admission process. However, she admitted to not fully comprehending the financial aid process. Even though she did not understand what she was being told, she did not request clarification, and researched her questions on her own time. Gina’s experience aligns with challenges for students whose parents are not well versed in higher education policies and procedures (Choy, 2001).

Gina viewed her experience as fair throughout her program. The classroom sizes were small and the teachers were helpful. Upon graduating from the 18-month program, Gina acknowledged assistance from the Department of Career Services staff, but she was unable to obtain work in her field. Gina understood that obtaining work was two-fold and that the college could assist, but she, also, had to do her part. Gina was working at a local home health company as a nursing assistant making minimum wage. She was unclear on why she had such a large financial aid balance remaining, since she paid \$100/month for 18 months. She was also not worried about paying the \$30,000 plus interest that she owed because she knew she could make payment arrangements with the loan company.

## **Value**

When probed about how she views her education, Gina proudly stated:

...I got an Associate Degree. That's higher than a diploma. I feel like, not that I got an advantage but a jumpstart over other people...

Gina was proud of her education and academic accomplishment. She thought that her degree from "RC" was as valuable as a degree from any other institution. In her opinion, she was given the fundamentals to eventually obtain a job her field and one day fulfill her dream of owning an accounting business. The interview ended with Gina stating that she would encourage anyone who was interested in attending a small school, to attend "RC."

### **Dana**

A mid-thirties, single mother of three, public school bus driver, and double minority, Dana multitasked during the interview, by doing what she loves- styling hair. As a single mother, she found her comfort in doing multiple things to get everything done for herself and her children. In fact, multitasking was one thing Dana reported she learned to do well very early in her life. She was excited about her upcoming graduation from the 18- month Cosmetology program at a local FCPU. It had been a long and tough journey and as I learned when she started her story from the beginning of her education.

### **Educational Foundation**

Dana began her educational journey by explaining:

K through 12, I went to regular traditional schools until high school; well no, I actually went to a private school as well. It was a church school...Middle school, yeah, that was maybe seventh and eighth and from there I went to a magnet high school and then regular traditional high school. I think it would have been better if I didn't really want to go to any of them. I was forced to go to the private school and I was forced to go to the magnet school. I wanted to do traditional, but overall I think it was fine, all of them. I picked up bits and pieces.

Dana's foundational educational experiences align with Dalton et al. (2013) who posited that students, usually minority, who are academically disengaged for whatever reason, tend to

prepare themselves for early entry into the job market. Dana's personal experiences coupled with her education experiences catapulted Dana into the workforce at an early age.

## **CTE**

As Dana continued explaining her journey, she transitioned from K-12 to higher education, and how she always had a passion for styling hair and always wanted to be a "beautician." As a result, attending a technical college was her only option to obtain that goal. However, Dana's pathway to a Cosmetology diploma had not been straightforward.

I pretty much grew up with a great aunt and she was a cosmetologist; so I picked it up from her and I felt like I was blessed with a talent so I may as well pursue that talent. I actually attended three [different technical colleges]. The first one, it was horrible. College B, I didn't stay very long. I think at that point I had two kids and it was just kind of a bit much. When I decided to go back I went to a couple of schools and I just kind of prayed about it and I felt different when I got to that school. I felt like there was unity and all the other [negative] things that I saw at [the other] school were not present there.

Dana expounded on the experience of the current college, stating that the instructors were invested and she had learned a lot. Nonetheless, Dana admitted she was able to get what she needed to graduate and nothing would stop her this time around.

Neither of Dana's parents were formally educated. She explained that her children were her initial motivation to start college. There were times when she started a program and had to stop due to a pregnancy, but she always went back because she knew she had to complete college to provide a better life for her family. She gave her mother credit for her ability to be able to attend and complete school. However, after speaking with her, it seemed that much of the credit belonged to Dana for being diligent and persevering through obstacles to complete her education.

## **Value**

The value of one's education is largely subjective and, therefore it was imperative for this study to obtain various perspectives from the targeted CTE population, and to determine if the participants' experiences and perceived value of their education aligned with the current and likely more objective literature regarding FPCUs. Like Gina, Dana clearly saw value in her technical education, and subsequently enrolled in various career colleges after trying three different institutions. When questioned about her perceived value of her education, Dana stated:

I feel like whether it's a technical college or a four year institution or two, you know, for the technical college it's just pretty much...getting what you want quicker than taking that time to do a four year or two year program for whatever reason. We all make the world up so that's even with somebody who doesn't go to school and go to work at McDonalds.

## **Megan**

Like Dana, Megan multitasked during her interview. She busily balanced caring for her oldest boy while answering questions and giving me as much attention as she could. Megan was a Black female, single mother of two, and in her mid-twenties. Excited by the opportunity to share her educational experiences, she immediately proclaimed that her motivation to continue her education was for her children. Yet, her journey was a little different from the others.

## **Educational Foundation**

Megan began explaining her educational journey:

It [K-12] was good, easy; high school...my 12<sup>th</sup> grade year and my hardest as far as the tests; the standardized tests because I did fail it twice taking it in school then went to summer school and failed it again. I got down on myself but overcame it and passed it my last year of high school and graduated on time. I went to school in "KG" City Community College...on a basketball scholarship. I went there not knowing what I wanted to do...ended up getting an Associate Degree in general studies and that's it and then I had a baby.

Megan's K-12 experience aligned with current literature regarding the systemic "sorting" (Dalton et al., 2013) where students, usually minority, are not provided a strong foundational education. This ensures that they are funneled to a certain type of education, thus, continuing the capitalistic and oppressive divisiveness for people of color.

## **CTE**

Megan explained her pride in being the first person in her family to graduate from college, and, further, that she felt like she was a role model to others around her. Unlike the other participants, Megan obtained an Associate Degree from a community college before deciding to attend CTE. She stated:

I wanted to go to school [college], but I went to the junior college because it was free. They gave me two years of opportunity to see if college is really what I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want to go back to school [for] four years so I listened to different programs and I was like, well, maybe I can do this [CTE] since I have kids and it's easier and I can go either day or night and so I just gave it a shot.

Megan's decision to continue her education was primarily for her children, but also because she was not sure of what career she wanted to pursue. She also faced with the dilemma that many General Studies degree graduates encounter: there are not many career paths to pursue with a general degree. Like most CTE students, when they decide what route to take to continue their education, Megan's decision was based on time and brevity of programs. Apling (1993) reported large percentages of technical programs are shorter than 18 months and are designed to appeal to populations that have to work and care for their family while pursuing an education.

## **Value**

Oftentimes, the oppressor camouflages their malicious acts on the weak in the form of generosity and equality (Freire, 1970). The oppressor, according to Freire, has used education, a

tool controlled by the privileged, as a way to manipulate individuals into thinking that incurring more debt through short and shallow programs is a way to achieve financial and social equality. However, there is little evidence to support a claim that this type of education can provide value to those already engulfed by systemic oppression.

For those in the midst of the storm, it is hard to see the proverbial forest despite the trees.

Megan spoke of the value of her education:

I've managed; it's hard and sometimes I get down and out and want to quit, but I'm almost done so I just look at my kids and say you have to keep going. You can't stop, just to better a life for them and I have a good support system that helps me as far as, you know, getting my kids for me so I can maintain.

Megan values her education for the purpose it serves. She stated, however, that she would suggest that others “go to a four year” because it is “better.” Yet, she valued her experiences and understood her children and her desire to secure a trade that would keep them financially stable drove her journey. Whether this desire will become a reality has yet to be seen.

### **Katie**

This vivacious, twenty-something, Black female eagerly shared her experiences with me over coffee. She was a single working mother, and a graduate of a local technical college's Pharmacy Technician program. She enjoyed baking and catered small events part-time for supplemental income. More talkative than the others, she expressed her excitement to share her experiences and to contribute to the study. She thought her experience may inspire someone to pursue higher education, and that brought her delight.

## **Educational Foundation**

Like the other participants, Katie graduated from a metro area, public educational system, characterized by subpar schools that have either been taken over by the state or private businesses. Nevertheless, the participant's experiences are not entirely shaped by these circumstances. Katie described the beginning of her journey:

Before I was actually all magnet, which was all like accelerated schools all through school until high school. I went to an all magnet elementary school here; dance, art music, the whole roster. I went to an all magnet middle school. Now in the eighth grade my mom actually switched me over to a school that she felt was better but it was not magnet. I actually went to "Central" and middle school my last year and my mom graduated from "BR" High. She was a first all-magnet four-year class there and she was like, "I want you guys to go there." My sister and I hated it "BR" High to go to "Central", but at that time "BR" High was number one in academics, "Z" was number two and "Central" was number three. So I didn't feel like I was taking a backward step at all. I felt like I was fine and I feel like I got better interaction and a better education there and we had a football team.

Contrary to the current literature that indicates that the primary enrollees of FPCU, and more specifically CTE, have been previously disengaged, Katie self-identified as having been engaged in the best public schools available in her area.

## **CTE**

Even though Katie views her foundational education experience as premier, she did not desire to attend a four-year institution as current literature predicts. She expounded:

At first I actually went to "XY" community college for two years and my major there was natural and physical sciences. I wanted to be an orthodontist, but when I got there I really felt like everything was a struggle. It was like, I'm not supposed to be here this many years. Nobody there I don't think stayed the two years, or the however many months that they were supposed to or they had anticipated. I was like, this is taking too long. Then after I had been there I actually graduated from high school in May of 2008 went straight to college August of 2008, so I didn't, you know, I got that summer break, but I didn't really get anything else and I was working and I was in school not because it was anything I had to do because I just wanted to do that. But I got pregnant in July of 2010 and I finished at "XY" community college the last semester that I went. I was

actually two semesters from graduating and I was just like, I don't want to go through this anymore, so I left there. I finished December 2010 and I had my baby in March of 2011...after I had him I didn't start at "RC" until October of 2013...

Like the other participants, Katie's child became the catalyst for her decision to pursue CTE.

Katie was also motivated by her mother, a technical college graduate and single mom. She went discussed how she chose the institution:

I did a lot of research. I chose, I was between two things I wanted to do. I was a general assistant pharmacy tech and, I honestly, I do a lot of research to see what's going to benefit me; I do research for recipes just to see what is my better out, and I went to four or five different schools and this and that and I looked up prices and I talked it over with my mom and my sister and I ended up going there because they had the shorter program, they had the better price, and honestly the people were nicer there and I knew a guy...who was working there at the time and he said it was a good thing. Like I said, I did quite a bit of research [on] "XY" community college, I did not want to get burned out. I was taking a bunch of pre-requisites and doing this and doing that and it wasn't adding up to anything I'm just going, paying for books, buying gas to go back and forth to school and I'm just here, and you just keep, you know, putting me off and "RC" was easy for me...

Unlike the other participants, Katie felt equipped to make a logical decision when determining her next steps toward obtaining higher education. Even though Katie believed that she chose an institution that benefitted her needs and lifestyle, she subconsciously subscribed to what Hiraldo (2010) portrays as a higher education environment that works against equity and perpetuates racist paradigms that are prevalent in our society.

## **Value**

Due to the deeply engrained systemic oppression of minorities in this country, it is often challenging for the oppressed to discern "The inextricable ties between citizenship in a democratic society and popular education" (Anderson, 1988, pg. 1). Nonetheless, Katie thought her education was valuable and would enable her to have the American dream. She illuminated:

There will always be a place that has to supply something to somebody, or risk something. So, I mean, I kind of think about that like when I told my mamma about it

and I bought everything, put everything on the table to her. Her words to me were, “Your education is an investment. You’re doing the best thing. You have guts and you go to church. You read your Bible and you pray. You invest in a business, you put your money to work. And when it’s time to work you put your effort, you put your energy.” What she is standing behind, a new investment. . .I think technical [college] is a bad rap because I hear some people say, “Oh, you went to “RC” and that’s not a real school, is it?” Some people just think of it as an easy way out. But school, I am a strong believer. I don’t have an issue with it but it’s not for everybody. Like I said, “I don’t feel like I took the easy way but at the same time, I feel like I got a lot more out of it than guys that go to a class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.” Sometimes I got a lot more than education. I just wish it wouldn’t get a bunch of bad raps because it helped me. It helped me at the end of the day; going to class from 8:00 to 1:00, instead of having to be in there all day and not seeing my baby and this and that.

Katie’s thoughts dispel the thematic conclusions of CTE and FPCU literature that she and other students/graduates, are victims. Katie explained how she thought that the decision to attend a FPCU was the best thing for her to do and it helped her obtain a foundation for a career.

Anderson (1988) would use her thoughts as validation of his posit that, “Schooling for second-class citizenship have been basic traditions in American education” (pg. 1). Current literature explains that these students are victims, however the students/graduates did not see themselves as such. CTE is a tool, created by the dominate group, to give the illusion of equity by continuing to keep minorities in the working class.

## **Sharon**

Born in California, Sharon was not like the other participants; she is a single mother, Black, and female, and her perspective is different. Approaching graduation from the Process Technology program in a few months, she was excited to share her news of being hired at a local gas and oil refinery. She explained how she decided to apply for jobs without the assistance of the school and was fortunate enough to secure a job in her field before graduating. Sharon explained that the excitement of the new opportunity awaiting her had put “wind in her sail” and

she could overlook the hiccups at her college throughout her program because she saw “light at the end of the tunnel.”

### **Educational Foundation**

Unlike all of the other participants, both her mother and father raised Sharon. Her parents met at a local Historical Black College and University (HBCU). Her father graduated but her mother did not. Higher education was a priority in their family, and a major reason Sharon returned to Louisiana for her senior year of high school.

...originally I actually started school in Los Angeles; was raised out there so as much as I remember as for kindergarten all the way up into high school it was mostly magnet schools and private schools. My mom and my dad, well especially my dad he was more of the fundamentalist, like he made sure we knew how to read before school; dad taught us how to read and mom, mom was more of the work ethic you know so it balanced out very, very evenly you know. That's as much as I remember from kindergarten all the way up...my senior year I moved to Louisiana. I moved in with my grandmother, things weren't, you know, too hot with my mom so my senior year I moved there and that's when I saw the big cultural difference from learning out there to learning out here. I actually wrote a paper on it, it was called “From Starbucks to Community Coffee.” Definitely just not so much as just education, but of course, whenever I came out here my senior year my grandmother she's from a small town, Columbia, Louisiana, and they were still doing African American queens and Caucasian queens like as far as homecoming goes. For instance, like they were still segregated and I think that was the year that they decided to just bend it. But to see like okay, but this is still going on.

Sharon's experience while in the South was significant to her, whereas the other participants were born and raised in the South, and were acclimated to the segregationist temperament that still underlies the culture. Sharon's observations are supported by Anderson's (1988) assertion that Blacks have been treated as second-class citizens from the beginning of slavery up to and including today. This is no longer an overt action, but an action covertly engrained in education, politics, and other aspects throughout southern society.

## CTE

Sharon was tasked with attending the university where her parents met and she described it:

...So you know coming out here of course we're all about going to "X University" so I went to "X University" and of course again just the shock, so, I mean, I went to "X University" for about two and a half years and it didn't work out the way I had planned it to work out ...

Sharon explained how she determined that CTE was the best route for her:

Now life happens. Okay, I had my child and then I told myself that I...didn't want to go back to school, it didn't matter which school it was, I didn't want to go back to school until I officially knew what I wanted to do, you know, I had to figure out what it is about me that I can bring to the table, what can I see myself doing for years and years to come instead of like just going through the motions with, you know, another job that I'm calling my career because that is what I felt like I was doing, you know. When they say that school like college is for you college is perfect; when they really aren't for everyone. You know it's just more like the cliché that's going around with what you know as you were growing up. So, I just took a step back and just figured out all the things that I felt that I could bring to a job that I could see myself doing for years and years to come and then when I found out about technology classes, you know, that's when I definitely looked more into it and I found that technical schools were the way to go.

Her desire to work at a global oil and gas refinery propelled her into attending "RC" for their Process Technology (PT) program. Sharon was one of the 18 students to start the newly formed PT at "RC". She explained that the program was not organized and many of her classmates dropped out because of the disorganization and chaos. However, like the other participants, her child motivated her to continue. Sharon's sister, a PT graduate from another career college, urged her to continue based on her own success.

## **Value**

Sharon's perceived value of her education was something in which she took pride when she spoke. Her experience at another type of institution made her feel like she had a different perspective on what higher education is and what it can be. She stated:

...I think it's probably better than most degrees out there. It's not so much as, just money, it's, just, more of like a job security as well. I can take this degree and I see the main thing that I was looking at as for as kind of what it is that I really want to do. I needed job security, something that's going to secure me for my future, my son's future, you know, something that I know that I can like if all else fails I have this to back up and, you know, seeing how they're always in demand for operators and there are so many different categories of plants that you can do, not just oil and gas, but food and beverage, agriculture, agriculture which no one is in competition with. So it's just one of those things that I feel that I can most definitely say that, yeah...you completely value it and it's very valuable and I feel like it's winning as well.

In understanding current literature regarding this predatory education and its targeted student population, it is important to clarify that the students are described as victims but they did not see themselves as victims. Several comparisons are useful to highlight their similarities to prove the predatory motive targeting students, as explained in the themes section. The experiences recounted by each participant gave insight into their beliefs and motivators that propelled them to CTE. Unlike the literature, these women believed that their experience will assist in a better quality of life and for that, they did not see themselves as victims. However, the recurring themes deem them victims because of the commonalities they share and thus the reason they were targeted by FPCUs.

## **Themes**

Each participant was interviewed separately in an environment of her choosing to ensure her comfort. Major themes that emerged from the analysis and data coding included:

1. Demographic patterns

2. Motivation by brevity of programs
3. Financial aid policies and lending stipulations were not clear during process, and no one is currently paying or educated about their balance or how to pay off loan
4. Perceived value of education is positive

### **Theme 1: Demographic Patterns**

Each participant shared the same identifiers: Black, female, and single. Current FPCU literature indicates that women of color are the majority of those enrolled in CTE (Apling, 1993). Critical Race Theorists, activists and scholars focused on studying the relationship between race, power, and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), explain how intersectionality, the intersection of race and gender, makes this particular group's experiences qualitatively different (Crenshaw, 1991). Throughout the literature regarding FPCU, and specifically CTE, only quantitative data exists for an understanding of the phenomenon of vocational/career education. Thus it was imperative to conduct a qualitative study to share the experiences of and the value perceived by students who chose to participate in this type of predatory education.

It is no coincidence that the majority of students who attend FPCUs are minority women. Cheng and Levin (1995) explained that the type of students who attend these type of institutions are targeted for a plethora of reasons. They make up the largest percentage of students in this type of higher education because of the dominant group's essential need to keep minorities as second-class citizens. To provide the illusion of equity, one must create a faux environment of equal access to quality education. This masked inequality ensures that students obtain "real skills, for the real world," are lured into colossal amounts of student loans and endure a short amount of "training" to obtain an education that will keep them in the working class.

This tactic is not a new ploy. Anderson (1988) explained that the “mis-education” of the Negro reaches back to the beginning of the emancipation of slavery. As a result, it is so systemic that the marginalized group often cannot see the oppression. This group has been told that an education is the key to success and, as a result of the strong desire to obtain success through education and to achieve the American Dream, these oppressed have subscribed to the shenanigans and remain in financial debt, ensuring the low-socioeconomic status.

The youngest participant, Gina, was the only participant who did not have children and was not the portrait of the typical CTE student... overwhelmingly a Black, female, with low-socioeconomic status and with at least one child (Dalton et al., 2013). Four of five participants had at least one child and cited their child as the primary reason for working towards a certification, diploma, or degree. Despite the dominant narrative that Black, single parent, females are lazy and sponge off the government, these women exhibited diligence and determination to obtain an education while caring for their families as sole providers (Brown, 2013).

Being a single mother is challenging; coupled with working full time, caring for a child or children, and going to school, it can be difficult. However, these women chose to work hard to secure a better future for themselves and their children. Their hard work and being the sole financial provider for their families aligned with Melkerrson and Saarela’s (2004) finding that “Higher education decreases welfare participation as well as welfare dependence” (pg. 425). The adversity of being a single mother, working entry-level type work, categorized financially as low-socioeconomic, and attending an overly priced career college can be additional reasons why these participants and others like them experience challenges in changing their situations. And this is the primary goal of the dominant group- to ensure that there is a consistent working class

filled with minorities. A snare, clothed in education was created for unsuspecting and naive individuals. Deming, Goldin, and Katz (2011) surmised:

In principle, taxpayer investment in student aid should be accompanied by scrutiny concerning whether students complete their course of study and subsequently earn enough to justify the investment and pay back their student loans. Designing appropriate regulations to help student navigate the market for higher education has proven to be a challenge because of the great variation in student goals and types of programs. Ensuring that potential students have complete and objective information about the costs and expected benefits of for-profit programs could improve postsecondary education opportunities for disadvantaged students and counter aggressive and potentially misleading recruitment practices at four-profit colleges... ” (pg. 137).

Although Black college enrollment has increased at almost twice the rate of White enrollment in recent years, as indicated in the literature, a vast number of those Black students enrolled in FPCUs. Taylor and Appel (2014) clarified, “Unfortunately, a recent survey by economist Rajeev Darolia shows that for-profit graduates fare little better on the job market than job seekers with high school degrees; their diplomas, that is, are a net loss, offering essentially the same grim job prospects as if they had never gone to college, plus a lifetime debt sentence” (pg. 1). In my experience, recruitment tactics were intentionally well funded and repugnant. “They are mining the intersections of class, race, gender, inequality, insecurity, and shame to hook students,” explained Taylor and Appel (2014). The weekly message delivered from the corporate office to the high school recruiter was to exceed the established recruitment goals to maintain financial security for the company. Taylor and Appel (2014) acknowledged, “When an institution of higher learning is driven primarily by the needs of its shareholders, not its students, the drive to get “asses in classes” guarantees that marketing budgets will dwarf whatever is spent on faculty and instruction (pg. 5). The University of Phoenix has spent as much as \$600 million a year on advertising; it has regularly been Google’s largest advertiser, spending \$200,000, a day. This example is a reflection of how far these institutions go to prey on their targeted population.

Institutions such as these and where I worked spend top dollar to attract those they deem as poor, disengaged, and financially irresponsible (Cellini, 2010; Cheng & Levin, 1995; Choy, 2001; Deming et al, 2011).

Low-income and minority students are over-represented at FPCUs, as was explained by a brief from the Institution for Higher Education policy. “The brief, *A Portrait of Low-Income Adults in Education*, is the latest in a series of IHEP reports that offer snapshots of the status of low-income students in higher education,” stated Phillip (2011, June 23). Phillip (2011) clarified IHEP’s findings:

Found that 19 percent of low-income students are enrolled in for-profit institutions. That’s up from 13 percent in 2000. Meanwhile, only 15 percent of these students are enrolled in public institutions, down from 20 percent. Low-income minority women also are three times likely to enroll in for-profit colleges.

During my four years of employment at a career college, I witnessed a student population overwhelmingly comprised of Black females. The targeted potential students were mostly minority and deemed failing academically. I was encouraged to ‘overlook’ academically successful schools due to their student demographics. It was clear that our institution targeted a certain type of student. My job was to ensure that the counselors and teachers understood which “type” of student should be funneled to our institution.

## **Theme 2: Motivation by Brevity of Programs**

The participants’ motivations for pursuing an education at a FPCU were varied. However, one of the top rationales behind attending a career/technical college was the brevity of the programs. Apling (1993) explained that more than half of the programs at these institutions are the same, and conversely, they are all around the same length. They are usually 18 months or less, a selling point for FPCU’s that garners interest from a particular “type” of student.

Specifically, these institutions target working class double minorities who are single with children and were raised by single parents with low educational levels. Their best option is obtaining a “higher education” in the shortest amount of time.

The primary recruitment tactic taught at this researcher’s institution was to highlight the brevity of the programs. During presentations, I was to highlight the statistics of how much longer it takes to earn their four-year degree. This peaked the targeted audiences’ sense of urgency, most of whom were first generation college students; their lack of knowledge and information about traditional education and its perceived values did not resonate with them like it did their better informed counterparts. Those students who were raised in homes with parents who graduated from traditional institutions were interested in the brevity of the programs, as they had accepted that it would take at least four years to obtain a bachelor’s degree. Generally they did not come from the same backgrounds as the targeted populations, and there was no sense of urgency to provide for a family or immediacy to care for children.

There are many communities that have single, working class women with children; however, these institutions for various reasons target minority women. “These programs promise much, are often open to those who do not meet traditional college-entry requirements, and are largely funded by federal student financial aid, particularly federal grants and loans” (Deming et al, 2011, pg. 138). Primarily and disproportionately, single women of color with children usually were raised in similar environments. They are usually one of multiple generations of individuals with a low-socioeconomic status and have experienced low quality education during their K-12 experience, making them the prime target for this predatory type of education (Deming et al. 2011). Freire (1970) explained this particular oppressed group is easily targeted, usually without their knowledge. Dubois (1973) agreed, noting that the dominant group has intricately

orchestrated the marginalized groups' denial to quality education, and funneled them to destructive environments.

### **Theme 3: Lacking Knowledge of Financial Aid Policies**

The participants of this study were a mix of current students and graduates. However, none had begun paying their loans, nor did any of them seem fully aware of how much they owed. Some stated that the financial aid process was “confusing” and they would “figure it out when the time comes.” Each of them acknowledged their understandings and misunderstandings of the financial process:

*Gina:* ...I watched the video that explained it and I also did some research on my own when I got home 'cause I didn't understand what those words meant...During college it [monthly payments] was like \$20/month and after you graduated it increased to \$100/month. Then you start paying the student loan part, which is [estimate] \$20,000, you start paying that. They contact you and you set up the payment plan or if you're not working at the time, they postpone it until you are able to pay... I got mine postponed 'til Feb. of 2015. I think the latest they will postpone is 6 months, but if you not, if you haven't gotten a job within the 6 months, you call them back and they will keep postponing, like that... Eventually, I will, I just have to save up to it. But, I didn't know

*Katie:* ...my six-months hasn't hit yet so I'm just still getting the email from interest. I didn't take out a drastic amount, I actually okay the tuition was fifteen nine ninety five. I qualified for like seven or eight thousand in Pell Grant so that was really good, I think I only took out like a nine thousand dollar loan so I don't think it's going to be a bad thing.

*Dana:* It was helpful. They actually stood right there and went step by step even though I didn't really need it that was fine by me as I had been through it a couple of times so ...

*Megan:* Financial aid wise, you know, they switched up the prices on us, but other than that it [enrollment process] was okay... (Explaining the confusion) Like it was the amount of the program when I first enrolled. I think it was like they had either taken like a thousand dollars off the program.

*Sharon:* Actually it was very different. When I started up to do their financial aid this is when they just, just switched over to a new program that had to do with you doing face to face, like “Skyping” with the financial advisor in which I thought it was extremely cool because you know the problem with financial aid; you know, when you graduated people don't understand the fine print like when you sign this is what you are going to be doing. So there is like someone telling you, you know, these are like this is what's going to happen you know just to break it down for you and I thought that was a really actually a

smooth transition very different it wasn't bad but it you know was great, just very, very, unique especially when you compare it to the processes.

Regarding financial aid, specifically grants and loans to FPCUs. Taylor and Appel (2014) wrote:

Public funds in the form of federal student loans has been called the "lifeblood" of the for-profit system, providing on average 86% of revenues. Such schools now enroll around 10% of America's college students, but take in more than a quarter of all federal financial aid—as much as \$33 billion in a single year. By some estimates it would cost less than half that amount to directly fund free higher education at all currently existing two- and four-year public colleges. In other words, for-profit schools represent not a "market solution" to increasing demand for the college experience, but the equivalent of a taxpayer-subsidized subprime education (pg. 380).

Most higher education institutions agreed that FPCUs should not be eligible for federal dollars due to their for-profit status. Grubb (1993) explained that this practice is questionable since these institutions report the highest default rates and fraud cases. FPCUs, specifically career/technical colleges, charge extremely high prices for short programs and often do not prepare their graduates with the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce. Deming et al. (2011) illuminated:

The snippets of available evidence suggest that the economic returns to students who attend for-profit colleges are lower than those for public and nonprofit colleges. Moreover, default rates on student loans for proprietary schools far exceed those of other higher education institutions. Although for-profit colleges have had strong financial incentives to innovate in ways that increase enrollments, that rapid growth of the sector may have eroded program quality (pg. 179).

FPCUs serve 13 percent of the higher education population, however they receive 31 percent of federal student loans. Per the Department of Education, this disproportionate amount is not as alarming as the fact that nearly half of the students who default on their loans are FPCU students (Apling, 1993; Deming et al, 2011; Grubb, 1993). Defaulting students are usually low-income students who have household incomes below the federal poverty line, are mostly minority females raising their children alone, while working and pursuing higher education. I recall one particular student who was a single mother of three and decided to attend college to obtain a

better paying job. She did not have a car so she rode public transportation to school daily. She also used public transportation to get to and from her part-time job. She chose to enroll in the Medical Assistant program because of the brevity of the program and her desire to work in a hospital because of the hours of operation. Her children were her motivation, and she was determined to earn a Medical Assistant diploma so she could work at night at a local hospital while her children were asleep at her mother's home. She surmised that she would be able to greet her children each morning, prepare them for school, and rest during the day while they were at school, in preparation to work overnight. However, at the end of her program, she was not able to successfully pass the certification portion of the program and was unable to obtain a position as a Medical Assistant. During our last encounter, she expressed that although she was disappointed, she did not view her experience negatively, and she would continue to work with her current employer to provide for her family. This story is an example of the result of predatory education. Meszaros (2014) argued:

For profit colleges have been helping to maintain a permanent underclass. Much like car title loan companies and paycheck lending companies, for profit colleges prey on poor and minority students, saddle them with debt, and leave them with only debt, as their degree is often worthless in the job market (pg. 1).

FPCUs perpetuate the systemic oppression by ensuring minorities are the underclass (Meszaros, 2014) and thus provide a glimpse into an engrained issue. Allowing these institutions to operate outside of the federal government while dispersing federal loan money is a gross contradiction. FPCUs are businesses and that fact, within itself, is problematic (Cellini, 2010). Businesses focus on profits and labor market and thus have the opportunity to change the demands of the labor market (Delgado, 2012). Education run as a business is predatory in nature. As a business, the focus is on its interests and profits rather than students; racial capitalism is a result. Meszaros (2014) concluded:

For profit colleges point to deeper issues within our society. First, education should not be run as a for profit business, and especially with no federal oversight or regulation. Clearly, for profit colleges do regulate themselves and are utilizing valuable federal student loan money to provide a scam education to vulnerable populations in society. As public education is continually dismantled in this country on the primary, secondary and post-secondary level, are we surprised that a certain segment of the population remains trapped in a cycle of poverty? (pg. 1)

In agreement with Freire (1970), this illusion of access to higher education is a continuation of the oppression of the unsuspecting, guised in high priced marketing and slick jargon. Meszaros (2014) concurred:

I believe that the creation of a permanent underclass is not an accident; in fact, I would argue that private prisons, charter schools, voucher programs, and for profit colleges all aim to create an underclass that is profitable to corporations. After attending lackluster secondary schools, many poor and vulnerable students are left with few options and attend a for profit college, further indebting themselves without the benefit of graduating with an accredited degree. While poor and vulnerable students all over the country are losing educationally at every turn, for profit educators are making record profits. To top it all off, these profits are coming from federal money, which means taxpayers are the source of these corrupt companies' profits (pg. 2).

As the Career Services Director, I witnessed the aftermath of completing CTE. Many of the graduates expressed their frustration and disgust with their job search and with being ill prepared to work their field. Few who were able to obtain work in their field and went on to have successful careers, however, they were the minority. The majority were out of work for months, even years. Those graduates were tasked with repaying their enormous debt with the same minimum wage jobs they had before completing college.

Repaying student loans is a major concern for the students and graduates, as well as those who critique FPCUs. “A whopping 96% of students who manage to graduate from for-profits leave owing money, and they typically carry twice the debt load of students from more traditional schools” (Taylor & Appel, 2014, September, 23).

Table 1: Student Characteristics from IPEDS for For-Profits, Two-Year Public Colleges, and Four-Year (Non-Profit) Colleges

Student Characteristics by IPEDS Institution Type, 2009/10

	For-Profit Institutions	Two-Year Public Institutions	Four-Year Public Institutions	Four-Year Private Non- Profit Institutions
Female	0.651	0.570	0.552	0.576
African American	0.221	0.136	0.109	0.104
Federal loan (per student)	11,415	759	3,512	5,769
Federal grant (per student)	2,370	773	738	632
Tuition	13,103	2,510	5,096	24,470
Number of institutions	2,995	1,595	690	1,589

**Theme 4: Perceived Value of Education**

Determining the value of anything is personal. Understanding this is the rationale behind this qualitative methodology. Knowing that FPCU's, specifically CTE, are predatory in nature, it was important to ascertain the opinions, experiences, and perspectives of current students and recent graduates. Initially during the interviews, the participant's explanations of their turmoil during their respective programs caused me to think that they thought their experiences and education were not valuable. Contrarily, each participant believed her experience of institutional chaos was not a deterrent and, overall, each had a sense of pride and value in her education.

This study illustrates the premise that the oppressed group unknowingly enrolls in predatory education institutions. Although these institutions have high staff turnover, poor reputations, and general disorganization, this group believes that obtaining an education from a higher educational institution will assist in their advancement socially, academically, and financially (Melkerrson & Saarela, 2004). I believe that turmoil and chaos is so engrained in their individual experiences that they are able to overlook and dismiss occurrences that others from more stable environments would not. This, in conclusion, provides insight into how these

institutions continue to thrive and why the largest percentage of their population is comprised of double minorities.

The graduates with whom I worked shared their difficulties with job searches. Their shared experiences align with the stance that for profit graduates do not fare well and find themselves unable to obtain employment in their field (Taylor & Appel, 2014), and incur challenges with repayment of student loans. The marketing tactics of FPCUs are filled with dreams and images of obtaining high paying jobs after completing eight to ten month programs; the reality was that most of the graduates with whom I worked with were unable to secure work in their field. For example, Gina graduated last year and is working as a Nursing Assistant making minimum wage. She graduated from the Business Office Management Associate Degree program and incurred over \$30,000 worth of debt as a result of the 18-month program. Deming et al. (2012) concluded:

For-profit schools, therefore, do better in terms of first-year retention and the completion of shorter certificate and degree programs. But their first-time postsecondary students wind up with higher debt burdens, experience greater unemployment after leaving school, and, if anything, have lower earnings six years after starting college than observationally-similar students from public and non-profit institutions (p. 160).

## **Discussion**

Sperling and Tucker (1997) supported the foundational rationale of the creation of CTE:

There is now a social and political consensus that identifies improvement in the knowledge and skills of the workforce as the investment that is most crucial to our nation's long-term economic success. Given current federal budget constraints coupled with the present institutional structure of American education and training, many workers will fail to gain the needed knowledge and skills. Improving the knowledge and skills of

the workforce will require more than simply providing more of the same education and workplace training. Part of the solution will require institutions of higher education that focus on the efficient development of workplace skills and values, particularly those related to work life-long education and continuous self-improvement (pg. 1).

The creation of an institution of higher education specifically for the purpose of maintaining a working class was the premise of this study. FPCU, specifically CTE, is an educational predatory threat to minorities. I surmise that this type of institution ensures minorities, more specifically minority women, continue to populate the nation's working class. Historically, double minorities were not willingly given access to education. By making education "easily" accessible to all and to maintain the imbalance of the wealth and power, the majority created CTE. Created to put people to work, these institutions disguise their social and political consciousness with another form of systemic oppression. It is not an accident that the majority population of these institutions is Black females of low-socioeconomic status, subpar educational foundation, and a lack of understanding of higher education policies and practices (S Deming et al. 2011; Spring, 1994; Tate, 1997; Wilms, 1987).

### **Portrait Overview**

The demographics of this study's participants are reflective of the large proportion of the students and graduates of FPCUs. Black females comprise the largest percentage of students and graduates of these type of institutions (Apling, 1993; Cheng & Levin, 1995; Choy, 2001). Most of the participants self-identified as a Black female, raised in a single parent home of low-socioeconomic status. The majority of the participants were single parents who sought education at CTE to secure a better life for their families. Deming et al. (2011) explained, "Students in for-profits tend to be in more precarious financial situations than other students before they enroll" (pg. 142). Their financial situations propel them to pursue higher education in hopes to elevate them to higher economic status (Melkerrson & Saarela, 2004).

Intersectionality of race and gender enhances the challenges for Black females in higher education. Being a double minority in institutions of higher education is more challenging because of the lack of support and the lack of knowledge to policies and procedures. Each participant in the study admitted to not understanding the financial aid process, however this lack did not deter them from agreeing to the terms and enrolling. As a result of their parents' ignorance or absence, the students/graduates of the study did not have guidance or support during the confusing financial aid process. Thus, it is surmised that this lack has fueled an institution of higher education, a career college that targets double minorities and is predatory in nature. Motivated by wealth and domination, the dominant group perpetuates oppression in various forms. Education is the most consistent trend of economic oppression of minority populations (Donnor, 2013; Freire, 1970; Harriss-White, 2006; Parson & Plakhotnic, 2006).

### **Predatory Education**

These particular institutions are strategic in their marketing and locations. Determining areas where there are large populations of minorities and, thus, planting career-focused colleges is intentional and fuels racial capitalism (Leong, 2012); "The process of deriving social or economic value from the racial identity of a person" (pg. 2153). FPCUs are generally created and owned by White men, the dominant group of power through wealth. Each study participant identified the president or CEO of her respective institution as a White male. In most instances, the President did not have a formal education or his education was in business rather than in education. Even though minorities are a large percentage of the students and graduates of these institutions, other races and nationalities are enrolled as well. This does not negate the fact that these particular institutions intentionally target minorities to perpetuate the working lower class.

“And where that society is founded on capitalism, it is unsurprising that commodity of nonwhiteness is exploited for its market value” (Leong, 2012, pg. 2154).

One of the participants attended a FPCU new to the area. When the college arrived, it was an evident to competitor institutions, such my former employer; their demographic research prior to opening provided them with information about the previously established colleges. The new college: 1) opened inside of a desolate mall located in a heavily populated area, thus overwhelmingly patronized by minorities, and a stop on the public transportation route; secured a telephone number that was altered by only one digit from a competitor institution; and offered the same but shorter programs as other institutions.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Intersectionality, racial capitalism, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and CRT tenets were used to understand the racist complexities within FPCUs, specifically CTE. The systemic nature of racism, and how it related to education illuminated the challenges this study’s participants and others face when enrolling into these types of institutions (Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005). Students of color have unique perspectives regarding higher education, however their experiences are scarcely represented in FPCU literature. Thus, the participants of this study shared their experiences to provide insight into a subject often overlooked in FPCU.

A key finding of this study was that all of the women subscribed to the notion that higher education was their gateway to a better life. Regardless of their academic challenges and current financial struggles, due to exorbitant amounts of student loans, they all felt as if they did what was necessary to propel them to the American Dream. It was heartening to note that despite the

predatory environment that each participant experienced, none of them described her experience as negative. Each valued her education and, in most cases, would suggest the institution or a similar one to others.

The researcher surmised their experiences were a direct reflection of the deeply engrained and systemic oppression of southern culture. Many minorities are unaware of the systems that keep them oppressed (Freire, 1970). As a result, an unconscious agreement, a racial contract, is signed (Mills, 1997). For this nation to operate in oppression and segregation so fluidly for centuries, both the majority and minority groups have an established covenant. This contract is not tangible but its validity cannot be negated. The participants of the study were examples of this contract, naively subscribing to predatory education by adhering to the rules handed down by the majority group, and especially the rule that education is the key to success, and there is equity of education within all higher education institution. In reality, the illusion of access to equitable education is the trap of many predatory career colleges (Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1995; Gillborn, 2005; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

It is imperative to understand that one study cannot adequately identify the depths of discrimination (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Studies only describe a glimpse the entire picture. Nonetheless, Critical Race Theorists continue to delve into issues of racism and oppression to expose deeply embedded oppression; studies such as this are integral to the cause. Understanding the historical foundation of racism is the beginning of understanding the effects of oppression and how it has thrived and evolved for centuries.

## Capitalism

The idea that education is used as property to exploit minority females who were once deemed property can be challenging. The dominant population imported minorities into the United States as property; slaves were brought in to be the laborers to build this nation through backbreaking work, sweat, blood, and tears. When slavery was abolished, the dominant group used education as another avenue to perpetuate slavery but without visible shackles. By ensuring minorities were given subpar education, the oppression continued without covertly, (Anderson, 1988). The oppression of minorities through education continues today.

Marx coined the term capitalism. His theories of value being tied to utility parallel the perpetual dehumanization of people of color. Leong (2012) expounded:

The Marxian analysis thus provides a lens for examining the way that racial identity is produced, used, and exchanged in society. We can think of racial identity as a commodity that we all produce. The process of racial identity production is complex and multifaceted (pgs. 2183-2184).

The dominant group has used minorities for its benefit since the inception of slavery. Thus, minorities are valued and have been used as workers since being imported from their native lands (Freire, 1970; Mills, 1997). Therefore, understanding how education was used as a tool to ensure the perpetuation of minorities as low, working class citizens becomes clear. The participants of this study were forced into the workforce early in life for various reasons, however, their families were funneled into making decisions to quickly return to the working class. This is the foundation of racial capitalism as explained by Leong (2012).

## **Summation**

The experiences of the participants of this study aligned with the claim that educational oppression is systematically engrained in our culture. Minorities are often unaware of this deeply entrenched racism. The women focused on caring for their families and obtaining higher education and they believed that completing college would advance them socially and financially, however, incurring debt by attending at FPCU was not presented as part of the package. As single mothers, with huge amounts of student loan debt, their lives continue to be challenged financially, thus their opportunities to leave the low working class are thwarted.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Three topics will be discussed in this chapter: (1) my experience and motivation for the study; (2) my summary and significance of the findings; and (3) limitations of the research and implications of the findings for practice and future research.

### **Researcher's Motivation**

As a former employee at a proprietary school for four years, I was privy to unsettling trends regarding the majority student population: minority women. The school aggressively targeted minority women from low socio-economic status, who were disengaged during K-12 (many did not graduate) and those already overcome with financial debt. These students were deemed the “type” suitable for the school. The admissions and financial aid processes were designed to be quick transitions to enroll the students into programs as soon and quickly as possible. The process prevented prospective students from changing their minds and not enrolling. In campus meetings, we were advised that the goal was to graduate all students, however, if the student physically sat in class for three days and had consistent, documented enrollment, the campus received full payment from the government. The entire staff was encouraged to call and do whatever was necessary to ensure that students attended school the first two weeks of classes; after that, the money was in the bank and attendance was not a concern.

The financial aid department was eliminated from each campus nationwide and each campus had one person who collected monthly payments, as tuition was never full covered by Pell grants, scholarships and student loans. Students with financial aid questions were advised to contact the company headquarters in Florida or to sit at a computer to video chat with a representative when available. This process was challenging for students and their families

because so many questions arose during financial aid meetings. Video chats had a time limit and students were not always able to ask all of their questions or obtain sufficient answers. This process left the students confused and often led to issues with debt repaying once the student dropped out or graduated.

I decided to investigate trends in proprietary schools because of the issues described here within and the challenges faced in the classroom with uneducated teachers. There are empirical studies regarding the education to career track, financial aid disparities, and the comparing and contrasting to community and/or tradition institutions; literature available on proprietary schools only scratches the surface as research about the students is sparse. CRT and action research explains that it is imperative to directly hear the experiences and stories of those who are being marginalized to provoke social change as well as to illuminate hidden truths. Minority females are targeted and experience systemic oppression, yet may not be at all aware. To determine their thoughts and experiences, research ascertained their thoughts and feelings with no guidance from the researcher. Open-ended questions determined commonalities and or differences.

The continued relevance of consistently researching educational inequity is the foundation of social justice. To forge positive change, it is necessary to continually access and evaluate discrimination and injustice. Superficially, one can surmise that proprietary education is not a perpetual cycle of systemic racial “sorting” through education. However, I posit that in fact it is a tool within education that was not initially designed to discriminate but has morphed into a funnel to keep marginalized groups in a lower working class and social status. Holistically, it is clear that to maintain a White male dominated society in which there are disparities of wealth, there has to be a system in which this structure remains intact.

This research does not infer that this type of education cannot be successful. I believe that this type of institution can be beneficial if at its inception, the environment is created with equity and equality. This means there should be no targeted population, there should be a diverse group of students as well as staff, and programs should be designed to benefit the students holistically to ensure that they are equipped to secure employment in the career of their choice, and able to repay all debt.

Understanding the type of institution described in the study is significant. The institution where I was employed was a nationwide for-profit college that was placed in cities with large minority populations to attract the targeted group of individuals. This “college” operated as a business instead of an institution of higher education. There was a corporate office located in a high-class suburban White majority populated city in Florida. All of the White, male executive leaders were housed at the corporate office, whereas the campuses nationwide were usually led by minority females. The institutions where the study participants either currently enrolled or recently graduated were either the exact college described in the study or one similar. These institutions have the saturated capital city because of the percentage of low-socioeconomic minorities, as well as the failing K-12 school system. These predatory colleges refer to themselves as colleges, not universities, and are structured differently from the well-known University of Phoenix and are not to be confused with that type of institution. More specifically, these institutions strategically use media to target their “type” of students by placing billboards in minority populations and on channels and on commercials that are confirmed to have large numbers of minority viewers. As a result, they have been termed predatory in nature.

## **Summary and Significance of Findings**

This study was a qualitative examination of the lived experiences and the perceived value of minority female students/graduates of FPCU's. There are many contributions this research makes to the current FPCU, CTE research. The two most important are filling the gap in the research and bringing the lived experiences of double minorities at CTES to the forefront. There is little qualitative data regarding FPCU's and CTE. The data is overwhelmingly quantitative and sheds light on the foundation and statistical aspects of this type of education. This research fills the gap in the current literature regarding the targeted population of FPCU's and their lived experiences. This information is relevant to higher education's examination of how and why this type of institution is thriving.

Critical Race Theorists have examined intersectionality and education, however, there is little understanding of the intersection of race, gender, and education in regards to CTE. This study fills the gap in that literature and it brings with it another perspective. CRT is premised with understanding, examining, and providing an outlet to and for the voices of marginalized groups and this research aids that cause. This work allows one marginalized group's respective voices to be heard collectively and brings a new level of understanding to education.

## **Limitations of the Study**

All research projects incur limitations. There are no perfect research designs (Creswell, 2014; Slife & Williams, 1995). Marshall and Rossman (2010) states, "A discussion of the study's limitations demonstrates that the researcher understands this reality – that she will make no overweening claims about generalizability or conclusiveness relative to what she has learned" (p. 42).

In addition:

Limitations derive from the conceptual framework and the study's design. A discussion of these limitations early on in the proposal reminds the reader what the study is and is *not* – its boundaries – and how its results can and *cannot* contribute to understanding... framing the study in specific research and theoretical traditions places limits on the research. The overall design, moreover, indicates how broadly applicable the study may be. Although no qualitative studies are generalizable in the statistical sense, their findings may be transferable. A discussion of these considerations reminds the reader that the study is bounded and situated in a specific context. The reader, then, can make decisions about its usefulness for other settings (p. 43).

Addressing the issue of minority women in proprietary schools presented limitations. Primarily, CTE is an expansive division and the focus of this proposed research was for-profit career schools that target minority populations. These institutions target marginalized groups by airing commercials on channels and/or shows with majority minority viewers, such as BET.

It was also challenging to track the data of proprietary schools without their consent. They are governed differently than other institutions and thus they are more restrictive with their data. The result of their constricting policies of displaying data to the public is that there is not much literature on their operational functions or their demographics. It was challenging to accurately connect the correlation between their target desired audience and their marketing plans. However, it is necessary to obtain this information and illuminate the issues where the literature is deficient.

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

To: Potential Participant

From: Rashanda R. Booker, Doctoral Candidate  
Louisiana State University, [rbooke2@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:rbooke2@tigers.lsu.edu)

Subject: For-Profit Colleges and University (FPCU) Minority Women Student/Alumni Study

Dear Potential Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Rashanda R. Booker, Doctoral Candidate, in the Educational Leadership & Research Department, of the College of Human Sciences & Education at Louisiana State University.

The purpose of this study is for African American female students and/or graduates of For-Profit Colleges and Universities (FPCU), to share their lived experiences, while attending and/or post-graduation.

You will be asked to participate in a group interview face-to-face, and then possible a one-on-one interview face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview. Either may last up to two hours, maximum. Interviews will be audio-recorded, with your consent. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and stored in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer, in a locked room. There will be no identifiers on either recordings or the transcripts and I, the principle investigator, will be the only one that will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. Your participation will have the potential benefit of increasing the understanding of lived experiences of minority female students/graduates of FPCUs. However, you will not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study. The research is confidential. Some of the information, collected about you includes your gender, race, educational background, socio-economic status, employment status, program of study, and the length of time you attending the institution. *Your participation in this study is on a volunteer basis and is of no cost to you, and you are free to choose not to participate, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.*

If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years. This study has been approved by the LSU Institutional Review Board (IRB). For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Dennis Landin, at 578-8692, or [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu).

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please advice of your willingness and availability to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Rashanda R. Booker, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

AUDIO/ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: “Minority Female Students/Graduates of FPCUs Lived Experiences” conducted by Rashanda R. Booker, Doctoral Candidate. I am asking you permission to allow you interviews to be audiotape (sound), as a part of the research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team. The recording(s) will include the participant’s assigned pseudonym. The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet with no link to subject’s identity; and will be retained for five years after which hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be erased.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator, named above, permission to record you, as described above, during participation in the study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reasons than those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant (PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your K-12 experience.
2. How did you choose to attend a FPCU?
3. Are any of your family members college graduates?
4. How did you decide which program to study?
5. How was the enrollment process (including financial aid)?
6. How were your interactions with the administrative staff?
7. How was your experience inside the classroom? With the instructors?
8. What was the most challenging part of the program?
9. How did you balance school, family life, and work (if applicable)?
10. Upon completing the program, did you receive job placement assistance?
11. If applicable, did you take the certification exam? Were you successful?
12. How long did it take you to find work in your field of study?
13. Are you enjoying working in your field?
14. (If not working in field) What has been the toughest challenge of obtaining work in your field? Have you received (or still getting help) from your Alma Mater?
15. Looking back, what are some things you would do differently (specific to school)?
16. How do you feel about your education? Is it valuable? Does it compare to other institutions?
17. Majority of students/grads are Black women, do you have any thoughts on why that may be?

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

TO: Rashanda Booker  
Ed Leadership & Research

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 3, 2014

RE: IRB# E8765

TITLE: African American Females and For-Profit Career Technical Educational (CTE) Institutions

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 10/1/2014

Approved  Disapproved

Approval Date: 10/1/2014 Approval Expiration Date: 9/30/2017

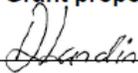
Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a,b

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –  
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

## VITA

Rashanda R. Booker, a native of Oxford, Mississippi, received her bachelor's degree at Southeastern Louisiana University in 2002. Thereafter, she worked at various higher education institutions in student affairs. As her interest in higher education grew, she entered graduate school and obtained a master's degree in May 2008. Her passion for higher education coupled with her experiences at a proprietary college, motivated her to pursue a doctoral in Educational Leadership at Louisiana State University.