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# Perceptions of Unemployed African American Men on Labor Market Accessibility: Implications for Economic and Workforce Development Policy

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# Perceptions of Unemployed African American Men on Labor Market Accessibility: Implications for Economic and Workforce Development Policy

## Abstract

Since the 1950s, federal government policies have developed anti-poverty programs that attempted to address urban joblessness among African American males. However, these programs have resulted in discriminatory social practices that increased marginalization and exclusion of this population. In addition, structural changes in urban economies and shifts in labor market dynamics have also contributed to the growing number of unemployed African American males over the last four decades. With the increase in the frequency of joblessness among urban African American males, their communities have experienced the emergence of a new element to poverty, an element implicating an underclass. The emergence of this underclass is emphasized by segregated neighborhoods, disproportionate rates of adult joblessness, a lack of participation in the labor market, and unemployed adults and adults who never accessed the labor market. The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of unemployed African American males and their challenges to accessing the labor market. Data collected from the study can be used to inform policies to include the labor market experiences of unemployed African American males to utilize this input in the planning process, as well as governance in designing local community economic development programs. Data were primarily gathered in the study using semi-structured face to face interviews with unemployed African American males. The study is significant because it examined the labor market experiences and perceptions of unemployed African American males so that local neighborhood and economic development initiatives offering workforce development can better meet the needs of this population.

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C. Michael Robinson, Ed.D.


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## Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to extend all honors and praises to the Great God Allah, for granting me the will to endure the many challenges and obstacles that I encountered during this journey. I'd like to extend honors to my ancient Moorish forefathers and foremothers, as I am the proof that you all existed. Next, I would like to dedicate this in the memory of my beloved mother Shirley Faye Byrd-Mims, Grandmother Novis Byrd, my adoptive Grandmother Ophelia Clark, and step-dad Harold Clark, Sr. Although you all are not here in the physical form to see who and what I've become and accomplished, I felt the presence of each one of your spirits every time I was in the valley of decision, telling me to keep working and to not give up.

I can't go on without dedicating this to my daughter Ameena, the most precious gift I've ever received. I would like to extend a huge show of gratitude and appreciation for my Beautiful and strong fiancé Madea for being there with me every step of the way, this was a sacrifice, but I am grateful and appreciative of your support and patience throughout this process. Now we can focus on planning the wedding of our dreams! Next, to my Big Brother and Spiritual father, Timothy "Noble" Jennings-Bey, years ago you guided me on this path, seeing what I didn't, forever indebted for the knowledge and wisdom you passed on to me which guided me through! This dedication would not feel right if I do not mention my Godfather, Edward L. Mitchell Sr. You always told me not to worry and that "it'll get GREATER later"! That taught me patience and to appreciate the little blessings ALWAYS.

To all my siblings; Harold Jr., Quinn, Bianca and Baby brother Trent. This is not my accomplishment alone. Let this achievement serve as an example of what can be accomplished regardless of where and what you come from. I love you all unconditionally, couldn't ask for any other siblings. To Mr. Team A.N.G.E.L, Edward Mitchell Jr. Keep inspiring and keep Pushing! Terry "Livewire" Moore, thanks for always being there, a brother like no other. We've had a brotherly bond since we met and your always supportive and encouraging. For my Uncle Mickey Byrd, my love of school and learning has carried me through like you said, and I didn't quit! I would like to extend gratitude to the five gentlemen (A, B, J, M, and Z) who took their time out to volunteer their time to participate in the study, allowing me into your experiences was truly humbling and inspirational. I extend all Honors to all that supported me and gave me words of encouragement throughout my journey.

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Thank you to the St. John Fisher College as an institution and family. I love you all and truly enjoyed this wonderful and transformative experience.

**Biographical Sketch**

Terrence Byrd El is currently serving as an Empire Fellow in the New York State Department of State Executive Office. Mr. Byrd El attended the State University at Albany from 2000 to 2004, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Minor in Africana Studies in 2004. He attended Southern New Hampshire University from 2011 to 2012 and graduated with a Master of Science in Community Economic Development in 2012. Terrence came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2014 and began studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Byrd El pursued research in the following qualitative research area; Perceptions of Unemployed African American Males on Labor Market Accessibility; Implications for Economic and Workforce Development Policy under the direction of Dr. C. Michael Robinson and Dr. Linda Doty and received his Doctor of Education in Executive Leadership May 2018.

**Abstract**

Since the 1950s, federal government policies have developed anti-poverty programs that attempted to address urban joblessness among African American males. However, these programs have resulted in discriminatory social practices that increased marginalization and exclusion of this population. In addition, structural changes in urban economies and shifts in labor market dynamics have also contributed to the growing number of unemployed African American males over the last four decades. With the increase in the frequency of joblessness among urban African American males, their communities have experienced the emergence of a new element to poverty, an element implicating an underclass. The emergence of this underclass is emphasized by segregated neighborhoods, disproportionate rates of adult joblessness, a lack of participation in the labor market, and unemployed adults and adults who never accessed the labor market.

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of unemployed African American males and their challenges to accessing the labor market. Data collected from the study can be used to inform policies to include the labor market experiences of unemployed African American males to utilize this input in the planning process, as well as governance in designing local community economic development programs. Data were primarily gathered in the study using semi-structured face to face interviews with unemployed African American males. The study is significant because it examined the labor market experiences and perceptions of unemployed African American males so that local neighborhood and economic

development initiatives offering workforce development can better meet the needs of this population.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Since the 1950s, the federal government has attempted to address urban poverty and joblessness with various social programs. Despite these efforts, social and economic issues emerged concerning the phenomena of African American male joblessness, which was publicly revealed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) in his report on the African American family. Moynihan identified the situation of African American male joblessness as an unconcealable crisis and predicted that the problem would continue to develop into a more critical situation (Holzer, 2009). Moynihan (1965) also acknowledged this situation as the primary cause of instability within African American families and suggested that this phenomenon must be of importance for any public policies that seek to stabilize African American families (Holzer, 2009; Moynihan, 1965).

The labor market difficulties found among low-income young African American men are of concern more than any other group (Bound & Freeman, 1992; Ferguson, 2012; Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005; Moss & Tilly, 1996; Royster, 2007). From the late-1960s to the mid-1970s, changes in the urban economy contributed to the creation of a jobless underclass within inner cities (Wagmiller, 2004). The changes in the economy that ensued over the course of several decades continued to contribute to the decline of young African American male employment (Ferguson, 2012). In addition to the adverse effects on the employment prospects of low-skilled African American men within the urban economic infrastructure, there is also the historical legacy of residential segregation which concentrated African Americans in the central city (Kain 1968; Massey & Denton,

1993; Strait, 2001; Wagmiller, 2004; Wilson, 1978). Within urban labor markets structural factors impact African American employment rates (Dickerson, 2007), thus resulting in structural and cultural factors which lead to the social isolation of African American males and impact their ability for skills and training development.

The study provides information for future economic and workforce development programs that will be successful in implementing strategies to meet the perceived challenges of assisting African American males in accessing the labor market. It will also serve to help policymakers to design policies that are more effective in addressing African American male unemployment than previous attempts.

**Urban Poverty Initiatives**

Between 1950 and 1966, inner cities became areas in which the demographic was predominantly African American, and where an 86% increase in population had occurred due to the migration from the South (Halpern, 1995). The majority of the poor within the inner city were first-generation African American migrants, and during this period, the economic inequality grew with the gap in employment between European American males and African American males reaching 112% by the early 1960s (Halpern, 1995). Urban renewal and public housing policies were created to address poverty. However, these policies only came to serve two purposes: (a) to safeguard city centers and their commercial and cultural institutions from the wave of African American migration; and (b) to reinforce local segregation through zoning and carefully coordinated locations of schools, transportation routes, and public housing (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1983; Halpern, 1995). Wilson (1996) attributed government policies such as urban renewal to the growth of jobless ghettoes, both directly and indirectly.

During the 1960s, the government made additional attempts to combat urban poverty as the strategy of urban renewal itself became obsolete and blighted due to the devaluation and abandonment it caused in African American neighborhoods (Halpern, 1995). In response to the lack of effectiveness of prior poverty programs that the government failed to address, it responded with two major federal efforts: the Gray Areas program and the Mobilization for Youth (Halpern, 1995). The policies of the 1960s were primarily shaped by efforts due to the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty however, as urban neighborhoods continued to deal with economic disinvestments and further social isolation, these strategies proved to be fatally flawed (Halpern, 1995). Halpern (1995) and Kasarda (1989) assert that as a result of the failures of these federal programs, economic disinvestment slowed modestly during the 1960s and 1970s and intensified in the 1980s, resulting in the joblessness rate for inner-city males to increase from 19% to 50% in the 1980s. Holzer (2007) and Spence and Kiel (2003) revealed that job training programs, and especially their public employment components, decreased in scale and capacity after the 1970s and have not recovered to date.

**Current Context**

The recession that the United States experienced recently and in the 1980s had an adverse influence on the rates of employment and underemployment among African American and Latino males (Quane, Wilson, & Hwang, 2013). African Americans historically continue to face joblessness rates higher than other cultural and ethnic groups, and once unemployed, they tend to stay unemployed much longer than any other cultural or ethnic group and are less likely to find employment (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2012). African American joblessness rates have consistently been double

those of European Americans; the national joblessness rate for African Americans is at 16.0%, compared with that of European Americans at 8.7% (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2011). In the state of New York, African American males experience a joblessness rate of 13.8%, compared with 4.7% for that of European Americans and 4.0% for Asians (BLS, 2015).

The African American male joblessness rate in the city of Syracuse, New York, is 18.8%, compared with 9.0% for European American males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The Syracuse metropolitan area currently has the highest concentration of poverty for African Americans, with nearly two-thirds residing in areas highly concentrated with poverty in the United States (Jargowsky, 2015). Concentrated poverty refers to the poor percentage population that lives in high-poverty neighborhoods or census tracts and applies to include sectors such as a county, metropolitan area, state, or the nation as a whole (Jargowsky, 2015). Jargowsky (2015) revealed that in Syracuse, the number of high-poverty tracts increased from 12 to 30 from 2009 to 2013, giving Syracuse the highest poverty concentration of African Americans and Hispanics of the major 100 metropolitan areas. Wilson (1987) implies that increased concentrated poverty in neighborhoods is attributed to the major factor of joblessness, which created devastating effects in highly concentrated poverty areas.

**Problem Statement**

The efforts of urban renewal and public housing policies in the 1940s and 1950s created a situation in which African American male joblessness worsened. Government policies further led to increased segregation, discriminatory zoning laws and other policies that decimated urban centers. Because of the failed policies from the 1940s and

1950s, the federal government intervened with policies and social programs as a part of the War on Poverty. Yet, despite efforts from the Civil Rights movement, the Gray Areas program, and the Youth Mobilization program, minimal economic opportunities were made available to African American males.

Various structural factors are attributed to the high rates of African American male joblessness. These structural explanations include: higher discrimination, skills mismatch, residential segregation, spatial mismatches, and economic shifts in the urban economies. However, much of research has failed to acknowledge the self-perceptions and experiences of the unemployed African American males themselves (Ferguson, 2012). Wilson (2009a, 2009b) suggests in addition to structural factors to understanding the urban poor, an examination of cultural factors are also needed.

Despite the various models used to address urban poverty and African American male joblessness, labor market distress among African American workers has persisted at catastrophic levels for decades (Allegretto & Pitts, 2010). Moreover, there is a need to explain the impact of these experiences on their vocational behavior (Ferguson, 2012). Since employment and economic situations have persistently been compromised, there is a need to focus on specific behaviors and their effects on various life issues (Edeoga, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the self-perceptions of unemployed African American males about their employability, perceptions of their ability to access the local labor market, and the extent to which they feel their skill acquisitions impact their ability to access the labor market. Ferguson (2012) states that, the educational, skills, and training acquisition experiences of African American males struggling to compete in the labor market need to be considered. Moreover, they continue

to be unemployed at disproportionate rates, despite government efforts, policies, and programs. This indicates the need to examine their lack of engagement and inclusion within the labor market within the context of their social rights as citizens.

**Theoretical Rationale**

The citizenship theory served as the framework for the study. Citizenship theory examines the ideal of citizenship within the concept and function of social class (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). T. H. Marshall (1950) first utilized this concept to focus specifically on social class, the welfare state, and the transformation of post-war capitalism (Turner, 2009). However, historically, the concept of citizenship and its association with individuals have typically referred to men in the formal labor market and therefore, examines work as a fundamental basis of citizenship and the welfare state (Turner, 2009). Marshall's citizenship theory contends that through the redistribution of resources, citizenship mitigates the inequalities of social class and provides the basis for shared identities and social solidarity through common membership (Turner, 2009).

Moreover, citizenship identity depends not only on a legal status, but primarily on access to social and economic resources (De La Paz, 2004). Citizenship identity refers to the sense of belonging and solidarity, which is also connected with the problem of unequal distribution of resources in society (De La Paz, 2004). T. H. Marshall's primary interest in social rights and social citizenship developed as a bundle of rights and obligations that define the identity of members of a political community, and thereby regulate access to the benefits and privileges of membership (Turner, 2009). Bendix (1996) indicated that citizenship excludes *all socially and economically dependent persons*. Moreover, Bendix contends that social citizenship is further concerned with the

social and economic conditions that allow for the efficient enjoyment of rights. The modern conception of universal citizenship suggests that when extreme inequality and poverty are combined, some groups and individuals are challenged with social exclusion (De La Paz, 2004).

Social citizenship therefore seeks to understand the conditions that make active citizenship possible. Moreover, from citizenship is determined the institutional conditions for equality, the rights to enjoy what T. H. Marshall (1950) describes as a "modicum" or measure of a cultured life (Turner, 2009). American sociologist Talcott Parsons later contributed to prior work on citizenship theory, when he began to examine full citizenship rights for African Americans. Parsons (1965) studied the historical changes in the status of various religious, ethnic, and cultural groups in the societal community regarding the supply and demand dynamic. He proposed citizenship as a "balance or equilibrium between the emergence of a group's demands for inclusion and the larger society's supply of the resources of citizenship" (Lidz, 2009, p. 78). An examination of the context of work within a group lends a perspective to understand historical, social, political, and economic perspectives that reveal structural changes in the patterns of human experience from which the meaning of work is derived (Brief & Nord, 1990; Ferguson, 2012).

Thus, for the purposes of the study, citizenship theory lends a perspective of involvement in the labor market as a social right of African American men as citizens. Further, citizenship theory proposed a framework that examined perceptions of unemployed African American males of their inclusion and ability to access employment

as a benefit from the social and economic resources employed via local workforce development programs.

**Statement of Purpose**

The goal of this phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of unemployed African American males who reside in economically distressed census tracts and have challenges to finding employment, and to examine the degree to which this phenomenon is impacted by local community workforce development initiatives. Therefore, the study served to identify these men's feelings, thoughts, and their shared lived experiences related to social exclusion, self-employability based on acquired skills, and their ability to access the labor market.

Moreover, to inform the development of societal and economic policies which are to be inclusive of the labor market experiences of unemployed African American males, as this input is needed for the planning process and governance of designing local community economic development programs. Halpern (1995) revealed that throughout periods of federal poverty initiatives, local poor African Americans were excluded from the planning process of such programs.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were proposed to examine the lived experiences of unemployed African American males:

1. What are the perceived challenges experienced by African American males in accessing the labor market?

2. What level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

**Potential Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study was to examine the labor market experiences of unemployed African American males from their perspective so that local neighborhood initiatives offering workforce development can better meet the needs of this population. Also, the study is significant because it examined this phenomenon within the lens of citizenship and its concern with accessibility to social and economic resources and inclusion. Furthermore, it is significant in assisting local leadership with the engagement of unemployed African American males and assisting them with access to the social and economic resources needed for their full economic inclusion and enjoyment of the social rights of citizenship.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Citizenship*: a set of legal, economic, and cultural practices that defines an individual as a competent member of society. Such practices shape the flow of resources to individuals and social groups (Turner, 1993).

*Concentrated Poverty:* social transformation that occurs within high-poverty neighborhoods from which middle- and working-class families move away and an increase of poorer families move in (Wilson, 1987).

*Joblessness*: the state of persons who are not only actively seeking employment, but also are not in the labor market or have dropped out of the labor market (Wilson, 2009a, 2009b).

*Unemployed*: individuals who did not have a job at all during the survey reference week, made at least one specific active effort to find a job during the prior 4 weeks, and were available for work (unless temporarily ill); also, all who were not working and

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waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off (U.S. DOL, BLS, 2016)

**Chapter 1 Summary**

The study examined the self-perceptions of low-income unemployed African American males who reside in economically distressed census tracts. The study sought to understand the perceptions of unemployed males and factors related to prolonged joblessness to inform future economic development and workforce program development. The citizenship theory framework served to examine the study from within the context of social inclusion, access to social and economic resources as a social right, and obligations as a member of a community. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature which examines the citizenship theory framework, in addition to, the structural and cultural factors which contributes to urban male joblessness. Subsequently, Chapter 3 details the design and methodology of the study. Moreover, Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data found in the study and discusses the categories and themes found throughout the courses of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 will examine the implications of the study, discuss any limitations, and provide recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

**Introduction and Purpose**

This chapter examined the literature that highlighted the issue of African American male joblessness. Initially, the first section of the review of literature examined the historical development of the theory of citizenship and provided an analysis of the emergence of this theoretical perspective. This section concluded by presenting the issues related to full participation within society, most notably through economic participation within the context of the right to labor and ability to earn. The second section closely examines literature that presents structural factors impacting African American male joblessness. The chapter concluded with an analysis of the literature which established the basis for the study and provided an understanding of the experiences of unemployed African American males within the context of social rights.

**Citizenship Theory**

The idea of examining citizenship rights within the context of labor rights and economic participation began with Alfred Marshall (1873) in his paper on *The Future of Working Classes,* which challenged sociologists to examine the problem of social equality within an economic context (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Marshall (1873) proposed that as a result of disproportionate and demanding labor, members of the working class would come to value education and leisure more than increases in wages. Instead, workers through labor would develop a sense of independence, "manly" respect for oneself and respect for others, and ready acceptance of their roles as public and

private citizens (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Marshall (1873) further suggested that the enjoyment of the conditions that resulted from being a part of the working class signified this as acceptance as full members of society or, in other words, a citizen (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992).

Overall, Alfred Marshall's concept of citizenship entails the idea of basic human equality, and within the social class system, inequality would become acceptable due to the various economic levels in society that developed. He thus proposed that skilled artisans or skilled workers would experience the duties of citizenship versus its rights within a free competitive market (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). This concept of human equality and citizenship serves as the basis on which T. H. Marshall (1950) constructed his theory of citizenship.

Much of the political and implicit concept of citizenship regarding rights versus citizenship as a legal status emerged post-World War II, from the work of T. H. Marshall (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). According to Kymlicka and Norman (1994), his work is the most influential on the idea of citizenship as rights in the postwar period. The premise of T. H. Marshall's theory on citizenship suggests that socioeconomic inequality would become legitimized within Western democracies through the gradual extension and expansion of the universal rights of citizenship (Oxhorn, 1998). T. H. Marshall's theory of citizenship was based primarily on his examination of welfare policies of Britain from the period 1890-1945; during this timeframe, he further examined the development of citizenship rights within three elements of society: civil, political, and social (B. S. Turner, 1990).

T. H. Marshall (1949) developed three elements into which citizenship is divided: civil, political, and social. These three elements, he proposed, developed over the course of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, but had gotten separated within societies and re-emerged in the post-war period simultaneously with the system of capitalism and social inequality (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992).

T. H. Marshall (1950) found that between the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, changes in social and economic conditions influenced the context in which the ideas of citizenship rights were developed and applied to persons within a society. According to Marshall, before the 18th century, the three elements of citizenship were interconnected functions of social rights, which determined social status and determined where and what type of justice an individual could get. The first element of citizenship developed within the context of civil rights; Marshall suggested this aspect of citizenship developed in association institutionally with courts of law.

**Civil rights**. The first element of civil citizenship consists of rights and individual freedoms such as: freedom of speech, thought, and faith; the right to justice; and the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Moreover, early laws impacted the basic civil right to work and occupational status. As a result of the Elizabethan Statute of Artificers, which were laws that restricted certain occupations to certain social classes, local laws had reserved employment in towns to its community members and utilized apprenticeships as a means of exclusion rather than recruitment (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992).

T. H. Marshall (1950) suggested that within the context of economics, a basic civil right was the right to work, which included the right to choose an occupation of

choice, and this choice was only subject to the prerequisite of technical training. At the conclusion of the 18th century, the addition of new rights to the preexisting status of servitude to free labor redefined the idea of citizenship. It changed the dynamic of economic and political society as it determined the status of those excluded from equal membership in English society for centuries (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Thus, T. H. Marshall (1950) attributed these changes to the resulting concepts of freedom and citizenship as being interchangeable and therefore developed into a national institution. This shift and development of the idea of citizenship toward the end of the 18th century set the stage for the further development of citizenship rights.

**Political rights**. As a result of 18th-century Elizabethan laws and statutes limiting individual freedoms, the principle of economic freedom became the accepted norm in English society as the 19th century began (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). T. H. Marshall (1950) credited the development of political rights in the 19th century to the repeal of the Elizabethan statutes, which granted previously held rights to new segments of the populace.

These efforts to address political inequality through legislative reforms by 1832 were unsuccessful, however, and resulted in developing closed-group monopolies and initiating the ideals of capitalism (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). T. H. Marshall (1950) defined a group monopoly as a monopoly in which no person can force his or her way via his or her efforts; instead, admission is at the pleasure of the existing group members. Thus, the policies developed during the 19th century extended the rights of those who were already a part of a privileged economic class and did not confer rights of citizenship politically; rather, it recognized the capacity of those who could produce the standard

evidence of success in the economic struggle (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Therefore, T. H. Marshall (1950) proposed that political rights had become connected to economic achievements and that civil rights and electoral reforms increased this entitlement. Also, he suggested that the two elements of political and social rights of citizenship overlapped from the 19th century into the 20th century.

**Social rights.** Marshall (1950) attributed the emergence of the social rights of citizenship to local community memberships and functional associations, which were supplemented and then replaced by a national and locally governed system of wage regulation and a Poor Law. The Poor Law was a comprehensive economic program with the general aim of preserving the social order that was in existence instead of creating a new one (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). However, due to a competitive economy, the program failed and remained an isolated remaining ideal by which social rights became disregarded; by the end of the 18th century, the social rights of citizenship and the civil rights of citizenship had become conflictual ideals of citizenship. The Poor Law was the last remnant of a systematic attempt to adapt the social needs and status of citizens to a real income and not just solely to the market value of his labor (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). Essentially T. H. Marshall (1950) suggested that the Poor Law was an attempt to champion the social rights of citizenship through social welfare.

Through an act of legislation in 1834, the Poor Law renounced the ideals of free market interference and instead reversed the concept of social security by detaching the remaining social rights from the status of citizenship (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). The law treated claims of the poor, sick, and incapable not as an integral part of citizenship but as an alternative means to citizenship. The claims addressed when the claimants

ceased to be citizens occurred with the civil rights practice of exercising the personal liberty to rely on public institutions, and by law resulted in a forfeiture of any political rights they may have possessed (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). T. H. Marshall (1950) suggested that the 19th-century emergence of political rights also laid the foundation for social rights to become an integral part of citizenship status either being expressly denied or not definitively admitted. T. H. Marshall argued that the social rights of citizenship in the 20th century would be re-established through the growth of public education. Education, according to Marshall, is a prerequisite of civil freedom, and the right of an adult to have an education is a fundamental and social right of citizenship.

**African American Males and Unemployment**

The development of citizenship rights began with the establishment of civil rights and progressed to political and later social rights. However, this evolution of citizenship validated social inequality as it developed simultaneously with capitalism and provided the social and political foundations on which modern capitalism could thrive (Oxhorn, 1998). While civil rights emerged and gave legal powers to those restricted by class prejudice and lack of economic opportunity, political rights gave power through the exercise of demand, experience, organization, and change in the concepts of the function of government (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992). However, during these periods, social rights failed to be constructed into the ideal of citizenship. T. H. Marshall (1950) contended that because social rights developed outside of political and civil rights, the developing idea of citizenship within a capitalistic society created a conflict. His identification of the inherent oppositions between citizenship, welfare, and capitalism

suggested that embedded in the ideal of citizenship exists the notion of a redistribution of resources to balance the negative outcomes of an unregulated market (Turner, 2009).

T. H. Marshall (1950) was concerned with the opposition between formal political equality and individual freedom, in addition to social and economic inequality (Handler, 2002). The social entitlements of the welfare state reconciled and reduced the conflicts between capitalism and civil and political citizenship (Handler, 2002). Through proposed expansion of social rights of citizenship through periods of sickness, joblessness, and distress, T. H. Marshall (1950) focused attention on entitlements to social security through the basis of claims to social welfare for the 20th century (Handler, 2002; B. S. Turner, 1990). Social rights enabled people to exercise civil and political rights and provide individuals with a sense of security, which, in turn, foster a sense of a collective identity between the state and its citizens—thus the term *social citizenship* (Handler, 2002).

T. H. Marshall's (1950) primary interest in social rights served as the core of his theory and led to his explanation of the emergence of welfare services as an improvement of the condition of the working class (B. S. Turner, 2009). Marshall's theory of universal social citizenship fundamentally created the social democratic idea of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Dahrendorf, 1996; Hibbert, 2008; T. H. Marshall, 1964). The theory analyzed citizenship and social class (Bottomore & Marshall, 1992), the welfare state, and the transformation of post-war capitalism (Turner, 2009). Marshall's influence is central to the idea that citizenship diminishes the negative impact of the market through the redistribution of resources by rights and results in conflict with the principle of equality. It eventually supports democracy and the actual inequalities of opportunity,

wealth, and income—all of which comprises a capitalist society (Handler, 2002; B. S. Turner, 1990, 2009). However, within a capitalist society, the economy does not consider the notions of life that the worker must certainly endure such as: work accidents, joblessness, work-related illness, and the social disregard of the elderly who age out (B. S. Turner, 2009).

T. H. Marshall's theory on citizenship in the post-war capitalistic society has been influential on the works of citizenship studies of the 20th century. His work was influential in America in providing the framework of analysis for race relations and ethnic problems (B. S. Turner, 1990). T. H. Marshall's (1964) ideas on citizenship and social equality influenced Parsons's study of African Americans and citizenship during the Civil Rights movement (Lidz, 2009). For the study, Parsons's (1966) concept of citizenship as it relates to African Americans, citizenship, and inclusion applied.

B. S. Turner (2009) revealed that American sociologists only considered factors such as race, ethnicity, migration, and immigration when considering citizenship. The study examined the idea of citizenship for African American males within the context of social rights via economic opportunities, specifically via perceptions of employment and inclusion within the labor market. Parsons (1966) recognized the increased disadvantage which a majority of African Americans faced, whether they resided on small farms in the South or urban slums in the North. They received poorer education, were restricted to jobs with low wages and equally poor career options, experienced lower-class status, and faced barriers in providing better opportunities for their families (Lidz, 2009).

**African Americans and Social Citizenship**

Parsons (1965) examined the welfare element of citizenship in depth because its relation to citizenship was less well known and it was important to understanding the realities obstructing full inclusion for African Americans (Lidz, 2009). Parsons outlined four developments of rights and responsibilities which collectively defined citizenship in modern democratic societies (Lidz, 2009). He emphasized that fully institutionalized elements of equality exist within each of the four complexes of citizenship rights, and African Americans would have full citizenship when they benefited equally with other citizens from the specific rights protected by each of the four complexes (Lidz, 2009).

Parson (1965) proposed four complex components of citizenship: (a) the *pattern maintenance function,* in which there is common valuation, inclusion, and acceptance of persons as members of the society; (b) the *integrative function,* in which exists the legal rights of citizenship, including the Constitutional right to equal protection of the laws in civil as well as criminal matters; (c) the *attainment goal function,* in which there exist political rights, including particularly the right to the franchise through the extension of duties to form politically active associations and petition public authorities; and (d) the *adaptive function,* in which embedded welfare rights and benefits occur and provide security for citizens' abilities to participate successfully in a wide range of roles in the broader society (Lidz, 2009).

Parsons (1965) defined inclusion as the process by which previously excluded groups attain full citizenship or membership in the societal community. For African Americans, he proposed that this would be a highly complex process. Kymlicka and Norman (1994) suggested that for the expression of citizenship to occur in an ideal liberal democratic welfare state, the state would have to ensure civil, political, and social rights

for all members so they will be full members of society and can participate and benefit from the shared life of a community. Moreover, when any of the rights become denied or violated, the result is marginalization and exclusion (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994).

Inclusive citizenship entails both recognition and access to formal rights; within a sociological context, this aspect of citizenship places emphasis on legal rules, norms, practices, meanings, and identities (Isin & Turner, 2002; Lister, 2007). Additionally, the perspective of inclusive citizenship exists within the context of the relationship between individuals and the state (Lister, 2007). Social citizenship, according to Handler (2002), refers to stipulations of the welfare state in which assistance is designed to decrease the risks of sickness or disability, old age, joblessness, and lack of income. Therefore, social citizenship rights are commonly analyzed in economic terms such as: de-commodifying labor, protection against risks to earning capacity, and reducing poverty (Handler, 2002).

Since the time of Parsons's (1965) work, findings on the need for full inclusion and citizenship rights through social rights have been centered around structural factors and changes in dynamics in urban economies, along with extensive changes in policies that have furthered the exclusion of African Americans. Conservative strategies and policies have restricted the economic opportunities of middle-class African Americans; the new influx of immigrants have increased competition in labor markets and therefore have restricted opportunities for African Americans (Lidz, 2009). Moreover, well-educated Asians have acquired scarce middle-class jobs, while Latinos now occupy unskilled physical labor, factory work, and domestic service, and thus have limited the jobs open to African Americans (Lidz, 2009).

**African American Male Joblessness**

Since 1980, a majority of Americans have experienced economic marginality through joblessness. However, inner-city African American males have suffered the most joblessness within this span (Wilson, 1996, 2009a). The joblessness experienced by African American males today is symbolic of what Wilson (1997) considered "the new urban poverty" (p. 19), which is characterized by segregated neighborhoods with a disproportionate rate of the adult population who are unemployed and no longer participating in the labor market or have never accessed the labor market (Wilson, 1997). Attributed to the emergence of a new *urban underclass* is the growing problems of joblessness in inner cities due to changes in the social composition of these neighborhoods (Wilson, 2012) and the evolution of the urban economy (Wagmiller, 2004). The emergence of a jobless underclass within urban communities is also credited to historical shifts in the urban economy (Wagmiller, 2004). This growth of a jobless underclass led to a progression of changes in urban economic life that have disproportionately disadvantaged inner-city residents, particularly low-income African American residents (Wagmiller, 2004).

**Joblessness crisis**. Wagmiller (2004) evaluated alternative hypotheses about the causes of spatially-concentrated male joblessness. The aim of the study was to examine the causes of concentrated male joblessness within the city through an analysis of variables such as: industrial restructuring, suburbanization, immigration, urban unrest, and disorder (Wagmiller, 2004). The study utilized longitudinal samples from census tract data of 204 metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) in the United States from 1970 to 2000. Wagmiller found that male joblessness gradually increased over a 30-year period. The study revealed that joblessness for men age 16 and over was at 24.6% in 1970, then

increased in 1980 to 28.0%, followed by a slight increase to 28.3% in 1990; by 2000, the rate of male joblessness in the average metropolitan area reached 31.5%.

In his study, Wagmiller (2004) revealed an increase in the number of jobless neighborhoods over a 30-year period from 1970 to 2000 across the 204 largest U.S. metropolitan areas. Jobless neighborhoods are defined as neighborhoods where the majority of working-age males are not employed (Wagmiller, 2004; Wilson, 1996). The number of jobless neighborhoods increased from 854 in 1970 to 2,279 by 1980. Over the course of the succeeding decade, the number of jobless neighborhoods had risen to 2,710 by 1990; by 2000, the number of jobless neighborhoods analyzed in the study increased to 4,000 within the 204 metropolitan areas (Wagmiller, 2004).

Wagmiller (2004) identified various factors that affected the emergence and increase of the jobless underclass over the course of the decades. In the 1970s, urban unrest and disorder and, to a lesser extent, deindustrialization played prominent roles in urban joblessness; the 1980s saw the remnants of the cultural turmoil from the 1960s and early 1970s, in addition to violent crime in the city that had significant effects on the expansion of the jobless underclass as the consequences of deindustrialization waned. Other factors, such as the growth and emergence of professional and technical occupations for employment opportunities in urban areas in the 1980s and 1990s, increased effects of industrial restructuring due to suburbanization, as evidence of cultural unrest and violent crime receded (Wagmiller, 2004).

Urban male joblessness became more concentrated because of a complex and changing set of social and economic forces (Wagmiller, 2004). In addition, the concentration of joblessness in central-city neighborhoods initiated a downward spiral

that eventually resulted in the social isolation of the most disadvantaged persons in tightly clustered sets of rapidly deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods (p. 9).

**Structural Factors**

Residential segregation is a significant factor in the structural characteristics of metropolitan labor markets. These factors entail; industrial structure, a high concentration of minority populations, immigration, differences in group skill levels, and spatial mismatch—all of which are significant in employment outcomes in metropolitan areas for African Americans (Dickerson, 2007; Hamermesh & Bean, 1998; Huffman & Cohen, 2004; Wilson, 1987). In addition, other influential factors were found to contribute to the disproportionate rates of African American male joblessness.

**Shifts in urban economic structure.** Since the 1960s, inner-city neighborhood economies have seen a decline in employment as structural changes within the industrial structure of the city have impacted and thus limited city residents' access to jobs (Kain, 1968; Wagmiller, 2004; Wilson, 1987). The decline in availability of employment within metropolitan areas resulted in increased rates of male joblessness, while simultaneously suburbanization increased the effects of growing joblessness, resulting in "jobless ghettos" within the central city (Wagmiller, 2004, p. 2). An examination of structural features within metropolitan labor markets—such as the industrial structure, the concentration of minority populations, immigration, differences in group skill levels, and spatial mismatch—have been utilized to explain African American employment outcomes in metropolitan areas (Dickerson, 2007). Research has further revealed that the exclusion of African American workers from full economic participation and job

accessibility within metropolitan labor markets is also due to continuing cultural

disparities (Dickerson, 2007).

**Labor market segregation.** In a quantitative study examining residential

segregation within the context of social organization, Dickerson (2007) conducted a

comprehensive analysis of the employment of African Americans in metropolitan areas.

This analysis tested whether the spatial arrangement of African Americans and European

Americans within a metropolitan area influenced minority male and female employment

rates within the context of the structural conditions of the local labor market (Dickerson,

2007). In the study, a comparative analysis of residential segregation was examined in

correlation with four other key structural explanations for urban cultural inequality:

(a) industrial composition, (b) minority concentration, (c) immigration, and (d) group

skill disparities (Dickerson, 2007).

The study analyzed data sets of the 95 largest U.S. cities according to structural

characteristics. Dickerson (2007) compiled data based on demographic, employment,

educational, occupational, and industrial characteristics of cities from the 1980, 1990, and

2000 decennial census 1-percent Public Use Microdata Sample data and aggregated to the

metropolitan level. Data from the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or the primary

metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) were utilized as geographic units of measures for

approximately two-thirds of the African American population and half of the European

American population of the 95 cities in the study.

Data sets comprised of city characteristics were joined based on residential

segregation indicators for 1980, 1990, and 2000. Census data published by the Housing

and Household Economics Statistics (HHES) Division of the U.S. Census Bureau was

analyzed and provided a multivariate analysis comprised of cross-sectional analysis from cities in the year 2000. This analysis determined how structural factors affected the employment rates of African Americans in metropolitan areas as they varied across different labor markets. A fixed-effects analysis determined if changes in structural factors over time *within* the same labor market affected these employment rates. A fixed-effects analysis is an alternative of standard ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression which estimates variation *within* an individual unit; in the study, a city examined over time, as opposed to variation *across* individual units estimated the conventional OLS (Dickerson, 2007).

The study determined that residential segregation, when conceptualized and operationalized as a structural feature of metropolitan labor markets, limited the employment rates of African Americans within the context of other structural factors of metropolitan areas (Dickerson, 2007). From 1980 to 2000, metropolitan level suggested that segregation was significantly associated with the aggregated employment rates of African Americans. Dickerson (2007) found that while particular types of segregation affected these rates, others did not.

However, the cross-sectional analysis revealed that while these effects operated across metropolitan labor markets, the fixed-effects analysis showed that it functioned as segregation as other structural factors changed within a labor market over time (Dickerson, 2007). The structural characteristics described additional variation *across* cities rather than variation *within* cities over time. Also, these patterns were similar but not identical for African American men and African American women (Dickerson, 2007).

Across labor markets, the dimensions of residential segregation significantly correlated with the employment rates of African Americans. The uneven distribution of minorities across census tracts in the metropolitan area and the clustering of these tracts in the city had the greatest impact on the employment rates of both African American men and African American women. The centralization measure was positively related to African American men's employment rates, indicating that these rates were higher in metropolitan areas with centrally located African Americans.

The fixed-effects analysis demonstrated that as residential segregation changed over time, only the clustering dimension of residential segregation affected change in the employment rates of both African American women and African American men (Dickerson, 2007). The study further revealed that increased contact with European Americans in neighborhoods diversified African American men's job networks and offered greater employment opportunities via referrals, information, and the like. However, this finding was different for African American women; a potential explanation for this is due to the gendered nature of jobs, which make men's jobs rather than women's jobs more amenable to referrals. Also, spatial configurations found a correlation with mechanisms that act as effective barriers to employment opportunities in the local labor market (Dickerson, 2007).

The significance of the study revealed that in a cross-sectional analysis, residential segregation and demographic factors stand out as the most determinative of employment for African Americans across different labor markets. For industry composition and residential segregation, this significance occurred over time within

metropolitan labor markets, as demonstrated in the fixed-effects analysis (Dickerson, 2007).

**Residential segregation.** Wilson (2012) attributed the concept of social isolation as a key factor in high jobless rates among African American males. *Social isolation* is defined as a lack of contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society (p. 60). Social isolation has impacted high rates of joblessness for African American males due to the lack of contact between different classes of people of cultural backgrounds, which then increased the effects of living in highly concentrated poverty areas (Wilson, 2012). The result of this lack of interaction has thus restricted opportunities in neighborhoods where this phenomenon exists, and has created a situation where residents are socially disadvantaged; lack job networks, access to jobs, and involvement in quality schools; and result in behavior that is not conducive to good work histories (Wilson, 2012).

Chatterjee (2012) attributed cultural segregation to the limited housing opportunities of specific groups of households to communities inadequately located to jobs. Segregation has resulted in adverse consequences on the educational attainment, employment rates, and welfare participation for families residing in these areas. The result of segregation on African American employment outcomes is fundamentally centered around the idea of spatial mismatch hypothesis (SMH). The mismatch hypothesis contends that job decentralization, together with the existence of housing market segregation, has created job loss for inner-city African Americans (Chatterjee, 2012; Kain, 1968). The concept of SMH proposes that real estate market segregation constructs a separation of African Americans, who predominantly reside in the central

cities, from jobs that are located in the suburbs; this leads to communication and

commuting problems for African Americans in urban centers and, hence, job loss

(Chatterjee, 2012).

The SMH also suggests that low-skilled minorities residing within the inner city

experience poor labor market outcomes due to the disconnection from job opportunities

in the suburbs (Gobillon, Selod, & Zenou, 2007; Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011).

According to Dickerson (2007), recognizing residential segregation as a structure permits

disparity in the distribution of resources and maintains inequality; therefore, it is

important to understand how the cultural fabric of a city institutes barriers to

employment.

Increased suburbanization of employment has accompanied industrial

reorganization and therefore exacerbated the problems of inner-city joblessness among

African American men (Ferguson, 2012; Wilson, 1987). The above factors each interact

to contribute to joblessness for inner-city minorities, increased concentration of

segregated urban centers; which result in commuting problems to the suburbs where jobs

are growing and limit the ability of African Americans to live near or commute to work

where jobs are more accessible (Chatterjee, 2012).

The suburban growth of industries resulted in a struggle for inner-city residents to

access these industries due to lengthy commutes and limited access to transportation, lack

of recruitment efforts that rarely target inner-city residents, and the social isolation of the

inner city and informal networks for finding work that is not readily available (Ferguson,

2012). This "mismatch" between jobs and the inner city also deprived inner-city residents

of role models because the more skilled and educated migrated out of the inner city to suburbs because of employment opportunities there (Ferguson, 2012, p. 35).

**Spatial mismatch hypothesis (SMH)**. Chatterjee (2012), in a regression analysis study on *Residential Segregation and African-American Employment,* tested the causal relationship between the suburbanization of jobs and residential segregation to determine their relationship and impact on African American employment outcomes. The study conducted an analysis of Census data between 1970 and 2000. It examined for SMH longitudinally to determine, (a) whether the decline of central-city employment in industries where African Americans are overrepresented increased African American unemployment rate, (b) whether residential desegregation reduced African American unemployment rate over time, and (c) whether employment decentralization had a larger impact on African American unemployment in metropolitan areas with a greater degree of cultural residential segregation (Chatterjee, 2012).

A cross-section of intertemporal variation and large difference regressions were utilized to understand the impact of the long-term change in segregation and job suburbanization on the observed change in African American employment outcomes (Chatterjee, 2012). Because of the argument that SMH proposes a relationship between housing market segregation and the ability of African Americans to gain access to employers that have relocated to the suburbs, the extended difference model allowed an examination of how changes in the level of residential segregation affected the change in African American unemployment rate over the measured period (Chatterjee, 2012).

The findings of the study revealed that suburbanization caused cultural residential segregation. Moreover, the study suggested that the driving force to increased residential

segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas correlated with cultural residential segregation and there is a causal relationship between the population suburbanization and the number of highways running through the urban centers of metropolitan areas by the 1947 Highway Plan (Chatterjee, 2012). The findings of the study revealed that decreases in cultural residential segregation do not improve the employment outcomes for low-skilled African Americans. The shift in labor demand away from industries that hired low-skilled laborers, according to Chatterjee (2012), occurred over the past few decades, and lowered their employment rates even when those jobs were accessible. Although low-skilled laborer regardless of race faced unemployment problems that arose from these shifts when cultural discrimination is accounted for, employment for African Americans was impacted more than for any other non-minority group, even in the absence of skill or spatial mismatch (Chatterjee, 2012).

The results from the study further indicated that shifts in labor demand away from manufacturing, wholesale trade, and retail (MWR) industries significantly increased the gap between African American and European American joblessness. Cultural segregation in the study impacted the decentralization of jobs, and the study further indicated that job decentralization did not significantly increase the low-skilled African American unemployment rate more in MSAs, which were found to be more residentially segregated, except for the 1970 cross-section regression. The cross-section years of 1980, 1990, and 2000 estimations of long-run changes had insignificant variance effects. These results measured low and indicated that physical inaccessibility of jobs did not impact African American unemployment in terms of job decentralization, at least not until the latter years of the sample (Chatterjee, 2012).

The significance of the study indicated the causal relationship between residential segregation and suburbanization on employment outcomes of African Americans. In contrast to previous studies, the findings from the study introduced a variable regression instrument in measuring population suburbanization with the number of highways created by the 1947 Highway Plan policy (Chatterjee, 2012). The effect of job suburbanization on African American unemployment rates in segregated MSAs did not statistically differ from less segregated MSAs; therefore, the study indicated that other factors besides physical inaccessibility had impeded African Americans from gaining access to the jobs (Chatterjee, 2012).

**Racial mismatch.** The concept of racial mismatch is attributed to African American male joblessness. Although this concept shares the same fundamental elements as the SMH, the contention of this hypothesis indicates there exists a cultural/racial element to SMH (Hellerstein & Neumark. 2011). Racial mismatch proposes that developing more jobs in the proximity of where African Americans live or relocating them to where there are jobs will not increase employment (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011). This cultural mismatch suggests that a significant impact on African American urban labor market challenges involves the cultural/racial issues that must be addressed; as a result, spatial mismatch is actually a cultural mismatch (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011).

In their analysis of African American employment within urban markets, Hellerstein and Neumark (2011) proposed that labor market challenges for African Americans are not entirely explained in terms of the "characteristics of the people" (p. 15) who are within those markets; instead, these challenges are people-based. The

authors argued that spatial mismatch as a place-based explanation does not explain these problems. Hellerstein and Neumark indicated that the interaction of place-based factors in addition to race demands examination in order to explain the cultural/racial dimension to labor market challenges.

Within the interaction of race and place, the study particularly examined the disadvantage of African Americans within the context of labor market networks. The researchers defined these networks as informal and interpersonal channels through which information about jobs flows in ways that affect who gets jobs and where they work (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011, p. 16). Dickerson (2007) implied that a characteristic of residential segregation is that it restricts the supply of minorities applying for available jobs in the mainstream by limiting their access to jobs physically and limiting their access to information about jobs, particularly good jobs. The physical and social isolation of persons, especially minorities living within the inner city, severely restricts the access that poor African American males have to informal job networks (Wilson, 1997). As a result of residential segregation, social networks and word-of-mouth on selective job postings are segregated and further enabled (Dickerson, 2007). Wilson (1997) cited this as a problem for African American males, considering that many low-skilled employees learn about employment opportunities through an acquaintance or a recommendation from someone affiliated with the company.

Hellerstein and Neumark (2011) measured labor market networks by examining the extent to which employees within a business disproportionately come from the same Census tract. Moreover, they measured these data about the residential location of employees who work in the same Census tract but in different businesses. In measuring

for the significance of network effects, groups were categorized by culture—African American, European American, Hispanic—as well as by various measures of skills. The researchers sought to study culturally-based networks and whether they operated strongly within the cultural groups as opposed to across them (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011). To assess for cultural stratification of networks in this analysis, the researchers measured the extent to which African American employees were clustered within businesses with other African Americans or European Americans who were their neighbors instead of just with African Americans whose coworkers were neighbors.

Hellerstein and Neumark (2011) found evidence of weaker network connections among African Americans and Europeans, whereas connections were found to be stronger among African American neighbors; namely, the empirical significance of networks for African Americans decreased by 40% when measuring the extent to which African Americans were likely to work with either other African American neighbors or European Americans who were their neighbors (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011). Two significant findings resulted from the study: (a) labor market networks are deemed important, and (b) they are culturally stratified, meaning that increased local job density for an individual's own culture affects employment probabilities in contrast to employment density with other cultures (Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011). As a result of the study, Hellerstein and Neumark (2011) implicated that a challenge for public policy is the need to further research on how policy can strengthen and leverage labor market networks in order to improve labor market outcomes for African Americans.

**Skills mismatch.** Kasarda (1995) and Wagmiller (2004) contended that the concentration of joblessness and disadvantage in the central city is not only a result of

manufacturing decline, but also a consequence of an increasing mismatch between the types of skills required for the growing number of information and service-related occupations. Patterns of economic restructuring have created core-city economies that are oriented toward information processing and technology, while the residents in these areas typically have low skills and low levels of education (Frisbie & Kasarda, 1988; Galster, Mincy, & Tobin, 1997; Kasarda, 1988, 1995; Norwood, 2001).

Wilson (1997) stated that within the new global economy, education and training have become more significant and, as a result, created a gap between skilled and unskilled workers. In a study by Kasarda (1986), data revealed that inner-city African American males who reported that they "did not complete high school" were found to be at a disadvantage within new urban economic transformations, compared with their European American counterparts who reported having at least one year of college. Skinner (1995) suggested that the results of the study provided evidence that indicated in northeastern cities there was a correlation in the supply of low education jobs and African American joblessness.

The shift in demand for more skilled workers has been especially devastating for low-skilled workers who are new to the labor market or who marginally participate (Wilson, 1997). For African Americans residing in communities with high jobless rates, decreased employment growth, and lack of access to areas with increased employment, this shift has further deteriorated their economic situation (Wilson, 1997). African American males have experienced increased difficulty in accessing the labor market over the last four decades, including accessing low-skilled, low-wage jobs (Wilson, 1997). Chatterjee (2012), in an analysis of Hellerstein, Neumark, and McInerney (2008), tested

the cultural mismatch hypothesis and job density within a sample of zip codes and found that unemployment tended to be the highest among low-skilled African Americans.

Another aspect of the joblessness crisis research indicates a correlation with poor education. Low-skilled African American males enter the labor market lacking basic skills that would meet the changing needs of potential employers as a result of poor public education experiences (Wilson, 1997). Holzer (2009) concluded that Moynihan (1965) essentially predicted that two factors would affect employment opportunities and outcomes for young African American men: (a) labor-demand factors, which include employer attitudes and hiring behaviors toward African American men, and (b) labor-supply factors, which consist of family formation and skill development. These factors are responsive to features and changes on the demand side of the labor market. In response to growing inadequate employment opportunities, African American men were found to be either withdrawing from the labor market overall or reluctant to enter the market (Holzer, 2009). The following section provides a review of literature that examines cultural factors impacting African American joblessness.

**Cultural Factors**

Although significant research has examined the structural factors that impact joblessness and poverty (Wilson, 2009b), cultural factors are important in understanding social and economic outcomes of low-skilled African American males (Wilson, 2009b). Concerning African American male joblessness in inner-city communities, there is a lack of evidence and an absence of consensus on the impact of the cultural factors that have emerged (Wilson, 2009b). In communities where worklessness or joblessness is highly concentrated, there is less contact with working people, low aspirations, short-term

outlooks on careers, and a prevalence of negative perspectives of jobs that are available (Ritchie, Casebourne, & Rick, 2005). Culture, in this case, is defined as the sharing of modes of behaviors and outlooks within a community, and the study of culture entails the examination of how it is transmitted from generation to generation and sustained through social interaction within the community (Wilson, 1997).

Sharkey (2008), in a study of Intergenerational Transmission, revealed that 70% of African American children reside in the poorest communities. Moreover, findings from the study indicated that cultural disparity which characterized American neighborhoods in the 1970s had been transmitted, unchanged, to the current generation. It was thus concluded that generational poverty has characterized the most frequent experience for African American families over the last four decades. Having utilized previous works on the ghetto as measurements for social exclusion (Wacquant, 2001) and Wilson's (1996) concept of social isolation, results determined that the majority of African American families residing in America's poorest neighborhoods come from families who have remained there for generations and that more than half have resided in the poorest neighborhoods in both generations (Sharkey, 2008).

Sharkey (2008) found that variables such as family income, education, and occupational status accounted for the continuity of neighborhood income from one generation to the next. However, the destination neighborhoods of children appear to have more to do with their origin neighborhoods than with other aspects of their family background or any advances made in educational attainment.

The impact of family and community expectations has a significant impact on social mobility and the choice of careers (Halpern et al., 2004; Ritchie et al., 2005).

Wilson (1997) acknowledged that the result of social isolation in African American communities created an environment for young people who lacked the understanding of work as a fundamental aspect of adult life. As a result, they had little or no labor force attachment. Ghetto-related behavior and attitudes often reinforce economic marginality and are frequently found among residents of ghetto neighborhoods, which are notably characterized by high rates of joblessness, social constraints, and restricted opportunity (Wilson, 1997).

**The impact of joblessness.** Unemployment results in a direct route to poverty because it creates a dynamic in which expenses are constant and revenue over time diminishes (Edeoga, 2013). Poverty is significant to a person's mental health and viewed as a function characterized by a lack of individual capabilities, such as education or health, that are needed to attain a basic level of human well-being (Bourne, 2009; Edeoga, 2013). Unemployment adversely affects the mental health and well-being of individuals' chances of re-employment (Ritchie et al., 2005) because prolonged unemployment in the labor market was found to decrease confidence in gaining employment (Edeoga, 2013; Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010).

In an analysis of Work and Well-being, Ritchie et al. (2005) in their review of Murphy and Athanasou (1999) discovered that in 14 out of 16 studies, job loss negatively impacted mental well-being. Additional studies demonstrated that intervals of time spent out of the labor market damaged self-esteem through indicators such as depression, anxiety, and self-alienation or loss of identity (Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1996; Ritchie et al., 2005). Self-esteem as a result of unemployment further impacts re-employment (McGregor & McConnachie, 1995; Ritchie et al., 2005). Additional studies indicated that

economic hardships associated with unemployment had greater effects than lack of structure, social identity, and routine. The lack of motivation and discouragement has also been found to be a factor related to unemployment on an individual level as well as at a local level due to lack of job opportunities (Ritchie et al., 2005; Van Ham, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2001).

Wilson (2009b) in an ethnographic study of young African American males found consistencies with an earlier ethnographic study by Liebow in the mid-1960s. Both studies revealed that when young African American males experienced repeated failures in job searches, they gave up hope and no longer bothered to look for work. Although the study found repeated failures that caused their resignation and led to cultural attitudes which discouraged their pursuit of stable employment in the labor market, the more significant find was employer attitudes and actions toward low-skilled African American males during these periods (Wilson, 2009b).

**Employer discrimination.** Cultural discrimination by employers has been established as an enduring explanation for African American male unemployment (Ferguson, 2012; Skinner, 1995). Employers have been shown to discriminate against young African American males in hiring either through statistical discrimination or cultural animosity (Ferguson, 2012; Stoll, 2005). *Statistical discrimination* describes the generalizations made by employers about inner-city African American males that result in decisions being made based on assumptions without reviewing the applicant and is a culturally motivated practice (Wilson, 2009b).

In a field experiment, testing for labor market discrimination by employers, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) responded randomly to over 1,300 employment ads by

sending out 5,000 resumes with randomly assigned names. The names utilized were designed using traditional African American male and female names along with traditional European American names. The ads responded to covered various jobs of different quality, ranging from cashier work at retail establishments and clerical work in a mail room to office and sales management positions (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). The researchers also randomly designed résumés of high quality and low quality, and randomly assigned each cultural name to each résumé (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).

The findings of the study revealed significant cultural differences in callback rates. Applicants with European American names received one callback for every 10 résumés sent out, whereas applicants with African American names needed to send about 15 résumés and received one call back. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) suggested this 50% gap in the callback was statistically significant.

Culture also affected the reward to having a better résumé. European Americans with higher-quality résumés received nearly 30% more callbacks than European Americans with lower-quality resumes; alternatively, having a higher-quality résumé was found to have a smaller effect for African Americans (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). According to the study, the gap between European Americans and African Americans increased due to résumé quality, although there was an expectation that improved credentials would alleviate employers' concerns that African American applicants were deficient in some unobservable skills. However, the data revealed the opposite (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). The experiment also revealed some other characteristics of the disparity in treatment by culture. In studying the effect of the neighborhood of residence on the likelihood of callback, results suggested that residing in a wealthier, more

educated or European American neighborhood increased callback rates for European Americans. However, it did not help African Americans (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).

Cultural disparities were found across different occupations, and regardless of the constrained affirmative action laws, resulted in the exclusion of African American résumés by federal contractors, this included larger employers and those who claimed they were "equal opportunity employers" (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004)**.** The significance of the study suggests that employer perceptions are a factor in poor labor market outcomes for African Americans due to preferential treatment, regardless of skills or credential training. Thus, training programs may not be enough to alleviate the cultural gap in labor market outcomes (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).

In an analysis of a field experiment on employment discrimination in New York City that examined for incidences of discrimination in low-wage labor markets, Pager, Bonikowski, and Western (2009) and Pager and Karafin (2009) found results consistent with the findings of prior employer audit studies. These studies provided empirical evidence that cultural bias continues to impact the employment opportunities available to young African American men (Pager & Karafin, 2009). This suggested that employer behavior continues to impact African American male employment opportunities in meaningful ways (Pager & Karafin, 2009).

Pager and Karafin (2009) conducted in-depth, in-person interviews with 55 New York City employers, who represented a subsample of firms that advertised for entry-level positions in 2004. The interviews were constructed to collect information on topics such as recruitment strategies; screening procedures; concerns about entry-level workers;

and criteria for selection, placement, and promotion decisions. The study focused on employers' cultural attitudes. The core segment of the interview investigated three primary sets of issues related to, (a) employers' general attitudes toward the employment problems of African American men, (b) their specific experiences with African American applicants and employees, and (c) the relationship between employers' experiences and general attitudes.

The study revealed three major themes that emerged from the employers' responses connecting their attitudes to their experiences, lack of work ethic, self-presentation, and a threatening or criminal demeanor (Pager & Karafin, 2009). The study thus concluded that while the majority of employers reported positive experiences with African American workers, they still maintained negative attitudes about African American men generally, to the extent that these attitudes shaped hiring decisions despite equal productivity among African American and European American workers (Pager & Karafin, 2009). The significance of the study implied that employers consistently avoided African American workers, hiring them at roughly half the rate of equally qualified European Americans (Pager & Karafin, 2009).

Wilson (2009a, 2009b) contended that despite the structural factor of discrimination and limited employment opportunities, African Americans consider discrimination the least factor for goal achievement or determining life chances. Despite the significant findings on employer discrimination from European Americans, Wilson (1997) in his survey of employers revealed that although 74% of European American employers negatively expressed employment-related characteristics of inner-city African Americans, 80% of African American employers responded negatively. The criticisms

from employers referred to African Americans in general, yet the males received the harshest (Wilson, 2009). The following section now briefly highlights other factors that the research has identified as factors impacting African American male joblessness.

**Other factors.** Incarceration and child support both negatively affected the employment and labor force activity of young African American men (Holzer et al., 2005). These factors are correlated with the poor work experience and weak employment networks of many young African American men and worsen their incarceration spell (Holzer et al., 2005; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Empirical evidence revealed that child support enforcement limited labor force activity among African American men aged 25-34 (Holzer et al., 2005). In a study examining incarceration and child support, Holzer et al. (2005) suggested that past incarceration and child support accounted for the decline of labor force activity between 1979-2000 among the 25-34 age group. However, the results were less among those aged 16-24. The aim of the study was to measure the effects of prior incarceration and the enforcement of harsh child support policies on the labor force behavior of less-educated young African American men over the past two decades (Holzer et al., 2005).

Mead (1992) advocated for child support enforcement as a means of forcing African American men to work (Ferguson, 2012). However, high child support payments for many low-skilled African American males are a disincentive to remain in the formal labor market and become an incentive to move into the informal economy (Wilson, 1997). The informal sector connotes activities that are illegal (Wilson, 1997). As a result, Mead (as cited in Ferguson, 2012) insinuated that the incarceration of "hustling African-American men" (p. 24) frequently and for short periods of time will deter criminal

activity and influence them to turn toward earning money legally through employment (Ferguson, 2012). Furthermore, employers are less likely to hire ex-offenders than other groups of comparably skilled workers (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2002, 2003; Holzer et al., 2005).

An audit study of employers in Milwaukee by Pager (2003) indicated that employers were reluctant to hire African American men with criminal records, compared with European American men. Also, this aversion to hiring ex-offenders was shown to limit job options for young African American men who did not have criminal records, even among employers who did not check criminal records (Holzer et al., 2002; Holzer et al., 2005).

**Chapter 2 Summary**

A review of the literature on social rights and citizenship illustrates the development of citizenship from T. H. Marshall's (1949) concept to Parsons's (1965) definition of the individual as a full member of a community or society based on the fulfillment of obligations and rights. However, the ideal of citizenship of African Americans as citizens has been placed in a different context, with the designation of second-class citizenship. Which signifies having legal standing as citizens, yet denied full rights in practice due to the experience of discrimination (Heater, 2005). Furthermore, unemployment is a designation of second-class citizenship (Shklar, 1995), and historical discrimination and segregation led to social practices which created structural and cultural factors that excluded a disadvantaged underclass of citizens. The concept of the underclass specifies individuals who, despite legal standing as citizens, are economically

and culturally impoverished, and experience exclusion from the conventional social and political activity that citizenship connotes (Heater, 2005).

Following the examination of the development of the idea of citizenship, the literature provided a review of structural factors such as residential segregation, labor market segregation, cultural mismatch, skills mismatch, and shifts in urban economies. These factors illustrated how such social practices have resulted in social exclusion and impacted full participation within society through limited access to employment. Moreover, it has warranted cultural responses to social exclusion and concentrated poverty (Wilson, 2009b).

Also, cultural factors have led to responses that include; impacts of joblessness, employer discrimination, and increased rates of incarceration and challenges to child support policies. Cultural responses to structural factors developed a culture of poverty and an emergence of the underclass, which the research indicated lost access to critical segments of the market and society that include the labor market, the political community, and the social network (Oommen, 1997). Because of high unemployment and increased concentrations of poverty in inner cities, the emergence of African Americans as an underclass has developed (Wilson, 1987, 2012).

For the study, the framework of social rights of citizenship proposed that all of the above factors are significant when understanding the experiences of unemployed African American males and their accessibility to the labor market. This chapter provided an outline of the federal program models initially designed to address poverty in deteriorating urban centers. Structural changes within these neighborhoods, in addition to

economic shifts, have also impacted the dynamics that contribute to high joblessness rates and thus low labor-force participation rates.

The next chapter provides a detailed explanation of how this qualitative study was conducted.

**Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology**

**Introduction**

This goal of this qualitative interview study was to understand the experiences of unemployed African American males and their challenges in finding employment. The purpose of the survey was to inform local community workforce development efforts in increasing the social and economic inclusion of this population. The study was a phenomenological study because the researcher wanted to understand the perspectives and experiences of unemployed African American males to inform policymakers and practitioners who design programs to increase accessibility to the labor market for jobless African American males.

The following research questions were proposed to examine the lived experiences of unemployed African American males:

1. What are the perceived challenges experienced by unemployed African American males in accessing the labor market?

2. What level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

Through face to face interviews, the researcher examined the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009) in accessing the labor market. The interview aspect of the study allowed the researcher to talk to individuals to understand their experiences and articulate their reasons for their actions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

**Research Context**

The study was conducted in the city of Syracuse, New York, a mid-sized city located in upstate New York. The study entailed participants who resided within the census tracts across the city that have been identified as economically distressed and have poverty levels that are 20% or above and have rates of joblessness; these areas are characterized as highly concentrated with poverty, within the context of the definition provided by Wilson (1987) and Jargowsky (2015). Recruitment of participants came from community-based organizations and workforce development programs that deliver services to unemployed African American males.

Initially, an email letter requesting the assistance of executive directors for focus group participation was sent out to the identified community agencies (see Appendix A). Emailed letters invited the executive leadership of various organizations to participate. The following agencies were invited to participate: CNY Works, Visions for Change (VFC), State University of New York Educational Opportunity Center (SUNY EOC), State University of New York at Onondaga Community College (SUNY OCC) Economic and Workforce Development Program, Jubilee Homes of Syracuse Build 2 Work Program (B2W), Jobs Plus Program, Peace Inc. Family Resource Center, and Syracuse Community Connections, Inc. (SCC, formerly Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility, Inc.). For each agency, the email letter was sent out to each executive director after approval of the IRB. Each organization is known for providing job readiness and employment support for persons who are unemployed.

CNY Works is a local not-for-profit within Central New York that serves as a single point of entry for workforce information. The agency brings together businesses,

job seekers, and training providers with the goal of providing a skilled workforce for every business and employment for every job searcher. Visions for Change is an organization with the mission to build self-sufficiency via education, and support to initiate changes systematically that contribute to long-term solutions to the problems of poverty by creating prosperity and economic opportunities as well as enhance the general well-being of its participants. The organization's *Choosing to Thrive* program works with individuals who are living in poverty and prepared to move from poverty to financial stability; the program also works on the community level to change policies and barriers that influence individuals to remain in poverty.

The State University of New York Educational Opportunity Center (SUNY EOC) is an educational and vocational training program that provides urban communities with academic programs that lead to higher education and provide job training programs with the goal of leading to employment and economic self-sufficiency. The program operates on the city's Southside and in one of the highest areas of concentrated poverty. The State University of New York Onondaga Community College's (SUNY OCC) Economic and Workforce Development program offers short-term training, career placement, and job skills development training services by working with area employers. Furthermore, the program assists community members to develop the skills necessary to get hired, acquire work, and improve their quality of life.

Jubilee Homes of Syracuse is a community development organization located in the city's Southwest neighborhood, which is an area characterized by high unemployment and poverty. The agency offers workforce development and assistance to city residents through its Build 2 Work program which offers résumé assistance, interviewing

preparation services, and life-skill awareness for sustaining employment. The Jobs Plus program, a welfare reform program of Onondaga County, provides employment and interview assistance; through classroom education and training, the program utilizes employment experience with the attainment of needed work-related skills. The services from this agency assist individuals who receive public benefits to access and sustain employment.

Peace Inc., through its Family Resource Center, provides job readiness and employment information to community residents. Moreover, the final agency, Syracuse Community Connections, Inc. (formerly Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility, Inc.), has various programs within its agency that serve persons who are unemployed and seek employment services. This agency provides services to residents who reside within three census tracts that have the highest rates of poverty in the city.

**Sample and Population**

For the study, six to eight unemployed African American males were recruited per agency to participate in the interviews. To describe the significance of a phenomenon experienced by a small number of individuals, studying three to 10 subjects is recommended in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) and Polkinghorne (1989) further augmented the use of 10 subjects as a reasonable size when using in-depth interviews that can last as long as 2 hours.

Therefore, a total of 24-40 unemployed African American males were invited to participate in the study. Participation in the study required the following criteria: (a) identified as African American, (b) male, (c) age 18 and over, (d) unemployed, and (e) resided within a neighborhood characterized by rates of poverty that are at least 20%.

Established criterion sampling for the study was chosen because all individuals experienced the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 1998). Utilizing a purposeful selection of participants was a strategic decision point within this qualitative study (Creswell, 1998). In addition to selecting the research participants through purposeful sampling, *criterion sampling* was a strategy specifically utilized in this phenomenological study.

Initially, letters of invitation were emailed to request assistance from the executive directors and program directors in the recruitment of the targeted demographic (see Appendix A). The researcher identified each agency based upon prior professional experience and from having been a part of various anti-poverty initiatives in the city of Syracuse. Next, consent from organizational leadership was sought via letters of invitation for participation in focus groups. Informed consent (see Appendix B) was issued to the organizations for distribution to interested persons. Then, the researcher contacted interested participants via phone and study participants were invited to one-on-one interviews that were scheduled within convenient locations of the organization of their recruitment. In order to gain support from the participants, the researcher conveyed to them that they were participating voluntarily in the study. He also explained the purpose of the study and ensured the participants that they were not being deceived about the nature of the study (Creswell, 1998).

The following section outlines the research instruments used in the semi-structured interviews. It details the data collection procedure for conducting the one-on-one interviews, recording procedures, participant confidentiality, data storage, and the processes to disseminate and discard information.

**Data Collection**

The study utilized the qualitative method of one-on-one interviews. Letters of invitation for focus group participation (see Appendix B) were sent to each participating community agency. Within one week of referral, each interested participant contacted the researcher via phone call. Before each interview, participants were contacted at least 48 hours before their scheduled session. The one-on-one sessions occurred in locations that were conveniently located for participants to attend without transportation barriers. One-on-one interviews were scheduled so they did not interfere with the job-searching process for participants who were actively seeking employment.

For the study, participants and the executive leadership of each organization did not receive any financial incentive to participate. However, light refreshments were made available during each one-on-one interview. Also, reminder emails were sent out to the leadership of each participating community agency at least 24 hours before confirmation of participants.

**Instruments used for data collection**. Data for the study were gathered utilizing semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Qualitative interviews were significant because the individuals experiencing challenges to labor market accessibility being examined articulated their conscious experiences (Creswell, 1998). Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological research was to obtain a view into the research participants' lives and to understand the personal meanings constructed from their lived experiences of unemployment (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). However, before the collection of data, participants were assured confidentiality and granted permission to share experiences via informed consent.

**Informed consent.** Before the interview process began, the researcher established a clear understanding with the interviewees about the use and publication of the interview material (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To ensure adherence to interview guidelines, the researcher provided an informed consent form (see Appendix B) to the participants. Prior to the interview, an explanation was provided for the purpose of the study and the objectives for which the findings will be reported. Creswell (1998) suggested this as a means of not engaging in deception.

**Validity.** For assurance of the validity of the study, care was taken to make sure participants met the research criteria because this was critical to ensure that the data collected for the study investigated the intended aim (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Also, to confirm validity, research participants were accessed through local community-based agencies/programs that work with individuals who are seeking employment services. Creswell (1998) revealed that participants in a study must be chosen carefully and be persons who have experienced the phenomenon. Letters of invitation (see Appendix A) were disseminated to organizational leadership to recruit participants to consent to interviews with the researcher that would not exceed 2 hours. Because of the collection and analysis of the participant interviews, the data provided insight into the shared lived experiences of the participants.

The researcher conducted a systemic review to evaluate the questions and warrant that additional formal, clear, and concise questions were developed for the study. Utilizing the seven stages of an interview investigation allowed for adequate preparation for the interviews and provided a higher quality of the knowledge produced during the interview interaction (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The study ensured that participants

met the study criteria: all participants at the time of their interview self-reported that they were unemployed. The collection of these data was significant for understanding the perceptions of unemployed African American males regarding their labor market accessibility.

Before conducting interviews, formal research questions were completed to identify variables and make sure that the issues formulated for the study were relevant to the target population (Fowler, 2014).

**Constructing interview questions.** The interview questions developed for the study aligned with the research questions (see Appendix C) to provide an understanding of the perceived challenges of unemployed African American males in accessing the labor market. Specifically, the questions were:

1.  What are the perceived challenges experienced by African American males in accessing the labor market?

2.  What level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

The interviews were conducted to examine similar experiences and identify the significant commonalities or essence of the participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The one-on-one interviews consisted of 11 semi-structured questions which guided the interview conversations as described in the interview protocol (see Appendix C). As the interviewer, the researcher made sure to cover all open-ended questions as included in the interview protocol. This protocol served as a guide to focus the research participant on the topic of discussion in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Also, the general interview protocol of the study was followed to ensure that the discussion remained

focused on the perceptions and experiences of African American males in accessing the labor market (Fowler, 2014).

**Conducting interviews.** The researcher in the study was the most important instrument for attaining knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). He recorded information from the interviews, utilizing both handwritten notes and audio recordings. Johnson and Christensen (2014) and Creswell (2009) suggested these methods when collecting data for qualitative one-on-one interviews. Moreover, the use of audio recording enabled the researcher to focus on the topic of discussion and the dynamics of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The participants consented to audio recording the interview sessions when they agreed to participate (see Appendix B). Before each meeting, notifications were issued to participants reminding them that their participation was voluntary and that all information would be kept anonymous and confidential (see Appendix C for interview protocol).

During the interviews, the researcher recorded written observational notes in a reflexive journal. To engage the participants in the discussion and establish trust and rapport (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), the researcher began with approximately four or five questions that were icebreakers (Creswell, 2009). After the initial questions, four to five additional probing questions were posed to the participants for further detail, and they were encouraged to expound on their experiences and challenges to accessing the labor market when a significant theme was discussed. The discussions concluded with the researcher thanking the participants for their time and contributions to the discussion (Creswell, 2009).

Moreover, when any participant disclosed any additional perceptions or experiences relevant to the study, the researcher gained permission from the participant to record these within the field interview notes (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The audio-recorded interviews from the study were translated and reconstructed into a narrative to be revealed to an audience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The next section details how the data collected from the interviews were analyzed.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2009) contended that the data analysis process entails the collection of open-ended data based on proposed questions and is then analyzed utilizing the information provided by research participants. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher identified the central themes and concepts gathered from the discussions with the participants. Moreover, transcription of the interviews served as the first step in the organization and preparation of the data for analysis (Creswell, 2009). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggested that the initial requirement for transcribing an interview is that it be recorded, while the second requirement is that the recorded audible conversation be audible to the transcriber. For this qualitative study, the audio recordings from each one-on-one interview were submitted, transcribed and typed into a text file (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) by a third-party transcriptionist.

Next, the researcher examined all transcribed data to obtain an overall idea of the information provided by the participants in order to reflect and gain an understanding of the perceptions conveyed during the interviews (Creswell, 2009). The transcription of the recorded audio interviews focused on the narratives given by the research participants.

**Confidentiality.** The study ensured confidentiality and privacy by assigning aliases to the participants. Creswell (1998) asserted that a researcher will protect the anonymity of research participants by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals. To ensure adherence to ethical principles of research, the present researcher was responsible for collecting, storing, and reporting the knowledge gathered from the shared experiences of the participants.

The protection of the rights and privacy of participants were guaranteed throughout the study through the establishment of fictitious names, and only for the publishing of research results will the narratives of the participants be used (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Furthermore, ethical treatment was assured, and privacy rights were communicated to study participants. Participants were assured of confidentiality in the informed consent (see Appendix B). The researcher ensured adherence to research ethics by completing an ethics training course in February 2016, and the resulting certificate was sent to the IRB at St. John Fisher College. The Ethical Principles of Beneficence indicates that risk of harm to a participant should be minimal; the sum of the potential benefits to the participant and the significance of the knowledge gained should outweigh the possibility of harm to the participant and thus justify a decision to conduct the study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

**Interview analysis.** The study followed Creswell's (2009) six steps to data analysis of qualitative research. Regarding the transcribing of the interviews in the study, a detailed discussion of the data was conducted utilizing the coding process (Creswell, 2009). Initially, transcribed text data were segmented into units of analysis based on the descriptive wording documented from the interviews. Then the segmented data were

coded categorically (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). For the purposes of data analysis, inductive coding, in vivo coding, and a priori coding were utilized. This method of coding aligned with the study because the researcher generated codes through an examination of the data, used the participants' words to develop codes, and utilized codes based on the previous research literature (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Although Creswell (2009) contended that there is an issue with the use of predetermined and emerging codes, Johnson and Christensen (2014) cited the use of preexisting and inductive coding as a standard practice.

After coding the data in the study, the researcher generated themes. After the development of topics, the data were developed into a detailed narrative discussing the participants' perceptions as revealed in the study. Additionally, the revealed themes were arranged and detailed into a visual table to coincide with the research narrative of the study (Creswell, 1998). Finally, the researcher provided an analysis of the data to make meaning of the findings. This analysis provided an understanding of the participants' experiences and challenges as related to the study and to determine whether the findings aligned with prior literature on African American male joblessness or whether there was another emergent explanation (Creswell, 1998). A focus of the interview research as a narrative understanding warrants unison among the original interview, the analysis, and the final report of the study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

**Research validity.** To ensure validity in the study, the researcher checked for the accuracy of the results by employing validity strategies (Creswell, 2009). Testing for validity in the study was significant as the researcher ensured that the survey utilized the methodology identified to investigate what was suggested in the study (Brinkmann &

Kvale, 2015)—that is, the perceptions of unemployed African American males about their labor market accessibility. Also, to determine the accuracy of the findings of the study, validity was measured based on the perspective of the researcher's notes and the participants' perceptions (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). For the study, application of the validity strategies (Creswell, 2009) of triangulation, descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity were utilized (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

The triangulation approach developed for the study was a research process that provided a systematic cross-checking of information and conclusions via the use of multiple data sources (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Furthermore, triangulation served to the examine whether the data from preexisting studies, in addition to the participants' perspectives, established themes and yielded results that were either convergent or divergent with the sources (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Creswell (2009) suggested the use of "rich, thick descriptions" (p. 191) to communicate findings. Additionally, Johnson and Christensen (2014) referred to this as *descriptive validity*.

In the study, the researcher's descriptive validity reported that the survey accurately studied the perceptions of and challenges to labor market accessibility among unemployed African American males. Moreover, their perceptions, problems, and experiences were accurately recorded and notated within the researcher's written notes (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Interpretive validity signified that the qualitative researcher accurately understood the research participants' perceptions and experiences and interpreted them in the investigation report (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In revealing the validity of findings, Creswell (2009) contended that the more experience a

researcher has with participants in their actual setting, the more the validity of the conclusions increases. However, in the study, the researcher had in-depth prior professional experience of working with unemployed African American males and thus understood the phenomenon in the study to ensure validity (Creswell, 2009). The researcher further ensured validity based on experience working with this population and understanding the participants' perspectives, thus contributing to the validity of their perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Finally, in ensuring the validity of the study, the theory of citizenship was utilized to explain the phenomenon of unemployment and challenges to labor market accessibility among African American males (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Furthermore, the strategy for ensuring theoretical validity occurred in the study as the researcher spent time studying the perceptions and experiences of the participants through one-on-one interviews. Understanding the relationship between the challenges of unemployed African American males and labor market accessibility in the study was possible through the framework of the social rights of citizenship, which contends that the denial of unemployment and discriminatory practices result in social exclusion. Moreover, this results in the denial and failure of the recognition of full citizenship rights and economic inclusion.

**Storage and disposal of research data.** The recorded audio interviews were stored securely in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. The audio recordings were also stored securely, saved, and uploaded onto a computer external hard drive. After a period of 3 years, all data from written and audio recorded files will be destroyed.

**Chapter 3 Summary**

The process of the study began with approval of the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB). The timeline for the study began in May 2017. First, letters of invitation were disseminated to all agencies that work with the identified targeted demographic. Second, participants were recruited and invited to participate in interviews that were conducted in a private location; the interviews did not exceed 2 hours. Third, the researcher collected data from researcher notes, and submitted audio-recorded one-on-one interviews to a third-party transcriber. Fourth, after completion of transcription, the data were coded and arranged into themes for further analysis. Finally, the data was analyzed and checked for validity, utilizing multiple validity strategies (Creswell, 2009); they were then written in a narrative form for submission to St. John Fisher College as a completed dissertation.

The goal of the study was to examine the self-perceptions of unemployed African American males about their labor market accessibility. The data analysis informs economic and workforce development practitioners, educators, policymakers and those who seek to understand the impact that structural and cultural factors have on the experiences of African American males as related to their exclusion from full citizenship rights (Brief & Nord, 1990).

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the study was to understand the challenges of obtaining employment for unemployed African American males who reside within an inner city, characterized by high rates of concentrated poverty. As stated in Chapter 1, the study's aim was to understand their lived experiences of joblessness and to analyze the factors related to their prolonged joblessness. Final analysis from the study will inform economic and workforce development policies and programs within urban inner cities. Participants were asked to describe and explain; their personal experiences searching for employment, accessibility of the jobs for which they applied, and to describe any skills, abilities, experience, and credentials that they possess which they use to find employment. This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted utilizing semi-structured face to face interviews.

In conducting this research, the issue of labor market accessibility for unemployed African American males was examined utilizing the theoretical framework of the Citizenship theory, which contends that the right to work and to access economic and social resources are an essential social right for those who are recognized as citizens within a society. As revealed in Chapter 3, eight local community-based agencies that provide career development and/or job training services were invited to participate in the study and provide three to five males who were between the ages of 21-55 and currently unemployed but seeking employment, as this aligns with the U.S. Department of Labor definition of *unemployed*. In total, three agencies agreed to participate, and essentially

two agencies sent a total of five males to contribute to the study. Research recommends three to 10 subjects for validity when conducting qualitative interviews. A total of five unemployed African American males agreed to participate in the study.

This chapter will describe the themes, and essences which emerged from the data analyzed. The remainder of Chapter 4 will provide an examination of the participants' perceptions regarding their labor market experiences as they seek employment. Findings based on the self-perceived challenges of these African American males provides implications for policymakers, and economic and workforce development practitioners in addressing the challenge of disproportionate African American male joblessness. Prior to examining the research questions which were proposed and analyzed to examine the lived experiences of the five unemployed African American males who participated in the study, the research problem identified in Chapter 1 will be reviewed.

**Research problem**

Chapter 1 revealed the failure of research to acknowledge the self-perceptions and experiences of unemployed African American males themselves (Ferguson, 2012). Furthermore, it illustrated how for decades government policies, and programs impacted the structural factors which increased joblessness amongst African American males. Structural factors such as; higher discrimination, skills mismatch, residential segregation, spatial mismatches, economic shifts in the urban economies, labor market segregation, discriminatory zoning laws, and other policies which decimated urban centers. Moreover, disproportionate rates of joblessness exist despite the educational, skills, and training attained African American males struggle to compete within the labor market. In addition to, the structural factors and their inability to obtain and sustain employment, there has

developed a need to examine the lack of engagement and inclusion from the labor market

within the context of the social rights of citizenship. Thus, illustrating the need for

research to consider and understand the lived experiences of unemployed African

American males and their challenges to attaining full employment (Ferguson, 2012).

**Research questions**

The study analyzed the perceptions of five unemployed African American males

who reside in Syracuse, New York and are seeking employment. Most of the participants

in the study, experienced *long-term unemployment*. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

defines Long-term unemployed as those persons who have been jobless for 27 weeks or

more. Selection criterion in the study required that the participants; (a) were African

American, (b) male, (c) age 18 and over, (d) unemployed, and (e) resided within a

neighborhood characterized by rates of poverty that are at least 20%. The following

research questions were proposed to examine the lived experiences of unemployed

African American males:

1. What are the perceived challenges experienced by African American males in
   accessing the labor market?

2. What level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

In addition to these research questions, 11 semi-structured interview questions

were proposed to five unemployed African American males to understand their lived

experiences in their efforts to access employment.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

The succeeding section presents the categories, themes, and essences which

emerged from the findings of the study. First, the data collected from transcribed

interviews were categorically segmented based on descriptive wording and responses of the study participants. Then, the segmented categories were examined for themes which emerged from participants' responses and which aligned with prior research literature. Themes and essences emerged from the participants repetitive descriptions of their shared lived experience of being unemployed throughout the study.

**Research question 1.** The first research question led to the emergence of two categories of codes and the findings of the six themes. Each theme was also characterized by a shared common experience or an essence for each theme. Table 4.1 shows the two major categories, themes, and essences that emerged with each. During this analysis, it was observed that many of the participant responses to questions were interrelated.

*Category 1: accessibility of employment opportunities.* The first research question aimed to identify the self-perceived challenges to obtaining employment for the five African American males in the study. Previous literature examined in Chapter 2, revealed that structural barriers resulting from federal government policies and programs were developed, and continually sustained from the preceding decades. As research from Chapter 2 illustrated, these structural factors also impact the disproportionate rates of joblessness amongst urban African American males. As the participants responded to the interview questions which sought to answer the first research question, four primary themes emerged. Several essences were also captured as participants described their challenges to accessing employment. One theme that emerged from the participants was *limited local employment opportunities.*

Table 4.1

*Categories, Themes and Essences of The Perceived Challenges of African American Males in Accessing Employment Opportunities*

| Category | Themes | Essence |
|---|---|---|
| Accessibility of Employment Opportunities | Limited Local Employment Opportunities | *Sense of Exclusion from local Employment Opportunities* |
| | Transportation Barriers | *The need for reliable transportation inhibits employment opportunities* |
| | | *Good jobs located outside Challenges to accessing employment outside of city* |
| | Employer Discrimination | *Restricted from Employment opportunities based on Employer bias* |
| | | *Inequitable employment opportunities* |
| | Other Barriers | *Sense of frustration and limitation* |
| | | *Stressful and hurtful* |
| Challenging Experiences while Seeking Employment | Experience of Prolonged Joblessness | *Inability to obtain and sustain employment* |
| | | *Feelings of discouragement and frustration of prolonged unemployment* |
| | Impact of Joblessness | *Impact on their sense of value as a man to the family (Manhood)* |
| | | *Financial hardships* |
| | | *Social isolation* |
| | | *Emotional well-being* |

***Limited local employment opportunities***. During the study, the participants often described their challenge to accessing employment as being limited, especially in terms of local hiring and employment opportunities. For example, in describing *limited local employment opportunities*, Participant J stated:

It's not, it's not really great. I think it's under where, it's under the standards where it should be, you know. Of course, the kind, uh, obviously, you can see be-, if you come out here and you open your eyes and you could tell the difference between, uh, where people live and how it's looking and, and what's going on. Because of the jobs, the availability of jobs and the, and the, and the, and the education that needs to be provided for, uh, young people in, in areas such as this, you know. It's limited, very limited -*scarce* [emphasis added].

Participant M added:

Locally, and personally for me, I mean, I really don't -I personally don't have too many issues. I just think that locally, where I'm from, is, is really - You could feel that it, that it's really segregated, you know? Those who are trying don't have the same opportunities as some of those people who don't live in the same neighborhoods, don't have the, don't got the same background. That's really tough. The city, the city I'm from is really segregated, and those who live in suburbs, those who live in the city, inner city, they have two different type of opportunities.

Participant Z, described the *limited local employment opportunities* in the following manner;

Not accessible at all. Not accessible at all. 85, 80% of the jobs in this area are

occupied by people that don't even live in this area. … Yep. By Caucasians that

aren't even from this area, who don't even, who aren't paying taxes in this area,

who aren't, you know, they're, they're not building houses and building up

revenue in this area. …They aren't, you know, um, building bus, businesses in this

area, you know.

Participants J, M, and Z summarized the *limited local employment opportunities* available

to them within their local community. In describing the *limited local employment*

*opportunities* that are available to them, the participants further characterized this

experience through *challenges of exclusion.* Participant Z alluded to this experience by

emphasizing the lack of opportunities available, in stating;

We don't have any opportunities. We have zero opportunities. Zero opportunities

to be leaders, zero opportunities to be doctors, to be lawyers, to be things that are,

you know, prolific.

And finally, Participant A provided the following in describing the *challenge of*

*exclusion;*

Some of the simplest jobs now they don't want you because you are over

qualified and then some of the jobs that, that you are qualified for then they don't

want you.

Although several of the participants in the study, identified *limited local*

*employment opportunities* as a challenge to their ability to access the labor market, they

identified employment opportunities that existed outside of the local inner city and within

the suburban communities however, the participants described barriers to accessing these

opportunities. Findings from prior research reveal that the decline in availability of employment within urban areas increased rates of male joblessness while simultaneously the effects of suburbanization increased the effects of growing joblessness, resulting in "jobless ghettos" within the central city (Wagmiller, 2004). Moreover, the shift in the industrial structure of the city limited residents' access to employment. This impact was revealed and described often particularly through barriers. One of the themes which emerged, centered on the participants challenges with transportation. The shared experiences or *essences revealed* within this theme described by the participants most often highlighted; (a) *inability to access higher paying jobs located outside of the city, (b) suburban employment opportunities are limited to inner city residents, and (c) the lack of reliable transportation to access these jobs equitably.*

**Transportation barriers**. A common reoccurring theme which the participants described was their inability to access the employment opportunities which are located outside of the inner city. The succeeding descriptions from the study participants illustrates the extent to which transportation challenges limit their ability to access employment outside of the urban area in which they reside.

Participant A, described his experience with both the challenge of transportation and the limited opportunities available to inner city residents as *frustrating:*

Um, I mean it's kind of a little bit frustrating because some of the major, some of these major manufacturing companies are really not in the inner city. So that don't… it's kind of harder for when you are in the inner city and you don't have the transportation or the bus line don't really go out there or it does go out there in only once every few hours or things like that. And so, transportation is kind of a

thing that kind of at least stops me about getting out to some of these other better manufacturing paying benefit jobs. And then it's also kind of hard because sometimes those companies are not really looking for any inner-city people you know.

Participant M discussed the challenges of transportation and the *inability to access the higher wage opportunities* of suburban employment opportunities versus being limited to earning lower local wages:

Well, if, um, the real low-paying jobs are locally. You know, you find yourself making $10 to $12 an hour, and if you want to stay local anything that's paying over $15 and better, at least, um, that's going to be at least where I'll start to get that 10-mile range, and if you don't have transportation, doesn't seem like a lot, but locally 10 miles could be a little hike, and then it started to be 25 miles out that... You know, the better, further out, the better the work, so anything that's really close, within them city limits of Syracuse, the pay doesn't be as high as it should be, and a lot of the times it's actually the, the jobs are out a little bit, so if you don't have means of transportation it's tough to get to work.

Participant Z discussed the need for a vehicle and further stated that the higher paying jobs are located outside of the city and he explained that these limited opportunities for African American males' results in culture shock and *feeling of isolation* when able to access employment;

They're far out, you have to, you need a vehicle to, to get to them. Um, they're, they're high paid, but it's like, you know, if -if- if -if you're lucky and you land that, you can-you can- you can see the people looking at you with- you know,

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with surprise in their face... Like, you know, "How'd that black guy get that position?" Or, "Hey Tom, I wanted that, I… I was supposed to bid for that. You know… he didn't give it to me… He gave it to him." It just… it, it feels like you're not wanted, you know… it feels like… it feels like how did I get here? You know? It feels like um… it feels like I'm the only one who made it. It doesn't feel like, you know, my brother has the same opportunity to get here as well.

*Employer discrimination*. The perception that employer discrimination emerged most notably as participants described their challenges to accessing employment. Bertrand and Mullainthan (2004) in their case study demonstrated the impact that employer perceptions have on the joblessness rates of African American men. Pager and Karafin (2009) in their study provided empirical evidence whereby employer discrimination and cultural bias continually impacts employment opportunities made available to African American men. In the study, participants alluded to this practice through two themes; (a) name discrimination, and (b) residential discrimination. This factor by employers also revealed the *essence* that the participants felt employer bias made accessing employment *inequitable.*

Participant Z shared this perspective on name discrimination and his challenge to finding employment online;

And you still have the online process as well. But the online process is gonna cultural, culturally um, knock you out of the box the moment that your name is Tyrone. The moment that your name is, you know, (removed for confidentiality). The moment that your name is Tyson. The moment that your name is, you know, not Tom, or not Bob, or not Robert. Or, or not, you know, Ty. Or not, you know,

Frank. Like they, they're looking for key words and key names. Your last name gives up everything. Definitely. If you're a Williams, no. If you're a Washington, no. You know? You have to be a Kelly, or a, uh, Swarovsky, or a -they're looking for this stuff. They're looking for these key words, for these key names. That's the interviewing process. That's the hiring process- that's the applicant process.

Participant A expressed many times throughout his interview, the perspective that *employer discrimination* toward inner city residents posed a challenge to obtaining employment. When asked are there any other factors that you believe contribute to why you are encountering difficulties in obtaining employment? He replied;

Also, too like sometimes I kind of think just the [gentrification] is of the system. You know you can kind of- just- some just- you can like- you put on the application your address they look at, they can just look at your address to see what type of area you live in. Okay this person stay in the inner city or very- can be violent area or this person it kind of-  just sometimes your area kind of gives you a bad rep automatically even though maybe you might be like that type of person or you may not you know. 'Cause I have seen a lot of good people and a lot of smart people that just came from the hood and still live in the hood.

In addition to the structural and cultural factors that contribute to African American male joblessness, there are other factors that evidence contends contributes to their labor market experiences. Three other themes emerged in the study when seeking to understand the self-perceived challenges of the African American men who participated in the study. Two of the themes which emerged as challenging factors identified by the participants on their ability to obtain employment were, *criminal records and child*

*support.* Holzer, et al. (2005) indicate that both incarceration and child support negatively

effects the labor force activity of young African American men. Child support as noted

by the prior research studies examined in Chapter 2, revealed that child support

enforcement restricted labor force activity among African American men aged 25-34

(Holzer et al., 2005). The third theme that emerged was the impact of having a *physical*

*disability*.

     **Criminal record as a barrier.** Research suggests that not only are employers less

likely to hire ex-offenders than other groups of comparably skilled workers (Holzer,

Raphael, & Stoll, 2002, 2003; Holzer et al., 2005) but they are reluctant to hire African

American men with criminal records, in comparison with European American males.

Participant J described his experience based on his criminal history as *frustrating*;

     Frustrating. Very frustrating. Um- As an African American and with a criminal

     history, it's hard, you know- to, you know, actually get jobs unless it's like, in

     construction or you know somebody, so- It's real frustrating with that. Um- just

     need more opportunities.

     He further later in his interview shared the following perspective on his criminal

history impacting his ability to access employment;

     Felonies, history of, uh, criminal history. Criminal history, bottom line, you know.

     Uh, that deters a lot of employers from you because there are so many people that

     don't have felonies that's looking for the same opportunities, you know. So, it's

     just like more of a, I- I feel like it's employment profiling. You know what I

     mean?

Participant Z similarly expressed his frustrations with his prior criminal

conviction from the age of 17 which hinders him currently in his search for employment.

Now, 32 years of age, he shared this perspective;

> I feel like I made a mistake and I'm black, and I feel like- I'm presumed, uh, guilty
>
> until proven innocent.

When asked if he felt his criminal record from 15 years prior was still being held against

him, he replied emphatically;

> Definitely. They're- they ask about- they ask about that all the time- Um, it was, I
>
> was 17 and I was in the state of Pennsylvania. So now you have the in between
>
> laws. Now I have to get a pardon from the governor of Pennsylvania to get my
>
> record expunged from a mistake that I made when I was 17 years old. And I was
>
> out on my own, didn't have parents or anything like that. I had a job, I lost my job,
>
> ended up having to sell some drugs to, you know, to pay my rent and support
>
> myself. As a 17-year-old kid, when I was really supposed to be in high school,
>
> just worried about high school. You know, my mom was on drugs, um, I had to
>
> do what I had to do. And I'm still paying, yes. I'm definitely still paying.

*Child support*. The impact of child support on African American male joblessness

has been found to impact the work force activity of those between 25-34 (Holzer et al.,

2005). The enforcements and high payments further inhibits their ability to access

employment and other opportunities.

Participant M, a 33-year-old male at the time of the study, explained that when he

does find employment opportunities he is *not employable* due to the hardships and

barriers to employment opportunities further created by child support. He shared this on child support as being a barrier;

> Something as simple as that I might not be able to get to it, and other reasons, like transportation, and the reason why transportation is an issue is because I can't have a vehicle right now, because of my license situation and child support. Can't get my license. Well, the reality is, I've- my license was suspended due to the child support, and since it was suspended it was- I have, I have missed out on many jobs due to the fact that I can't have a valid driver's license right now, and it's- I mean, it's tough. Child support, they don't care that I'm not working right now. They take half of my child, uh, unemployment right now. So, it, you could go, I could apply for a million and one jobs, but if I can't- If I'm not, if I'm not, if I'm not going to have a valid driver's license, I'm already a non-candidate.

Participant Z explained that his inability to pay high child support payments while in college and while having custody of his son whom he was paying for, presented a *barrier to education* and resulted in him not completing college. He shared this about his experience;

> Um, I uh, broke up with my, uh, son's mom, and you know, ended up getting involved with someone else. And um, she kind of sprung me having my son. She wanted me to keep my son. And I ended up keeping him, along with me going to school full time and working full time. Excuse me- so I pretty much had to make a choice. You know, be a father, pay my bills, or extend my education so that I could pay my bills and be a father. So, at the time, you know, I, I had to take care of my child. Um, I was worried about child support, uh, payments being taken out

and just all this stuff. You know, um- yeah. His mom wanted me to pay child

support still. Yeah. Out of pocket child support. We never had an agreement until

now, we're just getting in court, but um, yeah. Pretty much paying child support

out of pocket still, and still having my son living with me, you know, 50% of the

time, pretty much.

 ***Disability as a barrier to employment.*** Throughout the research interview with

Participant B, he consistently shared a theme that focused on his inability to access

employment opportunities. A 34-year-old male, he described his experience with a newly

diagnosed disability as being a significant challenge to finding employment. He

constantly described this impact as being *hurtful and stressful* as it has limited his ability

to utilize his skills and abilities he worked so hard to attain.

Participant B on having a *disability;*

 It's stressful. It's kind of, uh, kind of hurtful at the end of the day, um, because I,

 I've accomplished a lot of goals a lot of young men my age or young black men

 my age haven't even, can't even get to. And I, I, I accomplished my goals, and I

 can't use my credentials or use the stuff that I know or went to school for, because

 of my disability. So, it's kind of stressful. It's kind of a, a hurtful thing. Um, I

 usually get- Sometimes I get depressed or I get down. It's like, Dang, I, I d-, I, I

 put in all this time and effort, you know, and got education and did what I was

 supposed to do and did the right thing, and now I can't use it. So, it's kind of a

 stressful thing, you know. It can be. And sometimes I'm down about it when I sit

 and think about it. But, um, you know, I, I get over it, you know. And, you know,

I get through it, but it's just, like I said, it's just a powerful thing to go through, you know.

This section presented descriptions from the study participants which described the *Challenges of Accessing Employment Opportunities*. From this category, four themes emerged in the study as described by the participants; (a) *limited local employment opportunities*, (b) *transportation barriers*, (c) *employer discrimination*, and (d) *other barriers*.

*Category 2: Challenging experiences while seeking employment*. In Chapter 2 of the study, the research illustrated the impact that being unemployed has on individuals who are seeking employment yet unable to successfully access labor market opportunities. Ritchie et al. (2005) implicated the adverse effects being jobless has on the mental health and well-being of individuals' chances of re-employment. Moreover, prolonged unemployment in the labor market diminishes confidence in obtaining employment (Edeoga, 2013; Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010). The participants' descriptions of their employment seeking experiences in this section will illustrate the challenges and impacts of being long-term unemployed. Two themes emerged; 1) *experience of prolonged joblessness* and 2) *the impact of joblessness*. In addition, there were six essences that characterized the lived experiences of the two themes; (a) *inability to obtain and sustain employment, (b) feelings of discouragement and frustration, (c) impact on sense of value as a provider for family, (d) financial hardships, (e) social isolation,* and *(f) emotional well-being.* The following section will reveal the participants perceptions on the challenges they face while jobless and the how it impacts their well-being.

***Experience of prolonged joblessness***. Prolonged joblessness or long-term unemployment is defined as those who are unemployed for 27 weeks or more (Rothstein, 2013). All the study participants spent nearly a month unemployed, however, four out of the five spent 27 weeks or more unemployed. Figure 4.2 illustrates this data. During the interviews, the participants described how the extensive time spent out of the labor market was beginning to impact them. This was expressed through two essences: (a) the *inability to obtain and sustain employment* and (b) *frustration and discouragement of prolonged unemployment.* The following statement shared by Participant Z, illustrates the frustrations and discouragement experienced with the inability to obtain employment over the course of the year he has been unemployed;

> Um, it's, it's horrible for a young black male. Um, 50 applications a day, um, some days, 40, 30, you know, you, you get to, you know, really trying to work hard and make people hire you, which is something that you can never do- Um, just going above and beyond to, you know, to show how desperate I am to have a job. It's, it um, it actually, it, it becomes a burden, I feel like. Um, you know, I, I can come qualified, I can come dressed to impress, I can come with a cover letter, I can come with a resume. You know. I could not come with it, and it feels like I get the same results.
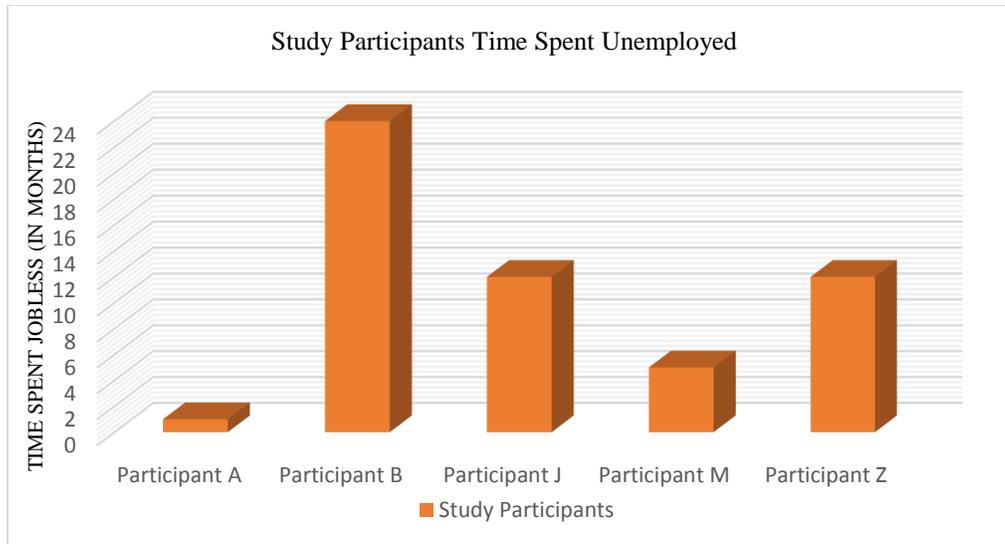
*Figure 4.2.* Category 2: Participants Time Spent Jobless

**Impacts of joblessness.** Throughout the study interviews, the participants often described how they were affected by the occurrences of joblessness. These impacts most notably emerged and intersected through the essences of: (a) sense of value as a man to their family (manhood), (b) financial hardships, (c) social isolation, and (d) emotional well-being. The participants in the study, each described all of these as frustrating and difficult experiences. Participant B provided this description on the impact joblessness was having on his ability to be a steady provider for his children:

> It's {frustrating. It's frustrating} and it's, it's, [it's hard. It really is]. Keeping money in my pockets, trying to, you know, survive, keep my head above water, you know, trying to take care of my kids. Um, like I said, the big, the big, the big issue is the money issue. It sucks because I, I know that I can, you know, do a lot better, and I just can't, just due, you know, like I said, due to my illness. I can't really, you know, be the father or be the man that I really want to be and take care of my kids in how they sh-, you know, they should be took care of. Not saying

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that I'm a bad father or I'm not doing the right thing as far as taking care of them,

but I, I, I would like to do a lot better by doing it.

Participant M also described how the impact of joblessness affected his role as a man to

his family and the financial hardships experienced. He expressed the following;

Well, the [financial impact], it really hits home, um, from not being able to really

pay rent to, to not really buy, able to buy your kids clothing, to, um, have to

explain to your woman, or your wife, that you're trying. It, it makes you feel less

than a man, is, it's really, really, really- It rips your heart out at times.

Participant Z expressed the *financial hardships, emotional* distress and *social*

*isolation* caused by being jobless;

Being unemployed, I feel like I do not fit in. I can't pay my bills, I feel like my

wife will leave me any given second for somebody else that can pay his bills. Um,

I'm uh, very depressed. Um, I can't take my family out to places that I really want

to take them to and have fun, and show them, you know, more to life. I uh, I'm

very, very depressed. Very depressed- You feel like an outcast. You know? And

this isn't my fault.

Participant J explained the following;

If you're not bringing any funds in, you're dependent on somebody else's funds to,

you know, help you take care of your family. For me, it's, it's a hard thing being

I'm a man, you know, uh, provider. I got children so I have to do other, other

things, go outside and cut grass and do everything, you know. Basically getting

independently paid, working on my own anyway but without the benefits. Um, it

hasn't been easy. It hasn't been easy. It's a tough role. Uh, emotionally, *you know,*

everybody goes through- I don't know one person that, that, that doesn't have a

job and has a family that isn't emotionally going through some things, you know,

mentally thinking about the future, the present, you know. Everything that's

coming up, all the bills that's piling up in front of you, all the stress.

He further added;

Socially, it, it's, it's, it's kind of, um, uh, it kind of cuts you off a little bit because,

uh, you're not socializing with the, the people- Uh, but, yeah, socially, uh, just a

little bit limited.

Participant A emphasized how the frustration of being jobless impacts him

*financially, emotionally* and the struggle of staying motivated in explaining;

Hmm, it's [frustrating financially] because everybody has bills and kids and

things to take care of [that's frustrating]. And then sometimes [it's frustrating]

when you try to file, file for an unemployment you might not get it because of the

employer's side- Emotionally, sometimes it's frustrating but then I can't, for me

{I can't let that stop me because you got a kid}. Okay if you are especially, if you

are trying to grow in life and take care of your kids and handle your own

responsibilities, you got to keep pushing and keep looking. So that's my, my

perspective about that as well. But sometimes it's just how you just kind of wake

up in the morning and it's like you really don't wanna, feel like doing this.

Research indicates that the economic difficulties correlated with joblessness

produced greater effects than the lack of structure, social identity, and routine (Ritchie et

al., 2005; Van Ham, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2001). Ritchie et al. (2005) concluded in

their study cited in Chapter 2 that job loss negatively impacted mental well-being.

Moreover, data illustrates that the periods of time spent out of the labor market impaired self-esteem across indicators such as depression, anxiety, and self-alienation or loss of identity (Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1996; Ritchie et al., 2005). Thus, the participant descriptions of how they are *impacted by joblessness* correlates with prior research.

This section provided descriptions from unemployed African American males regarding their *challenging experiences while seeking employment.* From this category two themes emerged: (a) *the experience of prolonged joblessness* and (b) *the impact of joblessness.* Within the two themes, the participants described six essences which characterized their shared lived experiences. The first theme, *prolonged joblessness,* revealed that many of the participants have spent 27 weeks or more unemployed, which indicates they were long-term unemployed. From this theme, two essences were identified: (a) *inability to obtain and sustain employment* and (b) *frustration and discouragement of prolonged unemployment.*

The second theme revealed that all of the participants' were *impacted by joblessness* moreover these experiences correlated with prior research which indicates that primarily economic hardships presents jobless persons with the greatest degree of difficulty in their well-being. The next section, will examine research question two and provide an understanding as to the skills and abilities that the participants possess in order to determine the extent of their employability.

**Research question 2**

The next research question the study aimed to identify any skills, abilities, and credentials, the participants identify that they possess to examine their level of job readiness and how prepared are they to be competitive in the labor market. Three

categories were developed, from which six themes emerged, and seven essences

emerged. Table 4.2 illustrates this information.

Table 4.2

*Categories, Themes, and Essences of Research Question: What Level of Job Readiness Skills Are Present Among the Study Participants?*

| Category | Themes | Essence |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Skills and Experiences of Participants* | *Attained Skilled Trades and Industry Specific Certifications* | *Sense of Accomplishment with Certifications acquired* |
| | *Relevant Workforce Experiences* | *Multiple certifications and skills acquired* |
| *Role of Workforce Development Program in Skills Attainment* | *Participant Perceptions with Workforce Development Programs* | *Discouraging experiences with inability to access and sustain Employment Post Program* |
| | *Impact of Post-Secondary Institutions as training providers* | *Exposure to New Career Opportunities* |
| *Means by which Employment Opportunities are sought* | *Online Job searches* | *Frustrating Online Application and hiring process* |
| | *Utilization of Social Networks as a referral Source for Employment Opportunities* | *Applying online is Significant Aspect of Seeking Employment* |
| | | *Inquiries via Social Networks* |

**Category 1: skills and experiences of participants.** Research question two, aims to identify the skills, credentials, and abilities attained by the participants in the study in order to understand their level of job readiness skills. In the study, all five participants

have attained at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. Moreover, three of the

participants have attended college, while one participant has attained an associate's

degree. Figure 4.3 illustrates this demographic data of educational attainment amongst

the participants in the study. Research contends that the joblessness crisis indicates a

correlation with poor education and that low-skilled African American males enter the

labor market lacking basic skills needed adapt to the changing needs of potential

employers as a result of poor public education experiences (Wilson, 1997). However, the

participants in the study demonstrate through their attainment of skilled credentials and

certifications, that they are indeed skilled.

The two themes that emerged within this category illustrated that the participants:

(a) *attained skilled trades and industry specific certifications and* (b) *possess relevant*

*workforce experiences.* In addition, two essences were identified from the desceiptions of

the participants; (a) *sense of accomplishment with certifications acquired* and (b)

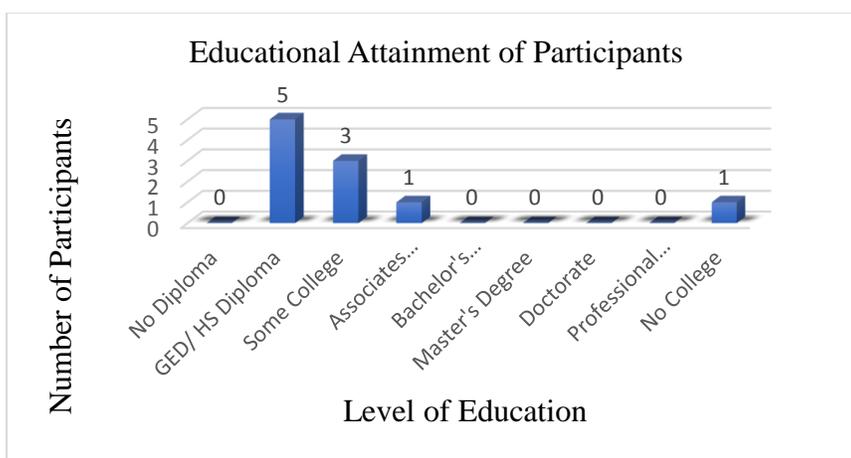*participants have multiple certifications and skills acquired.*



*Figure 4.3.* Educational Attainment of Participants

***Acquisition of skilled trades and industry specific certifications.*** During the

interviews of the study, participants were asked to describe their skills, abilities and

credentials. Although the participants answers varied, they all attained credentials,

certifications, and trainings that indicate they are skilled persons. Moreover, the

participants described their accomplishments with pride and exuberance. Their responses

interconnect the emergent themes with the identified essences.

Participant B, provided the following answer:

OSHA, um, [electrical certification.] I have [asbestos certification,] um, [asbestos

supervisor certification]. Um, now, um, um, maybe I think I'm maybe one step

from being a master electrician. I am, um, uh, maybe, maybe about a year in it, a

year and a, maybe about a year in training left, and, and one test from that. Um,

what else I have going? Um, I have, I have- Wow, I got a lot of stuff. (laughs).

Participant Z proudly acknowledged that he has acquired the following certifications:

Um, I've gotten uh certifications, [fork lift certifications] in my life. I've gotten uh,

[blueprint reading certifications]. I've gotten, uh, experiences, um, working as a

[hospitality manager], running the whole uh, front end of a um, of a café and

restaurant]. I uh, I've uh, managed, um, numerous uh, events. Um, baby showers,

weddings, things of that nature. Um, I'm kind of a jack of all trades, master of

none- Now in the sheet metals union, yes sir!

Participant M similar to the prior responses, shared his credentials as follows:

I'm nationally certified in NCCER (National Center for Construction Education

and Research). Um, I have took Core One, Labor One, Labor Two, so I'm

nationally certified as a, um, a laborer in a, um, NCCER. I'm down as the number

one student for my class- Mm-hmm (affirmative). Um, from [blueprint reading, to flagging, to rigging]. Uh, [construction math, laser level]. [I have knowledge to set up and run a transit].

*Acquisition of relevant workforce experience*. The second theme that emerged from the participants' responses about their skills and abilities, was their *relevant workforce experience*. The participants each gave an account of the types of work experiences they had prior to being unemployed.

Participant J described his work experience with the following statement:

Yeah. I've had, uh, first, I worked construction. Um, I did construction and landscaping for my first jobs since well- under the table first. So my experience with that is basically hard work, making sure of getting it done. Um, I worked for a few construction companies and, uh, unfortunately, they're not, they're not, uh, in business anymore, so that led me to that. But, uh, I, the, the only manufacturing job I ever have was that right after that. 13, 14 years, 13, 14 years. I like working with my hands, you know.

Similarly, Participant A provided an account of his *work experiences*:

Ah, kind of the same like manufacturing but also, but more manufacturing for food because manufacturing is making things and where, like one of my long jobs that I was working at um, the (Local) commissary factory in Syracuse, New York and I worked there from 2005 to 2014 . Most of my other jobs most have been in for the food industry working in food I do like working in foods and cooking and things like that and I have had ah, prior experience.

Participant M also provided a description of his work experiences, in which his sense of accomplishments was evident as he stated:

I was on jobs from [building, uh, (local shopping center)], um, to [putting, uh, walls up in the federal building], to (concrete work). The (Local area University),. I've done majority of the sidewalks that's all up there in the university, uh, all sidewalks at (community college). I did all those. Um, right now, as, as recent as my ma- my last job, I was doing what Weather Towers, uh, for New York State. I put up at least 60 towers myself, uh, out of 125- Uh, what else have I done? I've, like I said, I've, I've do- I ran, I set up the, the fiber optic wiring and the wifi for the Buffalo Bills Stadium. Uh, we helped lay that out. I ran the cable, connected all the, all the antennas. Um, I have a vet, uh, like a really, [a lot of history of construction], so a little bit of everything. I've done from concrete work, *to hanging up antennas and installing them, to a little bit of everything.*

This section provided an insight as to the skills and abilities the participants in the study possess. The skills and abilities they expressed emerged from themes which indicate their skill set and the participants sense of value and achievement in the certifications and credentials they have earned. The next section will examine themes relevant to the development of Category 2 which will discuss participants' perceptions of workforce development programs and discouraging feelings of not being able to access employment opportunities post program.

**Category 2: Role of workforce development programs in skills attainment.**
The development of this category for the study, is relevant because, over the course of data analysis and the coding of the data, the connection was made that majority of the

participants attained and acquired their credentials and skills via *Workforce Development programs*. During the interviews, participants not only provided responses that allowed for the emerging of two themes; (A) *perceptions of workforce development programs and (B) the impact of post-secondary institutions as training providers.* The essence identified within these two themes were:*(a) discouraging experiences with inability to access and sustain employment post program and (b) exposure to new career opportunities.*

    ***Perceptions of workforce development programs***. The first theme that emerged within this category was the participants' responses which alluded to their perceptions of workforce development programs. Essences captured in these descriptions, illustrate that while these programs provided the study participants with exposure to new career opportunities and skills, their inability to assist the participants with access to sustained employment opportunities created feelings of discouragement. Participant A discussed his perception of a workforce development program he participated in and his feeling of let down afterwards.

> [it was a manufacturing program] and it was, I was one of the first people of the group of the first program that they started with. And it was actually a very interesting experience for me because truly I have never really thought about going back to school or participating in more educational thing… they gave me a lot of experience but then pretty much after I got hired onto the job I got left, laid off because of financialness of the employment…... from the employers. So that kind of …really kind of hurt me in a lot of ways 'cause I was just really getting into the job, I was really liking the job everything was going good for me. But in, it kind of felt like I've just gotten, got [set up for failure] you know?

Participant M described a similar experience:

Okay. Well, the one that I took, the NCCER training program, that probably was one of the best programs I was involved in, because I lea- I learned so much. I felt that once I was done with the program I could hit the ground running. Um, the only catch was, uh, once we got done with work we, [it wasn't too many jobs available for us afterwards], you know, and a lot of people weren't taking us serious because of our, our certifications, because it's a non-union certification. Um, a lot of people only acknowledged a union certification, saying that you have to be a union person in order to get a lot of the good jobs around here. A lot of people didn't respect it, locally, because people, or especially locally, um, they deal with a lot of union work.

Participant B perceptions of *workforce development programs* emphasized that the post training job opportunity are non existent. He shared the following thoughts when asked if he participated in any *workforce development programs*:

Yes, I have. Uh, me personally, [it's a waste of time], because I could do the same thing that they're doing by myself and probably have a better chance of getting a job than with the job- job training, because after the training, usually, um, you still can't find any work. So I, I think it's better to just, you know, do your stuff by yourself, me personally.

**Category 3: means by which employment is sought.** Research indicates that a result of structural factors such as residential segregation and social isolation, have impacted the lack of interaction, restricted opportunities in neighborhoods where joblessness exists, and has created a situation where residents are socially disadvantaged;

lack job networks, access to jobs, and involvement in quality schools; and result in behavior that is not conducive to good work histories (Wilson, 2012). Additionally, research reveals how the lack of recruitment efforts rarely target inner-city residents; and the social isolation of the inner city and informal networks for finding work is not readily available (Ferguson, 2012). The two themes that emerged: (a) *online job searches* and (b) *utilization of social networks as a referral source for employment opportunities,* encapsulated the participants' experiences with how they are accessing information about employment opportunities. Their experiences from these themes has led to essences that describe (a) the *online application and hiring process as frustrating,* (b) *identifies applying online as a significant aspect of seeking employment, and* (c) *inquiries within social networks.*

Participant Z expressed the manner in which he learns of employment opportunities:

Online, word of mouth, Indeed.com. Um, Syracuse.com, um, you. Wherever- It's 50/50. It's a 50/50 chance.'Cause being a young black male, if you have, obviously, it's only gonna be another young black male who gives a, who gives you a referral. That's, every referral I've ever had was a, was somebody of my, of my color, of my culture, of my- I've never got a, a, a, you know, a recommendation or a referral from, you know, a Caucasian- Um, it's always been somebody that's uh, dealing with the same struggles and from the same economic background as me.

Participant J simularly utilizes online searches and social networks to be informed about employment opportunities. He communicated the following:

Either [I go online], you know, job search or just being out and about and, uh, I

[ask somebody on a job] or, or, you know, it's a number of things. You know, I

can just[ get a lead from a family member.] They tell me, "You should go over

here and check this out," something of that sort. And I'll do that, you know, walk

in.

Participant A alluded to the growing significance of applying online:

sometimes it's from other people but a lot of it it's, [a lot of the jobs are like

online] [most of the time they don't want you coming in nowadays to turn in your

application or pick up a application] {most of it is online, online}. So also um,

just like the online job search companies once you sign pretty much participate in

one you get like 10, 15 other companies trying to do the same thing.

**Debriefing question**. In concluding the interviews, a significant theme emerged

when the participants had an opportunity to discuss anything they felt they did not have a

chance to explain during the semi-structured interview. The *need for entrpreneurship*

*opportunities* to address their challenges to accessing the labor market.

Participant M encapsulated this perspective in his response:

" Uh- I just, again has to be an emphasis on building and creating our own, and

what I mean by that , creating our jobs in our communities, building up these

companies in our community, and then that could be a real change. I was, when

we start doing that, that could actually, we could make an impact on our economy

and really make  a difference in our community. Other than that, it's going to be

the same status quo.

Participant Z had a similar perspective, when asked to elaborate on his explantion of there being a need to "*own our own"*, he explained:

> We need our own task force, I feel like. We need to put our own selves to work.
>
> We can't look for somebody else to put us to work.

In the affirmative, he responded:

> Self-sufficiency- Self-Sufficiency.

Particpant J during his response to describing his job searching experience, alluded to the continuous frustrating experience and thus stated "*there is a need for more opportunities".* As a follow-up, he was asked what type of opportunities would he like to see for males such as himself (African American males) he responded:

> Well, me such- Me, I, um - [I got a ... More of an ambition to own my own
>
> business]. Um, because, coming from my background, my experience thus far in
>
> my life, it's, uh- It's harder for me to, to get a job unless I really know somebody
>
> to put me in the job, so I want to, you know- I would like to get more help in the
>
> building my own business sector and being able to understand  a business and
>
> how to build it also.

He concluded his response emphasizing the *need for entrepreneurship opportunities* by stating:

> I think that we should be able to do it ourselves, with our own business and our
>
> own minds and hard work.

**Chapter 4 Summary of Results**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of unemployed African American males and their challenges in finding employment. This

chapter presented the perspectives and lived experiences of five unemployed African American men. The participants shared their challenges and experiences in attempting to access the labor market within an urban metropolitan area. In conducting this research, the issue of labor market accessibility for unemployed African American males was examined utilizing the theoretical framework of the Citizenship theory, which contends that the right to work and to access economic and social resources are an essential social right for those who are to be recognized equally as citizens within a society.

Moreover, the participants described the skills, abilities, and credentials attained that contribute to their level of job readiness. The participants in the study were asked two questions: (a) What are the perceived challenges experienced by African American males in accessing the labor market?, and (b) what level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

The findings from question one, revealed two categories, and six themes. Research question two, yielded findings of three categories, and six themes. For research question one, the following categories were included: (a) *accessibility of employment opportunities* and (b) *challenges experiences while seeking employment.* The following six themes emerged during the study: (a) *limited local employment opportunities,* (b) *transportation barriers,* (c) *employer discrimination,* (d) *other barriers,* (e) *experience of prolonged joblessness, and* (f) *impacted by joblessness*.

Findings from research question two led to the development of the following categories: (a) *skills and experiences of participants, (b) experiences with workforce development program in skills attainment,* and *(c) means by which employment opportunities are sought*. Furthermore, the following six themes emerged: (a) *skilled*

*trades and industry specific certifications attained,* (b) *relevant workforce experiences,*

(c) *participant perceptions with workforce development programs,* (d) *impact of post-*

*secondary institutions as training providers,* (e) *online job searches,* and (f) *utilization of*

*social networks as a referral source for employment opportunities.* These categories

and themes enabled the participants to share detailed descriptions of their experiences of

joblessness that will provide evidence to community and economic development

practitioners, workforce development programs, and policymakers to understanding the

lived experiences of unemployed African American males so that programs and policies

will be formulated to ensure them with full access to the economic and social resources

needed for full labor market inclusion.

Implications of the study will be discussed in Chapter 5 to provide meaning and

understanding to the interviews. In addition, I will discuss the importance of the data,

limitations to the study, implications for future studies, and provide policy

recommendations using the final analysis of the data collected.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

**Introduction**

Despite government policies and programs, African American males continue to be unemployed at disproportionate rates. Labor market distress among African American workers has been at catastrophic levels for decades in spite of various models used to address urban poverty and African American male joblessness (Allegretto & Pitts, 2010). Several structural explanations such as; higher discrimination, skills mismatch, residential segregation, spatial mismatches, and economic shifts in the urban economies, have been attributed to such high rates of joblessness amongst them. Inspite of this and explanations concerning cultural factors, a majority of research failed to acknowledge the self-perceptions and experiences of the unemployed African American males themselves (Ferguson, 2012). Thus, the study lends to research an understanding from the experiences of unemployed African American males as to what they perceive their challenges are and what were the skills and abilities they posess in order to meet the labor market demand. This is significant as consideration needs to be given to the educational, skills, and training acquisition experiences of African American males struggling to compete in the labor market (Ferguson, 2012).

The goal of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of unemployed African American males seeking employment, and to examine the degree to which this phenomenon impacts their ability to access labor market opportunities. The study aimed to know how they perceived their lived

experiences of joblessness and to analyze the factors related to their prolonged

joblessness. Moreover, the study identified and presented an understanding of the;

feelings, thoughts, skills attained, and the impact of social exclusion of African American

males on their ability to attain employment. The final analysis from the study will be

presented to inform future economic and workforce development policies, and programs

which serve to address the urban poverty and the African American male joblessness

crisis within urban communities.

Furthermore, during the study the participants alluded to many of the structural,

and cultural factors that the prior research literature indicated contributes to the

disproportionate rates of African American male joblessness. For example, the

participants in the study described their experiences with limited access to employment

opportunities' which are outside of the inner city and located within suburban areas, thus

correlating to prior research, which revealed poor labor market outcomes are significant

to the disconnection from job opportunities in the suburbs (Gobillon, Selod, & Zenou,

2007; Hellerstein & Neumark, 2011).  Also, the data from the study indicated that the

participants perceive cultural bias related to structural factors such as residential

segregation and name discrimination as participants expressed their inability to access

employment opportunities regardless of their occupational credentials and experiences,

suggesting that employer behavior continues to profoundly impact African American

male employment opportunities (Pager & Karafin, 2009). Finally, the participants'

described their experiences with the social, economic, and emotional impacts of

joblessness, in addition, the participants shared what levels of education they attained,

industry certifications, and experiences as well as experiences with local workforce development training.

**Implications of Findings**

The study, provides data from existing research that illustrates how federal programs and initiatives since the 1940s have failed and even contributed to the increase in joblessness of urban African American males throughout the decades even until the present. While prior research literature detail the various structural and cultural factors which impact joblessness amongst African American males the majority of research on unemployment has not adequately or clearly provided a voice to these individuals and their experiences of being unable to find a job and the struggle to find the means of sustaining themselves and their family (Blustein, 2006; Ferguson, 2012). Therefore, the study served to provide unemployed African American males the opportunity to describe in their own words what they perceive are the challenges they face in attaining employment opportunities. Furthermore, it allowed them to highlight their level of employability via the education, skills and abilities which qualify them for employment opportunities.

Wilson (2009a) contends that public policy and policymakers have an obligation to understand and highlight the dynamics of the relationship between structural and cultural forces which impact the social and economic outcomes of jobless inner city African American males. Moreover, through social structures culturally bias attitudes are incorporated and as an characteristic of a culture, gain power (Wilson, 2009a). Although, there are anti-discriminatory laws in place, the study confirmed the findings of Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) whereas they found employer bias excluded African American

résumés and impact cultural disparities across various occupations despite federal anti-discriminatory laws.

Prior literature attributed other cultural factors, such as spatial, skills and cultural mismatch as further explanations of social exclusion from employment opportunities for African American males. These frameworks assert that a significant disadvantage of these mismatches is the lack of information and successful referral to employment opportunities. Wilson (2009b) proposes that public policy discussions be framed to address the problems of culture and poverty because they are an integral aspect of the policymaking process. The study revealed that despite having the credentials and skills necessary to qualify for employment, African American males still experience long-term joblessness, and an inability to obtain employment. Therefore, policies in this aspect need to be developed at local or state levels which would provide oversight and ensure that labor market opportunities are being marketed and made available to inner-city residents, in an effort to address disparities across occupations, and would provide oversight to ensure equitable access to those with qualifying credentials and experiences.

The participants' lived experiences in the study illustrate how entwined both structural forces and cultural forces are in disproportionately marginalizing a particular group of American citizens from full employment. Therefore, using the social rights of citizenship framework, the study contextualized how such social and cultural practices have resulted in social exclusion, the inability to earn, and has impacted full economic participation within society by limiting access to employment and thus an essential economic resource.

The findings of the study indicate that while the participants felt local workforce programs were beneficial to their acquisition of skills and credentials, their inability to gain employment afterward alludes to a disconnect between the jobs they were being trained for and employment opportunities in those areas. This suggests that initiatives need to be structured and implemented to ensure that not only are the structural factors addressed but that cultural factors begin to be addressed to ensure equitable access to all employment opportunities based on the labor market challenges of those whom it is a challenge to access. Thus, the recommendation here would suggest the development of strengthened partnerships between the training institutions, which were primarily through higher education institutions and the private and/or public employers with whom they are collaborating with to ensure employment opportunities and more accountability and oversight of outcomes. These partnerships can be maintained through effective leadership, clear and consistent communication with stakeholders, effective project management, and trust which is vital to the success of the partnerships (Forrer, Kee, Newcomer, & Boyer, 2010). Grubb (2001) describes the significance of local workforce investment boards as the mechanisms constructed to provide accountability and oversight of educational and vocational training programs in local state partnerships.

Therefore, a recommended approach would be to establish a workforce development public-private partnerships task force to provide oversight and accountability of educational, vocational training, and private partnerships with an emphasis on accountability and results, strategically designed within the governance structure to ensure effective labor outcomes (Forrer et al., 2010). Therefore, new policies need to be developed with the aim of addressing and correcting the structural barriers

which; impact limited employment opportunities, limit public transportation availability, and encourage employer discrimination of inner-city residents.

In the study, the participants shared their perception as to what may assist them in gaining full inclusion into both the labor market and the economic market. The respondents provided answers that alluded to the need for entrepreneurship opportunities and the need to become local employers as a viable strategy. This corresponds with research which suggest the strategy of microenterprise development as an effective poverty reduction strategy, as it is proven to create employment opportunities, redistribute income, and provide a spark for industrialization in poorer areas (Green, Kirkpatrick, & Murinde, 2006).

**Application of citizenship theory-social rights**. In utilizing the citizenship theory on social rights, the study then examines the perspectives and lived experiences of unemployed African American men within the context of having the right to economic security, access to economic welfare resources equitably, and having the ability to access employment opportunities and therefore the social right to earn. Shklar (1995) indicated that in addition to voting, the opportunity to "earn one's livelihood" is the other sign of equal citizenship. Shklar (1995) contends that equal members of society are rewarded for the actual work they have done no more nor less, are independent "earners", and thus recognized on the basis of being remunerated workers, and not just as voters. In the study, the structural and cultural factors which impacted the shared lived experiences of unemployed African American males, suggests then their inability to access the labor market, and continual social exclusion from employment opportunities to earn thus indicates a denial of their social rights, and thus a right of citizenship. Moreover, within

the context of citizenship, the study illustrates that the right to earn is not merely a right to self-respect but "a right not to be deprived of one's standing as a citizen that is at stake" (Shklar, 1995. p. 101).

In the next two sections, limitations to the study and a discussion of policy recommendations will be described.

**Limitations**

The study initially targeted between 24-40 unemployed African American males from eight different community agencies within the city of Syracuse, NY. Three agencies responded to the invitation to participate in the study. However, two agencies participated in the study. As stated in Chapter 3, only three to 10 participants are needed for interviews in a valid qualitative phenomenological study. Therefore, the study used a small sample size of unemployed African American males from the inner city of Syracuse, NY. The results presented were based upon their personal experiences as described during the interviews. The study was also conducted over a one month time frame. The experiences of these males also may not be reflective of other African American men's experiences, in contrast to prior research literature the males in the study were educated and possessed credentials, skills, and abilities that are not considered to be low-skilled. Another limitation to the study is the lack of diversity in age range and work experience, given that the participants were 30-40 years of age, another limitation of the study is the age range. The next section will discuss recommendations and implications for future research.

**Recommendations**

The findings from the response of the participants, aligned with prior research and studies which identified structural and cultural factors as barriers for unemployed African American males seeking employment.

Thus, the following recommendations have been developed from the data presented in the study; (a) policy development for structural and cultural factors, (b) strengthen public-private partnerships through local workforce investment board oversight, (c) entrepreneurship opportunities and microenterprise development, and (d) need to further research. Based on the experiences of the sample size of unemployed African American males in the study, these recommendations are significant within the field of economic and workforce development, as African American males are persistently disconnected from the labor market at disproportionate rates.

**Policy development for structural and cultural challenges.** Currently, policies are developed around structural barriers, however as Wilson (2009b) contends policies need to be developed with the consideration of the cultural factors which are creating barriers to African American male joblessness. Therefore, the recommendation based on the findings of the study indicate the need for policies to be developed considering the shared cultural experiences of African American males themselves. Based on the findings of the study it would be critical for policies to address equitable accessibility of employment opportunities within and outside of the inner city. Furthermore, in addressing cultural barriers, there is a need to address employer bias toward African American males, which prior research and the data from the study suggest continues to disproportionately impact the labor market outcomes of African American males.

**Strengthen workforce development public-private partnerships (PPPs)**

**through local workforce investment boards oversight.** In the study, the participants

indicated that workforce development programs sponsored by higher educational

institutions were an integral aspect to their acquisition of skills and credentials. They also

described how they were introduced to new career opportunities through these programs

as well. However, the participants also discussed their inability to access the employment

opportunities for which they are being trained. Therefore, it is recommended that the

local public and private partnerships which exist to create the develop of these training

programs should also be strengthen through oversight and accountability of local

workforce investment boards. As an aspect to these partnerships, a focus on labor market

outcomes should then be the basis of the development, implementation, and evaluation of

the industry partnerships created for local economic and workforce initiatives.

**Entrepreneurship opportunities via microenterprise development**. The

findings of the study illustrate that employer bias impacts the labor market outcomes of

African American males, moreover, the data implicates that training programs may not be

enough to alleviate the cultural disparities which influence labor market outcomes

(Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Therefore, the next recommendation is based upon the

participants describing the need for entrepreneurship opportunities and more African

American owned businesses to become the local employers. In addition to, workforce

strategies, providing micro finance promotes entrepreneurial opportunities within local

neighborhoods and provides an opportunity for ownership and for provide local

employment opportunities. Microenterprise development programs (MDPs) are programs

which provide micro-loans, business advice, training assistance, on certain cases provide

services of savings to the poor, welfare recipients and the unemployed who are intent on establishing and/or growing an existing small family business (Ssewamala and Sherraden, 2004; Ssewamala, et al., 2006). Microenterprise developments, aids individuals with accessing the financial capital and means to become self-employed (Ssewamala, Lombe, & Curley, 2006). The growth of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) are also ascribed to the contribution of poverty reduction and income distribution (Green, Kirkpatrick, & Murinde, 2006).

Therefore, it is recommended that local economic and workforce development initiatives create more entrepreneurship opportunities and promote enterprise development in industries and occupations where there is a need for African American male business owners.

**Need for further research**. Further research is needed to examine the labor market challenges of African American males, based on their shared lived experiences. Future studies need to continue to develop an understanding of the cultural perspective and experiences of African American males in relationship to the structural and cultural factors which impact their social and economic marginalization as citizens within society. Their social exclusion and inability to equitably access the basic social right needed to be productive members of a community, moreover, to enjoy full employment and inclusion within the labor market need to be further examined to inform economic and workforce development programs, and policies. Future studies can also examine the self-perceptions and labor market experiences of African American males whether employed or unemployed.

This section presented the recommendations and suggestions that can be employed to improve the labor market outcomes of African American males who reside in communities concentrated with poverty and face high rates of joblessness. These recommendations serve to inform the policies of local economic and workforce development initiatives with strategic approaches that will increase labor market accessibility of African American males.

**Conclusion**

The dissertation throughout the five chapters, identified the problem of urban African American male joblessness within the framework of citizenship theory, discussed research which alluded to the structural and cultural factors contributing to this crisis, provided an outline to the methodology design of the phenomenological qualitative study conducted. The second half of the dissertation, discussed the findings of the study and finally provided a discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations. This section will outline each of the five preceding chapters.

In Chapter 1, the study provided an overview of the urban African American male joblessness crisis. The chapter began with an historical synopsis of the increasing concern about the disproportionate labor market difficulties found among low-income young African American men (Bound & Freeman, 1992; Ferguson, 2012; Holzer, et al., 2005; Moss & Tilly, 1996; Royster, 2007). Next, the chapter outlined earlier urban poverty initiatives and the impact they had in the increase in urban African American male joblessness. Then, the chapter examined the current context of the problem in which data from the U.S. Department of Labor (2012) revealed that African Americans historically continue to face joblessness rates higher than other racial and ethnic groups, and once

unemployed, they remain unemployed longer than any other cultural group and are less likely to find employment. This chapter, revealed that the national joblessness rate for African Americans is 16.0%, compared with that of European Americans at 8.7% (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2011). Moreover, African American males in the state of New York experience a joblessness rate of 13.8%, compared with 4.7% for that of European American males and 4.0% for Asians (BLS, 2015).

The data then, revealed the African American male joblessness rate for the city of Syracuse, New York, is at 18.8%, compared with 9.0% for European American males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Following the context of the study, the problem statement established that urban renewal and housing policies beginning in the 1940s and 1950s worsened African American male joblessness. Essentially, the failure of these policies led the federal government to intervene with additional policies and social programs as a part of the War on Poverty. However, efforts from the Civil Rights movement, the Gray Areas program, and the Youth Mobilization program, only created minimal economic opportunities for African American males and although there was an accomplishment for voting, the Great Society programs failed against poverty and unemployment (Shklar, 1995). Since then, various models have been used to address urban poverty and African American male joblessness, and yet throughout the decades the labor market distress among African American workers remained at catastrophic levels (Allegretto & Pitts, 2010). Thus, despite government efforts, policies, and programs, African American males continue to be unemployed at disproportionate rates.

The chapter therefore, indicated a need to examine African American male lack of engagement and inclusion within the labor market from the context of their social rights as citizens. Ferguson (2012), stated that the educational, skills, and training acquisition experiences of African American males struggling to compete in the labor market need to be considered.

The citizenship theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory since its development historically, associated the ideal of citizenship with individuals, typically men in the formal labor market, therefore, it considers work as a fundamental basis of citizenship and the welfare state (Turner, 2009). So, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of unemployed African American males and the challenges they identified to finding employment and the degree to which this phenomenon impacts local economic and workforce development initiatives. Chapter 1, outlined the problem of African American male joblessness and the impact that failed government policies has on this phenomenon which continues to increase at disproportionate rates.

In Chapter 2, a review of literature provided significant areas of research which identified the various structural and cultural factors which developed and thus contribute to African American male joblessness. First, the chapter examined in detail the historical development of the citizenship theory. Secondly the literature then discussed the emergence of the study of African Americans and social rights of citizenship, highlighting the need for full economic inclusion. Then, the chapter revealed the structural and cultural factors, that research identified as being significant in creating barriers to African American males' inability to earn, which the citizenship theory

contends is a fundamental right to be recognized equally as a citizen. The chapter presented the structural factors which research indicates developed because of failed government policies and programs.

The literature identified the following structural factors as significant in creating barriers for African American males; (a) residential segregation due to discriminatory zoning policies, (b) shifts in the urban economic structure due to the suburbanization of jobs, and (c) labor market segregation characterized by skill and racial mismatches. Next, the literature in the chapter examined the cultural factors which impact urban African American male joblessness. The research examined the impact of cultural factors which led to African American social isolation and thus generational economic marginalization which created a lack of attachment to the labor force. The literature then, examined the following cultural factors which developed in response to the structural factors; (a) impact of joblessness, (b) employer discrimination, and (c) other factors, child support and criminal records. The literature in Chapter 2, established evidence which suggested that the structural factors created by government policies and programs, influenced structural barriers which marginalized inner city African American males, led to cultural responses which further inhibited employment opportunities and denied them full inclusion into the labor market. Although, Chapter 2 provided research which identified factors that contribute to the African American joblessness crisis, research is still lacking which encapsulates their own personal experiences and perceptions on their labor market challenges.

Chapter 3, detailed the methodology utilized to collect and analyze data for the study. The study was designed as a phenomenological qualitative study for the researcher

to examine the perceptions and experiences of the participants in accessing the labor market (Creswell, 2009). The goal of the study was to understand the experiences of unemployed African American males and their challenges in finding employment. To understand their lived experiences, the following two research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceived challenges experienced by unemployed African American males in accessing the labor market?

2. What level of job readiness skills are present among the study participants?

In addition to the research questions, 11 semi-structure interview questions were designed and posed to the participants during the study. The data was gathered from the participants during one on one, face to face audio recorded interviews which lasted no longer than two hours. The interviews were audio recorded with informed consent of the participants.

The context of the study occurred within the inner city of Syracuse, NY which, has the highest concentration of poverty among African Americans in the United States (Jargowsky, 2015). The participants resided within economically distressed communities defined as highly concentrated with poverty, where poverty levels are 20% or more within the census tract (Jargowsky, 2015; Wilson, 1987). In the city of Syracuse, New York, the unemployment rate for African American males is at 18.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The research participants in the study, were strategically selected using purposeful sampling strategy within this qualitative study (Creswell, 1998). Additionally, criterion sampling was utilized because all participants experienced the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 1998). Participation in this study required the following criteria; (a)

identified as African American, (b) male, (c) age 21 and over, (d) unemployed, and (e) resided within a neighborhood characterized by rates of poverty that are at least 20%.

Analysis of the data began with the collection of open ended data based on the proposed research and interview questions, next the data was analyzed utilizing the information provided by research participants (Creswell, 2009). In the next phase of the data collection, the audio recorded interviews were submitted, transcribed and typed into a text file by a third-party transcriptionist (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The transcribed text data were then segmented into units of analysis based on the participants' descriptive wording from the one on one interviews. Finally, the segmented data were coded categorically (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) and analyzed to make meaning of the findings. Chapter 3 provided the process and methodology in which the data was collected and analyzed for the study.

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the data collected. The findings in the study reveal despite the level of education attained, or types of skilled trades and industry specific certifications the five unemployed African American men possessed, they experienced long term joblessness. Moreover, the participants identified structural and cultural factors as challenges to accessing the labor market. Their perceptions with their inability to access employment opportunities aligns with structural and cultural factors found in the Chapter 2. The participants in the study identified structural factors such as transportation barriers as inhibiting their employment opportunities. Similarly, cultural factors were also experienced as barriers to employment, as the participants perceive impediments such as employer bias based on name and residential discrimination. After

the study interviews, the participants described the need for increased entrepreneurship opportunities for African American men to gain access to the labor market.

The two research questions were presented to all five study participants, and from each question, emerged categories, themes, and essences which described their experiences.

From the first research question, two categories and six themes emerged. Participant responses to the first research question, what are the perceived challenges to accessing the labor market? led to the development of the first category: *accessibility of employment opportunities*. The participants described the accessibility of employment opportunities through the emergence of four themes: (a) limited local employment opportunities, (b) transportation barriers, (c) employer discrimination, and (d) other barriers. These four themes were then highlighted by the following shared experiences or essences provided by the descriptive wording of the participants: (a) sense of exclusion from local employment opportunities, (b) the need for reliable transportation inhibits employment opportunities, (c) challenges to accessing the good jobs which are located outside of the city, (d) restricted from employment opportunities based on employer bias, (e) inequitable employment opportunities, (f) sense of frustration and limitations, and (g) stressful and hurtful.

The second category to the first research question developed as the participants described their experiences while seeking employment opportunities, this led to the development of the second category in which the participants' described their experiences as: *challenging experiences while seeking employment*. From this category, two themes were identified: (a) experience of prolonged joblessness and (b) impact of

joblessness. These two themes emerged as the participants shared their experiences with job seeking and in sharing the length of time they had spent jobless. The participants described their lived experiences of being unemployed and described the impact that being jobless was having on them personally, as it relates to their financial, emotional and social well-being. Within these experiences the participants also shared several essences which encapsulated the impact of joblessness on their thoughts and feelings with their (a) inability to obtain and sustain employment, (b) feelings of discouragement and frustration of prolonged unemployment, (c) impact on their sense of value as a man to the family (manhood), (d) financial hardships, (e) social isolation, and (f) emotional well-being. The findings from the first research question, revealed that the participants in the study faced challenges to accessing employment opportunities. The study participants identified their employment seeking experiences as challenging, especially during their experiences with prolonged joblessness.

With research question 2, the study participants identified their skills, abilities and credentials they attained to reveal their level of employability. This question revealed that unlike prior research literature, the African American males in this study were skilled and educated, with four out of the five participants possessing a high school diploma with at least some college experience. From this question, the participants' experiences led to the development of three categories and six themes. The following three categories were developed to explain the level of employability of the study participants: (a) skills and experiences of participants, (b) role of workforce development program in skills attainment, and (c) means by which employment opportunities are sought. The six themes that emerged from the participants' responses, alluded to how they acquired their skills

and credentials and how they accessed and learned of employment opportunities. The following six themes provided the data for the study: (a) attained skilled trades and industry specific certifications, (b) relevant workforce experiences, (c) participant perceptions with workforce development programs, (d) impact of post-secondary institutions as training providers, (e) online job searches, and (f) utilization of social networks as a referral source for employment opportunities. The shared experiences identified in the study, highlighted participants' feelings of accomplishments as they described their skills and credentials.

The findings from the study reveal that the participants' identified their experiences with workforce development training programs and the inability to find employment post program as frustrating. The participants' responses indicated that while applying online is a significant aspect to the application and hiring process, they found it frustrating.

Chapter 5 provided meaning and an analysis of the findings from the data. A brief discussion outlined the significance of the research and the goal of the study. The study contributes to research an understanding of the experiences of unemployed African American males and their self-perceived challenges to accessing the labor market as prior research failed to acknowledge the self-perceptions and experiences of unemployed African American males themselves (Ferguson, 2012). The study provided an understanding into the shared lived experiences and challenges of unemployed African American males seeking employment. Furthermore, the lived experiences of the participants in the study demonstrate the relationship between structural forces and the cultural forces which disproportionately marginalize African American men from full

employment as American citizens. The citizenship framework in the study, contextualized the social and cultural practices which contribute to social exclusion, limits the ability to earn, and therefore impact African American male labor market participation.

The data revealed that both structural and cultural factors continue to impact joblessness amongst African American males. Furthermore, findings from the study indicated that while the participants expressed satisfaction with local workforce development programs, they were unable to neither obtain or sustain employment afterward. The data further revealed that despite possessing skilled abilities and a minimum of high school level education attained, the men remained unemployed. The participants in the study indicated the need for more entrepreneurship opportunities to increasing accessing to the labor market for African American males, besides research contends that microenterprise development is an effective strategy to creating self-employment opportunities, local employment opportunities and in poverty reduction (Green, et al., 2006). Based on the findings from the data in the study, four areas of recommendation are suggested.

The joblessness crisis among unemployed African American males, is impacted by structural and cultural factors which are interconnected within society and thus restricts access to the right to earn. Four areas of recommendations are suggested, (a) policy development to address structural, and cultural factors (b) strengthen workforce development public-private partnerships (PPPs) through local workforce investment boards oversight, and accountability (c) inclusion of entrepreneurship opportunities and

microenterprise development in local economic and workforce initiatives, and (d) the

need to further research.

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# Appendix A

E-mail Requesting Executive Director's Assistance for Study Participation / Informed Consent

**E-mail Letter requesting Executive Director's assistance with study participant**

**Recruitment**

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. —————————————— :

My name is Terrence Byrd El and I am a doctoral candidate in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College. Currently, I am seeking approval from the Institutional Review Board. However, to expedite this process, I am requesting your assistance and participation.

As a part of doctoral research, I am seeking information regarding the perceptions of labor market accessibility of unemployed African American males between the ages 21-55. My interest is in understanding the perceptions they have, specifically as it relates to accessing employment and to understand what level of job readiness exist among the participants. This information will be gathered via one-on-one interviews and/or focus group interviews. All data collected will be kept confidential and all identities will remain anonymous.

If your organization has a client base that fits the description outlined above, I am asking you to refer men who may be interested in participating in the study. They may either participate in a focus group (if enough men are willing), or face to face interviews.

Following the study, it is my intent to share findings. Study results may be used to inform the development and delivery of programming offered by your organization.

Your organization's participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may elect not to participate. Similarly, participants who are referred will participate voluntarily and can withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Please feel free to contact me with questions. Direct referrals to Terrence Byrd El at (315) 403-4831, or tb05827@sjfc.edu.

All calls and referrals are kept confidential. For any concerns regarding confidentiality, please call Jill Rathburn at (585) 385-8012. She will direct your call to a member of the IRB at St. John Fisher College.

Thank you for your willingness to assist with this research. Your organization's participation is significant in furthering the study. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign below.
I, ————————————————————————————
Title ————————————————————————————
On behalf, my organization, provide consent to participate in the study

# Appendix B

## Letter of Invitation for Participation in One-on-One Interview/ Informed Consent

**Letter Requesting Participation in One-on-One Interview**

Dear Sir:

I am currently working on my doctorate in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. As a part of my doctoral research, I am conducting a study examining the perceptions of unemployed African American men as it relates to accessing employment, and to understand what level of job readiness exist among the participants. As someone who has worked in Community and Economic Development, I have experience with various workforce development programs that aid unemployed African American men. However, I am interested in hearing what you feel the challenges are in finding work.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview to share your experience of being unemployed. The audio recorded interview will not exceed an hour and a half and the risks involved in your participation is that you may experience emotional discomfort discussing your unemployment experiences. All information and data gathered in this face-to-face interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. All notes, audio recordings, and responses will be locked at the researcher's home and destroyed after three years (December 2019).

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please feel free to contact me, Terrence Byrd El at (315) 403-4831 if you would like to discuss anything pertaining to the study. All calls will be kept confidential. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed and approved this research proposal. For any concerns regarding confidentiality, please call Jill Rathbun at (585) 385-8012. She will direct your call to a member of the IRB at St. John Fisher College.

Thank you for your willingness to assist with this research. Your input and experiences will be invaluable in determining how to successfully assist African American men in accessing employment.

*Terrence*

Terrence Byrd El
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher
St. John Fisher College
Doctorate in Executive Leadership

**Appendix C**

Interview Protocol (Draft)

| |
|---|
| Interview Protocol: |
| |
| The Perceptions of Unemployed African-American Men on Labor Market |
| |
| Accessibility; Implications for Workforce Development Programs |
| |
| |

*Basic Information About the Interview*

- ☐ Time of the Interview:

- ☐ Place:

- ☐ Interviewer:

- ☐ Recording/storing information about the interview:

*Interview Content Questions*

1) How long have you been unemployed and are you actively seeking

   employment?

   Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

2) Please describe your job searching experience.

   Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

3) What is the highest education level you have achieved?

4) What types of credentials, skills, and abilities do you possess?

5) Describe your experience with any job training programs you have taken part

   in?

    Probes: If applicable, how do you think the program(s) helped you? If not, how

could they help you?

6) Describe your work experience?

Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

7) How do you hear about the jobs for which you apply?

8) How accessible are the jobs for which you apply?

Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

9) Describe your experience with the application process with prospective employers?

Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

10) In your own words, please describe the employment opportunities in Syracuse for African American men with your skill set and education.

Probes: When the significant statement is made. Please explain.

11) Please describe your experience of being unemployed, to include: financial, emotional and social impact of being unemployed.

Probes: If significant theme/concept is mentioned. Please explain.

12) Are there any other factors that you believe contribute to why you are encountering difficulties in obtaining employment?

*Closing Instructions*

☐ Thank the research participant for participating

☐ Debrief and get feedback on how participant is feeling after sharing their lived experience

☐ Assure individual confidentiality with data files and storage

☐ Explain that the researcher will take every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data, however, the nature of focus groups prevents the researcher from guaranteeing confidentiality.

☐ Share with the participant, notes from the transcript for validity

☐ Inform the participant on how this information will be reported

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2016).