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Developmental Outcomes for Alumni of an Afrocentric Rites of Passage Program

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Many middle school and high school African American students experience a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum that may diminish their racial identity as well as academic performance. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the developmental outcomes such as preparation for higher education, career choices, and racial identity development for alumni of a Rites of Passage (RoP) program that sought to facilitate an Afrocentric experience for 8th to 10th graders. The research question concerned the perception of RoP young adult alumni, parents, and teachers relative to the alumni's developmental outcomes. The conceptual framework was comprised of Erikson's theory of adolescent identity and psychosocial development and Cross' nigrescence theory as viewed through the lens of critical race theory in education. Eleven people including alumni, parents, and teachers participated in semi structured interviews. Data were analyzed using open coding in search of emergent themes. The three themes and seven subthemes were African American pride, with three subthemes: (a) self-identity, (b) self-confidence, and (c) self-empowerment; knowledge is power, with two subthemes: (a) motivation and (b) role models; and career choice with two subthemes: (a) economic freedom and (b) mentorship. This study could contribute to positive social change by suggesting effective elements in the design and curriculum of Afrocentric programs to increase their contribution to the development of its students, empowering them as adults with a strengthened sense of racial identity, a deepened appreciation for higher education, and a commitment to pursue a career of choice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

African American students' academic underachievement, when compared to their White counterparts, has been a subject of concern in the field of education. Researchers found African American students are susceptible to the process of academic disidentification, meaning they are potentially more likely than their White peers to disconnect academic success or failure from the development of their self-esteem (Cokley et al., 2011; Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016). Weak academic self-concept, lack of racial identity, and devaluing of academic success can lead to disengagement and academic underachievement (Cokley et al., 2011; Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016). Understanding the factors that counter African American students' academic underachievement may aid educators in the development of an intervention.

In addressing the achievement gap between White and Black students, through racial and cultural identification, researchers have claimed Afrocentric education could have a positive impact (Bowman et al., 2018; Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016; Santos & Collins, 2015; Shockley, 2011). Afrocentric education programs, like the Rites of Passage (RoP) program that is the focus of this study, expose African American students to their heritage by presenting a timeline of historical events more reflective of the experience of African Americans as well as contributions of African Americans to American history. This RoP program aimed to assist students in forming a healthier identity as a Black person, positive attitude toward educational accomplishment, develop career path choices, and ideally empower them to reach their full potential.

Asante and Mazama (2010) found that when students' culture and history are placed at the center of their educational experience, the opportunity to connect and reaffirm the value of their heritage could provide a foundation for knowing and learning. Research on racial and ethnic identity, such as proposed in this study, has the potential to show positive outcomes of an Afrocentric education program on the racial and academic development of its participants (Miller-Cotto & Byrnes, 2016).

The sections of this chapter include background material related to the research problem and the gap in research, the problem statement and purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study and research question, the scope, delimitations, and limitations, and the positive significance of the study's potential contributions to the knowledge base and positive social change.

Background

Eurocentric curriculum has been found to be culturally and racially geared toward reaching and teaching White learners as the represented population (Lynn, 2004; Zion & Blanchette, 2011). White learners may benefit as a result, as students of a Eurocentric background have shown greater gains in standardized testing than those of other races (Knoester & Au, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2012; Zion & Blanchette, 2011). The lag in achievement by African American students was researched by Miller-Cotto and Byrnes (2016) and Harper (2007), who found that African American students related culturally and racially to an Afrocentric curriculum, which could result in academic gains.

The aim of the 14-week RoP program, which took place from 2005 through 2014 for eighth to 10th graders, was to equip its participants with a healthier identity as a Black person and develop a positive attitude toward academic accomplishments, career choices, and empowerment to reach their full potential. Key elements of the program were weekly, 8-hour Saturday classes led by African American teachers and administrators and a trip to Africa. In recognizing the school district's failure to reduce the achievement gap between White and Black students, the RoP program was designed to help close the achievement gap through the implementation of Afrocentric curriculum and pedagogy. The founders assumed by lessening the achievement gap, Black students would be more likely to be prepared for life after high school with more equal footing to that of their White counterparts. In addition, the assumption of the program founders was that if Black students are equally prepared for post-secondary education and entry into the job market, their local community and society at large stand to benefit.

Research has emphasized the need to increase youth's positive self-image via the promotion of ethnic pride (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Wakefield and Hudley (2007) claimed promoting positive identity formation amongst adolescents is the responsibility of schools, teachers, parents, and society as a whole and pointed to participation and a sense of belonging and engagement in the home environment, school, and community as central to the positive identity and character formation of adolescents.

African American students have been underachieving academically when compared to their White peers, in part due to receiving the majority of detentions and out of school suspensions. According to 10-year-old data from the Office for Civil Rights of

the U.S. Department of Education, African Americans represented 17% of the student population, but 34% of those suspended (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 2015–2016, 2.7 million students were suspended from school, with Black boys represented 25% of suspended student population and Black girls another 14%, potentially exceeding the 2010 figures (Sparks & Klein, 2018). Through schooling and miseducation, the dominant culture continues to establish and implement systems to educate and socialize students in a manner that maintains pre-established societal roles, and those students who defy the process are deemed misfits or failures and typically drop out of school (Agbo, 2010). African American students drop out for a variety of reasons such as "mismatches between the students' culture and the culture of the school or between students' experiences and the kind of experiences presupposed by teachers or the school curriculum" (Agbo, 2010, p. 724) and often not due to their academic abilities. Through studies of this nature, educators can critically examine the factors that contribute to the achievement gap and further explore preventative measures, alternatives, and solutions.

In American public schools, minority student enrollment outnumbered that of White students in 2014–2015 for the first time in history (Yoshinaga, 2016). Following population trends in the United States, soon the majority will become the minority. One way to address the weaker academic outcomes of African American students in comparison to White students may be to provide them culturally relevant curriculum. More can be learned about African American students' academic and developmental outcomes when engaged with Afrocentric curriculum (Endale, 2018; Harper, 2007;

Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Oyserman et al., 2006; Thomas & Columbus, 2009; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Problem Statement

Many middle school and high school African American students experience a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum that may diminish their identity and academic performance (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014). In the field of education, there is a focus on student academic outcomes measured by standardized test scores, leaving a gap in research on Afrocentric programs which instead focus on students' racial and cultural well-being and sense of belonging within a minority group (Hill, 2020). Programs such as RoP are designed to facilitate an Afrocentric experience, including a culturally authentic education linking student participants to their cultural and racial identity. Additionally, this RoP program, which is the focus of this study, aimed to help its participants form a healthier identity as a Black person and impact developmental outcomes such as preparation for higher education and career choice.

Other researchers have noted this gap in current research as it relates to the connection between African American students' racial identity and developmental outcomes and the role of Afrocentric curriculum (Endale, 2018; Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Hill, 2020). Not enough is known about alumni participants' perceptions of the influence of such a program on their developmental outcomes, such as career choice, academic accomplishments, and racial identity, nor about the perceptions of parents and teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative basic design study was to gain a deeper understanding of what stakeholders perceive have been the developmental outcomes such as preparation for higher education, career choices, and racial identity development of an Afrocentric RoP alumni. The phenomenon of interest was the influence of a culturally and racially relevant Afrocentric program on the racial identity and developmental outcomes on adolescents, when looking back from the young adult perspective.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and alumni regarding the alumni's developmental outcomes such as racial identity, preparation for higher education, and career choice resulting from participation in the Afrocentric RoP program?

Conceptual Framework

The theories guiding my research were Erikson's (1968) theory of identity and psychosocial development, specifically the stage of adolescence, and Cross' (1971) nigrescence theory as viewed through the lens of critical race theory (CRT) as it relates to African American racial identity development. These theories guided the construction of interview questions (see Appendix) as well.

Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson (1968) claimed that during adolescence, identity formation is a dominant task and is a direct consequence of an individual's choices, experiences, and actions. Adolescent identity formation is rooted within the social environment that the individual is a part of (Erikson, 1968). Individuals move from one stage to the next as they

encounter events or situations that cause for reflection and reevaluation of self (Erikson, 1968). Both Erikson's and Cross' works were identified as contributory theories in Umana et al.'s (2014) 21st Century Ethnic and Racial Study Group's integrated conceptualization of ethnic and racial identity with a focus on the social environment. Based on this theory, further research validated a relationship between successful identity formation in adolescents, a positive supportive educational environment, and academic success.

Thomas and Columbus (2009) recommended that potentially effective educational programs and curriculum for African American students, such as RoP, take into consideration both culture and identity. In this study, the theory of psychosocial development will be used to focus on the importance of the developmental stage of adolescence and provide a framework for interview questions (see Appendix).

Cross' Nigrescence Theory

Black racial identity, according to Cross (1971), takes place over the stages of adolescence, emerging adulthood, and through adulthood. Cross' theory of nigrescence sprung from the Civil Rights Movement and was described as a "psychology of Black liberation" (p. 13). According to a longitudinal study based on Cross' nigrescence model, adolescents scored highest in assimilation, miseducation, and self-hatred scores than emerging adults and adults (Worrell, 2008). Afrocentric curriculum, informed by CRT and racial identity, creates "liberatory possibilities, moving toward emancipatory epistemologies that deconstruct and center White supremacy, challenging tropes of post racialism, meritocracy, colorblindness, and the like" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p.

209). Research and interview questions for this study were designed with this stage of Black identity in mind.

Critical Race Theory in Education

CRT research in education has shown that "critical race pedagogical practices, if used appropriately, have the potential to empower students of color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, linguicism, and other forms of subordination" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). More than teaching culture and diversity, incorporating CRT into pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher training calls for a critical analysis that includes looking at the institutional arrangements of society to "assess how they are shaped by dominant cultural assumptions, and recognize how they may disadvantage members of the nondominant cultural groups" (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 189). Cast in a language of failure, current instructional strategies, through the lens of CRT, presume that African American students are deficient and require remediation for academic success (Ladson-Billings, 2010).

What CRT and Afrocentricity have in common is "both areas of study offer extensive critiques of the ways that Blacks have been constructed by Whites in this context of White supremacy" (Lynn, 2004, p. 162). Furthermore, these areas offer "new discourses about the ways that people of color have been historically marginalized and oppressed in a race-obsessed society that privileges White over Black" (Lynn, 2004, p. 162). Moreover, CRT and Afrocentricity provide an alternative to the traditional Eurocentric view of education that requires further exploration. CRT relates to my study approach in that it provides the lens through which racism in education is viewed.

Nature of the Study

This basic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) used in-depth semistructured interviews to understand developmental outcomes, such as preparation for higher education, career choice, and racial identity development of RoP program participants. To gain this understanding, I interviewed 11 people including alumni, parents, and teachers. The interview protocols were led by Rubin and Rubin's (2012) suggested qualitative data gathering methods. I hand coded the interviewees' responses to identify categories and emergent themes (Patton, 2015).

Definitions

Achievement gap: the gap that exists between African American and White students' performance in standardized tests scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Afrocentric curriculum pedagogy: presents lessons and "perceptions of worldviews from a primarily Black/African perspective" (Asante, 2008, p. 69).

Critical race pedagogy: "an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly upon the perceptions, experiences, and counter hegemonic practices of educators of color" (Lynn, 2004, p. 154).

Culturally responsive curriculum: "reflects, respects, and teaches from the cultural perspective of those represented in the school and or classroom" (Thomas & Columbus, 2009, p. 45).

Eurocentric curriculum pedagogy: presents lessons and "perceptions of worldviews from a primarily White/European perspective" (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 51).

Racial ethnic identity: an "awareness of race and its ingrained connection to academic achievement" (Altschul et al., 2006, p. 44).

Assumptions

Assumptions in the study included the participants having clear enough memories of the program and its possible influences to sustain a 45–60-minute interview. I assumed that the interview itself would spark memories. I assumed all participants would be honest during the interview process and adequate data would be provided for an in-depth thematic analysis and to answer the research question.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was narrowed to include only African American participants in the RoP program in the one school district where it was carried out. Alumni would have to have completed both the academic and travel portion of the RoP program. The teachers would have participated in their program, and parents would have impressions of the program's influence by listening to and observing their children. The study did not cover any other classrooms, programs, or populations. The following delimitations are present in this study: a) The study was restricted to alumni who were at the time of participation in the program in eighth–10th grade, and b) the study was limited to one public school district in the Northeastern United States, which is the only district that enacted this particular Afrocentric program.

Limitations

Because the alumni as well as parents and teachers would be about 10 years away from the RoP experience, some memories were lost, and the findings were limited by

their perceptions of what memories they could retrieve and the meaning they have since made of the experience. Triangulation of interviews enhanced credibility, including researcher reflexivity, and was used to increase transferability of the findings. Self-selection by the alumni, parents, and teachers may have biased the results. Strategies implemented concerning study limitations are described in Chapter 3.

Significance

The results of this study could lead to positive social change, as they illustrate the connection between developmental and racial identity outcomes and academic achievement. In this study, positive social change is referred to as an action that results in the improvement of human and social conditions (Walden University, 2020). At Walden University, positive social change is defined as a "deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies" (Walden University, 2020, para.1).

When those who have been excluded from an educational opportunity are granted access to furthering their education, you have empowered a people that may never have considered the possibility of effecting social change, which speaks to Walden's commitment of creating lasting positive social change. Additionally, the findings of this study may advance knowledge in the field of education by aligning African American racial identity and culturally compatible curriculum in the classroom that may lead to academic success for African American students (Whaley & Noel, 2012).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I describe the background of the study with an emphasis on Afrocentric and Eurocentric curriculum and the possible link to academic underachievement of African Americans, as I explained in the problem statement. Research on the impact of Eurocentric or Afrocentric curriculum is limited, especially from the perspective of a contributing factor in the continuation of the achievement gap between White and African American students. The purpose of the study, research question, and conceptual framework in Chapter 1 have provided a description of the intent of the study, the phenomenon of interest, and how they guide the research question. The scope and delimitations and limitations sections concluded the chapter by addressing potential transferability, dependability, and biases of the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed description of the conceptual framework and a review of literature that relates to the phenomenon of interest and key concepts under investigation.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Many middle school and high school African American students experience a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum that may diminish their racial identity and academic performance (Okeke et al., 2009; Whaley & Noel, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative basic design study was to gain a deeper understanding of what teachers, parents, and alumni perceive have been the developmental outcomes of the Afrocentric RoP program, such as preparation for higher education, career choice, and racial identity development. When students' culture and history are placed at the center of their educational experience, the opportunity to connect and reaffirm the value of their heritage can provide a foundation for knowing and learning (Asante & Mazama, 2010), and when students of color are encouraged to explore their racial-ethnic identity, they are more likely to develop a positive identity and be more academically engaged (Altschul et al., 2006). However, there is a gap in the research literature concerning the influence of Afrocentric curriculum on African American students' academic and developmental outcomes (Endale, 2018; Harper, 2007; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Oyserman et al., 2006; Thomas & Columbus, 2009; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Chapter 2 opens with an outline of literature search strategies and transitions into a description of the conceptual framework used to drive the inquiry, which draws on Erikson's (1968) theory of identity, Cross' (1971) theory of nigrescence, and CRT in education. I then begin a review of empirical literature by making the connection between race and academic achievement and the preservation of White dominance in education. I

close by addressing the gap in research through an analysis of research on racial-ethnic identity and schooling.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University Library databases were accessed for this study, including EBSCO, Sage, Education Source, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the Journal of Negro Education as the main search engines. Key terms used to conduct the search included but were not limited to achievement gap, Afrocentric/Eurocentric/ curriculum, rites of passage, critical race theory (CRT), nigrescence, response to intervention (RTI), racial ethnic identity (REI), race and academic success, and the psychosocial theory of identity development. Articles reviewed ranged from years 1990–2020, and some more seminal articles were older than 5 years.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework combined two theories, Erikson's (1968) theory of identity and psychosocial development and Cross' (1971) theory of nigrescence as viewed through the lens of CRT. The identity theories, combined with CRT, formed the framework and guided the design of this study pertaining to African American adolescent development as well as guided the construction of the interview questions. I discuss the theories in the following section.

Theory of Identity and Psychosocial Development

Educational programs and institutions offer opportunities to equip young people with the power to make sense of the world around them while developing awareness of their identity. The conceptual framework for this study included Erikson's (1968) theory

of identity and psychosocial development that takes place throughout the lifespan,

specifically during adolescence. Each of the eight stages in Erikson's psychosocial theory

is based on a conflict between two opposing emotional forces that we must negotiate, and

as a result, our personality, character, and self-identity form. The major tenet of Erikson's

theory focuses on the eight stages of identity development that begins at birth and ends

with death. The eight stages of identity development include stage (1) basic trust vs.

mistrust, stage (2) autonomy vs. shame, stage (3) initiative vs. guilt, stage (4) industry vs.

inferiority, stage (5) identity vs. identity diffusion, stage (6) intimacy vs. isolation, stage

(7) generatively vs. self-absorption, and stage (8) integrity vs. despair. While growing

through the stages certain attributes emerge; otherwise, role confusion will occur

(Erikson, 1968). In the first stage hope develops, the second stage will, third purpose,

next competence, followed by fidelity, love, care, and lastly, we cultivate wisdom

(Erikson, 1968). This study focused on the impact of an Afrocentric RoP program on the

development of racial identity, higher education pursuits, and career choice of its alumni.

Nigrescence Theory

Cross (1971) developed a five-stage model that describes the process of

developing a racial identity when transitioning from Negro to Black. The Cross model

refers to a Negro-to-Black conversion as "(a) pre-encounter, (b) encounter, (c)

immersion-emersion, (d) internalization, and (e) internalization commitment" (Cross,

1971, p. 16). The pre-encounter stage pertains to a perspective or belief that the world is

anti-Black and is "dominated by Euro-American determinants" (Cross, 1971, p. 16). The

theory describes that the encounter stage takes place in two phases. First, an experience

must take place that fundamentally shifts their way of thinking about being Black. Secondly, as a consequence of the experience, or encounter, the individual "cautiously and fearfully tries to validate his new perceptions" (Cross, 1971, p. 17). During the immersion-emersion stage, the individual can experience a newly discovered sense of Blackness, a "Blacker-than-thou" (Cross, 1971) attitude that often displays anti-White or destructive tendencies. The second phase of the immersion-emersion stage creates a sense of acceptance and openness that allows the individual to be less ego focused and more in control of themselves (Cross, 1971). A transition into the internalization stage marks a resolution between the "old" and "new" perspective of the world. A calm sense of security, self-confidence, and involvement in Blackness takes place during this time. The final stage of internalization-commitment brings about a shift in thinking from me to we, more of a sense of concern for the group as opposed to the self. The process of changes in racial identity are typically manifested over the course of three periods of life: adolescence, middle, and late adulthood (Parham, 1989). This study focused on adolescence as the period of time participants entered the RoP program as well as the alumni, parents, and teachers, reflecting on the years of racial identity development after the program.

Critical Race Theory in Education

CRT in education is defined as a "critique of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that explores the historic and contemporary constructions and manifestations of race in our society with particular attention to how these issues are manifested in schools" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 282). CRT in education examines teachers' attitudes,

behaviors, and practices (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Applying critical race analysis to educational issues offers insight for researchers examining the failure of the system to appropriately educate the culturally subordinated (Lynn, 2004). Research shows that when teachers are culturally relevant, they are more effective (Chapman, 2007; Cruz et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Yazzie-Mintz, 2007). CRT professional development programs have been found to be essential to ensure culturally relevant, effective, and inclusive pedagogy (Siwatu et al., 2016). Viewed through a CRT lens, to maintain the status quo in teacher education is supporting the pedagogy of White supremacy that excludes people of color (Choi, 2008; Evans-Winters & Twyman-Hoff, 2011; Howard, 2003; Kohli, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Young, 2011). Teachers who participate in on going CRT education stand to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitude when responding to the needs of a diverse student population (Choi & Lee, 2020).

CRT suggests school-wide systems should continually evolve to improve their culture and climate to better respond to the ever-changing population. Teachers empowered with quality professional development aimed toward racial and cultural responsiveness are better prepared to meet the constantly changing individual needs of students today (Cruz et al., 2020). Research has shown connecting CRT to a "broader discourse on pedagogy, particularly the emancipatory teaching practices of people of color attempting to utilize such liberatory strategies as a vehicle for counteracting the devaluation of racially oppressed students" (Lynn, 2004, p. 157) provides a theoretical starting point that calls for African American students not to be viewed as inadequately

prepared for American schools because of their race, culture, or language (Howard & James, 2019; Lac, 2017; Lynn, 2004; Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Making a Connection Between Race and Academic Achievement

Across the United States, teachers and curriculum are underequipped to meet the needs of African American students. Because instruction is viewed as a basic set of teaching skills that should meet the needs of all students, when these strategies or skills fail, it is viewed as a student shortcoming instead of a technique deficiency (Ladson-Billings, 2010). It is the primary responsibility of curriculum developers and educators to create and implement strategies for students' academic success, including the African American student population. African American students with strong cultural awareness have been found to be more likely to succeed academically (Hypolite, 2020; Whaley & Noel, 2012). It seems reasonable that with strengthened racial and cultural awareness through critical race pedagogy and curriculum, African American students would likely experience greater academic success. With greater educational success, African American students' academic identity could show signs of strengthening. Making the connection between cultural or racial identification and academic performance could possibly contribute to addressing and narrowing the achievement gap between White and African American students.

Preservation of White Dominance in Education

In the field of education, White dominance is preserved and reinforced within Eurocentric pedagogy and curriculum (James et al., 2021). White teachers, who teach as they have been taught, only preserve the White dominance that has been in place for

centuries (James et al., 2021; Zion & Blanchette, 2011). From the perspective of many African American educators, the journey from slavery to sharecropping, segregation to integration, and standardizations to common core, are messages that do not reflect true change in the White-dominated educational system of the United States (Asante, 2008). Zion and Blanchette (2011) suggested educators should hence acquire methods of teaching that reflect an alternative to a Eurocentric approach and perspective to education. Challenging hegemonic concepts makes it possible to "uncover instances of domination and oppression and the role of power and privilege and understand how the hidden curriculum and reproductive nature of our school system conspire to perpetuate inequities between members of dominant and marginalized groups" (Zion & Blanchette, 2011, p. 195).

CRT educators understand their students' background is a vital part of instructional design, and they need to cultivate relationships through the learning process (Cruz et al., 2020; Lynn, 2004). As viewed through the lens of CRT, school curriculum has been identified as a "culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings, 2010). RoP required CRT professional development opportunities for teachers to facilitate cultural enrichment within their classrooms through diversity awareness and instructional strategies. In light of a textbook analysis and review of pedagogical practices, Pellegrino et al. (2013) concluded: "Ignorance of past and current racism and fundamental inequality in American society for people of color accounts for perpetuation of misunderstandings in contemporary cultural dynamics and the interwoven associations found among Americans" (p. 210).

The preservation of White and social class privilege, racism, and segregation appear to be a priority in America that threatens our economic and educational status. As stated by Zion and Blanchette (2011), "it is in the best interest of our nation to ensure that our reputation and competitive place in the global marketplace is not lessened by a substantial population of students who have been failed by our education system" (p. 2). Education is a fundamental right that shapes our social constructs and should be protected and presented with integrity and accuracy. Culturally responsive classrooms draw from students' racial identities to reshape teaching and learning with the aim of building academic skills, affirming cultural histories, and helping students of color recognize social inequality (Hill, 2020; James et al., 2021).

Literature Review Related to Education and Race

The four topics I selected for literature review include: adolescent racial ethnic identity development, schooling, and academic achievement; race centrality, stereotypes, and academic self-concept; racial and cultural inclusion in texts and curricula; and curriculum reform. Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of identity development and Cross' (1971) theory of nigrescence with a CRT reference point outlined the framework section and served as the basis for much of this research, examining the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and academic achievement amongst African American adolescents (Altschul et al., 2006; French et al., 2006; Harper, 2007; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Oyserman et al., 2006; Thomas & Columbus, 2009; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Adolescent Racial-Ethnic Identity Development, Schooling, and Academic

Achievement

During their investigation of adolescent identity development of African

American students, several researchers have pointed to schools as a primary force in the

socialization and formation of their identity development (French et al., 2006; Harper,

2007; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014; Talpade &

Talpade, 2020). Discrimination has also been found to predict lack of school bonding

(Dotterer et al., 2009, p. 68), whereas, one study shows in a predominately White college,

the inclusion of a Black cultural center increased academic performance and school

engagement of its Black students (Hypolite, 2020). In interviews with students regarding

the Black experience in predominantly White schools, one student suggested White

educators "hold students accountable for racism, and teach Black history in schools"

(Anderson & Stevenson, 2019, p. 16). While it may seem effortless and natural for those

in the dominant group to fit into society's "existing institutional arrangement" (Ortiz &

Jani, 2010, p. 180), assimilation is much more challenging for non-dominant groups.

Shockley (2011) reported discrimination, oppression, and racism against people of

African descent have placed them in a "special circumstance, and standardized education

ignores that circumstance" (p. 1043).

Miller-Cotto and Byrnes (2016) reported academic achievement and racial

identity of students has a positive relationship with academic achievement, which Harper

(2007) found in an earlier study. Recent studies show for minority students, racial

identity and school connectedness were positive predictors of confidence and academic

achievement (Santos & Collins, 2015; Talpade & Talpade, 2020). However, when the schooling process is "coopted by ignorance and inflexibility" claimed Harper, "the end result is the adoption of a view of Black racial identity that impedes the process of teaching and learning" (Harper, 2007, p.236). Adolescents with formal reasoning and a strong sense of ethnic identity are thought to be better equipped to cope with discriminatory treatment at the individual and institutional level (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Thomas and Columbus (2009) examined the convergence of three distinct entities: culture, identity, and learning, and how they work together to form an instructional design that helps shape the understanding of cultural and academic identity. Their findings suggested that students with a strong sense of cultural identity are motivated toward academic achievement. They claimed if a child is aware and has an understanding of their cultural origin, they would be more invested in academic success, an important ingredient that should be implemented in creating any culturally responsive curriculum (Thomas & Columbus, 2009).

Many scholars have chosen to focus on a phenomenon called "acting White" (Durkee et al., 2019; Shockley, 2011). This term has been used to refer to African American students who are studying and attempting to excel academically. A culturally relevant curriculum might diminish this attitude (Durkee et al., 2019; King & Chandler, 2016). Students with respect for race and perceive being African American positively, have been found to have higher level grade point averages than those African American students who demonstrate a negative perspective of their race and disassociate

themselves from the group (Altschul et al., 2006; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Talpade & Talpade 2020; Thomas & Columbus, 2009). Transformative pedagogy empowers students to ask questions, discuss, and problem solve within the classroom environment (Cruz et al., 2020; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). When teachers incorporate transformative pedagogy, they provide students with lessons that encourage self-exploration by connecting the classroom to their personal experiences.

Race Centrality, Stereotypes, and Academic Self-Concept

For the purposes of this analysis, racial centrality will be referred to as the "extent to which race is a central aspect of an individual's self-definition" (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 4). Erikson (1968) had gone so far as to explain that adolescents are "sometimes morbidly preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others" (p. 128). For African American youth, the time of adolescence and identity formation can be unknowingly shaped by the influence of racial stereotypes and negatively steer their concept of self and academic functioning (James et al., 2021; Talpade & Talpade 2020) .

Racial centrality dilutes the relationship between academic race stereotypes and academic self-concepts; there are potential gaps in other factors that "lead to individual differences in the stereotype-self-concept relation" (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 11). Okeke et al. (2009) found African American youth's "endorsement of traditional academic stereotypes was related to lower academic self-concept" (Okeke et al., 2009, p. 10). In a study of racial stereotype threat, McClain (2016) found that African American students "fear confirming negative group stereotype[s] that they are not as bright as their peers" (p. 41). McClain suggested stereotype threat has such a dramatic impact on the

standardized testing environment that the results of African American students tests are "lower than they should be and do not reflect their true academic capacity" (p. 36).

When racial centrality is low, academic performance is stronger, and the negative impact of belief in traditional racial stereotypes is lessened (Okeke et al., 2009). This concept of understanding who you are can often be a challenge as textbooks and curricula regularly misrepresent historical events or only offer from one cultural perspective, typically Eurocentric. If academic underperformance is to be effectively reversed, greater attention should be given to the effects of negative stereotypes and the impact on African American youth self-concept. Smith et al., (2009) measured racial-ethnic identity by utilizing the Racial Attitudes, Beliefs, and Stereotypes Measure-II (RABS II), and the Multi-Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) Belonging subscale. Academic achievement was assessed primarily on reading and listening comprehension skills using the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT). To assess self-esteem, the Pictorial Perceived Competence Scale for Children was used to measure social acceptance, physical, and cognitive competence. Lastly, to evaluate behaviors, information was gathered from parents and teachers regarding children's level of aggressive behavior, using the Child Behavior Checklist. The participants included 2,680 African American boys and girls ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. The data were collected in the southeastern United States from schools with majority African American population on free or reduced lunch. When examining the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and the six dimensions of competence using the MEIM, a positive correlation indicated, "as perceived competence increases so does racial-ethnic identity" (Smith et al., 2009, p.

153). Research points to the connection between racial-ethnic identity and academic achievement, self-esteem, and behaviors in young African American children (Cokley et al., 2011; Hypolite, 2020;Smith et al., 2009; Talpade & Talpade 2020).

Additionally, the findings show a positive association between reading comprehension and racial-ethnic identity. Smith et al., (2009) found problem behaviors pointed out by parents decreased as racial-ethnic identity increased and found a positive connection between racial-ethnic identity and academic success, social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavior (Smith et al., 2009; Talpade & Talpade, 2020). However, Cokley et al., (2011) found as African American male students grew older "the correlation between academic self-concept and GPA decrease sharply" (p. 63). They suggested due to negative experiences associated with academic failure and punishment for poor conduct, school is a more "hostile environment" for African American men, (Cokley et al., 2011, p. 63) than any other student population. These negative experiences may cause African American men to disengage psychologically, academically, and increase frustration levels (Cokley et al., 2011; Hypolite, 2020; Irving & Hudley, 2008; James et al., 2021; Talpade & Talpade, 2020).

Cultural Inclusion in Texts and Curricula

Ideally, meaningful history lessons create learning opportunities that challenge the notion of education for African Americans was, and in many regards still is, universally inferior (Newman & Schmalbach, 2010). The value of examining racial identity through textbooks and curricula and how it affects self-perception is vital to creating more definitive studies that measure intelligence and motivation among African American

students. By exploring race through education, as presented in textbooks, Pellegrino et al. (2013) contributed to the body of knowledge by "enmeshing critical race theory and student learning" (p. 211). Understanding the educational experience of African American students can be expanding by delving deeper into the realm of textbooks and their potential impact. One analysis conducted to further identify this issue included fifth, eighth, and 11th grade advanced placement social studies textbooks and curricula adopted by the State of Texas (Brown & Brown, 2010). The textbooks studied were selected from the American Textbook Council and used in advanced placement courses for 11th and 12th grades. The review includes a three-pronged literary approach: "(1) reading the text, (2) noting the themes, and (3) supporting conclusions with examples" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 143). The theoretical lenses of cultural memory and CRT were utilized to examine how institutionalized racism operates within American society. Within this study, cultural memory was defined as "the discourses, texts, and artifacts that shape how we conceptualize and imagine a social context or a group's experience" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p.142).

Using the CRT approach, Brown and Brown (2010) examined the institutional "nature of racism in U.S. society" (p. 142) by exploring the way social studies textbooks portray "racial violence against African Americans" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 143). The African American perspective of racism in education was evaluated as it unfolded throughout American history. Within the textbook analysis a search was conducted for the inclusion of such topics as post-Civil War education in the South, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, and issues that occurred as a result of those historical events. All

textbooks reviewed by Brown and Brown mentioned the African American education experience, as well as the often less documented accounts of African American educators who provided exemplary educational efforts despite pervasive racism and discrimination. Textbooks failed to include the African American struggle for equality in education and several included a thorough discussion of the African American education experience but failed to connect past events to race relations then and now. Helping young African Americans realize the connection between their cultural past and the present aids them in understanding the present condition of society and the potential direction of their future according to this study, no textbooks fostered or developed that type of cultural understanding for African Americans.

Race related issues are prevalent when considering the many factors impacting culturally responsive education reform, ranging from teacher preparation, formal assessment, curricula, and textbook design. Textbooks are a valuable resource in many curricula, and act as a map guiding the direction of instruction. Oftentimes, events presented in textbooks contradict historical occurrences and are typically selective of the events included and presented. Students are thus required to participate in a collective memory of a group in which they are not members (Pellegrino et al., 2013).

Pellegrino et al. (2013) claimed false, collective, and historical memories are further cemented when students are required to remember and recall events and key personalities for standardized assessments. In light of a textbook analysis and review of pedagogical practices, Pellegrino et all claimed "Ignorance of past and current racism and fundamental inequality in American society for people of color accounts for perpetuation

of misunderstandings in contemporary cultural dynamics and the interwoven associations found among Americans" (p. 210).

Resistance to the institution of slavery in America has been depicted as an effort taken up only by specific dynamic individuals (Brown & Brown, 2010; Pellegrino et al., 2013). These selected narratives often presented partial or inaccurate descriptions of these individuals and countered by emphasizing the economic significance of the institution of slavery to justify the heinous treatment of African Americans. Teachers who lack the knowledge of accurate historical narratives run the risk of perpetuating misinformation (Brown & Brown, 2010; James et al., 2021; Talpade & Talpade, 2020). CRT supporters have proposed that without pre-service and retraining for teachers unfamiliar with the African American saga, the deep institutionalized racism, which for centuries ensured the dominate culture's economic security and oppression of their African American counterparts, will continue to be scrutinized but not significantly altered (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Talpade & Talpade, 2020). While progress has been achieved and acknowledged, systemic change has not occurred.

In their study, Brown and Brown (2010) found that fifth, eighth, and 11th grade textbooks portray a historical perspective of the African slave trade as one that was not institutionalized but rather as "isolated incidents that were done by a few bad men and that only affected the individuals directly involved in the violent act" (p. 150). By perpetuating such historical inaccuracies through textbooks and curricula, it is expected that students and teachers continue to misunderstand the issues of systemic racial inequality in America. "When discussing resistance racial violence, focuses again on

individuals isolated often heroic efforts that veil the organized and systematic ways that free Blacks and enslaved Africans acted against their social condition" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 150). One can gather from their findings that institutionalized racism is still being preserved in some textbooks. Institutionalized racism is being preserved in textbooks and taught in the classroom, with the dissemination of what Ladson-Billings (2010) referred to as "master scripting," and the continued muting the African American voice distorts our understanding of racism in American history.

Advancing this line of research, Duncan (2012) conducted a mixed method longitudinal study that measured the relationship between an Afrocentric U.S. history curricula, self-efficacy, and social studies test achievement for 8th graders attending KIPP STAR College Preparatory Charter School in New York. Study participants consisted of 217 eighth-grade students, 97% of them African American or Hispanic. Success in end-of-year U.S. history tests was measured for students participating in Afrocentric and Eurocentric curricula. A comparison of a post hoc New York state social studies test, one-way ANOVAs, and t-tests, showed that students who participated in the Afrocentric curricula significantly outperformed students who participated in Eurocentric curricula. Results of the Likert-type questionnaire indicated parents "strongly linked the Afrocentric curriculum to their children's self-efficacy and to their emotional response and connection to the curriculum" (Duncan, 2012, p. 94).

In 2014, with the support of Texas legislation, some public schools in the state eliminated references to slavery and the process of enslavement from their history textbooks. Social studies textbooks in Texas either eliminated or diminished accurate

depictions of the plight of enslaved Africans and African Americans (Brown & Brown, 2010). Despite the "presence of more inclusive narratives" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 144) throughout the violent history of America, structural outcomes and materials have become for students and teachers "the knowledge that informs how societies and schools operate within the United States" (Brown & Brown, 2010, p. 141).

Research steered in a different direction included a longitudinal study that examined the racial-ethnic identity of African American children. The central question of Brown and Brown's (2010) research asked if racial-ethnic identity was connected to academic achievement, self-esteem, and behaviors in young African American children? Racial-ethnic identity was evaluated using the Racial Attitudes, Beliefs, and Stereotypes Measure-II (RABS II), and the Multi-Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) Belonging subscale. Academic achievement focused primarily on reading and listening comprehension skills measured using the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT). To assess self-esteem, the Pictorial Perceived Competence Scale for Children was implemented to measure social acceptance, physical, and cognitive competence. Behavior information was gathered from parents and teachers regarding children's level of aggression using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). The study included 2,680 African American boys and girls ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. The data was collected in the southeastern United States from schools with majority African American population on free or reduced lunch.

When examining the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and the six dimensions of competence using the MEIM, the results demonstrated a positive

correlation indicating "as perceived competence increases so does racial-ethnic identity" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 153). Likewise, the findings demonstrated a positive association between reading comprehension and racial-ethnic identity. On the other hand, the parent related CBCL revealed a negative correlation with the MEIM, indicating, "problem behaviors decrease as racial-ethnic identity increases" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 153). There is a positive connection between racial-ethnic identity and academic success, social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavior (Smith et al., 2009). These discoveries are important because they clearly demonstrate the significance of the role of racial-ethnic identity and success in school.

Curriculum Reform

To narrow the achievement gap via curriculum redevelopment, the prevailing doctrine is that "current curriculum is somehow un-raced because it is stoked in the history of the United States, U.S. history curriculum has been overwhelmingly Eurocentric and psychologically oppressive to minorities in the United States" (Duncan, 2012, p. 94). Keeping this in mind, one way of promoting social change within the ranks of the public education system is to adopt more diverse curricula and instructional designs that foster racial sensitivity through cultural identity. Instilling cultural confidence and competence in our young African Americans through curricula reform would involve a representation of the full range of humanity extant in students' cultures (Ladsen-Billings, 2000). Undoubtedly, efforts are being made to address these serious biases by including multiculturalism in textbooks, curricula, classrooms, and teacher education but we still have a long way to go to deconstruct the myths. As stated in a

recent article many teachers are hesitant and even uncomfortable discussing ethnicity and social equity without the background knowledge of nondominant cultural histories (Hill, 2020).

Renowned Afrocentric educator Asa Hilliard (1998) rationalized that "educational reform must address two issues excellence in performance and excellence in curriculum" (p. 13). Hard work and clear focus can transform the educational conditions of students and teachers alike. Hilliard pushed the notion of cultural pluralism demanding more attention be given to what children are taught as well as the way they are taught (Jamison, 2020). Hilliard explained, "the content of school course work is never neutral" (p. 17); it affects children in one way or another. Although educators like Hilliard have been concerned about the issues of cultural pluralism for many years, little if any fundamental changes have occurred (Jamison, 2020). Hilliard stated, "a truthful portrayal of human events will force a pluralization curriculum instantly" (p. 48) which may possibly provide a way to begin closing the achievement gap that exists between African American and White students (Hilliard, 1998). African-centered pedagogy as "reclaiming the right, responsibility, and authority to name oneself and to identify with one's heritage" (Hilliard, 2000, p. 246). Anything other than African-centered pedagogy would be "cultural genocide" for African American people (Hilliard, 2000, p. 246). Eurocentric pedagogy leaves African American's the "only group on earth walking around totally dependent on somebody else's culture for our self-definition" (Hilliard, 2000, p. 246). The cultural miseducation of African Americans originally served as a way of maintaining control over the minds of newly freed slaves (Woodson, 1933).

The African-centered approach is not an attempt to fight against oppression only an effort to reclaim a historical sense of self (Hilliard, 2000). For people of African descent this normal desire to pass on cultural tradition was interrupted "but not interrupted beyond repair" (Hilliard, 2000, p.231). African-oriented curriculum and pedagogy is a strategy developed out of a cultural tradition that has a long history of developing "excellence in education" (Hilliard, 2000, p. 247) prior to slavery. This knowledge of one's history becomes valuable in that it helps create a picture of how the individual fits into society. The way in which history is represented in textbooks, curricula, and the classroom, plays a major role in developing cultural understanding and educational reform. As stated in Hill's (2020) recent article, the "nation's schools have failed too many students of color for far too long" and by "grounding education in students' lives" CRT will be "the fix we need" (p. 1).

The lens through which the historical experiences of African Americans are reflected in curriculum and textbooks, Newman and Schmalbach conclude, "As critical race theory implores, teachers are charged with maintaining the challenges of race and segregation in the minds of youth" (p. 45) and "textbook authors should be more mindful of the research of historical events and time periods before committing ideas to paper" (Newman & Schmalbach, 2010, p. 46). Errors in perception and outright omissions of events in textbooks have led teachers to develop their own conclusions, which are often filled with bias and misrepresentation. To help students successfully navigate schools and classrooms, teachers need to recognize that racism is reflected in curricula and textbooks. Even though one major shortcoming of the study was limiting the number of textbooks

analyzed to eight, the study should not be set aside but used as a motivation to inquire about historical events and class discussion starters.

Summary

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the conceptual framework of Erikson's theory of adolescent identity and psychosocial development, Cross' nigrescence theory, and critical race theory in education. Additionally in Chapter 2, I discussed two topics including: 1) making a connection between race and academic achievement and 2) preservation of White dominance in education. Finally, I analyzed four threads of research listed in the literature review: 1) adolescent racial-ethnic identity development, schooling and academic achievement, 2) race centrality, stereotypes, and academic self-concept, 3) cultural inclusion in texts and curricula, and 4) curriculum reform.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative basic design study was to gain a deeper understanding of what stakeholders perceived were the developmental outcomes of a former Afrocentric RoP participant, including preparation for higher education, career choices, and racial identity development. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and rationale, followed by a discussion of my role as the researcher. Next, I describe the methodology through identification of the population, criteria for selection, and procedures for how participants were identified, contacted, and recruited, followed by a description of data collection and instrumentation. Furthermore, I outline the data collection plan and data analysis plan and explain how issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures were handled throughout the research process.

Research Design and Rationale

I selected a basic qualitative inquiry approach to this study. The basic qualitative research design was the most effective method for my study as it allowed data to emerge through in-depth interviewing. Through interviewing, the basic qualitative design allows the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of how people make meaning of their lives and an opportunity to describe how they interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009). The basic qualitative design provided the flexibility of interviewing RoP alumni, parents, and teachers, whereas a case study limits the process to a single bounded setting, which I did not have access to. Because RoP is no longer in operation, there was no

opportunity to conduct observations, nor access to documentation, preventing the possibility of triangulation of data points as required in a case study.

Conducting a phenomenological study was not feasible due to time constraints and availability of alumni. Additionally, gaining in-depth descriptions of a lived experience from about 10 years ago would have proved challenging. I was also interested in gathering the perceptions of parents and teachers of the developmental impact on RoP alumni, which precluded the phenomenological approach to data collection. I had access to one source of data via the interviewing process of alumni, parents, and teachers, which made basic qualitative inquiry the most appropriate design for my study. In order to describe the experiences of African American alumni of the RoP program, the research was led by this question: What are the perceptions of alumni and their parents and teachers regarding the former participants' developmental outcomes, such as racial identity, career choice, and academic accomplishment, resulting from participation in the Afrocentric RoP program? The research question was designed to create a deeper understanding of how RoP alumni perceive their racial identity and developmental growth as a result of the program, using qualitative research that included interviewing, asking about "people's experiences and perspectives, and the ability to ask about what is not yet understood" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 7).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher for the study was as the interviewer, observer of the interviews, data collector, and analyst. The teachers and administrators of RoP were employed in the same school district as I worked from 2013–2016. I knew the

participants, including students, parents, and staff, through the RoP program, but was otherwise not affiliated. The founder of RoP was the principal of the school in which I was employed for 3 years. The alumni of RoP were never students in my class nor were the teachers in the same school. We worked and lived in the same community but never interacted outside RoP.

No payment or tangible incentive was offered to participation in the study. The names of all participants in the study remain confidential. I monitored, documented, bracketed, and reflected upon my biases and assumptions prior to data collection, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). I respected curiosity about people's perceptions and experiences and asked about what is not understood.

Methodology

In the following subsections, I describe the participant selection logic, identify the instrumentation, explain data collection, and discuss the data analysis plan.

Participant Selection

The founder of the RoP program acted as my lead for identification of and initial contact with all participants, as he has access to their contact information. Each participant in the study was either a former student, parent, or teacher of the RoP program. The participants met the criteria based on their connection to RoP and their relationship with alumni. The number of participants was intended to range from nine to 12: a sample size large enough to address the research question and attain data saturation. I reached saturation after 11 interviews.

The founder of RoP attempted to contact alumni, parents, and teachers from the 2005 through 2014 groups; most were unreachable. The RoP program began in 2005 and concluded in 2014. At the time of program participation, RoP students' grade level ranged from eighth through 10th, and ages ranged from 13 to 16. As it had been 6 years since the last 2014 program completion, alumni participants' current age range from 19-31 years old.

Instrumentation

This basic qualitative study was conducted utilizing researcher created interview questions based on the conceptual framework and literature review. To ensure the research question would be answered, the committee chair reviewed several drafts of the interview questions. Additionally, the interview questions were used in mock interviews with two people with similar experiences to participants in the RoP program. The development of the interview protocols of my study were also led by Rubin and Rubin's (2012) qualitative data gathering methods and style.

Data Collection

Data collection began after approval by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; #07-06-20-0188687). The interviews lasted 45–60 minutes in length. In order to evoke the most genuine responses, the interview questions were semi-structured, taking form as the conversation unfolded. This style of interviewing is designed to build a trusting relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocols included a pattern of flexible questions that supported a friendly and gentle tone where one question leads to the next based on the

interviewee's response (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This style of interview best suited my study as it is based on the relationship and personality of the interviewer and interviewee that facilitates a give and take conversation. As explained in the invitation letter, each interview was audio-recorded by two devices as backup and then transcribed by me. The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom to create a connection while observing COVID-19 safety measures. Live video interviews allowed me to observe body language, intonation, inflection, facial gestures, and emotions depicted in conversation (Wellard & McKenna, 2001). Each interviewee was debriefed, including assurance of confidentiality procedures and discussion of the possibility of follow-up interviews for clarification as needed. I sent copies of the transcripts to each participant and asked if there were any inaccuracies or additions they would like to make. There were no gifts as compensation for their time, but I followed the interview with a thank you.

Data Analysis Plan

The data collected was based on interview questions and follow up probes that answer the research question. The procedure for coding began with scanning the transcription, looking for key words or terms and repetitive concepts to flag or highlight. I hand code the interviews to ensure a good working knowledge of my data. By hand coding, I sought to increase my familiarity with the data and gain in-depth insight into their experience. Hand coding provided the opportunity to develop a working knowledge of interviewees' responses to identify common events and themes. Seeing together the interviewees' perceptions and how they connect to the same concepts or themes as others can provide real world, in-depth data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used a Word document to

conduct searches, highlight text, and track changes for categories and themes. Once key words or terms were identified, I categorized them according to context, and transition from categories to themes. Once themes emerged through the data, I analyzed and linked them to the research question. I did not implement a priori codes; all coding derived directly from interviewee responses.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was created by spending sufficient time interviewing, paying particular attention, and noting details that are relevant to the study (Patton, 2015). To establish internal validity, transcripts with identifiers redacted were shared with the dissertation committee along with my analysis. Each interviewee had the opportunity to review interview transcripts for transcript checking to ensure credibility.

In-depth interviews with the different stakeholder groups including alumni, parents, and program staff were an efficient form of triangulation for my study (Guion, 2002). By interviewing a comparable number of representatives from each stakeholder group, I gained insight on what they perceive as program outcomes. I triangulated the data by identifying agreed upon outcomes from their different perspectives (Guion, 2002).

External validity or transferability was established through a thick description of the interviewing process via a field journal. The setting and other aspects of data collection were described in detail to provide a fuller understanding of the experience.

Dependability was constructed by creating transparent audit trails, including a research journal and audio recordings describing the research process from the start. My

priority was "ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (Patton, 2015, p. 684).

In order to establish confirmability, I conducted in-depth responsive interviewing techniques by facilitating the opportunity for the interviewer to listen, reflect, and build upon the interviewees' response by asking follow-up questions, much like a friendly and attentive conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The development of the interview protocols was led by Rubin and Rubin's (2012) qualitative data gathering methods and style. In order to evoke the most genuine responses, the interview questions were semi-structured, taking form as the conversation unfolded. This style of interviewing is designed to build a trusting relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

Being the single collector and analyst of data, I employed strategies to establish confidentiality, such as usage of pseudonyms and generalizations regarding locations and dates of program participation. I stressed that each participant understood that participation was voluntary, and that each participant signed or agreed verbally to the Letter of Consent and no monetary reward was offered. The IRB approval was integral in designing the process for participant protection in the study. All study participants were 18 years or older. I had the sole responsibility to maintain confidentiality for all collected data, which was stored on an external flash drive kept in my personal safe. All transcripts and recordings will be destroyed after 5 years from the completion of the study. Personal bias was carefully documented in a reflective journal for self-evaluation (Patton, 2015).

Summary

In Chapter 3, I restated the research question and identified the central phenomenon, research design, and rationale. My role as the researcher was defined and explained along with a description of the relationships between participants and myself. In the methodology section, the intended study population was identified, as was the criterion for which their selection was based. Each data collection source was identified. The data analysis plan and its connection to the research question was explained. Issues of trustworthiness were noted regarding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical procedures were described in relation to maintaining confidentiality of all study participants.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 4, I explain the findings of this basic qualitative inquiry by first describing the setting, participants, and selection procedures. I also discuss the data collection strategies, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. The focus of this study is the impact of a RoP program on the development of its alumni including racial identity, higher education, and career choice. In the sections to follow, I describe the results of my study.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and alumni regarding the alumni's developmental outcomes such as racial identity, preparation for higher education, and career choice resulting from participation in the Afrocentric RoP program?

Setting

The settings for data collection took place in the location of each interviewee's choice. Most interviews occurred in the participant's home or at their work site. Participants were given the choice of interviewing via telephone, Skype, or Zoom, both with and without camera. I interviewed 11 people; all except one chose Zoom with camera on. One opted for the camera to be switched off due to low bandwidth. All interviews were conducted without interruption except two, and the participants resolved the issues within moments. At no time were the recordings interrupted, therefore causing no issues of trustworthiness on the study results. I recorded all interviews via Zoom and as a backup voice memo through my iPhone.

Participant Selection

The retired school principal helped gather contact information for alumni and conducted a search using social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. Participation in the study was voluntary, and once contacted, stakeholders agreed enthusiastically to participate.

The participants for this study included 11 African American stakeholders of the RoP program: five students, four parents, and two staff members (one retired principal and one assistant principal). Four alumni had advanced degrees, and one was a junior in college. Of the alumni with advanced degrees, one received her PhD from a university in the northeast as the first African American woman to earn that degree type from the institution. Three other alumni received their four-year degrees from prestigious universities in the northeastern United States. The alumni and parents participated in the early or middle years of the 10-year program. Staff served the program for 4 and 10 years respectively (see Table 1 for description of participants).

Table 1

Demographic Descriptions

Participant (pseudonym)

lasted an average of 45–60 minutes. The interviews were recorded with permission of all participants using Zoom and an iPhone app, and then uploaded to a transcription app. Once transcribed, I reviewed and edited each interview followed by sharing with the participants for approval.

Data Analysis

For each interview conducted, I listened to the recording while editing the transcript to become familiar with the data. I then began the analysis by hand coding, looking for keywords. Once key words were identified, I analyzed and translated them into codes and then to themes and sub themes. Codes and themes were identified from the responses to interview questions. The interview questions were developed based on the conceptual framework of Erickson's theory of psychosocial development and Cross' theory of racial identity in addition to probing questions based on the literature review. Collectively, I identified 31 codes, four themes, and 15 subthemes (see Table 2). Initially I created a single table of codes from the three groups of participants (alumni, parents, and staff) and color-coded each person. The table became cumbersome and difficult to analyze. I separated each group from the table into a Word document in paragraph form and maintained the color-coded identification. I used the search tool in Microsoft Word to identify recurring codes in the document.

After translating keywords into codes, I separated all codes and themes that reflected the three outcomes anticipated in the research question in addition to an overarching developmental outcome: racial identity development, preparation for higher education, and career path decision-making and identified code word responses from

each group (alumni, parents, and staff). I then used poster paper to create manageable

sections, making it easier to transition from codes to emergent themes and subthemes.

(See Table 2). The responses from all three groups (alumni, parents, and staff) supported

these four themes; however, the interviews with the alumni were richer and led to more

codes, while data from the staff and parents supported what I heard from the alumni.

During the study, there were no discrepant cases that emerged. All alumni interviews

were comparable and reached a data saturation point within the first three to four

interview sessions.

Table 2

Themes, Subthemes, and Codes in Relationship to Aspects of the RQ

RQ's key aspects

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I provided evidence of trustworthiness of these findings by taking steps to increase dependability, transferability, and confirmability. For example, to increase dependability, transcripts with identifiers redacted were shared with my dissertation committee along with my analysis for peer review. To increase transferability, I provided a thick description of the interviewing process in my field journal along with audio-recorded observations. The setting and other aspects of data collection are described in detail to provide a fuller understanding of the experience. The only adjustment made was instead of having a physical journal, I relied more heavily on voice memos. I conducted in-depth interviews with different stakeholder groups including alumni, parents, and program staff, which was an efficient form of triangulation for my study (Guion, 2002). By interviewing a comparable number of representatives from each stakeholder group, I gained insight on what they perceived as program outcomes as planned. Dependability was constructed by creating a transparent audit trail, including a research journal and audio recordings describing the research process from the start. As stated in Chapter 3 and supported by Patton (2015), my priority was "ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (p. 684). Although I made several notes in the beginning using a physical journal, I soon transitioned to electronic note taking by using Microsoft Word's dictation device.

Confirmability was established by conducting in-depth responsive interviews using techniques that created the opportunity for me to listen, reflect, and build upon the interviewees' response by asking follow-up questions, much like a friendly and attentive

conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), as planned in Chapter 3. The development of the interview protocols was led by Rubin and Rubin's (2012) qualitative data gathering methods and style. In order to evoke the most genuine responses, the interview questions were semi-structured, taking form as the conversation unfolded. This style of interviewing was designed to build a trusting relationship between the interviewer and interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I found this style of interviewing to be especially beneficial as it suited my personality and put the interviewee at ease and ready to openly communicate.

Results

In this section, I provide the results of my study. The research question was what are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and alumni regarding the alumni's developmental outcomes such as racial identity, preparation for higher education, and career choice resulting from participation in the Afrocentric RoP program? The three themes and seven subthemes are as follows: (1) African American pride, with three subthemes: (a) self-identity, (b) self-confidence, and (c) self-empowerment; (2) knowledge is power, with two sub-themes: (a) motivation and (b) role models; and (3) career choice with two subthemes: (a) economic freedom and (b) mentorship.

Theme 1: African American Pride

For the aspect of the research question regarding racial identity, there was one theme and three subthemes that emerged from the interview questions. The theme that emerged was African American pride. The data analysis indicated that all five RoP alumni reported a strengthening in their racial identity. All alumni described a deeper

sense of pride and connection with being African American. Parents' and staff responses

supported the claim. For instance, Kujichagulia explained that the program taught him to

"love my people." Kuumba shared, "the program opened my eyes to Black culture, this is

who I am and I'm so proud to be African American." Staff and parents agreed that the

RoP experience strengthened the racial identity of its alumni. Ujima shared that he felt

the program's intention was to help young African Americans develop a deeper

connection to their racial and cultural lineage in order to understand the importance of

achievement, including higher education, racial identity, and career choice.

All alumni interviewed explained that RoP taught them their history from the

African perspective for the first time. Ujamaa mentioned, "I have always been African

American, but Africa makes sense to me now." Nguzo, a parent, said that the program

shaped their child's experience as an "African American and strengthened their

connection to their racial group." Saba, another parent, said the RoP experience, "opened

the door to understand identity not just as a race but the core of who they are as a human

being." Saba further elaborated that RoP gave her child "greater respect for the African

culture" the trip to Africa "solidified her any questions she had about the great legacy of

Africa."

When asked about self-identity and connection to their racial group, Ujamaa

detailed:

Rites of Passage gave me a leg to stand on when I'm talking about African

history. Because one, I learned it, second, I was there to experience it. So now

there's not really a disconnect; now I can talk about African history from a

textbook perspective. I can talk about it because I was physically there; I met the

people, and that's what helped me reaffirm that connection to my identity with the

African people. I am African American but African makes a lot more sense to me

now; it holds more weight. I see the difference between the African and American

cultures but from an African American perspective.

Ujamaa took his thoughts in another direction as he reflected on connecting culturally

with Africa:

Let's talk strictly about the U.S. perspective: When you think about the African

American perspective, you just think about the American way of African

American, right? Really for my life, when I was growing up, there really wasn't a

tie to Africa, there was slavery, we have ancestors, but the *African* word didn't

really hold as much weight. I would say now I can see that tie…

When asked what it felt like to be amongst the majority population while in West Africa,

Imani shared:

I think it felt great. I think oftentimes in America you see yourself as of minority,

but when you suddenly become the majority, I think it's a different sort of way

that you move in spaces right because often times you have to either shrink

yourself or you have to assimilate to be able to make any sort of progress or

impact in certain spaces, but I think when you remove that and you think …less

about yourself and more about the community and how you can work together to

make these changes out of of self-preservation. Because I think, oftentimes you

were conditioned for self-preservation. Usually, you're either the only one or two

people and that sometimes can lead to competition between two people but when those sort[s] of constraints are removed, I think it removes a lot of pressure. Also, it forces you to think differently about yourself and how you interact with people who look like you.

Subtheme 1: Self-Identity

The strongest subtheme to emerge from the data in relationship to the first theme of racial identity was the sense of self-identity that developed as a result of participating in the program. All but one of alumni shared that the RoP program introduced them to their history and helped them discover who they are. For instance, Imani shared, "the program contributes to my overall sense of self, the layers of who I am." Kujichagulia went so far as to say, the program "is naturally ingrained in everything I do. The program gave me a sense of self, pride, made me want to strive for more." Ujamaa reflected that RoP "shaped who I am as a Black person and helped me develop a serious appreciation for the culture." Saba, a parent, shared that at a crucial time, RoP represented a "safe, wholesome, learning environment" where her child learned "about who she is and her culture." Two parents and one staff member said they believe that the RoP program would be with the alumni for a lifetime.

When asked about her connection to her racial group after RoP, Imani said:

I think of two parts: going to Africa, and the experiences that led me to go back again. Now days you have a test that can tell you exactly where you came from. But I think there's something really powerful about thinking about the continent as a whole and the intersections that happened between north, south, west, and

how you're a part of that longer narrative. It's thinking about the various

connections in the way that people move throughout the world and how you can

be a global citizen who is rooted within the African diaspora. I can go to France

and be Black in that space. I can go to Japan and be Black in that space and then

also bring pride in your ethnic heritage because of how Black people contributed

to all of these places in the world. There are Black people who went to Japan

made an impact. There were Black people in France that made an impact.

Thinking about your heritage in that way makes you a global citizen.

Kujichagalia described the realization of self-identity:

In reflecting on myself, I begin to really think, you know, how to define yourself

as a Black individual. As an African American or just somebody of color in

America, you got to understand who is creating the image that we identify with as

young individuals. Being a part of the Rites of Passage program, one main thing

that's always stuck with me was you can't know where you're going unless you

know where you came from...The affirmations that we discussed in the class like

Kujichaglia self-determination, which—crazy when you understand now—

thinking back how it may not have been apparent right away just the subtleties

and at least for me as an individual in terms of my own experience being part of

the program began to shape how I think of myself and identify myself as a Black

individual. So, you got to understand that the impact, in terms of all those lessons

we've learned in the classes so as much as the trip, was, it was, very important.

The lessons we learned were also very important. I wish and I hope actually we

could actually take this a step further and continue to educate us on our history.

Kujichagalia even thought that RoP was the only program of its kind. He went on to say,

"I'd like to take that opportunity now to say the Rites of Passage program planted a seed

in me where I wanted to learn about myself."

Ujima, a staff member, reflected on students' testimony over the years regarding

their connection to self-identity and Africa:

When I would hear some of the kids share their experiences, I many times felt we

were getting through to them, they were understanding that America was not the

only country in the world that had interesting, smart, creative, and artistic people.

And hopefully by these experiences our students were broadening their

educational understanding as opposed to such a narrow scope, which sometimes

was devoid of any contributions that any of them or their ancestors made.

Subtheme 2: Self-Confidence

Self-confidence as a subtheme was present in all interviews of alumni and

parents. Parents and alumni spoke to the significant impact the program had on alumni

self-confidence. Imani shared that the information received during RoP left them feeling

"powerful to assume ownership of that information" and to feel "confident enough to

challenge it" and confident enough to "share the information with people who didn't

know." Kujichagulia said the program "reinforced my confidence and reinvigorated my

self-identity, self-love, and empowers me." Saba said, "RoP was a pivotal time; it really

helped my child become a leader and not a follower." Nguzo, another parent, regarding

self-confidence observed that the RoP program was "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a great stepping stone" for his child.

Subtheme 3: Self-Empowerment

The third subtheme that emerged regarding racial identity and African American pride is self-empowerment. Ujamaa said that the RoP experience "changed me from it's about me to it's about us." He along with other alumni explained that their outlook on life changed from being about the self to about the many. Imani felt empowered by her RoP experience in West Africa when "seeing women in the villages in leadership roles impacted me, Rites of Passage opened up my world." Kuumba reflected on the importance of the process of fundraising for the trip to West Africa and was "thankful for the program and how we had to work hard to get that money to travel so it made me appreciate hard work, it was not a gift." Kuumba said about the trip to West Africa:

It was my first trip ever. Now I love to travel; I want to study abroad because ever since Rites of Passage. I just seriously and I literally just want to travel anywhere I can go. Yeah, like I just love that experience and I feel like Rites of Passage seriously open my eyes and allowed me as a young child to see that there's nothing holding me back. And I feel like I should experience as many countries as I possibly can.

Kujichagulia said of his RoP experience:

The program allowed me to understand, I have a different perspective and understand my unique experience as a Black individual in America, what that means, how you're supposed to approach that, and how you are supposed to know

yourself, and teach yourself your history, which is going to be a lifelong journey.

If every day I turned on the news and all I see is negative imagery of somebody

Black, subconsciously that's like what I'm going to identify with whether I had

the capacity to think for myself. So all these things…are very important for me

and back to the Rites of Passage program, it taught me to have self-love. Better

than that, it taught me to love my people and start to think about things from a

different perspective and understand what we''re up against and what that takes to

make it.

When discussing a change in perspective after RoP experience, Imani provided a

description:

I would say a change was, I became more vocal in spaces where I knew that there

were stories that were being left out. I think sort of being armed with all of this

information you sort of take ownership of it, right and you're able to speak and

say well that's one version. But I also know of five other people who did that and

that's not correct. So while we're here, let me correct history, you know, and

sometimes that makes teachers very uncomfortable, but I think it's really

powerful to assume ownership of that information that to be able to feel confident

enough to challenge it and spaces but to also see yourself as a leader right to be

like well, yeah, you're telling us one fraction of it, but it's going to help row is a

real thing and everyone's like what's going tell bro. I'm like well, let me tell you

bro is but I think you know at was a great experience to be able to know that and

to be able to put some pressure because that's what we were trying to do in the

program right was to be able to take ownership, but also share the information

with people who didn't know and we were given plenty of spaces to do that.

Saba, a parent, noted her observation of alumni self-empowerment when she shared this:

Rites of Passage made my daughter excited to learn and do homework. The

program provided an academic foundation…and "memorizing affirmations and

empowering poems was very impactful." The program gave her the confidence to

stand up and speak in class; it solidified her at a crucial age.

Theme 2: Knowledge is Power

For the aspect of the research question regarding preparation for higher education,

there was one overarching theme and two subthemes that emerged from the interview

questions. The overarching theme was knowledge is power and the two subthemes were

motivation and role models. The power of knowledge, more specifically the power of

knowing more about one's history and oneself, was a theme that resonated throughout the

participant interviews. The importance of making the most of yourself through

knowledge acquisition was a powerful theme that emerged. When asked about RoP

impacting decisions for pursuing higher education, Ujima, a staff member, noted the

intent of the program was that a "fire be lit, and students would take advantage of their

educational opportunities." Ujima also thought "this program has changed students'

attitudes about education and the furtherance of it." Ujima further explained "the majority

of our students went on to college and successfully completed their degrees. I would like

to think the program wet their whistle for education."

Imani explained the connection to racial identity:

I think that your connection to your racial identity is one that you learn in early age, but I think sort of embracing it and being proud of it is a second layer that only happens when you're introduced to new narratives of support that I think that's one of the bright spots for me about Rites of Passage was sort of learning what Africa was like before slavery because I think often times when you're in sort of K to 12 education, that's where your story begins. And it's something that isn't something to be proud of right there sort of a victor and there's a loser and oftentimes people of African descent are placed in the sort of losing position right, that they were saved by sort of white saviors and I think that by being in programs like Rites of Passage you learn about the history in Africa. Those who were not captured by slave traders what the African continent look like before and after conquest, but then also thinking about the role that African slaves in African sons played in America, thinking that there were people who push back against slavery there were people who were at the helm of you know, resisting violence and oppression and I think that's really the point which you can through become really proud of who you are and recognize that the story is much more layered and nuanced than you had previously thought.

Subtheme 1: Motivation to Learn

The subtheme of motivation was ever present across the interviews of alumni, parents, and staff All alumni described a motivation to learn more about their history, which in turn sparked a real thirst for knowledge. Kujichagalia explained:

The Rites of Passage program…we were all scholars…like we all wanted to learn…like we're all in middle school, waking up on a Saturday to go to class, like who does that? And so, in terms of my perception of knowing that I'm not by myself, there are a lot of unique and smart, people of color out there. For me was just more of a motivating factor. So, I think…we need more groups like that out there that are actually bringing together more people of color to create more of a change and showing them that like, we're all here together because everybody in the Rites of Passage program are still very like, close and we're all doing very well for ourselves and that inherently pushes one another just through that support.

During the trip to West Africa, Imani reflected:

I remember all of us sitting in the village and I remember the Chief being a woman like I can vividly remember that and for me it was something that I think we had never talked about in the classroom and it was really sort of a new experience like, oh, I didn't know that women can be chiefs especially at like 12 or 13 and that there was so much respect for her and the fact that she welcomed us I think gave me a new sort of framework to think about leadership, especially in either sort of traditional patriarchal spaces or even just thinking about women sort of in leadership roles, especially within a community, in the village. That was very impactful.

When asked what the motivation was to join the RoP program, Nia shared:

I wanted to learn more about my history, personally I think was very important to me and just so that I can learn and teach it down the road with my own family. It would be very nice to understand the crux of it all and how it all came about and how we came to America and get the stories that weren't told in the history books that you see in school every day. So, I thought it was a great opportunity for me to really understand and for me to open up my view of my own history.

Kujichagalia had a similar response when asked the same question:

When I had the opportunity to join the Rites of Passage program, I thought, when will I have another opportunity to really learn about my history? So, if you really think about it, just to be frank, individuals who go to public school systems, like myself, the first thing you learn about yourself as an African American is that you are a slave. So, if you really think about it the psychological impact that can have on a young African American in terms of the imagery that's presented to us at a young age. Now fast forward, I have always been curious in terms of the Motherland, in my history and learning. So now I have an opportunity to learn about Africa and then also the culmination of the trip to Africa as well. So those were my initial deciding factors when I think back on why I joined the program.

Ujamaa had this to say about what it meant to be in the program:

We were there to be focused on learning about ourselves. Because when we learn about the African culture in pieces, we are learning about ourselves as well. So, it wasn't just like hey, we're going to learn about African culture, but how you can tie that to yourself as a person. So, there was a sense of pride that I gained on a

weekly basis as well because I'm becoming more informed about myself. In seventh grade there weren't a lot of kids who knew what I was talking about at that level. And that's something that I took and ran with, it made me want to strive for more. When I went to college that made me want to say becoming a CEO is possible. Doing all these things are possible because of the people who I was around and also the experiences I had as well.

Subtheme 2: Role Models

Every former student reflected on the impact of having African American leaders as their teachers in the Rites of Passage program. For many of the alumni it was their first experience having a teacher from the same race. Nia, an alum, said, "Having those teachers in my life made me feel more connected to what I was learning." The majority of the parents interviewed stated the importance of having African American role models for their children was a positive influence. Former student Kujichagalia reflected:

Having those role models as positive role models come in and speak to us reinforced to all of us that we could achieve, even at that point in time, whatever we had on our minds. You know, so it just reinforced to me my confidence in myself my ability to achieve what I want to achieve and it was really being a part of that community that I continue to thrive as an individual reinvigorated. And myself, this self-identify, you know, this identity again that was outside of what America tells us as Black individuals, who we are. So all of that is like so important…because it's all about imagery for me. It's all about if you can't envision yourself becoming a doctor; you'll never become a doctor.

Ujamaa reiterated a similar experience of positivity gained from learning from enthusiastic African American teachers:

> It was very positive for me to see African American men and women who were enthusiastic to teach us about these types of things; that's something that I've never seen before in the classroom. I have my textbook learning about the Louisiana Purchase but [had not really found] someone who taught and was as enthusiastic about African culture. And being that they were so energetic, that got me excited about it as well. So, it was seeing that person as like a role model and understanding that OK, they have a deep interest in this, this is something that's important.

In Imani's experience she acknowledged what she learned by having her first Black teachers:

> …the first time I saw Black teachers I think was probably in Rites of Passage, especially that all of my teachers were Black was really sort of eye-opening for me and that they came from different schools—high school, elementary, middle— and they were all in [city] was really eye-opening cuz you don't see that especially when you're in certain academic groupings…and it was something that made higher education and thinking about being educated seem tangible when you can see it when they also offer themselves up as a resource: "say, you know, if you're interested in learning more about you know, Gambia and what commerce is like then here's my email. Let your mom know and here are some books that I can recommend" and sort of making sure that doors always open is

really important because then it makes you feel like that's a way that you can look

up to or that can be your mentor moving forward.

Imani also reflected on Ujima's role in particular.

One of the things that I reflect on a lot is when I think about Ujima and his role in

it and vision for the program. Also, the fact that Ujima personally mentored all of

us and I think knowing that he was both sort of this mentor but also the principal

of the school was another added layer right to see a Black man in a position of

power. But also see a Black man committed to community work and making sure

that we were involved in community work, that we were giving back, and that we

were learning at the same time. It was sort of this commitment that you know, you

saw him in class for Monday to Friday, but you saw a different side of him on

Saturday. I think was really impactful for me personally, that you can have your 9

to 5 but you also can have a passion project that is shaping the lives of young

people and that being able to have served this dual purpose is something that's

really important. To make students believe that you're being sincere, and that we

respected him, we also knew if we had a problem that we could go to him and be

sort of honest about it and he would do everything in his power to make sure that

whatever the situation was would be resolved and that he cared about us. I think

that if I hadn't done the program I wouldn't have gotten to see that side of him

and I wouldn't have believed that I could do the same thing.

Kuumba talked about how she came to appreciate learning about Black culture from RoP

like this:

I do I think going in on Saturdays, spending my time with Rites of Passage,

learning about people who are African American like myself, who have made a

difference. It made me have an appreciation for my race in a sense because you

don't really learn that in the classroom. I would never have known the numerous

people who contributed to America that look like myself. They don't teach you

that in public school and I appreciate the Rites of Passage. That kind of opened

your eyes and strengthened your sense of hope. It changed my perspective on

Black people because I really didn't know what Black culture was, especially at a

young age. Like my mom would say, "you don't know what you don't know."

We don't know. I didn't know much. Learning about how things have changed

over time for Black people in America and how they were treated, came from

Rites of Passage. It made a difference that my teachers were Black; that resonated

with me because they were Black, and they gave their free time to make sure we

understood what Black people faced throughout the years.

Theme 3: Career Choice

For the aspect of the research question regarding career choice there was one

theme and two subthemes that emerged from responses to the interview questions. The

main theme was career choice, and the two subthemes were economic freedom and

mentorship. For Kujichagalia and Ujamaa, economic freedom was a major factor in

career choice. For most alumni creative freedom and expression was of great value in

career choice. Imani, Kujichagali, Nia, and Ujamaa expressed major importance on being

a mentor to other young Black people so that they could share their knowledge of authentic African American history.

Subtheme 1: Economic Freedom

Economic freedom was of great importance to Kujichagulia and Ujamaa. Kujichagulia said:

> As an individual, I'm focused on educating myself about my history, my people, and how that translates into being a Black man in America today. It empowers me to figure out how I take what I am learning, my awareness, my gifts, and talents, to then empower other individuals and hopefully affect change in the way I can, to continue to open up the minds of other people of color around me. That doesn't mean that I know it all. I'm continuing to learn, to be always be open-minded, always valuable, flexible, and not stuck in any one way of thinking, or learning. So for me, I'm just that's really what his focus on is how do I take my gifts and talents to help uplift the rest of the world and how do I continue to just be a lifelong learner… As an African American, a person of color, you really need to focus on economic freedom in order to have any real freedom in this world. Because you have no power, without economic power, just as a pure basic, you have to have economic power. So, for me, I am really focused on wealth accumulation. I am focused on those aspects of maximizing wealth for those reasons, not for greed, not for myself, and not for the sheer aspect of money, it's having more control over my time, my freedom, and independence. Because if I write anything, I can't publish what I want to publish. If I'm working for a major

corporation, like I used to work for, I can't write what I want to write. So that's not really freedom of speech. You've got your job hanging over your head. I don't have time for that. That's not the world I want to live in; that's not the life I want for myself.

Ujamaa spoke to the importance of economic freedom in this way:

I'm a renaissance man, in the in the aspect of I like to have my hands in multiple things, and I can't be kind of put in a box or constricted to just one thing right now. Being that I was exposed to so many different things growing up, I want to experience it at all now. I would say for me specifically, I am a man of now, I'm a man of discipline, and that can be shown through my actions, of the awards, and accolades that I've received. I am a man of compassion, and philanthropy as well. I feel like those were things that I've gained through my experiences over time. With this tool belt that I currently have, obviously, I'm looking to gain a little bit more. I'm trying to be the best Renaissance man I can be, I would call myself be the epitome of the Black man. I was all about financial wealth and gain, right? I feel like that's essentially what it was before. Now it is about bringing people up with me. I feel like there are so many good things that are going on with me because of the type of experiences that I had. I want people to experience that as well. How can I get them on track to also get there as well?

Subtheme 2: Mentorship

Several of the alums spoke about the importance of mentorship, reflecting on their experience as a mentee in RoP to how that is translated into being a mentor as an adult today. This is what Kujichagalia had to say about the importance of mentorship:

So what's important to me is family and uplifting other individuals in terms of opening their minds to new ideas. And honestly, it's just freedom and independence. Those are really important to me. It's about reaching back and uplifting others. Mentoring young kids and giving them a positive image to look up to and help them know that they can do it too. So that's really what's important to me, to sacrifice myself, to be a beacon of hope, and change, to use the position I'm in, and the opportunities I've been given, and my intellectual capacity to give back. That's what's important for me. It's seeing people happy, as well as helping people and hopefully beginning to dismantle the structural racist society and start to build wealth accumulation for people of color, and those who have been marginalized. So that's what I'm focused on, figuring out how do I how do I generate my wealth but not have to be in that circle. It's not like my goal is to become wealthy but to give back.

When thinking about the significance of the mentorship received at RoP, Ujamaa described the process like this:

I'm Black; I understand that, but not really fully understanding the trials and tribulations that my ancestors went through. Being that I experienced that [at RoP], it gave me a better context as to who I am and the strides that I should take to better my people and better myself as well. After the Rites of Passage, I

transitioned from "it's about me" to "it's about us." That's when I wanted to

become more involved in mentoring and help shape the minds of the youth as

well to help them understand the culture. From an African American perspective,

it's not just guns, music, sex, and drugs, that's something that sells, yes, but that's

not who we are as a core. I wanted to teach that and have them and exposed to all

of those successful individuals that you don't see on the TV screen every day.

That's when I started going back to my hometown, going back and working with

Big Brothers Big Sisters, doing those mentorships to help reframe their minds,

and say hey, listen, I came from here, I made it out because X, Y, and Z. I have to

get my credit where credit is due to these specific people and these are these

specific experiences that I had. Now I will try by my best to expose you to those

types of experiences as well. And that's where it came from it's about me to this

is about us. It didn't really hit me until I graduated college. I would say it always

stuck with me. It always stuck with me and I was able to go back and talk with

Kujichagalia and my mom about our experiences in Rites of Passage. It hit me

when I graduated college and I saw the shift in my nurturing mentality to raise up

our youth. Seeing how people were progressing from, you know, a younger age,

this is where I wanted to start mentoring.

Ujamaa goes on to detail his start as a mentor:

I'm starting to teach the youth what it is like to be in the minority in general. But

specifically for African Americans what it was to be Black, what it was like to

achieve more, what it was to come from my neighborhood, and to not, from my

perspective have much, but when compared to those people in West Africa, you had a lot. It is about how we, as African Americans, better ourselves, to then better our communities as well. So I got my college degree. I'm like, "Yeah, I want to make a whole bunch of money. I'm doing well for myself. I don't ever want to go back to my neighborhood." Then I started mentoring people outside my home state and I'm like, "That's not me." I want to go back. I want to help those people who you know, grew up in my neighborhood. I want to better those people. I want to potentially come out with some kind of trainings and help with financial literacy, you know better those people in those types of environment. So that is where it triggered because I'm doing so very well for myself, but the question is who am I helping? Who am I bringing along with me?

During the interview when asked elaborate on a comment regarding helping others learn about history and "overcoming oppression," Imani said:

I think oftentimes especially in my previous position where I worked in public school education. There are a lot of demands from the Board of Education on what they deem to be important for education. There are also spaces to help students embrace who they are and introduce them to new information that would empower them to continue to grow and evolve over time. So, I'm always looking for spaces, even when constraints exist, to reach students where they are and find something that interests them. Especially students who grow up in spaces where they oftentimes are the minority and oftentimes feel like they are invisible. There are ways as an educator that I can encourage them to be proud of who they are. I

can encourage them to learn more and put them in a position where they feel empowered to teach other people, especially in spaces where they might be the only ones.

Reflecting on ways to be a natural mentor in the education setting, Nia portrayed his service:

It brings me back to the classes we had in Rites of Passage about oppression in the Black community and how it's still an issue today, not being publicized… being hidden. It's a reminder of what I was taught in Rites of Passage, to speak up when what people are saying is incorrect. As a teacher, I'm teaching my students the right way of history, teaching what really happened. I know it might seem aggressive, but they need to know because it's the future that matters…This is the time to change and make this movement so that all lives matter.

Nia continued to reflect on his own effort at demonstrating mentorship within his school and community when he indicated:

It brings back the journey to Africa and seeing poverty. You can go right to your next-door neighbor and see it and understanding how grateful I am, but also asking what can I do to change this? How can I help the community? So they don't have to feel impoverished, especially the children. It's like with my students that are in under the poverty line, how can I help them really feel that they're being loved and welcomed? Like when they ask for something, I'm the guy for that. If they need someone to talk to, I will be here for them. I'm their support system… a role model. I do check-ins with my kids and people in the community

as well. I try to commit to a lot of charities and different organizations that support kids in poverty. Just being there to support them and figure out whatever I can do, I'll be there for them. So they need something like one of my kids didn't have enough pencils. So I got pencils. This is something I want them to have and something he needs. I want to make sure that they have what they need.

Summary

The data I collected and analyzed regarded the alumni's developmental outcomes impacted by the RoP program, particularly regarding racial identity, preparation for higher education, and career choice. Alumni, parents, and staff agreed the RoP program shaped alumni perceptions of African culture, history, African American pride, and racial identity. Many of the alumni specified that the program helped shape their self-identity by teaching the history of their ancestors. In preparation for higher education, all alumni stated that RoP sparked their motivation to learn but their families established the expectation for college attendance. Although parents and staff reported similar findings the data provided by alumni was far richer as they experienced the effects of RoP directly. As far as career choice, all alumni except one acknowledged the presence of a common thread of RoP which involved in their decision-making process in the years after the program. Kumbaa, had not yet started her career but did indicate her passion for international experiences including the possibility of a career abroad as a result of her trip to Africa with RoP.

In Chapter 5, I use the theoretical framework of Erikson's (1968) identity and psychosocial development and Cross' (1971) theory of racial identity and CRT, to

interpret the results of my study, as well as empirical works, describe limitations of the

study's findings, and make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of what stakeholders perceive have been the developmental outcomes for Afrocentric RoP alumni, including preparation for higher education, career choices, and racial identity development. The findings emerged from interviews with 11 RoP stakeholders, including five alumni, four parents, and two staff members, on their perceptions of the program's influence on its alumni.

In this study, I was in search of the impact of RoP on its alumni. I asked interview questions that stemmed from the following research question: What are the perceptions of teachers, parents, and alumni regarding the alumni's developmental outcomes such as racial identity, preparation for higher education, and career choice resulting from participation in the Afrocentric RoP program? The main findings from my study showed that upon completion of the RoP program, alumni gained a sense of pride in their African American heritage. In addition, alumni described an enhanced appreciation and motivation for higher education and a desire to pursue their career path of choice. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings, present the limitations of the study, discuss implications, offer recommendations for future research, and provide a conclusion.

Interpretations of the Findings

In this section, I interpret the findings of my study and describe how they connect with and contribute to the current body of literature relevant to race related issues in education and racial identity development. In the literature review section of this study, I analyzed empirical articles as they related to CRT in education, race, and academic

achievement, and racial identity development in adolescence. In this section I interpret

the findings of the three identified themes as they relate to Erikson's (1968) theory of

identity and psychosocial development, Cross' (1971) theory of racial identity

development, and pertinent empirical literature.

Theme 1: African American Pride

African American pride was the most dominant theme, with the three subthemes

of self-identity, self-confidence, and self-empowerment. The theme of pride, combined

with the subthemes of self-identity, self-confidence, and self-empowerment connect to

the conceptual framework of Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development and

Cross' (1971) theory of racial identity development. Alumni made a direct connection

between their experience in RoP and the development of their self-identity. They also

linked developing pride in their race and as individuals to their RoP experience, including

the trip to West Africa. Parents and staff reported noticing alumni developing pride in

themselves and their race during their RoP experience, but the data provided by alumni

was more vivid as it was their experience.

Adolescent identity formation is rooted within the social environment in which

the individual is a part (Erikson, 1968). Alumni of the RoP program explained how their

identity was formed based on their RoP experience, as it gave them what they

characterized as a true sense of self. A leading contributor to participants' sense of self

was knowledge of their historical, racial, and cultural heritage, a sense of community, and

support extended from their role models in the RoP program. The parents, staff, and

alumni reported a genuine sense of community within the RoP program.

In a study of racial stereotype threat, McClain (2016) found that African American students, "fear confirming negative group stereotype[s] that they are not as bright as their peers" (p. 41). Once completing the RoP program, alumni reported a sense of self-confidence and self-empowerment released them from fear of not being as bright as their peers. Alumni reported graduating the program knowing more about their racial identity and cultural heritage, developing a sense of self seeped in historical knowledge gained from RoP program. Parents and staff observed similar outcomes in alumni, but the data provided by alumni was more descriptive as they lived the experience. Imani went so far as to say her development of self-identity, self-confidence, and sense of self-empowerment led her to challenge teachers when they shared misinformation in the classroom. Research shows that CRT empowers students and teachers to challenge racial inequalities and the "oppression dynamics" in education (Powell et al., 2020).

Theme 2: Knowledge is Power

The second theme, knowledge is power, accompanied by the two subthemes, motivation and role models, were discussed across all interviews in my study. Each participant spoke to the importance of the program providing positive African American role models, which motivated alumni to strive for more. All the alumni spoke to the impact of a connection made with their RoP staff role models as they learned more about their shared heritage, culture, and race. All five alumni shared that the RoP program provided their first experience of learning about their authentic history. Three out of five stated it was their first experience having African American teachers. Research has shown culturally responsive classrooms draw from students' racial identities to reshape

teaching and learning with the aim of building academic skills, affirming cultural histories, and helping students of color recognize social inequality (Hill, 2020). Students participating in the RoP program said they had their racial identities reshaped and confirmed, along with their understanding of cultural history and have therefore learned to recognize social inequality as suggested by Hill (2020).

Theme 3: Career Choice

The third theme, career choice, with subthemes of economic freedom and mentorship, was prominent in four out of the five alumni interviews and in two of the four parent interviews. Staff stated they felt the program would have most likely had an impact on career choice but weren't sure as they lost touch with alumni over the years.

Research shows that culturally relevant teaching increases student engagement, builds trusting relationships between teachers and students, and strengthens students' connection to their racial identity (Cruz et al., 2020; Hypolite, 2020; Talpade & Talpade, 2020). Two of the five alumni decided to be educators in an effort to teach the authentic history of the African American people. Two others of the five alumni shared that they learned the importance of economic freedom and independence in RoP and that knowledge impacted their career path. One alumnus went so far as to say he refused to be enslaved to the capitalistic money-making industry and decided to strike out on his own by starting a community service based investment company so that he could reinvest in the African American community.

Theorists Erikson (1968) and Cross (1971) agree the most influential time in psychosocial and racial identity development takes place during the phase adolescence.

With this understanding, the founder of the RoP program made the decision to focus on the African American adolescents. The primary interest was to help educate African American adolescents on their true history and empower them with the knowledge and insight gained in RoP. Two parents shared that they believe their children became educators as a direct result of participating in RoP. Four out of five alumni stated that becoming a mentor to other African Americans was very important to them as they realized the impact of their RoP mentors on their lives. The research of Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) reinforces the significance of mentorship or "influences outside the family" as being "critically important during adolescence and emerging adulthood" (p. 11). Two of the five alumni stated they are mentoring young African Americans on the importance of economic freedom and independence while reinvesting in the African American community.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations associated with my basic qualitative study. One limitation of the study included not being able to meet with participants face to face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were contacted through social media; even though over 100 students, parents, and staff have experienced RoP, 11 volunteered to participate in the study. Those were self-selected participants who may have had a unique experience compared to those who didn't volunteer. Not all participants were able to be contacted, as they relocated over the years and were unreachable. Self-selection is another limitation of the study as it may reflect an inherent bias in participants' willingness to share their experience in the RoP program.

Recommendations

After considering the results of this qualitative study, there are questions raised, I suggest here, recommendations for future research to address the gap in literature concerning the influence of Afrocentric curriculum on African American students' academic and developmental outcomes (see Endale, 2018). One gap in research is the dosage, or amount of exposure to such a program is enough to have an effect on its participants. I recommend that researchers continue to explore the effects of Afrocentric programs of different lengths regarding the extent of the effect of the program on participants' racial identity development and academic achievement.

One of the goals of Afrocentric curricula is to challenge, and in many cases rework and replace, inaccurate information and false assumptions that have fostered many current belief systems and have contributing to a number of societal imbalances for African Americans, from education, to wealth, housing, health care, and the racially driven political issues dividing America. The direction of future research greatly depends on how eager researchers and educators are to rethink many of our current educational practices and research those changes. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020), about 76% of public school teachers were men and 79% were White. Yet sadly, young Black men are often reported as the group that these teachers say often they fear the most (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018). When White female teachers call the school's resource officer to address classroom behavior because they are afraid of Black students, "they are recreating the dynamics that were used as excuses for racial terror" (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018, p. 14). As counselors and authors, Atkins and Oglesby (2018)

expressed concern regarding the current state of mental health issues facing young

African American students in public schools, suggesting there is "a constant barrage of

harm creates both physical and mental health issues for Black students. They're trying to

survive in systems that weren't designed for them to succeed" (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018,

p. 14).

If the U.S. public school system is to contribute to ending systemic racism as well

as microaggressions against students, I recommend we teach a fuller story of American

history, representative of the contributions and sacrifices of African American people

who helped build our collective nation. African American history should not be separated

from U.S. history and relegated to February; it should be included and taught year-round.

My recommendation is that public schools offer Afrocentric curriculum, especially in

U.S. history courses, for a more balanced approach to education. Regardless of their

racial background, the youth of the United States deserve to be educated accurately and

authentically on American history so that they can develop a better understanding of

current societal and political realities.

Implications

The possible implication of my findings has the potential to impact society on the

individual, family, community, organizational, and societal level. As the United States

moves through the Black Lives Matter movement, we are empowering social activists

during time of great need. RoP alumni were taught as early as the ages of 12 to 14 about

systemic racism, and they are familiar with policies and politics of modern-day

oppression. In the RoP program, students learned the United States was founded upon

slavery and the origin of law enforcement in this country was to capture escaped slaves. RoP students were alerted to racism in education through omission of their people, culture, accomplishments, and contributions from history textbooks. At the time, they were made keenly aware of the school-to-prison pipeline. They are all too familiar with the overrepresentation of Black men in prison and the significance of the issues fueling the Black Lives Matter movement.

RoP students interviewed understand the historical implications of why people of color or are excluded and oppressed through the continuation of White supremacy. As individuals, RoP alumni act as change makers in society. They are informed and active in creating positive social change by correcting social injustice. They speak out against racism; they educate and empower others to do the same. Four out of five alumni interviewed are active mentors in their communities. Many of them directly attribute their motivation to fight against systemic racism to their experiences and what they learned in RoP. The implications of my findings are important for policy makers in education to consider the inclusion of Afrocentric curriculum in public schools, especially in teaching U.S. history.

Conclusion

Adolescence, as described by Erikson (1968), is a stage of development when young people are in search of their sense of self and personal identity. During adolescence, young people are more focused on self than any other time in their development (Erikson, 1968). That sounds like a perfect time to learn about your history, your place in society, and the contributions of your people. Adolescents are wired to be

self-focused; this is a key period of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968) and racial

identity development (Cross, 1971). What better a time to be engaged in learning and

experiencing their cultural and racial history?

As a contemporary researcher explained, the lack of research on CRT programs in

education is, "unnerving, especially given district investments of both money and teacher

time in CR programs" (Hill, 2020, p. 3). The attempt by former U.S. President Donald

Trump and his administration to end diversity education and CRT training because such

information was considered "divisive, anti-American propaganda" (Block, 2020, p1)

should be a wake-up call for the United States. In a Tweet, Trump called CRT "a sickness

that cannot be allowed to continue" (Schwartz, 2020, p. 2). Keeping alive education can

lead to equity is important in the current political and social climate (Schwartz, 2020).

The United States is in the depths of fighting for racial and social justice within the Black

Lives Matter movement, stalling due to White supremacy at the presidential/national

level is a major societal injustice (Schwartz, 2020). A universal education based in

systemic analysis regarding racism is seemingly a necessary approach to corrective

action. By authentically educating our youth on the historical facts of racism in our

nation, we stack the proverbial deck in favor of positive social change and racial equality.

The results of this research point to concerns that our schools may continue to

weaken based on the vicious cycle of perpetuating inequalities that are mirrored in

society (Jamison, 2020). The upper class maintains the wealth and political connection,

while the underserved and disadvantaged struggle for equality in education and society.

Until African American populations have a representative voice in the political and

educational arena, their rights and opportunities will continue to be underrepresented (Jamison, 2020). "Only when all stakeholders are participants in the democratic process will democracy be justly served" (Friedman et al., 2009, p. 255). If real education reform is to occur in America, teachers, students, and parents need to have a place at the decision-making table.

The politics of educational reform often lead to change in policy but rarely follow through with appropriate implementation, largely due to inadequate training for teachers and administration (Choi & Lee, 2020; Powell et al., 2020). Strategic planning for educational reform is crucial to the success of effective change, as decades of mediocrity have demonstrated the need for "strategic guidance in approaching educational change" (Cuban & Tyack, 2009, p. 10). Without this strategic guidance, change is temporary, inconsistent, and incomplete. Without strategic planning, school districts might not be aware they are not adequately prepared for change (Cuban & Tyack, 2009).

Abating the implications of the academic achievement gap between White and African American students, social awareness and responsibility must become a unified priority, for teachers, administrators, policymakers, and society as a whole. Such educational change would require systemic reform leading to equity in education for all students being the goal (Choi & Lee, 2020; Jamison, 2020; Powell et al., 2020). When we address the race-based shortcomings in education, "the improvements in equity and excellence in education will improve the health of our democracy" (Fusarelli & Young, 2011, p. 93). When all citizens are empowered with a quality education, the likelihood of improved income and participation in the democratic process are increased.

When we empower our youth through education and equality, we grow stronger as a nation and are better prepared to face the demands of a global economy. Taking a closer look at the impact of quality education for all students is a necessary step toward equality. This educational reform should integrate a policy analysis, curriculum adoption, professional development, and textbook creation. Education is a fundamental right that shapes our social constructs and should be protected and presented with integrity and accuracy (United Nations, 1948). In other words, "it is in the best interest of our nation to ensure that our reputation and competitive place in the global marketplace is not lessened by a substantial population of students who have been failed by our education system" (Zion & Blanchette, 2011, p. 2198). After all, our country was founded, in theory, on the principles of equality.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

(Parent and staff questions minor adaptation)

1) Let's begin with telling me what year you completed the Rites of Passage program?

2) Tell me about what led you to participate in the Rites of Passage program?

3) Are there times in your life that you find yourself thinking about your experience as a RoP student? If so when? Can you tell me a little bit about it?
> Probe: (a) What experiences come to mind when you find yourself thinking about it?
>> (b) What experience triggers the memory?

4) Could you describe for me a meaningful experience you had while traveling to West Africa with the RoP program?
> Probe: (a) Describe for me your memories of being at the Door of No Return at Goree Island?
> (b) Could you describe for me what it felt like to be in the majority while in West Africa?
> (c) Describe for me your connection to your racial group identity?
> (d)Has the RoP experience effected your connection to your racial group identity? If so/not, please explain.
> (e) Has participating in RoP changed your perception of Black culture? If so/not, please explain.

5) Are there any aspects of the RoP trip to West Africa that contributed to the development of your identity as an African American?
> Probe: a) Can you tell me about that? If so why do you feel that way?
> b) Can you describe some of those memories for me?
> c) How has your perception of your African American identity changed as you've matured?

6) Are there any aspects of what you learned in the RoP classroom experience that contributed to the development of your identity as a Black person?
> Probe: a) If so why do you feel that way?
> b) Can you describe some of those memories for me?
> c) What experience triggers the memory?

7) In retrospect, can you describe for me your sense of self after completing the Rites of Passage program as you've matured?
> Probe: a) Who you are in the world?
> b) What is important to you?
> c) How do you perceive yourself?

8) Are there any other ways participating in the Rites of Passage program impacted your life? If so, can you tell me about how?

          Probe: a) Tell me about your motivation to purse higher education?

                  b) Tell me about your motivation to pursue your career path?

9) Is there anything else you would like to share?