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The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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MS, Troy University, 2008

BA, Western Illinois University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Local history knowledge informs citizens of the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of their communities. Community colleges are uniquely situated to address citizens' educational needs because of their historic mission to serve local people. The problem at a rural college located in a southeastern region of the United States was the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum. Dewey, Schon, Brookfield, and Mezirow's perspectives on reflection guided this case study. Two research questions focused on how faculty and staff at the college perceived the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum and how local history could be included in the curriculum. Using a qualitative case study approach, 12 faculty, administrators, and staff were selected through purposeful and maximum variation sampling. Qualitative data collected from open-ended questions and history and humanities course syllabi were inductively analyzed and coded towards an emergent approach. The most important findings related to (a) the high value of local history knowledge to educators, students, and communities; (b) the abundance of internal and external resources to address local history in the curriculum; and (c) the desire of faculty to participate in future reflective activities designed to improve teaching and learning. Based on these findings, a position paper was developed for administrators, faculty, and staff, which included 3 recommendations: curriculum review, community partnerships, and professional development and faculty reflective practices. This study identified strategies and resources that may more effectively support students' learning outcomes and developmental needs, in relation to local history knowledge, which positions the institution to employ the curriculum as a vehicle to encourage citizens to actively participate in a democratic society.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the two people whom I love most in this entire world—my daughter Olivia Nicole Walker and my mother Mary Susie Artis. Olivia, you have walked this journey with me from the very first day. I owe you a sincere debt of gratitude for inspiring me to do my very best. I am proud to be your mother. Mom, I appreciate the values that you instilled in me, including hard work, a willingness to share knowledge, and the importance of doing the right thing even when no one is looking. I want to also thank you for teaching me that it doesn't matter where you start, it matters where you finish. To me, this has meant always seeking self-improvement with the understanding that it is the quality of one's life and contributions made for the greater good that matter, not the things one acquires. I will never forget all of the sacrifices you made to raise me, Sheri, and Steven with the support of a hope and a prayer. Mom, these are just a few of the reasons why my doctoral diploma will never be displayed in my office at my workplace or the walls of my home. Instead, it will be wrapped beautifully and handed directly to you. Thank you, Mother.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All things are possible in His name. Second, I would like to pay homage to both my African American and Native American (Cheroenhaka-Nottoway Indian Tribe) ancestors. Throughout this rigorous journey I felt the presence of a higher power compelling me to stay strong each time I laid my hands on the Bible asking for guidance, and the spirits of my forefathers whisper words of encouragement as I walked the grounds they farmed and established as a tribal cultural and education center. When I reached certain points in this educational and life altering journey where I felt almost broken, the combined forces of God's presence and my heritage soothed my fears, strengthened my resolve, and redirected my efforts to successfully close this chapter of my life. I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr. Alan Harris, for his unwavering support and my colleague Dr. Hyler Scott, for her mentorship. Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Englesberg, University Research Reviewer (URR), for his thorough reviews and constructive feedback; Dr. Caroline Crawford, chairperson, for spending countless hours on the phone with me keeping this study on track; and Dr. Jennifer Grill, committee member, for her sound methodological guidance, leadership, and refusing to allow me to quit.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

History can be researched from a myriad of vantage points, including local, regional, state, national, or world views. Knowledge of history can serve as a catalyst for participation in a democratic society (Stearns, 2008). As Kolb (2011) noted when discussing the United States as a democratic nation, "The heart of a vibrant democracy is educated, engaged citizens who are able to make decisions for themselves, their families, their communities, and their country" (p. 16), which places higher education attainment as a key player in sustaining democracy. In particular, local history knowledge is very important to individuals, communities, and the nation. Dymond (1999) and Hunner and Westergren (2011) referred to the study of local history as a "bottom up" approach, where the focus is on the community setting as the centrality of the human experience. For example, local history knowledge gives citizens a sense of pride, belonging, and self-identity (Dymond, 1999). In fact, local history knowledge is very personal and informs citizenry of the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of their communities, which positions them to be active participants (Carr, 2008). Armed with knowledge of their communities, citizens are better prepared to make connections to the world that exists outside their communities and to apply learning in a global context (Kolb, 2011). Topa (2010) defined "globalization" as "the international system that is shaping most societies today. It is a process that is 'super charging' the interaction and integration of cultures, politics, business and intellectual elements around the world" (p. 215). In terms of knowledge as capital, the position taken by both Carr (2008) and Lauck (2013) advanced Kolb's (2011) arguments by contending that local history should be considered

when the imperative is to understand the implications of a national or global event or issue. A synthesis of the aforementioned findings, established reasons to explore what U.S. citizens and residents do or do not know about history.

In this regard, problems have been identified as they pertain to U.S. citizens receiving failing grades when tested on knowledge of basic civics (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2008) and the ability to identify key political figures (GfK Roper, 2012). These trends are occurring at a time when a call to action has been issued for community colleges to focus more on developing and assessing the skills students need to succeed in an increasingly globalized society such as navigating diverse workplaces, transitioning to 4-year institutions, and managing everyday life (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Salas-Isnardi, 2011). Skills critical for success in the 21st century include critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal, technology, change management, research, and self-regulation (Koenig, 2011), which can be acquired from studying history (Galgano, 2007; Stearns, 2008). Thus, this study challenges stakeholders to consider the local history curriculum as a key factor in supporting students' learning outcomes and developmental needs within the community skills milieu.

For the purpose of this study, the community skills milieu encompassed civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues, as defined by the American Association of Community Colleges (2012) and the American Association of Colleges & Universities (2012). Historically, the role of community colleges has been to serve the needs of communities (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Boggs, 2012). This study may provide the impetus for

community colleges to serve as viable vehicles by supporting the acquisition and transmission of local history knowledge through curricular and instructional decisions.

In Section 1, I define the problem which was situated at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC, a pseudonym); establish the rationale for studying the problem; provide evidence of the problem at the local level, in the wider education context, and the professional literature; define key terms; explain the study's significance; frame research questions; and discuss implications for potential project studies. Additionally, I conclude Section 1 with the rationale for selecting reflection and reflective practices as the conceptual framework, in addition to providing a comprehensive review of the literature that addresses the problem.

Definition of the Problem

The setting for this study was RSCC, which is located in a rural, southeastern region of the United States. RSCC is one of 23, 2-year, public schools operating within a state community college system. RSCC opened its flagship campus in 1971 as the result of a land donation from local citizens. Today, RSCC operates two campuses, one satellite location, and a regional workforce development center. The institution reported that over 2,600 full- and part-time students attend RSCC each year—Full-Time: 32%; Part-Time: 68%; Males: 37%; Females: 63%; and Students older than 24: 46%. RSCC employed 21 teaching faculty (full-time) and 140 adjunct teaching faculty (part-time) during the 2012–2013 academic-year, which indicated a heavy reliance on contract faculty. The curricula, which is where this study was centered, included certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs (transfer and applied). Courses were offered in a variety of formats, including traditional, online, hybrid, and shared distance learning in partnership with

other public community colleges within the state system. A closer inspection of the curricula revealed the absence of a local history course. Therefore, the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum was the problem that prompted this study.

In order to address this problem, I turned to Dymond's (1999) succinct definition of local history for context, as follows: "Local history is about ordinary, everyday life, and therefore has an educational and social importance" (pp. 15–16). This definition captured local history as a knowledge system which focuses on human experiences at the community level; hence, this study situated community colleges as an important aspect of the fabric of U.S. life and key to addressing the problem.

The community college curriculum has traditionally been liberal arts focused and anchored in general studies programs for the purpose of preparing citizens to participate in a democratic society (Dassance, 2011). Seybert (2002) provided the following in-depth analysis of what students should expect of the traditional curriculum:

> These general education requirements may include areas such as mathematics, oral and written communication, critical thinking and problem solving, technology, or diversity and multiculturalism. Often requirements are met by taking courses in traditional academic subject areas such as humanities, science, and social science in addition to English and mathematics. (pp. 55–65)

Essentially, the aforementioned programs have amounted to the requirements for earning a 2-year associate degree, designed to meet transfer requirements for public 4-year institutions (Cohen & Ignash, 1992). However, in the 21st century, stakeholders including the federal government, private foundations, nonprofit groups, and business industries have assigned another role to the agenda of community colleges due to concerns with the

nation's economic future—to prepare citizens to compete on a global scale (Kolb, 2011). This trend has resulted in community colleges' being criticized for abandoning the liberal arts curriculum in favor of workforce development initiatives (Ayers, 2011; Pusser & Levin, 2009). This problem persists despite the fact that researchers have determined that local history knowledge is value-laden (Amato, 2002; Brown & Woodcock, 2009).

In fact, the experiences, skills, and lessons learned that sustain rural communities such as the study site are handed down from one generation to another and have contributed to global knowledge repositories (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005). Thus, stakeholders, including the 896 similarly situated rural institutions throughout the United States (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007), should be concerned with the role of local history in the curriculum. Considering that Miller and Tuttle (2007) discovered, "The potentially strongest agency to influence the livelihood of rural communities is the rural community college" (para. 1), a sense of urgency exists to advance scholarship in the area of local history knowledge. A synthesis of these findings suggested an avenue for research. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC.

Rationale

A review of the history curriculum at RSCC prompted the following question: Why is it important to address the problem in terms of the role of local history in the community college curriculum? The rationale for this study was grounded in the following statement provided by Hicken (1964): "In fact, local history is so significant and vastly important that almost every literate American must give something of himself to its study" (pp. 162–163). Thus, stakeholders concerned with student development in

terms of the community skills milieu need to consider the benefits associated with studying local history. For these reasons, the rationale for this study was advanced with the understanding that citizens will require knowledge of their communities, including social, cultural, political, and economic conditions, in order have a voice in democracy, as demonstrated by Cantor (2007). In particular, community colleges were established to serve the needs of communities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Given this historic mission, the role of community colleges in promoting the acquisition and transmission of local history knowledge through curricular and instructional decisions was a central theme in this study.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

At the local level, the evidence provided support that there was a lack of focus on local history in the curriculum at RSCC. A review and analysis of public information regarding course offerings for the past seven academic years (2006–2013) revealed no listings or references to local history courses. Moreover, the institution offered the following programs that were not designed for transfer and did not require history courses: Associate in Applied Science, Certificate, and Career Studies Certificate. History course offerings were listed as follows: History of Western Civilization; United States History; Women in World History; Women in American History; Afro-American History; and History of Virginia. The college also offered six Associate of Arts degrees designed for transfer to 4-year institutions. The aforementioned programs required students to complete only six credit hours in the history discipline; three credits each in U.S. History 121 and U.S. History 122. Significantly, none of the current or past course descriptions make direct reference to the inclusion of local history.

Moreover, a key informant who worked at RSCC for over two decades defined the problem as a "dire need" to include local history in the history curriculum at RSCC (E. Artis, pseudonym, personal communication, February 28, 2013). These comments were clarified in writing at a later date with following the statement: "A knowledge of local history gives pride to its residents. It also inspires people to work to improve the community and tell others about its rich history" (E. Artis, pseudonym, personal communication, March 25, 2013). Therefore, the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum at RSCC was the problem that prompted this study.

Evidence of the problem in the wider education context. The lack of local history in the curriculum was also evident in the wider education context. First of all, only three of the 23 institutions in state community college system offered a local history course in the 2012–2013 academic year; this course was entitled *Local History 205*. Based on this evidence, it became apparent that the overarching focus throughout the state community college system has been to educate students on history from a regional, state, national, or world perspective. This situation represented a paradox when it came to RSCC's stated focus on providing diversified learning opportunities to communities and the state community college systems' publicly communicated mission to build strong communities. Moreover, this problem persisted despite efforts to preserve local history, including landmarks, museums, and an active historical society.

Evidence of the problem in the community setting. In the community setting, a search of the local library's online catalog revealed 221 resources related to the community's history. These topics ranged from economics, geography, politics, race, religion, social, culture, and events to education. It was evident that the community's

collection of local history resources focused more on tangible artifacts rather than human interpretations of experiences.

Evidence of the Problem in the Professional Literature

According to the professional literature, several dissertations have focused on specific events or characteristics of the community's history that have been of national significance. For example, a major slave rebellion, race, slavery, and religion were the foci of prior studies conducted on the RSCC community. Another researcher explored the desegregation of public schools in the midst of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Additionally, in terms of K–12 schooling, one study addressed a problem in the local education setting that related to teacher mentoring. This analysis also revealed a salient point—the apparent lack of focus on studying higher education related problems within the RSCC service region. At the time my research proposal was approved in August 2014, three doctoral studies had been completed by faculty at RSCC within the last 2 years that addressed topics specific to higher education in the region; hence, conducting research specifically designed to capture a holistic representation or even account of the community's education systems appears to be trending at RSCC.

The professional literature also revealed several disturbing trends in the status of history and humanities in the community college curriculum, which were supported by empirical research. The humanities are mentioned in the context of this review because the topic of history is oftentimes embedded in other humanities disciplines, as demonstrated by Ashford (2013). Friedlander's (1977) study of 182 community colleges, which focused on the discipline of history, revealed that 70% limited their offerings to U.S. and Western civilization themes. Additionally, Friedlander's (1983) study of 172

community and junior colleges was also revealing: 13% reported reducing humanities course offerings and 3% reported decreasing the number of humanities courses students needed to graduate. Moreover, a study conducted by Schyuler (1999) revealed that since the mid-1970s, the number of history courses offered at community colleges has declined. Tai's (2004) findings confirmed that these trends have continued. It is important to mention that across the disciplines, course offerings have dwindled at community colleges (Neimark, 1998; Okpala, Hopson, & Okpala, 2011; Tai, 2004). Jones (2008) attributed this trend to the "corporatization" of higher education where a business model approach is being applied that focuses on fiscal outcomes which gives administrators increasing control of the curricula. Given the aforementioned trends, Ayers's (2011) suggestion that community colleges are in need of serious redirection warrants closer inspection. One approach, as evidenced in this study, results in identifying promising practices that may serve as catalysts to address the role of local history in the community college curriculum.

Definitions

Community skills milieu: This skill set encompasses civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012; American Association of Community Colleges, 2012), which aligned with this study's efforts to address stakeholders' concerns with student development in this area.

Culture: The definition of *culture* was constructed based on a synthesis of Kammen's (2003) work on local history and Fiske's (2002) framing of culture. In this study, culture was framed as a manifestation of individuals' experiences and life lessons

that impart knowledge, skills, abilities, values, beliefs, and opinions that are passed down each generation.

Local history: Local history focuses on the stories of everyday people, and as a result it has implications for education and human interactions (Dymond, 1999). Thus, this study captured local history as a knowledge system which focused on human experiences at the community level.

Significance

Local history knowledge is important and should be included in the curriculum at community colleges throughout the United States. The significance of this study was captured by a self-described *gatekeeper* who spoke of the rich history of the community, region, and state, including early settlements, the presence of native tribes, civil wars, and an infamous slave rebellion (E. Artis, pseudonym, personal communication, March 25, 2013). Furthermore, this informant argued that "knowledge of local history gives pride to its residents" (E. Artis, pseudonym, personal communication, March 25, 2013). Considering this assessment, this study is significant because it fills gaps in the literature with regard to faculty and staff perceptions of the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum and strategies to include local history in the curriculum. Therefore, students, faculty, RSCC, communities, and the nation may benefit as demonstrated in this section.

First, a synthesis of the case made for the study of history revealed that increased globalization and diversity make knowledge of history a valuable commodity because it provides perspectives on global issues, promotes civic literacy, and supports the acquisition of skills related to research, analytical, assessment, communication (oral and

verbal), and problem solving (Galgano, 2007; Stearns, 2008). Therefore, this study is significant because it may serve as the catalyst for inclusion of curricula that are more geared toward supporting the development of students' community skills and participation in a democratic society.

Second, this study gives credence to the assertion that the sustainability of rural communities is based on local knowledge (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005), by focusing on a community college that is located in a rural southeastern region of the United States. In fact, this study was designed to capture the meaning participants place on local history within their rural community. To put the idea of culture into perspective, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) revealed over 164 definitions of culture. For the purpose of this study, culture was defined as a manifestation of individuals' experiences and life lesson, and culture imparts knowledge, skills, abilities, values, beliefs, and opinions that are passed on from one generation to the next.

Third, community colleges were designed to serve the needs of communities (Boggs, 2012). This study provides the administrative leadership team at RSCC with information to assess the benefits associated with redesigning the curriculum to include local history or more local history, as recommended by participants. Therefore, this study is significant because it addressed a gap in practice and better positions RSCC to advance the historic mission of community colleges.

Guiding/Research Questions

Given the attention to developing college students' community skills, shifts in the community college curriculum away from its historical, democratic roots to workforce training and diminishing opportunities for students to study local history, this study was

very timely. In particular, with respect to the historic mission of community colleges to serve communities and their place in the fabric of rural United States, the research questions kept the discussion centered on the implications that culture may have on human development. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do faculty and staff at RSCC perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum?
2. What possibilities and strategies could be developed to include local history in the curriculum at RSCC?

The research questions were designed with the understanding that local knowledge sustains rural communities such as the study site (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005), and students require knowledge of local history in order to actively participate in a democratic society (Kolb, 2011). Moreover, the United States has been clear regarding its agenda to compete on a global scale. This agenda is implicit in a report which is commonly referred to as the *Spellings Report* (named for former Secretary of State Margaret Spellings), which in part reads: "We want a world-class higher education system that creates new knowledge, contributes to economic prosperity and global competitiveness, and empowers citizens" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. xi). This means that it is incumbent upon community colleges to recognize the role of history education in meeting a broad agenda. For community college stakeholders at RSCC, this means leveraging their geographical positioning to advance scholarly inquiry that addresses the role of local history in the curriculum. The conceptual framework and themes related to examining the problem at RSCC are detailed in the literature review section.

Literature Review Addressing the Problem

The perception of the lack of local history in the curriculum at RSCC was the problem that prompted this study. Local knowledge is of particular importance to rural communities such as RSCC because sustainability depends on sharing information from generation to generation (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005). Stakeholders are demanding that community colleges focus more on developing students' community skills, which encompass civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012; American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). The aforementioned skills can be learned from studying local history (Wellman, 1982), which can support success in the 21st century (Galgano, 2007; Stearns, 2008). Literature focusing on addressing the problem identified in this study is virtually nonexistent. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the role of local history in the curriculum of RSCC.

The literature review directly addressed the problem statement by identifying seminal works, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other related media. The Walden University Library research databases, including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Education Research Complete, Expanded Academic ASAP, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, SAGE Journals Online, SAGE Premier, ScienceDirect, and SocIndex, were accessed utilizing a multiple databases search option, in order to gain diverse perspectives offered by a variety of disciplines and genres. Boolean descriptors were utilized which included: *adult learning; communities; community college; critical reflection theory; curricula; curriculum; faculty lived experiences; generational learning theory; generations; higher education; history;*

learning communities; learning theories; life history; local history; oral history; reflection theory; and *rural community.*

Using the aforementioned Boolean descriptors, I also searched the online WorldCat database for the purpose of identifying local colleges, universities, and public libraries where seminal works and journal articles could be physically located or otherwise accessed by the public. Additionally, the ERIC database was a valuable resource. Both of the aforementioned resources proved worthy with regard to highlighting the work of Brookfield (1995) which stimulated inquiry on the topic of critically reflective educators.

Conceptual Framework: The Role of Reflection

Addressing the problem outlined in this study required an understanding of how reflection has been conceptualized in education. This allowed me to better understand how participants reflect on professional practice. Twenge and Campbell (2008) found that human development is a manifestation of environmental factors such as relationships, media's influences, and important life events. Education systems have primarily focused on student learning, but learning also involves educators. Learning occurs as the result of an experience and processing that experience (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). Schon (1987) referred to this process as deep learning because it involves educators determining what and why they are doing something. According to Brookfield (1995),

> Reflective practice has its roots in the Enlightenment idea that we can stand outside of ourselves and come to a clearer understanding of what we do and who we are by freeing ourselves of distorted ways of reasoning and acting ….

> American pragmatism is present in reflective practice tradition's emphasis on making practice attentive to context, and in its disdain for standardized models of good teaching. (pp. 214–215)

Predating Brookfield's synthesis, Greek philosopher Socrates used an approach to reasoning (the Socratic Method) to focus on inductive dialog and debate for the purpose of helping others to acquire knowledge (Cordasco, 1976). In the context of this study, a form of Socratic questioning can be manifested in reflection, where educators challenge their own commonly held beliefs. The reflective nature of this study resulted in educators formulating new ways of thinking and doing for their own professional development and to the benefit of their students. Dewey (1933), Schon (1983, 1987), Brookfield (1995), and Mezirow et al. (1990, 2000) have been key contributors to research on reflection, which was one of the anchors of this study.

Dewey's thoughts on reflection. In fact, Dewey (1933) is credited with being one of the first to promote the benefits of reflection in education settings (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Dewey (1933) asserted that reflection should be a goal of education and urged people to "acquire the general habit of reflecting" (p. 19). Dewey opined that reflection is the foundation needed to transition thoughts into actions. In terms of supporting critical and scientific thinking, Dewey (1933) defined reflection as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to with it tends" (p. 9). To this end, when discussing the importance of reflection to educators, Dewey (1964) stated, "it enables us to know what we are about when we act" (p. 211). In the context of this study, Dewey's work was very important because it served as a tool for educators to reflect on

the role of local history in the curriculum and how local history can be included in the curriculum.

Schon's in-action framework. Schon (1983, 1987) built on Dewey's (1933, 1964) work, where he developed an in-action framework even though he used different descriptors. According to Schon (1983), reflection-in-action "suggests not only that we can think about doing, but we think about doing something while doing it" (p. 54). To set his work apart from others, Schon (1983) explained, "What distinguished reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action" (p. 29). Schon also introduced the term *knowing-in-action*; in other words, this term amounts to tacit knowledge that is skills-based and cannot be easily transmitted or put into writing. Schon identified knowing-in-action as critical to reflection-in-action, where the focus is not on the action itself, but what the action tells us about what we actually know. Schon posited that knowing-in-action encourages educators to reflect upon and make adjustments in practice in real-time. Schon expanded the conversation to introduce the term reflection-on-action to differentiate from reflection-in-action.

Specifically, Schon (1983) asserted, "We reflect on action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (p. 26). Schon (1987) introduced reflection-on-action as a process of identifying and recreating a critical incident that may have had good or bad outcomes, for the purpose of learning from that experience. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are essential to transforming practitioners to be reflective practitioners (Schon, 1987), which suggests that the more a practitioner reflects, the higher level of professional development. Researchers (e.g., Munby, 1989; Musolino & Mostrom, 2005;

Rogers, 2001) have mentioned Schon's work as the most frequently referenced frameworks on reflection or reflective practice. Jaeger (2013) narrowed the importance of Schon's work to teacher professional practice, which helped to situate this study's focus on gathering feedback on how local history could be included in the curriculum.

Brookfield's lenses of critical reflection. Brookfield (1995) used similar language as Schon (1983, 1987) when he situated the discussion on reflection to include the term *critical reflection*. Brookfield surmised that power structures are very influential in the lives of educators: He asserted that educators are predisposed to defer to external influences rather than apply their own critical thinking skills. In the context of this study, these were valid points of reference because community colleges are impacted by a variety of social, political, and cultural factors (Jurgens, 2010). Brookfield seemed to suggest positive outcomes for both faculty and students if educators become more critically reflective practitioners, which is consistent with faculty feedback in this study. A synthesis of this information reflected that Brookfield borrowed from Freire (2006) who used some very strong language in cautioning educators against becoming so entrenched in tradition. Freire cautioned educators to guard against the oppression and disenfranchisement which are inherent with educational structures.

To assist teachers in counteracting the risk of irrelevancy, Brookfield (1998) clarified the following four lenses that support critical reflection: (a) autobiography as a learner of practice, (b) the learner's eyes, (c) colleagues' experiences, and (d) theoretical literature. Brookfield imagined that teachers should conduct a self-analysis of their own educational experiences, welcome feedback from students, share lessons learned with peers, and pursue scholarship for the purpose of marrying theory to practice. In particular,

Brookfield asserted that using the autobiographical lens has serious implications for teachers and students. He explained that teachers' learning experiences can be so emotional that they have long-range effects (good and bad), and oftentimes these memories drive their responses. Thus, Brookfield situated teachers to imagine sitting in the same seat as their students and to use their memories to positively influence learners' experiences. This process is an important undertaking because when examining curricula educators need to be cognizant of the potential impact on students. The utility of Brookfield's lenses of critical reflection, in the context of this study, rested in providing the faculty an opportunity to consider multiple perspectives and to redirect their efforts to more positive outcomes for themselves and students.

Mezirow et al. on reflection and transformative learning. Mezirow et al. (1990, 2000) advanced the scholarship of Dewey (1933), Schon (1983, 1987), and Brookfield (1995) to move the discussion from reflection to focus more on outcomes by introducing the language of transformative learning. Mezirow et al. (1990, 2000) identified critical self-reflection as an important aspect of reflection that aids in *transformative learning*. To clarify this distinction, Mezirow et al. (1990) posited,

> While all reflection implies an element of critique, the term critical reflection will here be reserved to refer to challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning … Critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place. We very commonly check out prior learning to confirm that we have correctly proceeded to solve problems, but becoming critically aware of our own presuppositions involves challenging our established and habitual perspectives with which we

> have made sense out of our encounters with the world, others, and ourselves. (p. 12)

In this statement, Mezirow et al. borrowed from Dewey's (1933) concept of reflection but directed the attention to the individual as the catalyst for transformation. Moreover, Mezirow et al.'s comments underscored a focus on critical self-reflection as a viable means for adults to identify how they may be predisposed to certain beliefs and behaviors, which aids in maximizing learning experiences. As demonstrated by participants' responses, this study presented a viable opportunity for faculty to translate their reflections on professional practices to contributions to the academy—as a vehicle to transform themselves into better practitioners and improve student learning outcomes.

Criticisms of reflection and reflective practices. Despite the benefits to teachers that are associated with reflective practices, one criticism remains—the lack of consistent terminology used by contributors (Rogers, 2001). Prior to Rogers's (2001) assessment, Smyth (1992) warned, "reflection runs the risk of being totally evacuated of all meaning" (p. 285) due to its being applied to hosts of activities apparently designed to improve teaching. These caution flags are very similar to Brookfield's (1995) warning,

> One problem with the reflective practice idea is that is has become a catch-all term …. The terms reflection and reflective practice are so overused that they are in danger becoming buzzwords denuded of any real meaning—of taking on the status of [a] premature ultimate, like motherhood or democracy. (p. 216)

Nonetheless, the utility of reflection practices, in the context of this study, related to the intersection of theory and practice. Zeichner and Liston (1996) captured the relevancy of the theory–practice nexus: They posited that reflective teachers

- Examine, frame, and attempt to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice.
- Are aware of and question assumptions and values they bring to teaching.
- Are attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which they teach.
- Take part in curriculum development and are involved in school change efforts.
- Take responsibility for their own professional development. (p. 4)

To back up Zeichner and Liston's claims, Giamio-Ballard and Hyatt's (2012) empirical study revealed that faculty professional practices and student learning improved as a result of faculty participating in reflective activities. This information was very encouraging as this study sought to address the role of local history in the curriculum.

The need for reflective practitioners. Researchers have highlighted the need for all educators to engage in reflective practices in order to improve teaching and learning (Brookfield, 1995, 1998; Holloway & Gouthro, 2011; Hubball, Collins, & Pratt, 2005; Larrivee & Cooper, 2005; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Schon, 1983, 1987; Ward & McCotter, 2004). In particular, there has been a long-standing expectation that reflection will support faculty in developing professionally, assist in identifying best practices, support curricular development that responds to a need, and advance scholarly inquiry (Cook-Sather, 2011; Giaimo-Ballard & Hyatt, 2012; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Marshall, Smart, & Horton, 2011; Schon, 1987). Moreover, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which certifies organizations, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which accredits institutions, have encouraged all member organizations to embrace reflective practices (Giaimo-Ballard & Hyatt, 2012). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Schools

(SACS) is the CHEA member that oversees the study site. SACS is one of the six regional accreditation bodies that exist in the United States to provide oversight of the educational quality of public, private-for-profit, and private not-for-profit postsecondary institutions (CHEA, 2013), which makes it a critical consideration in RSCC's curricula decisions.

Promising practices in advancing the interest in communities. The professional literature revealed some promising practices in linking curriculum outcomes to placing students in community settings. For example, Astin and Sax's (1998) longitudinal, empirical study of 3,450 college students enrolled in disciplines across the curriculum may provide the impetus for educators to consider students' developmental needs when making curriculum decisions. Significantly, this study revealed positive correlations between the curriculum, students' knowledge of community and national issues, and the motivation to participate in a democratic society. A similar empirical study conducted by Netecki (2011), which focused on two academic programs (Paralegal and Early Childhood Education), linked students' learning outcomes to community learning experiences; as a result, higher retention and graduation rates were achieved. Even though these studies revealed gaps in the literature where the focus may not have exclusively been on local history curricula as a means to support developing students' community skills, enough evidence exists to infer that similar programs may be piloted for that purpose.

The most promising endeavor that may advance the inclusion of local history in the community college history curriculum is the $360,000 investment made by the National Endowment for the Humanities (Ashford, 2013). This program, Building

Cultures at Community Colleges, is designed to encourage community colleges to use the humanities curriculum as a platform to develop students' cultural and civic knowledge and to share learning outcomes publicly (Ashford, 2013). Moreover, a close inspection of the research conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2011) suggests that more studies need to focus on connecting curricular content to student success in the wider world, due to the benefits garnered by both students and faculty. Thus, gaps in the professional literature provide community colleges an excellent opportunity to support the acquisition and transmission of local history knowledge through the use of the curriculum.

The Value of Local History Knowledge

Local history is a vast knowledge system that is oftentimes captured under the auspices of "community history, historic preservation, museum studies, genealogy, urban history, ethnic studies, and interest in local records of all kinds" (Wellman, 1982, para. 1). Americans are intrigued with history including local, regional, state, and national perspectives. Notably, recent surveys of adults in U.S. households revealed that 63.2% of Americans patronized a museum at least once in 2006 (Griffiths & King, 2008). Moreover, 54% of U.S. travelers reported visiting exhibits, historic sites, and museums from 2004–2005, while on overnight vacations at various locations around the world (Tourism British Columbia, 2007). Significantly, museums account for more than $20 billion dollars of the U.S. economic engine (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.). These findings suggest that Americans have more than a casual interest in history. In fact, the data revealed that public interest in history is a national passion.

Moreover, Americans need to be more knowledgeable of diverse cultures due to

globalization (Jerald, 2009). Specifically, a synthesis of Galgano (2007) and Stearns's (2008) argument revealed that due to increasing globalization and diversity, knowledge of history is a valuable commodity because it provides perspectives on global issues, promotes civic literacy, and supports acquisition of skills related to research, analytical, assessment, communication (oral and verbal), and problem solving. In particular, knowledge of local history can impact the individual, the community, and the world. Local history "confirms the idea that one's own home is worthy of study" (Amato, 2002, p. 4). Local history insights allow individuals to see that history is not limited to national or global events; hence, personal connections can be made to broader issues, and the capacity of individuals to participate in a democratic society is supported (Knupfer, 2013; Kyvig & Marty, 2010), which suggests individuals will be better prepared to serve as social change agents.

For example, Knupfer's (2013) project involved 20 undergraduate history majors enrolled in a senior-level seminar. Knupfer engaged students in examining primary sources maintained in local library holdings including school board minutes, school system records, newspapers, and microfilm for the purpose of exploring Lansing, Michigan public schools' resistance to school desegregation from mid-1960 throughout the mid-1970s. Students produced a resource guide chronicling one of the most significant aspects of their community's history, which was made publicly accessible on the local library's website (Knupfer, 2013).

Similarly, Strauss and Eckenrode (2014) engaged 15 undergraduate history majors attending SUNY Fredonia, which is located in western New York, in a service-learning project in partnership with a local library that also served as a research center.

The project was designed to enlist students in filling gaps in information related to the community's immigrant populations. This study is significant because the web-based guide and database input generated by the students were designed to assist other researchers with locating and contacting historically marginalized groups, and accessing related primary and secondary resources.

Other researchers have focused on exploring local history through the use of oral history projects, which include ordinary people sharing recollections and life experiences with the purpose of preserving lessons learned for future generations (Carpenter, Harris, Cohn, Hale, & Carr, 2009; Tebeau, 2013; Wigginton, 1972). Oral history projects have been used to gain perspectives on local history topics including education (Blumenreich, 2012; Coats, 2010; Korkow, 2008); race (New Jersey Hispanic Research & Information Center, 2012; Sandul et al., 2012; Siddle Walker, 1996; University of Washington, 2014); culture (Maschi, MacMillan, Pardasani, Lee, & Moreno, 2012; University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2013; Wigginton, 1972; Winn, 2012; Zembrzycki & High, 2012); and organizational histories (American Association of University Women, 2013; Columbia Center for Oral History, 2014; University of Texas at Austin, 2014).

Notably, Wigginton (1972) addressed secondary and high school students' lack of interest in the English curriculum, in rural Georgia, by guiding them in the development of a magazine, *Foxfire Magazine*. Since 1966 students have captured the history of life and culture in Southern Appalachia by interviewing family, friends and neighbors and collecting artifacts for this magazine. Students learn skills including "writing, communication, collaboration, time management, decision-making, problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, and responsibility" (Foxfire Fund, Inc., n.d., p. 3).

To date, almost 9 million copies of the *Foxfire Magazine* have been sold, and the project has grown to include a scholarship fund as well as a museum and heritage site that is used to preserve tangible artifacts and to educate visitors. Moreover, *The Foxfire Approach to Teaching and Learning* serves as a best practices classroom instructional manual for teachers across disciplines and education levels (Foxfire Fund, Inc., n.d.), which can advance primary research in local history studies.

A synthesis of the research on local history suggests that the *social purpose* of the academy, which traditionally has been to act on behalf of the public good, typically in support of individuals, groups, communities, and on a global scale (Kezar, 2004), remains an important element of the U.S. education system and society. Thus, it would not be prudent for rurally-situated institutions such as RSCC to ignore the need to reposition efforts when it comes to including local history perspectives in the curriculum given the implications for student development, sustainability of communities, and preserving knowledge as capital.

The Mission of the Community College

Community colleges originated in the United States and have survived over 100 years (Boggs, 2012; Crawford & Jervis, 2011). The label "democracy's college" is synonymous with the expectation that U.S. community colleges were designed to encourage civic engagement, community development, and agency building in local people (Fonte, 2009). This framing of the capacity of community colleges translates to an obligation to address the role of local history in the curriculum. Therefore, community colleges should be concerned that there is a gap in practice related to the problem

addressed in this study because this situation is counterproductive to advancing its historic mission.

In fact, the community college is a U.S. invention (Boggs, 2012). Notably, Cohen and Brawer (2003) labeled the U.S. community college as the most significant contribution of the twentieth century—a milestone that came to fruition with the building of Joliet Junior College in 1901 (Coley, 2000). In its infancy, junior colleges (also referred to as community colleges), focused on curricula grounded in the liberal arts and producing individuals capable of participating in a democratic society (Dassance, 2011). The United States was founded as a democracy, anchored by a clear of set of values: individualism, hard work, self-awareness, social justice, and educational attainment (Kang, 2009). In essence, community colleges have served as a beacon of hope for those not otherwise positioned to pursue the American Dream. Empirical studies focused on socioeconomics revealed that community colleges have supported democratic values despite criticism that they divert students away from enrolling in institutions that grant 4-year degrees (Melguizo & Dowd, 2009; Stephan, Rosenbaum, & Person, 2009). Despite being founded on democratic principles, community colleges are being impacted by new trends in curricular functions.

New directions for community colleges. The mission of the community college has become more comprehensive by focusing on preparing students to transfer to 4-year institutions, workforce development training, continuing education programs, remediation and developmental education, and producing students that are more involved in their communities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Additionally, more emphasis has been placed on skills critical for success in the 21st century, including critical thinking,

problem solving, interpersonal relations, technology, change management, research, and self-regulation (Koenig, 2011). Mazurek and Winzer (2006) revealed that these shifts are not unusual because education systems are not insulated from the rest of society—they are impacted by a variety of factors, including "demographic, economic, political, cultural, religious, and historical" (p. 10). Thus, the need to be mission-oriented is very important to community colleges because of a myriad reasons: (a) this is the place where significant numbers of students embark on their education journey, (b) the tuition is cheaper than 4-year schools, (c) open access policies are the cornerstones, and (d) they are geographically situated to make it easier for local citizens to access (Robinson-Neal, 2009). Considering such high expectations, it is not surprising that a high level of scrutiny has been directed at community colleges.

Specifically, the reframing of the community college mission in the 21st century translates to the need to focus more on success with a widely publicized role in expanding access to higher education to marginalized populations (Boggs, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), only 20% of students attending public 2-year institutions who enrolled in the fall of 2007 completed a degree or certificate. Moreover, student enrollment at 2-year institutions between 2000 and 2010 increased from 5.9 to 7.7 million, and projections indicated that this number will reach 8.8 million by the year 2012 (NCES, 2010). A synthesis of this information revealed that time will not abate concerns with student success. Moreover, teaching is the primary focus of community college faculty (Twombly & Townsend, 2008); therefore, their role in advancing a student success agenda was paramount to this study.

Community college faculty. A study conducted by the National Center for

Postsecondary Improvement (1998) found, “Community college faculty receive scant attention from postsecondary researchers—or worse, are simply dismissed as a separate, and by implication lesser, class of college professors” (p. 43). Dew (2012) noted that outside of academia very little is known about faculty in higher education and he went on to suggest “hostility” has been directed toward faculty. In fact, Smith (2001) noted that much of the research on teacher lives has focused on teachers in K–12 settings. According to Twombly and Townsend (2008), this focus still exists. This situation is surprising because community college faculty (full- and part-time) represented 43% of the faculty within the public and nonprofit sectors as of the fall of 2003 (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2004–2005). The American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2009) concluded that 68% of the faculty teaching at community colleges were part-time in 2007. These statistics have remained consistent: As of the fall 2009, only 30% of faculty members at 2-year institutions were employed full-time (NCES, 2010).

Furthermore, community college faculty have heavy teaching loads; they teach five or six courses each semester, in addition to 15 to 28 hours which are consumed by instructional related tasks each week (Murray, 2007). According to the Snyder and Dillow (2012), “On average, full-time faculty and instructional staff spent 58 percent of their time teaching in 2003 …. Research and scholarship accounted for 20 percent of their time, and 22 percent was spent on other activities (administration, professional growth, etc.)” (p. 281). As demonstrated, the aforementioned activities leave very little time for faculty to address demands to increase engagement in research endeavors that support student success (Allen & Kazis, 2007; Prince, 2012). Open access policies at

community colleges, where entry is offered to any student who can benefit (Robinson-Neal, 2009), place student success primarily in the domain of faculty.

Though limited, studies specifically focusing on community college faculty have been insightful. For example, a national-level study conducted by Kim, Wolf-Wendel and Twombly (2008) found that community college faculty enjoyed better job satisfaction than others in the professoriate. To reflect community college faculty perspectives, in a study of 750 people, Dries, Pepermans, and De Kerpel (2008) found that participants' views across generations on the topic of success in work and life, were impacted by social context. Flower (2012) collected both qualitative and quantitative data from five community college faculty for the purpose of exploring the sociocultural contexts of personal development and professional experiences as they relate to implications for teaching. Flower's study revealed that prior experience as an adjunct faculty, using historical references in the classroom to engage students in the learning experience, prior experience as a coach or tutor, and sharing one's own lived experiences or those of colleagues positively impacted professional practices. Flower recommended that future studies should exclusively focus on adjunct faculty due to heavy reliance on their skills by community colleges.

Lootens (2009) included both full-time and part-time faculty in a quantitative study that was designed to investigate job satisfaction along the continuum of intrinsic and extrinsic, demographics, and institutional characteristics. Lootens's study revealed that part-time faculty were significantly more dissatisfied with salaries and benefits than their full-time counterparts. Lootens recommended that community colleges address these concerns given that increased hiring of adjunct faculty is a trend not likely to

reverse direction.

Lyons and Akroyd's (2014) study of 2,308 public community college faculty indicated positive correlations between faculty job satisfaction and sense of equity in compensation, opportunities for professional development, and perceived fair treatment of women and minorities. Lyons and Akyrod recommended that community college decision-makers consider how faculty are treated given the implications for faculty recruitment and retention, and student learning outcomes.

Nagle's (2013) quantitative study included full-, part-time, and dual-credit instructors, which expanded the target population focused on by Flower (2012) and Lootens (2009). The purpose of Nagle's study was to explore behavioral norms of community college-level educators by analyzing quantitative survey data. The findings of Nagle's study indicated that faculty were more likely to display behaviors in interactions with students that did not warrant severe sanctions as compared to those that warranted a caution. Nagle recommended that future studies should take a qualitative approach in order to gain more in depth of understanding of faculty behaviors.

In summary, the lack of research focusing on community college faculty revealed that a significant void exists regarding teaching diverse student bodies, even though the professoriate educates a significant number of those students. Moreover, a synthesis of the research regarding community college faculty suggests that despite deficiencies in resources, dismay with benefits structures, and concerns with the workplace culture, community college faculty are dedicated and committed to educating students who are most at risk of failure.

Student diversity presents faculty challenges. In a supplemental report commissioned by the NCES, Provasnik and Planty (2008) reported that 6.2 million students enrolled at the 1,045 community colleges located throughout the United States, which accounted for 35% of all postsecondary students enrolled during the 2006–2007 academic year. Dual enrollment students who are also high school students and students attending 4-year institutions also enrolled in classes at community colleges. Katsinas and Tollefson (2009) found that significant numbers of underrepresented, undergraduate students are enrolled at community colleges: Blacks, 58%; Hispanics, 66%; Asian and Pacific Islanders, 54%; and American Indian/Alaskan Natives, 57% (p. 9). These statistics are important because when compared to White students, both African American and Hispanic students' academic outcomes do not keep pace (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008). Recent findings by the NCES (2011) indicated that 80% of community college students need to work; 44% attend school part-time; and 61% live with their parents (p. 7). To add perspective, Goldrick-Rab's (2010) extensive review of the literature, which included approximately 750 studies, revealed that community college students face a myriad of challenges that negatively impact persistence, including deficits in academic preparedness, lack of financial support, family related issues, and being first generation college students.

Research indicated that one of the most pressing challenges faced by community college faculty is educating students who increasingly require developmental courses (Alstadt, 2012; Bremer et al., 2013; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014), many of whom have learning disabilities that may or may not be diagnosed (Gerstein, 2009). To put this into perspective, a nationwide study of community college students conducted by the

Teachers College at Columbia University, Community College Research Center, revealed that approximately 60% of students enrolled at public 2-year institutions required a minimum of one development course (Bailey & Cho, 2010). A study commissioned by the NCES revealed that when compared to other institutions of higher learning, community colleges enrolled 54% of students with disabilities (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Disabilities related to learning are the most frequently reported by students (Barnett & Jeandron, 2009; Raue & Lewis, 2011). Faculty have communicated "a desire for formal training on how to address the needs of students with disabilities" (Kozeracki, 2005, p. 43). The need for developmental education at public, 2-year institutions is so great that almost all of these schools offer programs (Aycaster, 2001; Boylan & Bonham, 2007). The annual cost to community colleges to provide developmental education (also referred to as remedial or basic skills education) has been estimated between $1.88 and $2.35 billion dollars (Strong American Schools, 2008). By definition, "Developmental education is a comprehensive process that focuses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students" (National Association of Developmental Education, 2014, p. 1), which speaks to the need to educate the whole student.

Some studies indicated that within 2-year institutions, developmental education primarily encompasses providing students that are not ready for college-level math, reading and English with basic skills instruction (Quint, Jaggars, Byndloss, Magazinnik, & MDRC, 2013; Zachry & Schneider, 2010). Bailey (2009) estimated that at least two-thirds of students enrolled at community colleges are at risk of failing college-level coursework because they have weakness in at least one major discipline. Thus, students

who gain admission to institutions of higher learning are not necessarily college-ready or knowledgeable of the skills and resources necessary to achieve their long-term goals. Rutschow and Schneider (2011) conducted an extensive review of the literature and revealed that faculty struggle with identifying best practices in developmental education. In fact, some research indicates that students enrolled in developmental courses may exhibit a negative orientation to learning due to feelings of being stigmatized or prior bad educational experiences (Hall & Ponton, 2005; Koch, Slate & Moore, 2012; Kozeracki, 2005), which may present challenges for faculty.

According to a study conducted by Albert (2004), which included analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, faculty working in the state of Iowa's community college system perceived that there was an abundance of students enrolled in developmental courses. Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2008) analyzed longitudinal datasets from *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count* (a national community college initiative), in order to track outcomes for developmental students. The results of Bailey et al.'s study indicated that less than 40% of students required to enroll in developmental courses were able to earn passing grades, and underrepresented students were more likely not to complete course sequences in developmental programs when compared to other student groups.

Mesa's (2012) study of a large suburban community college located in the Midwest included 25 instructors and 777 students enrolled in remedial and college-level math courses. Mesa utilized survey instruments to investigate participants' perceptions of students' goal orientation. The results revealed that students held positive perceptions,

but professors' perceptions were negative. Notably, Mesa did not investigate whether or not instructors' perceptions impacted instructional practices and student learning.

Primarily, researchers have focused on faculty–student interactions at 4-year institutions. These studies revealed that both formal and informal interactions contributed to improved student learning outcomes (Astin, 1993b; Pascarella & Terranzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993, 2000). Chang (2005) informed research on faculty–student interactions within community college settings by analyzing data from the Retention of Urban Community College Students (TRUCCS) survey. Data were collected on 779 African-American, 797 Asian American/Pacific Islander, 2,380 Latino, and 730 Caucasian (White) students. The results of Chang's study indicated that Asian American/Pacific Islander and Latino students reported low levels of interaction. Chang suggested that because community colleges enroll significant numbers of underrepresented students, more needs to be done to improve faculty–student interactions in order to move the retention and completion needle.

Diversity in student demographics also means a wide range of needs, which is compounded by the fact that community college faculty members have limited access to instructional, curriculum development, and professional development resources (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Adjunct faculty have even less access to professional development opportunities than full-time faculty (Smith, 2007). Moreover, community college faculty joining the ranks since the 1990s typically have not been academics, which hinders their ability to apply good principles of teaching (Lail, 2009). In fact, community college faculty may be knowledgeable of discipline-specific content, yet they lack the requisite understanding of pedagogy and experiences with curriculum design (Wagoner, 2008);

hence, in terms of mathematical concepts, faculty are not well-positioned to understand why students may not be able to grasp certain processes (Gerstein, 2009). Absent this information, faculty may be at a disadvantage in terms of garnering more positive student outcomes.

Another concern being highlighted by researchers is lack of faculty of color employed in higher education (Hagerdorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007; Levin, Haberler, Walker, & Jackson-Boothy, 2014; Vega, Yglesias, & Murray, 2010). This situation should be particularly concerning to community colleges because these institutions take pride in and are identified as serving significant numbers of minority students (Malcom, 2013). In his study of community college faculty of color, Fujimito (2012) prompted readers to consider the possibility that hiring practices may be contributing to the perception that socioeconomic and cultural divides exist between an overwhelmingly White professoriate and student bodies that are primarily of color. To put in to perspective, during the 2007–2008 academic year, 35% of all 2-year college students were students of color as compared to 82% of faculty members being White (Institute for College Access Success, 2011). Community colleges should pay particular attention to the lack of diversity in its teaching ranks because research emerging from 4-year institutions suggests multicultural education and diversity on campuses and in classrooms positively impact faculty teaching and students' experiences and educational outcomes across color lines (Antonio, 2002; *Does diversity make a difference?*, 2000; Gasman, Kim, & Nguyen, 2011; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Light, 2001; Quaye & Harper, 2007; Sadao, 2003; Umbach, 2006). The importance of the

aforementioned research is conveyed in the following message by Kayes and Singley (2010):

> Many of the significant educational issues facing community colleges revolve around diversity …. At the center of all these issues is diversifying faculty, for, as so much research demonstrates, both minority student achievement and intercultural knowledge and understanding increase when all students learn from culturally diverse and minority faculty. (para. 4)

The case made by Kayes and Singley is similar to the perspectives offered by others (e.g., Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Nagada, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2007; Springer & Westerhaus, 2006). Yet, Colvin and Tobler (2012) found that many faculty feel no responsibility to consider the implications of culture in their instructional strategies. If this is the case, and students' cultural experiences are ignored, the potential exists for faculty to misinterpret students' behaviors and to miss out on opportunities to close the achievement gap.

In fact, some researchers have made the argument that "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Kunjufu, 2002) or "culturally responsive" (Gallien & Jackson, 2006; Murphy, 2010) education practices designed for African American students are more effective. Gay (2002) captured the synthesis of culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching to equate to "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). In terms of learning styles, several researchers have determined that minority groups embody learning and communication styles directly related to their cultural backgrounds, which may not be fully understood by educators,

and therefore leading to cultural conflicts in the classroom (Banks, 2006; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009; Pewewardy, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1994) researched effective teachers of African American students and found that regardless of the race of the teacher it is possible to excel at teaching the target population if teachers are culturally competent. Moreover, the findings of Gay's (2002) research revealed the following key recommendations: (a) across the disciplines, educators need to incorporate cultural diversity; (b) instruction needs to be authentic and factual; (c) educators need to develop culturally relevant curricula that students can relate to; and (d) educators need to learn cross-cultural communication and behavioral patterns in order to build rapport with and to avoid conflicts with students. Gay's research is very important to community college faculty because these individuals educate a significant number of students of color; hence, Gay focused on gaining perspectives on low-achieving African American, Asian, Latino, and Native American students, from educators across disciplines in K–12 and higher education systems working directly with the population and researchers. Even though the aforementioned research has primarily focused on K–12 education, practical implications may exist for institutions of higher learning.

For example, Jensen's (2013) study of 31 non-Native American faculty teaching at a tribal college located in the Midwest explored faculty perceptions of professional practices, which provided much needed insight on the importance of culture in educating students. Jensen collected qualitative data (interviews) and quantitative data (surveys) which revealed that 100% of participants communicated the importance of making connections between instruction and students' backgrounds, in addition to the effectiveness of establishing informal learning settings that allowed students to connect to

nature and collaborate with peers. Additionally, Jensen found that 85% of participants indicated that knowledge of Native American culture is an important determinant of successful student outcomes, and 81% communicated "moderate to great" efforts to increase professional competencies in educating Native America students since working with the target population, which is encouraging due the fact that low numbers of Native American students earn college credentials.

Moreover, Richardson's (2009) mixed-methods study of a community college located in the Northwest filled a gap in research because faculty experiences with diversity at rural institutions is lacking. Richardson reported the following student demographics according to 2007 enrollment: Hispanic (13%), Native American (6%), African American, (2%), and White (77%). Forty-three faculty responded to the invitation to participate. Key findings of Richardson's study included faculty communicating the importance of (a) understanding students' cultural backgrounds and conveying the value of diversity campus-wide and in the classroom; (b) engaging students in issues related to diversity; and (c) incorporating diverse classrooms because they allow students to learn more about backgrounds different than their own, which positions them for success in school and work. The findings of Richardson's study are consistent with the concept that embracing diversity in the classroom translates to increased cultural awareness, improved personal development, decreases in stereotyping and prejudices, and a sense of equality (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Essentially, the research that is emerging in this area underscores that it in order to overcome challenges associated with educating diverse student bodies it would be

prudent for community college faculty to employ instructional approaches based on the philosophies and culture that have anchored students' communities for centuries.

Rediger's (2013) qualitative study shifted focus to whether or not community college faculty are up to the challenge of educating diverse student bodies. This study focused on the perspectives of eight community college adjunct faculty teaching communications courses for the purpose of exploring participants' understanding of diversity and their preparation to educate diverse student bodies. Rediger's findings revealed that participants were not adequately trained on concepts of diversity. In fact, several participants in Rediger's study applied stereotypes in communicating with students, held negative attitudes about students and low expectations—as a result, faculty instructional approaches were inadequate which manifested in frustration and conflicts with students, and student learning outcomes were less than desirable. Community colleges should pay particular attention to Rediger's findings because these institutions rely heavily on the services of adjunct faculty.

Moreover, a study conducted by Marks (2011) found that educators need to be more sensitive to students' cultures and should expand their knowledge of diversity if they expect to positively impact the achievement of the population. Notably, Marks' findings are aligned with Gay's (2002) argument that the United States cannot conceivably institute best practices in education if it continues to ignore the accomplishments and contributions of ethnic minorities.

Improving faculty professional practices. One approach that has shown promise in improving professional practices is faculty learning communities because they allow participants to reflect on teaching, collaborate with peers, and make connections between

instructional approaches and research (Beach & Cox, 2009; Gurm, 2011; Koch, Hennessey, Ingram, Rumrill, & Roessler, 2006). Lightner and Sipple (2013) conducted a quantitative study of 44 faculty participating in a learning community at Blue Ash College, a 2-year institution, which is located in Ohio. Faculty in Lightner and Sipple's study communicated positive views of the experience despite challenges with finding time to participate, in addition to a sense of appreciation of the opportunity to connect with peers. Participants also indicated that they would recommend the experience to others. Goto, Marshall and Guale (2010) advanced research in this area by conducting both qualitative and quantitative analysis to assess a learning community (*Teaching Labs*) comprised of 27 faculty, administrators, and staff at Everett Community College, which is located in Washington State. The study site instituted applied Teaching Labs (e.g., Collaborative Learning Lab, Instructional Technology Lab) and conceptual Teaching Labs (e.g., Diversity Lab, Inquiry Lab) in order to encourage critical thinking and knowledge sharing regarding teaching, learning, and the field of higher education (Goto et al., 2010). Goto et al. designed a survey in order to investigate and measure beliefs and professional practices related to instruction. Moreover, the Goto et al. study revealed that the social and collaborative nature of the learning community was credited with improving professional practices and garnering positive feedback from students regarding their learning experiences. To put into perspective, faculty learning communities may not be the panacea for conquering deficiencies in faculty professional practices, but the positives appear to be encouraging.

To summarize, the workhorse of community colleges is its teaching force. Given that the regional accrediting body that has oversight of the study site requires "The

institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty" (SACS, 2012, p. 23), faculty are placed at the forefront of addressing a myriad of challenges associated with educating significant numbers of underrepresented students. A synthesis of the research on community college faculty and their engagement with students suggests that the range of characteristics that students bring to the learning environment present an already time-constrained faculty with complex curricular and instructional decisions. Moreover, the aforementioned findings provide insight on why the lack of underrepresented groups in the teaching workforce can result in missed opportunities for the academy to positively support student learning outcomes. Given the high price tag on providing developmental education and the fact that significant numbers of underrepresented students never advance to college-level math and English, the stakes are high for community colleges. The good news is that it appears faculty are making an effort to close achievement gaps and social distance (perceived or real) between themselves and diverse student bodies by engaging in professional development activities.

Teaching History at Community Colleges

Community colleges play a vital role in history education. In fact, a significant number (almost 50%) of history courses that students need to meet 4-year institution graduation requirements are completed at community colleges (Tai, 2004). According to Tai (2004),

> Historians at community colleges are generally required to teach multiple sections of introductory, or "100-level" courses in American, western European, or world history, and to develop "200-level" electives in areas of their interest or specialty.

> Most community colleges expect full-time faculty to teach four to six courses per semester, with anywhere from two to five preparations. (para. 8)

Tai's findings suggests that community college history instructors have some latitude in teaching diverse historical perspectives to include gender, race, religion, and socioeconomics. This also means that opportunities exist for the professoriate to join forces with other departments such as humanities and social sciences, for the purpose of supporting students' exploration of history from an interdisciplinary approach. In fact, the concept of interdisciplinary teaching is not new to the academy, as demonstrated by Nutting (2000-2001) and others (e.g., Abell, 1999; Gudipati, 2002; LoPresto, 2013). If the professoriate chooses to take advantage of the aforementioned teachable moments, this would create a win-win situation for instructors and students. For example, instructors would be able to pursue some of their own research interests in the classroom setting and students would gain a broader education in history.

The American history survey course. Introductory history courses are considered to be survey where the professor employs a teacher-centered approach, supported by the use of textbooks, dates, and facts: Students are typically assessed by written papers and essays (Sipress & Voelker, 2011). One introductory course that community college history professors can expect to teach is the American history survey course. Historically, the American history survey course has served as a foundational course for students (Cohen, 2005). A study of 792 American history survey course syllabi which were available online revealed that history instructors at U.S. institutions of higher learning primarily use textbooks to teach (Cohen, 2005). In particular, 31% of the syllabi reviewed by Cohen (2005) were linked to community or junior colleges: This information

revealed that 47% of these institutions primarily utilized textbooks for reading assignments and 71% utilized tests to assess student learning (Cohen, 2005). These findings suggests that the professoriate may be limiting students' learning opportunities by not integrating the use of technology to encourage online research.

Maypole and Davies (2001) qualitative study of 24 students enrolled in a community college American History II survey course, focused on teaching students to utilize multiple resources to conduct research as follows: (a) documents, (b) textbooks, (c) guest speakers, (d) reflective journals, (e) discussions, (f) lectures, (g) group work, and (h) classroom discussions. According to Maypole and Davies, students increased engagement in the learning process and improvement in their ability to critically assess information. This teaching approach allowed students to develop skills that can be learned from studying history and to make historical connections on a more global scale. These findings suggests that the professoriate should give more serious consideration to professional practices that encourage students to utilize primary sources, events, and topics that directly relate to their own backgrounds.

The ethos of teaching history at community colleges. Tai (2004) implied community colleges tend to offer history courses that transfer to 4-year institutions with the rationale that shrinking budgets require good stewardship of institutional resources. To illustrate, a local history course which falls into an elective category may not be top priority for students in an age where college tuition is increasing. Jones (2008) noted that in recent times community colleges have developed a business model approach in response to students' desire to manage their tuition dollars more wisely and exit at a faster pace, which leaves citizenship education as a low priority. This situation

underscores a conflict with what Tai (2004) defined as "the ethos of a community college" as it relates to the long-standing history of community colleges serving the community (para. 3). Boggs (2012) noted that community colleges are a distinct American innovation and are geographically placed to serve the needs of their communities by offering education, training, and life-long learning opportunities. Boggs' assessment suggests that the word community in community colleges was not an accident—the term was designed with a clear agenda. Tai (2004) described the meaning of teaching history at community colleges with the following statement:

> To teach history at a community college is to empower students with the tools of analysis that confer authority in discourse and comprehension of one's world; to help students acquire the skills through which they become mature participants in American democracy. (para. 14)

This statement exemplifies how Tai captured the ethos or the culture of teaching community college history. Given Tai's description of the current teaching environment, the community college history professoriate is well-positioned to utilize their classrooms as a platform to prepare local citizens as America's next generation of informed, critical thinkers. Moreover, in the context of this study, Tai's assessment translates to professors as being uniquely situated to take on the task of addressing the role of local history in the curriculum as explored in this study.

Ball (2010) reflected on his first year teaching history at a community college by describing how "students connected their own experiences to the history they were studying, not as an academic exercise, but as way to talk about very real questions of religion, politics, family, war, and others that they were dealing with as part of their daily

lives" (para. 8). Ball's assessment provides insight on "active-learning strategies" where faculty position students to make links between history and their everyday lives, which have proven to have practical use for nontraditional students beyond the classroom (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). For example, Perrotta and Bonhan's (2013) mixed methods study of students (non-traditional and traditional) enrolled in history courses at a metropolitan community college, located in the Southeast, revealed that students' engagement increased when active-learning strategies (graphic organizers used to prompt peer discussions) were combined with lecture. The findings in Perotta and Bonhan's study aligned with Chickering and Gamson's (1987) model for best practices in undergraduate teaching which may be a viable framework for community college faculty to position students to link their personal experiences to the wider world.

On the topic of curriculum development, Rodgers (2005) posited that when developing a history course community college history faculty have the following two primary goals:

> The first goal is to provide them [students] with a basic knowledge of the kinds of important historical events and individuals that one would expect a well-educated person to know. A second goal is to help students to develop critical thinking and reading abilities. (p. 42)

Rodgers seems to suggest that the scope of the history curriculum development process is limited to just a few tenets. Yet, according to Masur (2005), faculty have additional responsibilities to advance learning to the extent that students embrace appreciation for past events.

Teaching has long been the primary focus of community colleges, but a paradigm shift is occurring from teacher-centered instruction to a "learning college" model with the primary goal of creating multiple learning opportunities which are not bound by place or time and is focused on advancing student learning as a priority in all aspects of institutions' policies, programs and practices (Blumeberg, 2010; O'Banion, 1997). This paradigm has implications for community college history faculty because its application is not limited by discipline. Learning-centered teaching "engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their own choices" (O'Banion, 1997, p. 4). To illustrate, Capps' (2012) study revealed that when a learning-centered approach to teaching is applied, community college students are more apt to persist. Capps' findings are aligned with the notion that it is incumbent upon community college history professors to understand that due to the influence of teacher-focused instruction students may arrive to college classrooms with a negative orientation to history (Moats, 2012). This problem exists due to K-12 systems' heavy reliance on lecture formats, textbooks, writing intensive projects and standardized assessments, which may not position students to readily embrace history learning that is research-focused (Moats, 2012). This situation positions community college history professors to consider the characteristics of diverse learners and to simultaneously assess their professional practices for alignment with course requirements.

Reeves (2007) qualitative study was designed to examine professional practices of nine community college history faculty deemed to be effective by their leadership. The participant pool in Reeve's study included faculty employed by the state of Alabama 2-year system. Data collected from interviews, observations, and organizational documents

revealed that participants had a passion for history, relied on storytelling, expressed concerns with autonomy in an increasingly technology-enhance society, and believed in knowledge sharing with less experienced faculty (Reeves, 2007). Reeves' findings are consistent with research conducted on strategies for effective teaching posited by Schulman (1987).

In summary, a synthesis of the research on community college history faculty revealed that more needs to be known. On the other hand, the available information highlighted the important role of faculty in history education at 2-year institutions. Moreover, despite heavy teaching loads and the economics associated with reducing the number of courses that are available to teach, the professoriate enjoys some latitude with academic freedom which supports professional development and benefits students. A new paradigm shift from teacher-focused to student-focused learning may provide the professoriate a more effective approach to motivating students to study history.

Community College Liberal Arts Curriculum in Jeopardy

The first community college was built in Joliet, Illinois in 1901 (Coley, 2001). Community college curricular functions initially included collegiate, vocational, and remedial education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 23). Zeszotarski (1999) suggested that community colleges combine the concepts of liberal education and general education. For this review, the terms liberal arts education or general education will be used interchangeably. Cohen and Brawer's (2003) framing of the purpose of liberal arts education captured the link to general education, as follows:

> The purpose of liberal arts education is to …. help people evaluate their society and gain a sense of what is right and what is important. This sense is not inborn; it

> is nourished through studies in which the relations among forms and ideas are explicated-the general education. (p. 317)

Upon closer inspection, the ideas, life and principles of the Greek Philosopher Socrates can be found imbedded in Cohen and Brawer's conceptualization of liberal arts education. Flannery (1998) pointed out that, following a humanistic stance, Socrates was known to challenge others through questioning "what is right?" and "what is good?" (para. 6). During the middle ages, the *trivium* (logic, grammar, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (mathematics, geometry, music, and astronomy) were combined to anchor the liberal arts curriculum (Wagner, 1983)—influences which are very evident in the 21st century higher education curriculum.

Today, the concepts of the trivium and quadrivium are rooted in the core requirements of degree programs as institutions of higher learning that seek to obtain or maintain regional accreditation in the United States. For example, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS, 2012), which accredits RSCC, outlined the following general education requirements that apply to associate degrees:

> For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. (p. 15)

Upon closer inspection, the aforementioned core requirements support an agenda advanced by student development theorists—the need to integrate academics and social

structures for the purpose of supporting more positive student outcomes in engagement, learning, and persistence (Astin, 1993a; Astin & Sax, 1998; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pace, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1987, 2005). For community colleges the juxtaposition is liberal education which supports developing the "whole" student and shaping them to become well rounded may be at risk of minimalizing the curriculum.

In fact, Karabel (1986) expressed, "the liberal arts programs, those that brought the community colleges into existence, are at risk of disappearing" (p. 27). Additionally, Brint, Riddle, Turk-Bicakci, and Levy (2005) confirmed the continuance of this trend with the following statement: "One of the most important changes in American higher education over the last 30 years has been the gradual shrinking of the old arts and sciences core of undergraduate education and the expansion of occupational and professional programs" (p. 150). Hainline, Gaines, Feather, Padilla, and Terry (2010) asserted that it is increasingly difficult to advance a traditional liberal arts education or science agenda when students are more concerned with pursuing applied programs or professional disciplines that will support careers after college. To this end, future research studies such as this one may be able to provide more insight regarding how elective courses such as local history can be included in the curriculum.

Workforce Development and Academic Tensions

Trends in humanities and history curriculum throughout the community college landscape indicate dwindling course offerings (Freidlander, 1977, 1983; Schulyer, 1999). Tai (2004) suggested that budget cuts may be responsible for these trends. Critics have complained that an increased focus on workforce initiatives is to blame for shifts in curricular focus (Ayers, 2011; Brint et al., 2005; Pusser & Levin, 2009). To add

perspective, Levin (2005) found that workforce development-scholarly tensions exist in higher education due to an increased focus on vocational initiatives, as evidenced by his study of two community colleges (one in the United States and one in Canada). Levin concluded that this trend does not adequately support developing students to be critically, reflective learners.

The aforementioned findings should be concerning to advocates for liberal arts education who have contended that the discipline is the mechanism for developing critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills (Brint et al., 2005; McNair, 2013). In fact, Milliron (2007) made a good case that in order to compete in an increasingly globalized world the skills of critical thinking, creativity, and courage are paramount. According to Jerald (2009), addressing societal problems that span from local to global and civic engagement requires critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In relation to this study, the aforementioned research findings highlighted some of the skills that can acquired from studying history (Galgano, 2007; Stearns, 2008). Hainline et al. (2010) suggested workforce development-academic tensions may be manageable if "The challenge is to provide a career-relevant education that also produces critical, enlightened thinkers and lifelong learners" (p. 8). Finegold, Gatta, Salzman, and Schurman (2012) and Rose (2012) recommended a merger of the traditional liberal arts and vocational curricula as a way to resolve workforce development-academic tensions.

A synthesis of these findings suggests that if stakeholders place student outcomes at the forefront of the discussion on workforce development-academic tensions, the reasonable conclusion is the two can coexist harmoniously. In the context of this study, this means that there was still room to consider the value of local history in the

community college curriculum despite shifts to more business-oriented models of education.

Implications

The professional literature revealed that a lack of a focus on local history in the community college history curriculum has implications which should raise an alarm for stakeholders. For example, rural communities such as RSCC rely on local knowledge for sustainability because this information has been deemed important to global knowledge systems (Gruenewald & Smith, 2014; Vandebroek, Reyes-García, de Albuquerque, Bussmann, & Pieroni, 2011), which makes it imperative to find out more about why this problem exists. Moreover, this situation puts community colleges at odds with stakeholders who are concerned with students' community skills development (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2012). Additionally, dwindling history course offerings mean fewer opportunities for students to learn skills necessary for success in the 21st century, such as perspectives on global issues; civic literacy; acquisition of skills related to research, analytical, assessment, communication (oral and verbal); and problem-solving skills (Galgano, 2007; Stearns, 2008). The problem that was addressed in this study redirected the focus on Cohen and Brawer's (2003) assertion that the community colleges were designed to serve the needs of citizens. This statement more than implied that the word "community" in community colleges was by design, which suggested a lead role in addressing the problem. A synthesis of this information demanded an exploration of faculty perceptions of the role of local history in the curriculum and how to include local history in the curriculum as necessary steps to adequately address the problem.

Thus, the implications for possible projects outcomes were numerous based on the findings of this study. First, a workshop or plenary session could have been designed to educate stakeholders on the value of studying local history and incorporating it into the curriculum. Second, a white paper or strategic plan could have been designed to support inclusion of reflective practices into faculty professional development activities as recommended by Dewey (1933) and others (e.g., Brookfield, 1995, 1998; Mezirow & et al., 2000; Schon, 1983, 1987). Third, a course on local history could have been developed. All of the aforementioned potential projects could advance the historic mission of community colleges to serve the needs of local people. More appropriately, in consideration of internal and external factors, the project developed was a white paper which included three recommendations for future actions based on the study's findings (Appendix A).

Summary

This project study is divided into four sections. In Section 1, I captured the problem that was addressed in this study as the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). Additionally, in Section 1, I framed the rationale for choosing the problem; defined problem-specific terms relevant to contextualizing the study; explained the significance of the problem; captured the purpose of the study; identified two research questions designed to explore how faculty and staff at RSCC perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum and what possibilities and strategies could be developed to include local history in the curriculum at RSCC; discussed the implications of the problem; identified possible project directions; and identified the white paper as the selected project.

Moreover, in Section 1, I included a literature review, identified the conceptual framework, and explored themes associated with addressing the problem. Research offering scholarly discourse on the problem was discussed in the literature review. A synthesis of this information revealed a "perfect storm" is brewing which has the potential to cause turmoil or create opportunities for community colleges including a mixture of increasingly diverse student populations, limited resources, and workforce development-academic struggles over the curriculum. The literature provides the impetus for community colleges to address the role of local history in the curriculum because of benefits to communities, students, faculty, and institutions.

In Section 2, I explain the justification for selecting qualitative case study methodology to collect, analyze and interpret data. In Section 2, I also highlight the description of participants and justification for selections and sample size; approach to establishing the researcher-participant relationship; ethical considerations; data collection plans and processes; data analysis procedures; processes for ensuring credibility of findings; study limitations; and dissemination of findings. Moreover, in Section 2, I present the data analysis results and provide an interpretation of findings in the form of relationships, themes, and patterns. Section 2 concludes with a summary of the outcomes logically presented.

In Section 3, I present the project (a white paper) which was developed as a result of the findings. I provide a brief description, goals, rationale for the project genre, literature review, and project description. Additionally, in Section 3, I discuss the project implementation plan; describe the project in terms of potential resources and existing supports; identify potential barriers, proposal for implementation and timetable; and

define the roles and responsibilities for the researcher, faculty, staff, and administrators. Moreover, in Section 3, I explain the project evaluation plan, highlight the overall evaluation goals, identify key stakeholders, and discuss the implications (local and far reaching) for this current study.

In Section 4, I discuss the strengths, weakness, and the approach to remediating limitations of the project in addressing the problem. I also discuss what I learned about scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. Moreover, in Section 4, I analyze myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I also, provide an analysis of the social change impact of this study and offer insights on implications, applications, and directions for future research. I conclude Section 4 with a thought-provoking message based on the study's findings.

Section 2: Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. In order to explore this type of phenomena, how and why questions needed to be answered (Yin, 2003). Indeed, qualitative researchers seek to make meaning of phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Glesne (2011) listed five types of qualitative research approaches that were considered for use in this study: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, action research, and life history. Qualitative case study research has particular utility when applied to trends and problems within community college settings, as demonstrated by several researchers (e.g., Doyle, 2012; Harbour, Davies, & Gonzales-Walker, 2010; McKinney & Morris, 2010; Sanders, 2010; Veltri, Banning, & Davies, 2006). Logically, due to this study's focus on one institution and gathering perspectives from individuals linked to that setting and utilizing multiple data sources, I determined that a qualitative case study approach needed to be employed. The appropriateness of this approach is evident in the insights provided by Merriam (2009) and Hancock and Algozzine (2006). I provide a detailed description of and justification for selecting this approach in this section, in addition to the processes and procedures that I employed to conduct an ethical and trustworthy study. The findings are reported in the form of themes and subthemes. This section concludes with an analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research questions, professional literature, and past studies, and introduction of the white paper that was developed as a result of the study's findings (Appendix A).

Description of the Qualitative Tradition

Quantitative and qualitative approaches serve different research needs. Quantitative research focuses on the measurement of variables and generalizing the results to the population; whereas qualitative research focuses on exploring and documenting human experiences through descriptive means and applying the findings to the immediate setting (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, qualitative methods are used to explore concepts or phenomena when there are gaps in research (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, qualitative researchers give equal consideration to the researcher's purposes as well as the perspectives of those who will be reading the information (Creswell, 2008). In this study, qualitative research was used to address the role of local history in a specific community college's curriculum. It is anticipated that stakeholders including educators, decision makers at the study site and policy makers outside of the organization will be interested in this study's findings.

Justification of Case Study Design

Case study research was selected as the appropriate qualitative approach to explore the problem identified at the study site. Case study research is "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The study site included two campuses and a satellite location, which was classified as an individual "case" for the purpose of this study. Case study research has been used to conduct research focused on community colleges in order to learn more about issues related to curricula (Butler & Christofili, 2014; Fong & Visher, 2013; Meyer, 2014). Moreover, case study research typically involves multiple data collection sources (Merriam, 2009). Thus, a demographic data form, interviews, history and humanities course syllabi, a

researcher-maintained journal, and the researcher serving as the primary data collection instrument were employed. The role of these sources is detailed in upcoming sections of this paper.

Even though case study research was ultimately selected, initial consideration was given to an ethnographic design, but as several researchers noted ethnographic researchers focus on providing descriptions of a culture or group of people by spending an extended period of time interacting (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Thus, ethnographic research was not selected after identifying that the focus of this study was on highlighting the experiences of the individuals rather than linking shared patterns of behaviors related to a group or culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Grounded theory was also reviewed, but not selected because the focus of this study was not to develop a new theory (Creswell, 2008). Consideration was also given to action research, but deemed not as appropriate because the problem did not require immediate interventions such as those related to threats to safety or security of employees. Lastly, life history research was not selected because the focus was not on an in-depth exploration of the participants' lives.

Participants, Criteria for Selection Participants, and Number of Participants

Qualitative researchers seek to construct a sample of participants that can contribute to the study (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) described research participants as "key informants" who have specific knowledge of the research focus or phenomena (p. 59). For the purpose of this study, participants were selected from administrators, faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff employed by Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). Careful consideration was given to

establishing participant selection criteria for this study due to the fact that over the last seven academic years (2006–2013), RSCC employed seven individuals who taught history (one full-time faculty and six adjunct faculty), and two individuals who taught humanities (the full-time faculty who also taught history and one adjunct faculty). Humanities courses are mentioned in the context of participant selection because the study site embedded the discipline of history within humanities courses, in the form of an interdisciplinary studies approach.

Interdisciplinary teaching has a long-standing history in higher education (Jones, Barrow, Stephens, & O'Hara, 2012; Kleinberg, 2008; Lattuca, 2001; Newell, 2010). Thus, the participant pool was not limited to those who taught history or humanities courses because gathering varying perspectives was imperative to exploring the problem. Participants included in this study met the following criteria: (a) employed at RSCC during the 2012–2013 academic year; (b) worked full-time or part-time; (c) administrators, faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff who taught history, humanities, English or social science courses or were involved in curriculum development, review or approval processes related to at least one of the aforementioned courses; and (d) administrators who allocated resources for curricular functions related to at least one of the aforementioned courses. Final selection of participants was made with the goal of including a diverse sample in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, race, origin, length of time teaching at the institution, teaching discipline; and length of time residing and engaged in service-related activities within the study site's service region, as gleaned from the demographic data form (Appendix B). These criteria were selected because (a) it was likely that participants would have an informed understanding of the organization's

mission, culture, policies, procedures, curricular functions, and the community; and (b) it was likely that the combination of courses selected would increase opportunities to explore the local history curriculum by employing an interdisciplinary approach. This type of sampling is referred to as "purposeful" due to the likelihood that participants may be able to provide insight on the problem (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling was used to limit the sample to participants who worked at the study site's two campuses and one satellite location.

Maximum variation sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that was employed in order to include varying perspectives on the problem and to identify themes across the sample as recommended by Patton (2002). The majority of participants were selected from the two campuses because those locations primarily housed the target population. It is common for qualitative research to focus of "a few individuals or cases," even as few as one participant, in order to maintain the integrity of in-depth experiences (Creswell, 2008, p. 217). Thus, the goal was to include 1 administrator, 1 faculty, 1 adjunct, and 1 staff from each campus and the satellite location for a total of 12 participants. Given that qualitative studies focus on exploring the depth of human experiences translated into words rather than degrees or numbers and the limited participant pool, 12 volunteers were deemed appropriate to address the research questions. I was prepared to send individuals not selected to participate in the study an e-mail to their personal accounts not affiliated with the study site, sent from my Walden University e-mail account (Appendix C). This was not necessary because only 12 individuals responded to the invitation to participate, and all 12 met the criteria. Demographic data that were collected included age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The participant pool made up the following demographics: 1 African

American female, 40–49; 1 African American female, 50–59; 2 African American females, 60–64; 1 White female 40–49; 3 White females, 60–64; 1 African American male; 40–49; 1 African American male, 50–59; 1 White male, 40–49; and 1 White male, 50–59. The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) reported the following demographic data for the RSCC service region: 51.6% female; 39.8% African American; 56.5% White; and 95.81% of residents are under the age of 65, which was consistent with the participant demographics for this current study. Table 1 provides participants' demographic data which demonstrates the diversity of the participant pool.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Code	Gender	Race	Age
Participant 1 (P1)	F	W	30-39
Participant 2 (P2)	F	B	50-59
Participant 3 (P3)	M	B	50-59
Participant 4 (P4)	F	B	40-49
Participant 5 (P5)	F	W	60-64
Participant 6 (P6)	F	W	60-64
Participant 7 (P7)	M	W	50-59
Participant 8 (P8)	F	B	60-64
Participant 9 (P9)	M	B	40-49
Participant 10 (P10)	M	W	50-49
Participant 11 (P11)	F	B	60-69
Participant 12 (P12)	F	W	60-64

Note. This information was compiled based on demographic data forms completed by participants. I assigned participants codes to protect confidentiality (e.g., P1–P12). F = Female; M = Male; B = Black/African American; and W = White/Caucasian).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Gaining access to participants started with securing an employee listing from the 2012–2013 college catalog, course schedules which listed instructors by academic semester and year, and institutional email addresses which were publicly accessible from the RSCC website. The study site does not have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process. I communicated by email and phone with the Vice President of Academic and Student Development because the organization's research agenda is housed in that department. Based on this communication, my request to conduct this study was submitted and processed. Within approximately 30 days of making my request, I secured a written letter of support and authorization to access data not publicly available, which was signed by the study site's president and submitted with my Walden IRB application. Thus, I did not make contact with the target population until I received the Walden IRB permission letter (IRB approval #10-10-14-0150866); subsequently, I informed the study site. A few days later, the Vice President of Academic and Student Development assigned a representative (Campus Dean) who communicated with me and forwarded (electronically) a spreadsheet listing employees in the target population and courses taught during the 2012–13 academic year, in addition to copies of history courses syllabi. Humanities course syllabi were not included in those forwarded. I notified my committee members of concerns with securing humanities course syllabus and it was recommended that I contact faculty directly. Based on authorization from the Campus Dean, I made direct contact with faculty face to face, telephonically, and by email, which allowed me to secure additional copies of history course syllabi and one humanities course syllabus.

Methods for Establishing the Researcher–Participant Relationship

This research was considered to be *backyard* study where the researcher was linked to the institution to be studied and known to the participants (Glesne, 2011). For the past 2½ years, I have been employed full-time at the study site as a College Success Coach. Additionally, for the past 1½ years I have taught student development courses. My primary duties involve assisting historically marginalized students with achieving their academic, career, and personal goals, in addition to teaching students skills that are necessary for survival within the collegiate setting and in the real world. I direct the daily duties and responsibilities of one part-time, program support staff person who is shared between two campuses. I have also served in roles as chair, vice chair, and a member of various committees. Typically, my student development classes average 15-20 students. Prior to this, I held part-time positions as a career coach and library clerk at the study site, in addition to being a former student.

Given the extent of my connections to the study site, prior to data collection, I clearly established my research stance an *emic* (participant-focused) rather than *etic* (researcher-focused) (Hatch, 2002). This positioning supported my efforts to generate accurate data and to reduce opportunities for researcher–participant conflicts (Creswell, 2008). Additionally, I secured consent electronically along with the demographic data form, prior to conducting interviews. The consent form included the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or reprisal (Appendix D). Moreover, measures to ensure ethical protections were specifically constructed to support the development of the researcher-participant relationship.

Measures to Ensure Ethical Protections of Participants

Researchers have many options to select from in order to protect participants. Specifically, I maintained an up-to-date human research certificate (Appendix E). I sent an invitation to solicit voluntary participation from my Walden University email to the target population's email accounts at the study site (Appendix F). This email requested that all future email communication with me needed to be sent to and from their personal email account, not affiliated with the study site, to my Walden University email account. Once employees responded to my email with an interest in participating, I emailed the demographic data form previously discussed and the consent form at the same time. After I received the completed demographic data form, I contacted those selected to be interviewed by telephone to confirm the date, time, and place of the interview. Next, I sent the interview guide via email at least 3 days in advance of the scheduled interview (Appendix G). A statement included in the consent form communicated participants' right to maintain of copy. The procedures outlined in this section were designed to protect the identity of participants from the study site.

Additionally, participants' names were deleted from reference on all interview records, study documentation, and the final study. Codes were used to identify participants (e.g., Participant 1 [P1], Participant 2 [P2], and so on) and pseudonyms for the peer debriefer (Peer Debriefer) and the study site (Rural Southern Community College, RSCC), in order to protect confidentiality. Information garnered during informal discussions found to be important to the study were brought to the participants' attention and permission was requested to be included in the research study (Creswell, 2008), which was granted. Interview data were stored on my USB flash drive, personal laptop,

and home computer which were password-protected to increase security. A subfolder for each participant was created to place interview transcriptions. The USB drive and all associated informed consent forms were secured at my place of residence and stored in a locked drawer to minimize accidental disclosure. I am the only person who has the passwords to my USB flash drive, laptop, home computer and a key that unlocks the storage system. In accordance with Walden University policy, after five years, all data associated with the study will be destroyed. At that time, I will permanently delete and overwrite all files on my computer, laptop, and USB drive, and shred paper documents.

Data Collection

Data Collection Choices and Appropriateness to Qualitative Tradition

Data consistent with qualitative research were collected from multiple sources as suggested by Patton (2002). Specifically, data were collected from (a) the demographic data form, (b) interviews, (c) history and humanities course syllabi, (d) researcher-maintained journal, and (e) the researcher serving as the primary data collection method.

How and When Data were Collected

Face-to-face interviews and the demographic data forms were utilized to collect data related to participants and to answer the interview questions. Data collected from the history and humanities course syllabi were utilized to determine if or to what extent local history was included in the curriculum. Data collection started on October 14, 2014, which was approximately 8 weeks into the fall 2014 semester. Each semester is prescribed as 16 weeks by the study site. By January 8, 2015, I had gained access to all participants and collected all data. Additionally, the researcher-maintained journal was utilized from the point of IRB approval on October 10, 2014 which helped to ensure that

my experiences were collected and accurately recorded throughout the duration of the study.

Generating, Gathering and Recording Data

Demographic Data Form

A demographic data form was emailed to individuals who expressed an interest to participate in response to the invitation email. These individuals were asked to record information on the demographic data form and return to me within 3 days by emailing from their personal email accounts not affiliated with the study site to my Walden University email account, only if they wish to be interviewed. The demographic data form clearly stated that by completing and returning the form, the individual consented to act as a participant in the research study. Thus, I used this information to select individuals to be interviewed for this study according to the criteria previously mentioned, with the goal of including "information-rich" sources who were likely to have direct knowledge of issues germane to the problem and would be able to offer diverse perspectives (Patton, 2002). The demographic data form was also used to create a biographical sketch of participants which was utilized to demonstrate the diversity of the sample, alignment with the criteria for participant selection, and the multiple perspectives offered.

Interviews

For the purpose of this study, one face-to-to face, individual interview was scheduled with each participant who volunteered for the study. The average time for the interviews was 20 minutes. Depending on the information garnered from the first interview, I was prepared to conduct one follow-up interview per participant which

would follow the same procedures for the initial interviews, but it was not necessary.

The interviews were conducted with the support of an interview guide. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, open-ended question format, using language that was clear, concise, absent technical jargon, and was easily understood by the participant (Creswell, 2008). Participants were emailed a copy of the interview guide which included interview questions to their personal email accounts, which were not affiliated with the study site, at least 3 days in advance which allowed ample time to ask questions and clarifications.

During interviews, probes were utilized in order to gain clarification or further explanation of responses to the predetermined questions (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2010) noted that probes can take a myriad of forms, including silence, uttering, a single word, complete sentences, or asking a question for clarification. The interviews took place in a location mutually agreed upon by the researcher and participants. Nine of the interviews took place in my office, one in a participant's office, one in a conference room on the main campus, and one in a conference room at the regional workforce development center (WDC). The interview locations were free of noise and interruptions because privacy was paramount to protect the integrity of the study. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants' written consent. Notes were taken utilizing my personal laptop during all interviews as a back-up to the audio—this information was gathered to minimize the loss of data in the event of equipment failure. There were no recording equipment failures during the interview process.

History and Humanities Course Syllabi

Public documents related to the study site, including the mission statement, strategic plan, course schedules, and course catalogs were reviewed during the course of researching the problem, developing the proposal, and completing the final study. Course syllabi were not open source or public documents as it relates to the study site. As a course instructor, it has been my experience that course syllabi are developed by the instructor and forwarded to the Campus Dean's office for review and filing. Thus, I ensured that I had written authorization to access organizational documents and data, which was outlined in the letter of support and data use agreements signed by the president of the study site. Data generated from history and humanities course syllabi were provided by the Campus Dean and individual instructors for the 2012-13 academic year, recorded in a word processing document, and transferred to a spreadsheet. This process supported my efforts to determine and record the extent that local history was included or not included in the curriculum at the study site. Since the aforementioned documents were not a product of the study, they were considered to "nonreactive" or "unaffected" by the research focus (Merriam, 2009, p. 156). This approach allowed me to construct a more holistic representation of the data.

Researcher-Maintained Journal

Conducting an ethical research study requires critical thinking. Brookfield (1987) noted "thinking critically—reflecting on the assumptions underlying our and others' ideas and actions, and contemplating alternative ways of thinking and living—is one of the most important ways in which we become adults" (p. x). I maintained records beyond the scope of the recorded interviews and notes typed during the interviews, as suggested by

Glesne (2011). The information gleaned from the research journal provided me ample opportunity to enhance critical thinking skills; quell researcher bias and emotion; address issues of ethics and roles; in addition to providing me information relevant to my development as a scholar, practitioner and emerging leader in the social change movement as framed by the institution.

Keeping Track of Data and Emerging Understandings

A variety of approaches were utilized to keep track of data and emerging understandings. Specifically, paper copies of interview transcripts, the demographic data forms, history and humanities course syllabi, consent forms, emails to and from participants, and the diary/journal maintained by the researcher were stored together. All of the aforementioned research materials were placed in a locked drawer which is located in my home office. Copies of the data were saved on my USB drive.

I developed 14 opened ended questions in the interview guide. Engaging educators in reflective activities has proven effective in improving professional practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012). The interviews were organized to alleviate concerns with merging of data. This process entailed assigning notes typed on my personal laptop with a label that identified the participant. Notes typed during the interviews were saved on the laptop hard-drive, my USB, and transferred to my home computer—all files were password protected. This process allowed for proper safeguarding and ease of access and recordkeeping. I personally transcribed each interview verbatim by utilizing word processing software.

Role of the Researcher

I served as the primary data collection instrument due to the many associated

benefits. Several benefits of this approach included the fact that I was able to: (a) synthesize information, (b) communicate nonverbally and verbally, (c) process information and provide almost instantaneous feedback, (d) follow-up with others to check for clarity and accurate accounting, and (e) conduct further research to address unanticipated or out of the ordinary findings or feedback (Merriam (2009).

I did consider that consensus in research circles indicated that researcher bias is one of the biggest threats to maintenance of ethical standards (Yin, 2010). Researcher bias is "a preference or inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 85). Given this information, I took a research stance that revealed personal biases, in addition to developing a plan for not allowing those biases to influence research findings (Lodico et al., 2010). One of my biases related to the fact that I am a native of the community which was the focus of this study. I take pride in local history events that have been included in regional and national discussions, and in textbooks that focus on the history of the United States. My other bias related to the combined effect of being educated in Germany, increasing understanding of globalization and global citizenry, being embedded at the study site through teaching Student Development courses (SDV), and working full-time as a College Success Coach. Diverse life experiences have led me to consider that the community college professoriate may be missing opportunities to expand students' understanding of local history and the connections that can be made outside of communities' borders. Thus, I was predisposed to advocate for the inclusion of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. To avoid bias in my research efforts, I utilized effective listening skills to gather the facts garnered from interviews and provided assurances of confidentiality; and accurately recorded, analyzed,

and interpreted data.

Data Analysis

How and When Data were Analyzed

Analyzing data can be a seemingly unmanageable process for novice researchers (Merriam, 2009). An iterative approach to data analysis and collection occurred in which I switched back and forth between the two (Creswell, 2008). Exploration of the transcripts involved reading the data which allowed me to gain a synthesis of the information and determine whether or not enough data had been collected.

Priori or pre-determined codes were not available because there was a lack of research addressing the problem; thus, emergent coding was employed. Data analysis and interpretation took on an inductive process by which themes were allowed to emerge from the various data collected (Creswell, 2008). Coding the interview transcripts and the history and humanities course syllabi involved the use of highlighting and cutting and pasting text (words) within a word processing document which aided in identifying and segregating descriptive data and themes, and transferring data to a spreadsheet. Moreover, this process was conducted by using a constant comparative method and ceased when repetition of themes became apparent.

Interpretation of the findings took the form of (a) a review of key findings, (b) relating findings to the extent that the research questions were answered, (c) scholarly reflections, (d) study limitations, (e) recommendations for future studies, and (f) connections to the professional literature and prior studies (Creswell, 2008). Relevant and sufficient data related to the study's findings and interpretations were reported and represented utilizing a narrative format, supported by tables as necessary. This approach

will allow the reader to make connections between the data, findings, and interpretations.

Evidence of Quality and Procedures to Assure Accuracy and Credibility

Evidence of quality relates to the trustworthiness of research. How can trust in research studies be instilled in the public? A process referred to as "validating" is aimed at supporting accuracy and credibility of research, which rests in the extent that the researcher and participants agree (Creswell, 2008). For the purpose of this study, trustworthiness was increased by utilizing a myriad of recommended procedures. Specifically, triangulation or checking for similarities in various data sources was accomplished (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, the interview transcripts and history and humanities course syllabi were examined to verify themes. Moreover, an email was sent requesting that participants conduct member checks (Appendix H). Member checks involved participants providing feedback on the accuracy of their interview transcripts, interpretations of their experiences, feelings and perspectives, and representations of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All requests to verify accuracy of data not responded to within 3 days were interpreted to mean that no changes were required. Additionally, the research journal allowed me to enhance my critical thinking skills; quell researcher bias and emotions; address issues of ethics and roles; and provide valuable feedback relative to my development as a scholar, practitioner, and emerging leader in the social change movement. I utilized the demographic data form to construct a visual representation of the participants, setting, place, and time. Reporting was made in the form of thick, rich descriptions in order to provide the reader a realistic experience.

Moreover, researcher bias, as it relates to my employment role at the study site and connections to the community, was fully revealed. Additionally, a peer debriefer was

able to ask questions and offer critical analysis and feedback of the proposal and final report. The peer debriefer met the following criteria: (a) a colleague who had the authority to ask questions and challenge me to reassess my assumptions regarding all aspects of the project study proposal and the final study, (b) not be currently employed by the study site, (c) knowledgeable of qualitative research, (d) did not receive any form of compensation, and (e) signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix I).

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Given that this study focused on the individual perceptions of the participants, it was possible that perspectives would not align (Creswell, 2009). This means that contradictions in accounts and themes may have arisen. I planned to report negative or discrepant information that may not have aligned with themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Honest reporting made the report more believable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). Dewey, Brookfield, Schon and Mezirow's reflection and reflective practices, which advanced the concept that educators' perceptions have the potential to impact professional practices, were invaluable tools in prompting answers to the research questions. It was assumed that participants would provide honest responses to the interview questions. This process was supported by ethical considerations defined in the consent form, which highlighted the voluntary nature of participation, measures to protect confidentiality by not using real names on research documents and the final report, and an option to withdraw from participation anytime

without fear of reprisal. E-mailing the participants the interview questions at least 3 days in advance afforded ample opportunity for review and to ask questions or clarifications. It was also assumed that the sample of 12 participants would be adequate to reach saturation which proved true. This process was supported by identifying key informants through purposeful sampling based on a list of administrators, faculty, adjunct, and staff names publicly recorded and provided by the study site; maximum variation sampling to support selection of a diverse participant pool; identification of themes across the sample; and member checks to support the accuracy of data, themes, interpretations and findings.

Limitations

Research studies have "potential weaknesses or problems" which the researcher identifies and reveals (Creswell, 2008, p. 207). One limitation of this study was that the small sample size (12 participants) may not support external validity as described by Creswell (2009). Qualitative, case study research is not aimed at generalizing to other settings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006); hence, although generalization was not a goal of this study, it may be construed by some as a limitation. Even though this study focused on one school, which has two campuses and a satellite location that serve specific communities, the findings may be transferrable to other contexts such as similarly situated rural community colleges. Including administrators, faculty, adjunct, and staff in the sample increased the chances of reaching saturation because, according to Creswell (2008), rich, thick descriptions and interpretations of experiences can be garnered from in-depth interviews. Moreover, as a novice researcher I was concerned that I would make mistakes, but I kept on track by maintaining up to date human research protections

training as prescribed by Walden University, adhering to the guidance offered by my committee, and utilizing the peer debriefer to review the proposal and final study for bias.

Another limitation was that the number of participants was unpredictable. In fact, the exact number of participants was not revealed until the data collection efforts were completed. For example, four participants reported scheduling conflicts related to medical problems, surgeries, deaths of close friends or family members, or being on vacation which delayed interviews. The last interview was conducted on January 8, 2015. Measures to increase the credibility of the study were clearly outlined in the methodology section of this paper.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope and delimitations of research studies establish boundaries. The scope of the study was delimitated to: (a) a demographic data form, (b) interviews, (c) history and humanities course syllabi utilized in the 2012–2013 academic year, (d) a researcher-maintained journal, (e) the researcher serving as the primary data collection method, and (f) a peer debriefer feedback. Participation in this study was delimitated to administrators, faculty, adjunct, and staff who were employed during the 2012–2013 academic year. Participants' reflections were helpful in revealing how to best address the problem as they sought to address concerns with students' learning outcomes. The focus of this project study was to gather administrators, faculty, adjunct, and staff perceptions, so the experiences of students were not included in the data collection and analyses processes. Thus, the findings may not generalize to other settings.

Dissemination of Information to Stakeholders

Upon completion of the project study and approval by Walden University, a printed and electronic copy of the document will be provided to the Vice President of Academic and Student Development who is responsible for the study site's research agenda. Study participants and the peer debriefer will be provided copies sent to their personal e-mail accounts not affiliated with the study site. The regional library system which serves the local community will be provided a hard copy of the final study for the purpose of adding to their collection of scholarly research. Additionally, a one to two page executive summary of the study's findings will be provided to the aforementioned stakeholders. All raw data will be made available upon request from authorized individuals as prescribed by Walden University.

Data Analysis Results

Review of Process to Generate, Gather, and Record Data

In review, data were generated from the demographic data form, face to face interviews, history and humanities course syllabi, and a researcher-maintained journal. I developed a demographic data form comprised of 18 questions which was completed by all 12 individuals interviewed (Appendix B). The information derived from the demographic data form was used to select participants to be interviewed and documented in a spreadsheet based on participants' code, question number, and response. I also developed a 14-question interview guide which was provided to participants at least 3 days in advance of scheduled interviews (Appendix G). I conducted face to face, individual interviews with 12 participants which were audio taped with their permission and transcribed into a word processing document. Each transcript was saved to an

individual word processing file. The information derived from the interviews were transferred from the word processing file to a spreadsheet and recorded by participants' code, question number and response. A representative of the study site (Campus Dean) and faculty emailed me history and humanities course syllabi. Four history course syllabi and one humanities syllabus were saved as individual word processing documents and transferred to a spreadsheet. The extent that local history was included or not included in the curriculum was documented on the spreadsheet. I also maintained a research journal which I used to examine and mitigate researcher bias and to record key milestones, events, and thoughts regarding the journey. Priori codes were not available due to the lack of research on the problem addressed; therefore, themes and subthemes were allowed to naturally emerge from the data which were color-coded and recorded in a word processing document and transferred to a spreadsheet.

Findings Presented as Patterns, Relationships, Themes, and Subthemes

To reiterate, the problem explored in this study was the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). Addressing the problem was supported by the selection of a diverse group of participants who were able to provide insightful responses to the interview questions. Two research questions were formulated which aligned with addressing the problem, as follows:

1. How do faculty and staff at RSCC perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum?
2. What possibilities and strategies could be developed to include local history in the curriculum at RSCC?

The 14 interview questions were logically developed to answer the research questions. Findings specific to the research questions, in relation to the interview questions, are also discussed in this section. The research questions primarily provided the context for data analysis and interpretation. The findings in this qualitative case study contribute to understanding the value of including local history in the community college curriculum to educators, students, and communities and how to best support local history curricula initiatives. Moreover, the findings underscore that managing change effectively in higher education requires a "sales pitch" and takes time. Data analysis and interpretation of findings are presented to capture patterns, relationship, themes, and subthemes and to explore relationships with the conceptual framework and professional literature.

Discrepant Cases

There were no negative or discrepant cases to report as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The nature of this qualitative case study provided participants the opportunity to offer insight on their interpretations of experiences (personal and professional); therefore, it was expected that opinions would differ. The verbatim reporting of participants' responses makes the accounts more believable, in addition to the documentation provided by RSCC (i.e., course syllabi) which were authentic work products. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also mentioned that honest reporting increases credibility, which is a salient point of this study's findings.

Evidence of Quality

Data, including the interview responses, demographic data form, history and humanities course syllabi, and researcher-maintained journal were triangulated to ensure

accuracy of the findings and to reduce researcher bias. Member checks and the use of a peer debriefer validated the accuracy of the findings. Only one participant (Participant 4) requested edits. Participant 4 did not dispute the accuracy of the transcribed interview. She mentioned: "This transcription is quite exact, and it sounds like I was 'nervous'! At any rate, I hope you can make a few edits." Discrepancies or clarifications were openly discussed and edits were made to ensure accuracy based on participants' feedback. After I edited the transcript, I sent it back to P4. Additionally, the peer debriefer reviewed the proposal and project study—feedback indicted that the proposal was well-developed, the themes aligned with participants' feedback, and the findings were supported by the professional literature.

Analysis of Demographic Data Form: Brief Biographical Sketches

Twelve individuals were selected for interviews based on responses to an 18-question demographic data form. As previously mentioned in this paper, each participant was provided a code in order to protect their confidentiality. The findings from the demographic data form revealed that employees oftentimes wear many hats, which may be attributed to the study site being a small, rural community college. For example, staff taught as adjunct instructors and faculty served as student advisors, led various committees, and worked in support of grant funded programs. In determining to what extent and in what manner to present a brief biographical sketch of participants derived from the demographic data form, the need to protect confidentiality was given high priority; thus, a holistic approach was deemed appropriate.

Participants included staff, faculty, adjunct and administrators who had 5 or more years' experience teaching, allocating resources in support of curricular functions, and/or

making curricular decisions at RSCC. All participants mentioned serving or acting in a leadership role on at least one institutional committee/work group/team or multi-organization project during their tenure. Additionally, participants' connections to the RSSC service region varied, as follows: (a) not being born, raised, or currently residing in the RSCC service region; (b) born in the region, relocating out of state, and returning during the adult years to reside and work; (c) never having left the region other than to attend a 4-year institution or to serve in the military; (d) having relocated from out of state or another part of the state. Moreover, all of the participants shared that they have been actively involved in community service endeavors in the RSCC service region as a result of personal choice, interest, or duties as defined by the institution. Participants' community service involvement included working with foundations, human services agencies, local councils/boards, public and private schools, and youth development organizations. Thus, the participants met the definition of "information-rich" cases as defined by Patton (2002), due to the multiple perspectives offered as a result of their varying roles, experiences, and responsiveness to the interview questions. To this end, this brief biographical sketch serves to capture participants' characteristics, including personal and professional backgrounds in relation to factors that may have influenced responses to the interview questions.

Analysis of Interview Data

Two research questions were developed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. Research Question #1 (RQ #1) related to the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum. RQ #1 was addressed with interview questions 1-9 which focused on exploring participants' current roles at the study site, definition of local

history, experiences as a learner and educator with local history, other experiences with local history, the value of local history, perceptions of local history in relation to the curriculum, and the extent that local history should be included in the curriculum. Research Question #2 (RQ #2) related to identifying strategies that could be used to include local history in the curriculum at RSCC. RQ #2 was aligned with interview questions 10-13 which focused on exploring participants' suggestions on strategies, processes, and resources (internal and external) that might support inclusion of local history or more local history in the curriculum. Additionally, RQ #1 and RQ #2 aligned with interview question 14 which allowed participants to add any additional comments. This information is discussed in detail later in this section.

Analysis of History and Humanities Course Syllabi

In order to fully address the problem outlined in this study and the research questions, the following question needed to be answered: To what extent was local history included or not included in the history curriculum? Based on a review of public information, RSCC included history content in its humanities course offerings during the 2012-13 academic year which was the focus of this study, so I requested syllabi for both disciplines. These courses were designated with the prefixes "HIS" (history) or "HUM" (humanities) by RSCC. I received a total of three syllabi provided by the Campus Dean and 21 documents (i.e., syllabi, rubrics, and course templates) from select faculty. Three of the syllabi received from faculty duplicated those provided by the Campus Dean. In the final analysis, four of the documents received were determined to be history course syllabi and one a humanities course syllabus, which are the focus of this review.

Due to the small pool of faculty, adjunct instructors, and administrators who teach in the disciplines of history and humanities, and the limited number of course offerings, it was imperative to protect the identity of those connected to this current study; hence, the courses that were analyzed are referred to as Course 1, Course 2, and so on. The variety of the courses afforded adequate opportunity to analyze the extent that local history was included or not included in the history curriculum. This data were triangulated with the interview data, member checks, public data, and data provided by RSCC, which revealed:

- Course 1: The inclusion of local history was consistent with the interview feedback from one participant who mentioned, "I try to include it [local history]," as evidenced by the required course readings, suggested course readings, field trips, and the requirement that students complete a "brief" research paper weighted at 15% of the course grade.
- Course 2: This course provided evidence of opportunities for students to explore aspects of local history, as evidenced by the required textbook and the requirement for students to complete a "thesis-style historically appropriate" research paper weighted at 25% of the course grade.
- Course 3: This course provided opportunities for students to explore aspects of local history, as evidenced by the required and suggested textbooks, and the requirement for students to complete research on a "thesis-style historically appropriate topic" weighted at 25% of the course grade.
- Course 4: This course provided opportunities for students to explore aspects of local history as evidenced by the required readings, suggested course

readings, field trips, and required reflective assignment (a 1-2 page narrative) weighted at 35% of the course grade.

- Course 5: This course provided opportunities for students to explore aspects of local history as evidenced by the "interdisciplinary" approach to instruction, the course required readings, written assignments, and a research paper (at least 12 pages) weighted at 40% of the course grade.

A synthesis of this data highlighted instructors' attempts to provide students opportunities to study local history, with students playing a significant role in selecting the topic. This approach spoke to a student-centered approach to learning versus a teacher-centered approach.

In summary, a salient point that emerged from analysis of the syllabi was instructors' treatment of the curriculum as a malleable resource to provide students opportunities to explore various aspects of the history of their communities, including social, political, economic, and cultural conditions. This information seemed to suggest that students are just as responsible for their learning experiences as instructors, especially when latitude is afforded to write and conduct research on historical topics of personal interest. Moreover, these findings may serve as a valid reference point when it comes to identifying how educators can utilize the study of local history as a vehicle to address the development of students' community skills at RSCC. These skills include civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012).

Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Revealed from the Data

The data revealed that Themes 1–4 addressed research question 1 (RQ #1) about the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum. Themes 5–7 addressed RQ #2 about strategies to local history in the curriculum at RSCC. Additionally, the data revealed that Theme 8 directly addressed the conceptual framework (reflection and reflective practices). This section explores the following themes and subthemes that were revealed in this study:

Theme 1: The Notion of a Universally-Accepted Definition of Local History May Be Elusive

The following definition provided by Dymond (1999) was used as a discussion prompt in order to explore how participants defined local history: "Local history is about ordinary, everyday life, and therefore has an educational and social importance" (pp. 15–16). Thus, this study captured local history as a knowledge system which focused on human experiences at the community level. Theme 1 revealed that participants used a variety of descriptors to define local history. Specifically, participants defined local history in geographical and global contexts, which are presented as subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Local history defined in geographical contexts. Similar to Dymond (1999), the majority of the participants defined local history in terms of educational and social importance, as evidenced by their use of the following key terms: all walks of life, backstory, behaviors, community culture, customs, daily norm of an area, economic, events, historical details, natural events, policies, political things, social background, social events, social system, and traditions. Participants used the following identifiers to establish demarcation lines or boundaries for defining local history:

centralized, community, grass roots, immediate vicinity, local, local region, region, particular geographic area or location, specific area, service region, and where I live, or where I work, or where I have grown up. Essentially, the boundaries participants established for defining local history primarily stretched beyond Dymond's more localized (at the community level) definition.

To illustrate, P2 described local history as "more of a specific to a community culture and a social background of what the person has experienced during a lifetime … more centralized to me either in where I live, or where I work, or where I have grown up." P2 further clarified her definition of local history by adding: "When it comes to local history, because again I think local history can be identified as local as is our service region, serving two counties and two cities." P5, was more specific in asserting that local history amounts to "the social events and even natural events that occur in a particular geographic area." When asked how he defined "local history," P3 defined local history in terms of culture by stating, "To me, local history would be giving students or persons a consciousness of the grassroots. Perhaps, even history gives us some insight of our future, present, traditions, customs, and behaviors." The comments made by P3 were echoed by P4 who stated, "Local history is defined as historical details that define the back story in the daily norm of an area within which one is living or working." P1, moved the discussion to place more of a regional focus on defining local history with the following statement: "I think local history encompasses anything that's going on in the immediate vicinity. Not necessarily the street, but the geographic location that you're in; being [the region of the study site]; that includes political things, economic, it covers everything." Continuing the trend towards a broader framework in defining local history, P8 offered,

"To me local history has to do with events and policies that I have experienced." In the final analysis, P10 synthesized what the majority of participants communicated: "I define local history as happened in all walks of life in a specific area." Overall, participants' responses reflected that local history encompasses certain "ingredients," to include social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the human experience.

Subtheme 2: Local history defined in global contexts. Two participants (P9 and P7) defined local history in global contexts. For example, P7 offered the following definition:

> To me, local history is a personal approach to history. It includes places I have likely visited and may include people I have met or events I have witnessed. It is not only "local happenings" however. It often involves how grand, worldwide or national events affected us right where we live.

The perspective offered by P7 challenges citizens to consider that local history does not evolve because there may implications in terms of what is occurring outside of communities' borders, to include global events.

P9 also contributed to the scholarly discourse on this topic when he mentioned being familiar with the work of Dymond (1999), but emphatically asserted a different opinion on how local history should be viewed. P9 posited that educators should consider defining local history in a global context rather than localizing it as he attributed to Dymond. The following passage demonstrates the position taken by P9:

> Reading his work [David Dymond] I know that's where he likes to look at everything in history, but I like to take it one step beyond that. Local history to me is more how did an event…global event…effect or is interpreted by the local

> region or community...For me, I look at the interpretation or the interaction with the event...how we view the event.

The comments offered by P9 and P7 broadened the scope of the discussion to suggest a cause-effect relationship between local history and global events. Furthermore, these analyses seem to suggest that communities' level of consciousness rises when the implications of events happening outside of its borders are given credence.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 1 findings were consistent with the professional literature which revealed varying definitions of local history to include geographical and global contexts (Carr, 2008; Dymond, 1999; Hunner & Westergren, 2011; Kolb, 2011). Moreover, these findings are not uncommon because as Kammen (2003) stated, "Local history lends itself to many interpretations… local history is, despite its limited geographical focus, a broad field of inquiry: it is the political, social, and economic history of a community and its religious and intellectual history too" (p. 4). Thus, Theme 1 aligned with the professional literature which demonstrated that although definitions of local history vary depending on the person providing the definition, each definition has educational and social value. This is important because each participant's definition of local history was reflected in how he or she answered additional questions in this study.

Summary of Theme 1. To summarize, Theme 1 emerged from participants' definition of "local history," which revealed how one defines the term, depends on whom one asks. To this end, the best conclusion drawn is that a concrete, universally-accepted definition of local history may not exist. This assessment was succinctly captured by P2 who stated, "Well, I think local history sometimes can be broad...you can use a broad

stroke or narrow stroke." Moreover, the lack of participants' consensus on the definition of local history did not necessarily equate to a lack of regard for its value, as evidenced by responses to other questions presented in this study.

Theme 2: Educators' Views on Local History Are Influenced by Their Own Backgrounds, Relationships With Others, and Interactions With the Environment

Participants were asked to share insight on what experiences influenced their views on local history, including teaching, learning, and other knowledge or experiences. Theme 2 revealed that participants' experiences varied, but relationships were at the core of factors that influenced their views on local history. P11, a self-described "lifelong learner," offered the following salient viewpoint on how experiences representing RSCC in community partnerships influenced her views on local history: "My views are one of caution, to be mindful of the fact that this tiny region has a great deal of diversity in how to communicate and share information and how to value each other." To put into context, P12 related the following experience living and teaching in a rural southwestern town before returning to the RSCC service region:

> Born and raised here, I left at age 18 to go to college and I went to colleges that were in the southwestern part of [the state where the study took place]. People out there did not know what "snaps" were, I didn't know what a "green bean" was…. I went to a lot of different churches because the students would ask me, you know, to go to their churches.... I went to family reunions, I went to all kinds of things. And, it was interesting because it was kind of like the students realized I accepted them, so they accepted me.

This account highlighted the fact that students can be resources in the acquisition of local history knowledge which challenges the validity of teacher-centered learning. Moreover, the experiences communicated by P12 underscored the uniqueness of communities in terms of each having its own culture and language.

Furthermore, P3 credited being raised in a rural town which is located in the RSCC service region, as influencing his personal values due to interactions with others as follows:

> My experiences with local history is basically relational...I am a person that's from a rural city...[a community in the RSCC service region]...and, so I'm very …let's say, been exposed to local history and I think it may be who I am as far as how I interact with people...I have a certain value system. With relationships and...appreciation for...other persons did pave the way for my present opportunities.

Considering this account and the fact that P3 also communicated living in various cities throughout the United States and in Europe for several years as an adult, it was suggestive that over the life span multiple influences may impact how a person views local history, which includes relationships and the environment.

P2, who also has deep roots within the communities served by RSCC, attributed her views on local history to relationships, as illustrated below:

> I would say gaining information from other people. Gaining knowledge and information…but, to me I think the impact of people that have been part of my development has been people that have taught me and just looking at how they impacted my life... and I guess that is part of my

> history. I would imagine how teachers, faculty members, church members people have impacted my life which is part of, maybe part of their history caused them to help me through my life.

Even though they were raised outside of the RSCC service region, P7 and P5 also revealed family backgrounds and relationships as sources of influence on their views on local history. P7 mentioned,

> I did a great deal of genealogical searching and it was exciting. It helped me build a bond with one of my uncles I had never had before. I discovered things that touched me personally, like the fact that my grandmother (long deceased) used my birth announcement as a bookmark in her personal Bible.

Likewise, P5 provided the following in-depth feedback on how generations of family members served as sources of reference on views of local history:

> Well, I had it from a couple of sources. For one, my parents were very interested in local history and would share how events that they knew of. ...the area that I grew up in, my grandfather's family had come there...I believe it was three generations before him...they were Dutch...and had come down from New York and supposedly had originally come from the Mayflower…so, they had a lot of personal pride...they were involved in that particular local history…Maybe, because I was connected to my grandparents and my grandparents talked about events I had the appreciation for the things…Let's say I hope I can pass on some things to my own children.

P5's comments suggest that family members are positioned to significantly influence views on local history. Additionally, these comments reveal that knowledge of local history can be a source of pride on an individual level. Moreover, the commentary offered by P5 conveyed how positive experiences with local history can fuel a desire to not only advance generational sharing, but also a desire to embrace the culture of communities other than one's own origin.

Like P5, P4 who was also born and raised outside the RSCC service region, but in an urban area, credited relationships with colleagues and interactions with students as influences on her views on local history, as the result of working at a rural community college (the study site):

> Over the last 8 years I would say I've learned a lot about local history via my interactions with people. These folks are artists [several local individuals named] that have come through the College [RSCC]...via the [a student club]...annual [a special event]…I was able to learn more about the culture, the people, the back story, and of course working with students and colleagues and co-workers I've also been able to expand my knowledge about...the history...the agriculture part...the back story...you know between races, class, education, etc.

The insight offered by P4 suggests that learning about local history in a starkly different environment from where one was born or raised can elevate the level of consciousness and appreciation for different cultures. The response provided by P4 also highlighted that learning is not limited to interactions between colleagues or educators acting as facilitators—educators should also be open to learning from students at a time when student-centered learning is routinely discussed in higher education circles.

P10, who moved from out of state, extended the discussion on factors that influence views on local history, in relation to his own educational experiences and teaching as follows:

> Being raised and attending both k12 schools and undergraduate studies in [a state located in the northeast], knowing the triumphs and struggles of those in the area was important to know how to interact with others. Upon moving to [the state of the study site] 17 years ago, I knew the importance of finding out the local history of the new area. By knowing the history, both good and bad, I could get a feeling as to what the populace had faced and how they had progressed as a culture. That knowledge made it easier to make a connection with the people around me, especially the students.

The experiences communicated by P10 were similar to P12, which demonstrated how environmental change can be positive if past experiences with local history are embedded in educational experiences. Similarly, P5 communicated that studying local history resulted in valuing the discipline and a desire to seek new information for the purpose of forging relationships outside of and within the education setting.

Another dimension was added to the discussion by P8, who was born in the RSCC service region, but moved away as a child to the northeastern United States, only to return 29 years ago. P8 communicated that as she attempted to navigate the place of her birth for the first time as an adult, she learned that churches were important to making connections to local history. According to P8,

> Moving here, my experiences with local history is the idea of how to get around, how to meet people, the social interactions were very different. Also, how people

> talked about different subjects. For instance, I was used to buses every 15 minutes, so it wouldn't be changing to this one and here is an hour in between [referring to bus schedules in the RSCC service region]. So, you'd have to be there on time. There was also knowing that stores and everything were very far apart and that walking seemed strange to people. I was used to walking in the streets meeting people or getting to know local politics by just going to places and you know seeing things, but we didn't really have a local paper. We had a paper for the whole state, so the local paper was very sparse. And just trying to get to know what was going on was difficult. Most of it came through churches I find, and that was not what how I was used to getting information.

The insight provided by P8 on navigating an environment when one lacks knowledge of local history highlights as sense of confusion. In fact, this descriptive account served to inform stakeholders of the complexities of local history including developing relationships, social interactions, and navigating transportation systems. Moreover, the account provided by P8, similar to P12, communicated the importance of identifying a "gatekeeper" who has knowledge of local history and can help others navigate the social, cultural, and physical dimensions of an environment.

P9, the only participant born and raised outside of the Unites States, offered the following unique aspect to the discussion on experiences that influence views on local history, in terms of his interactions with the environment:

> I grew up in [country omitted]. I'm a first generation immigrant. When we came to the United States we moved to [a northeastern state], and [the northeastern

> state] is a completely different environment from [a community served by the study site]. And, so now that I'm down here in the South...It's a lot different, so I don't even know how to talk about it, but I hear that 'this what we do in the South,' but I hear that each neighborhood or each group or sub-group of different southerners they have their own customs. So, what they call 'this is what we do in the South,' I often find out that 'this what your family is doing'…'this part of the South is doing.' When I go to Florida it's completely different. When I go to Georgia, it's completely different. (Laughter). But, sometimes we speak in such general terms…we're making it seem like this is what everyone in the South is doing or what everyone in this region is doing, but no it's just your family or just this neighborhood or this city.

The dialogue offered by P9 captured, to some extent, a sense of frustration with the opinions of others regarding factors that influence cultural experiences in the United States. P9 seemed to conclude, based on self-discovery and interactions with different environments that it would be more accurate to state that cultural influences such as customs and behaviors should not be solely attributed to a particular region—instead, these influences can be personal and familial.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 2 findings were consistent with Twenge and Campbell's (2008) work which revealed that human development is influenced by multiple factors, including interactions with others, public communication systems, and defining moments. Moreover, Theme 2 findings provide other researchers a framework to make connections between participants' use of words such as culture and environment to frame influences on their values and beliefs as it relates to Kammen's

(2003) insights on the study of local history, and the similar manner in which Fiske (2002) defined culture.

Summary of Theme 2. To summarize, Theme 2 emerged from participants' discussion on factors that influenced their views on local history. The findings indicated that the influences on views on local history were relational—community of origin; interactions with family, educational settings, colleagues, students, the environment; and self-discovery. Moreover, the findings seemed to suggest that acquisition of local history knowledge requires action and being open to lifelong learning.

Theme 3: Local History Is Important and Has Value to Educators, Students, and Communities

Participants were asked to share their views on the value of local history to educators, students and communities. The findings revealed consensus was gained in terms of participants consistently responding that local history has "value" and is "important." Participants offered a variety of examples that related to their professional and personal lives.

Subtheme 1: Important and valuable to educators. All of the participants communicated that the local history is important and valuable in their professional practices and personal lives. Consensus on this topic is reflected in P1's statement that "I think it is very important…imperative in my position," and revelations that local history is so significant that as a parent she educates her own children on the topic. The views shared by P1 demonstrate that if value is placed on local history, it can have relevance in the classroom setting and beyond. The following example of real-world experiences

shared by P4 is offered to illustrate that local history can provide educators a platform to develop positive interactions with students:

> Let's see. Knowing and appreciation of local history is important to me as a teacher...to know the environment which one is working. It helps me to work better with my students when I can understand the back story it helps me to connect with them, it helps me to have a true appreciation for their particular journey. I've often found that many encounters with students…you know...who never left this particular area…they really have a great, rich history that kind of adds to the dimension of the class.

The experiences offered by P4 also serves to remind educators that students have a past that includes diverse experiences that can contribute to learning in the classroom setting. In this instance, when students were provided a safe learning environment that included sharing their own backgrounds, the educator reported more positive outcomes occurred.

P2, who does not teach history, offered the following insight on the value of local history in terms of her professional life: "I am not one of the history instructors, but I think it's important...motivate me to not to do some of things...or to encourage me to do some of the things a lot different, which helped me decide that I wanted to get an education." Similarly, P10 offered long-standing beliefs on the benefits of local history with the following statement: "I have always felt that knowing the history of your direct area is important." More specifically, P10 shared the personal benefits of local history in a manner that improved professional practices whereby, "That [local history] knowledge made it easier to make a connection with the people around me, especially the students." Likewise, P5 stated, "I love history and I like to ask the back story of things...how things

got to be the way they are," which reveals the value of local history on a personal level in terms of a learner and educator's perspective on how knowledge of local history can answer how and why questions.

Subtheme 2: Important and valuable to students. Several participants framed the relevance of local history knowledge to students. The following comment by P6 is representative of participants' beliefs that local history has importance and value to students: "I certainly think students need to have a past....where they came from and where they're going." To illustrate, according to P4, when students understand local history

> They [students] have a greater appreciation for the cost that those who have come before them have paid. And then, that causes them or prompts them to value their education, to value their community, to value themselves, to value or consider heavily the choices that they make knowing that the choices will impact those who will come after them.

This response seemed to suggest that studying local history allows students to not only make connections with the past, but also provides the foundation for directing future decision-making. In order to facilitate this process, P3, who teaches, stated that educators should "have the student identify with the question or identify with the information about their experiences, which makes them connected to their society." To illustrate, P2 provided the following example of how educators can use the proximity of local history to spark students' pride in their communities:

> It's just like living in Boston and you talking about the Boston Tea Party. How rich is that to be able to talk about the experiences and you can look right out your

> University window and see it? It gives students a pride where they come from and teaches them about their history because we sometimes may glaze over it.

This illustration provided a powerful visualization of local history study at work, centered on one of the most significant events in United States history and how its availability calls for educators to connect students with similar history. Indeed, P2 acknowledged that local history is rich and valuable to students and seems to reassure educators that even though the past may not be "pretty," students may still be positioned to display pride in their communities.

Furthermore, the following excerpt demonstrates how P2 extended discussion on the topic to challenge educators to contemplate the value of local history to students that may have relocated to the RSCC region:

> Consider what local history is because some of our students may not be a part of the history that is where they are living now. We have some students that probably have come from California and being military families that have moved here and don't understand what has gone on here within their college...where their college community is located now.

This perspective offered by P2 was supported by P4 who stated, "It [local history] also gives other students who may not be from this areas as well as myself an opportunity to learn more about the culture." Moreover, according to P4, the benefits are there for both students and educators, as illustrated below:

> Students can benefit from local historical knowledge because it instills the greatest of pride about themselves and their communities." Of course it gives me as well as them a greater pride in their environment because I get

> to know about their environment and then I share that in our discussions and in our interactions and then of course that empowers them as well.

A closer inspection of the manner in which P4 introduced the words "pride" and "empowerment" to describe the benefits of local history to educators and students, suggests a call to action for educators to understand and apply the tenets of local history to their professional practices.

Similar to P4 and P12, P8, also suggested benefits to both students and educators as follows:

> A lot times the students would look at you as being teacher and put you in a box. So, it's like you know all this stuff. But, when you share part of that history with them, and they share part of their history with you, it sort of draws them into being more communicative...you become a whole different person and they can see potential in themselves and think 'I can probably do that.'

The experiences communicated by P8 seemed to give educators pause to consider that local history can serve as a tool to open the lines of communication with students. Moreover, these experiences demonstrated to educators that connections can be made with students by sharing a piece of their own past; hence, planting seeds of hope can empower students to build on the accomplishments of previous generations.

Subtheme 3: Important and valuable to communities. Overwhelmingly, participants' responses revealed the importance and value of local history knowledge to communities. RSCC is small institution, located in a rural, southeastern region of the United States, which is offered to contextualize participants' perspectives. Given that community colleges were designed to serve needs of local communities, P4 helped to

frame this discussion within the context of the setting as demonstrated by the following response: “I believe, again, keeping in mind that we're a small college...it's really important to retain students...I feel that it brings a sense of value...the role of local history is very important to the curriculum.” In fact, according to P3, “we could curtail some of the brain drain where students leave their communities and go other places,” which also suggests a link between local history in the curriculum and retention of students.

P10 offered the following perspective, which captures the prospect of entire communities benefitting from knowledge of local history due to the opportunities for informed decision-making:

> Through my experiences as both a learner and a teacher, the importance has only strengthened that connection by watching myself and those around me to grow and evolve. That type of knowledge can help guide decisions that can be made on many different platforms.

In essence, the experiences shared by P10 alluded to the potential power that knowledge of local history can wield, in terms of positioning citizens to actively participate in a democratic society in which addressing complex issues, requires informed citizenry.

P8 not only suggested that local history can advance social change, but went a step further than P10 by issuing the following cautionary tale to communities: “I think that it’s important for people who don’t understand it to know, because you can’t forget what happened or the difficulties, because they will come back and happen again.” P11 also noted that the knowledge of local history can aid in repeating past mistakes, in addition to suggesting that the value of local history to communities is the opportunity that it presents to effectuate social change, as demonstrated in the following passage:

> You cannot move forward without looking at the past, looking behind. So, the value of local history…never forget that people have learning experiences that you must recognize. Does it mean you have to follow that path? Because then you don't grow, and you don't transform yourself. But, history does tend to repeat itself, and so, the value is respect and acknowledge and be aware of where you came from...and what all has occurred with you...and from that, use it as springboard to be an agent of change...of social transformation.

Essentially, the perspective offered by P11 served as another cautionary tale to communities that in order to grow and transform, the imperative is to respect the diversity of citizenry, which was also echoed by P12.

P2 and P4 also conveyed that it would behoove communities to consider that decision-making can be positively impacted by gaining an understanding and appreciation of lessons learned from local history. Specifically, the following comments offered by P2 are very descriptive and cautionary:

> Again as I said you have to know where you come from. I think students...all of us we...communities...we need to understand things that have happened in the past…any issues, struggles that have occurred within your environment as I said....in your community...it builds the culture...and it builds your social knowledge of what has happened because knowing culture, knowing the disappointments, struggles, and the success that have happened is going to help you to be even more vigilant and aware of you not repeating some of things that may have happened negatively in the past...just ensuring that we understanding and not running away.

To put the experiences of P2 into perspective, it is appropriate to share that P8 described how it has been her experience that the RSCC community has a history of divisiveness which may serve as a barrier for it to evolve. According to P8,

> Here everything was so separate that it tends to be separate and stay that way. And, I think that the value of knowing about each other is that you can move forward together, rather than 'this one moves forward, and oh yeah, and you come to.' I think that especially in African American communities that one of the reasons that the past becomes so important is because there's this blank wall which you reach, where you don't know where to go to next. You can get up to a certain point, but beyond that, you're not sure how far back you can actually go.

The comments offered by P8 clearly provided support for the value of local history to communities in terms of unification. Still, P8 appeared to caution communities that there seems to be some unevenness in the availability of accounts on local history in the RSCC region which puts some segments of society at a disadvantage.

On the other hand, responses provided by P10 served to capture the scope of the value of local history across demographics in communities. P10 stated: "local history impacts everyone in a specified area…it also affects all involved regardless of race or gender." To illustrate how the value of local history can transcend demographics in communities, P1 stated: "I helped with a lecture series that was presented at a retirement community," in addition to being impressed with learning that older generations were "still very interested" in the community's history.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 3 findings were consistent with the professional literature which revealed that knowledge of local history is

important to instilling community pride and identity in citizens (Kyvig & Marty, 2010; Wellman, 1982) and cultivating cultural awareness in the context of globalization (Lauck, 2013). Kunjufu (2002) and Ladson-Billings (2000) found that understanding students' culture and backgrounds can improve educators' professional practices and student learning outcomes, which are views that emerged from Theme 3. Moreover, Carr (2008) and Kolb (2011) confirmed participants' feedback that knowledge of local history can result in informed decision-making.

Summary of Theme 3. To summarize, Theme 3 emerged from participants' discussion on their experiences with local history and assessing its value or importance. The findings indicated that participants are convinced that the value of local history rests in benefits to students, educators' personal and professional lives, and communities. Moreover, the findings indicated that by discussing local history, pride is instilled in students, educators, and the community. Additionally, participants expressed that local history has implications for decision-making, whereby knowledge of it can help to avoid past mistakes which can translate to social change. Overall, the participants' responses circled back to the following statement made by P9: "The value for my students and the communities we serve…by observing what has happened we can avoid future problems and predict future trends." To this end, P4, stated: "Well, I just see that history...local history is important. I think people, when they know from whence they have come, then they can get somewhere in a much more succinct manner," which synthesized participants' feedback on the value of local history.

Theme 4: Educators Recommended the Inclusion of Local History or More Local History in the Curriculum

P11 communicated that curricular offerings at RSCC should be consistent across the state community college system; however, there "should not be a tight relationship" unless there is evidence to suggest that a course already exists. In fact, since the 2012–2013 academic year the state community college system master file has listed a local history course (History 205), which RSCC has never offered. In terms of participants' knowledge of local history course offerings, the findings revealed that (a) Two participants had awareness of either a local history course or topical course (which would allow for a local history focus in the curriculum) in the state community college system's master file and (b) the majority of the participants believed that there should be a close relationship between local history and the curriculum. Participants provided varying insights on the status of local history in the curriculum—from non-existent to examples of field trips, classroom discussions, writing assignments, and research projects. Additionally, participants shared insights and expectations in terms of recommending revising the curriculum at RSCC to include local history or more local history. In some instances, participants recommended more than one option or instructional approach for stakeholders to consider.

Subtheme 1: The status of local history in the curriculum varies. Overall, participants' comments reflected that there are great possibilities for the curriculum when it comes to considering the inclusion of local history. The following comments made by P2 are offered to highlight the discussion on the status of local history in the curriculum at RSCC:

> There is rich history and I would think would be invaluable to include that somewhere...and have a strong focus on the local history. I think we really need to focus on it. But, surely to have a strong emphasis on your local history regardless of your locale.

In this succinct manner, P2 not only directed attention to value of the local history to communities served by RSCC and the need to capture it in the curriculum, but also boldly implied that unquestionably there should be a "strong" relationship between local history and the curriculum not only at RSCC, but also at other institutions.

The reality, according to P1 is that there are shortcomings in the wider press and in the curriculum at RSCC when it comes to a focus on local history. P1, who shared attempts to incorporate aspects of local history in the classroom setting, stated the following concerns:

> I don't know that it [local history] is incorporated as much as it should be in publication, meaning large publications of textbooks or even smaller trade books. I don't feel like it is incorporated as much as it should and I think that is a deficit. I feel that [local history] needs to be incorporated because I think there's a hole. Change textbooks as I'm looking at doing because I don't feel like a lot of local history is involved in that.

This idea of gaps in the curriculum strongly communicated by P1 was also supported by P9. According to P9,

> I just believe local history is very important. It's a shame that we squeeze it out of our curriculum…I give it high value because we walk around the same old buildings, we walk around the same grounds that were around during most of the

> events that we're talking about in history. We take it for granted. We don't mention it. And if we could bring more of it into the classroom, it would make it more real for the students.

Echoing the position taken by P1 and P9, P10 supported adding more local history to the curriculum with the following perspective:

> I believe the curriculum can only be strengthened by incorporating local history. It can help build a stronger connection to the content and between the students and teacher. By obtaining a common connection, I feel the curriculum would be enhanced.

Essentially, P2 challenged educators to ponder the potential impact of expanding the curriculum to include more local history. The following comments offered by P2 suggests that in order to promote what is commonly referred to as "student-centered" learning, educators must take the necessary action to add more local history to the curriculum:

> It's all about ensuring the knowledge and expanding the knowledge. By adding did you know that this happened in your community? Did you know this happened where you live? This is part of your rich history…do you know about it? Local history can be added that will increase and help the knowledge of our students.

This account demonstrated the vision that P2 has for engaging students in local history by using a Socratic-form of questioning, which aligned with the focus in higher education on developing students to be critical thinkers.

To further illustrate student-centered learning in practice through the use of local history, P5, envisioned the following classroom scenario:

> I think as an [specific teaching discipline named] it [local history] would be a great way to learn to research. I think…you know I have to be real stringent in talking to them about sound research…hearsay as well...I mean you could certainly interview people...the way you collect data in a primary way that would be really interesting. I think that could expose my students to some primary research.

Indeed, as captured by P5, local history can help students develop primary research skills which include interviewing.

P6 offered a specific example of how she has incorporated local history in the curriculum as follows:

> In the last three years where I have used local examples, such as when we discussed the Civil War in a [study site to neighboring state] context, which captured the imagination of the students as they could imagine the battle taking place. Teach things that happened in your area to students that they can relate.

Essentially, P6 illustrated how studying local history can engage students if the approach has personal meaning, which allows students to readily make connections.

P8 provided the following description of her attempts to include aspects of local history in the curriculum through students' writing assignments: "Like I said...if it's an essay then I would assign them something to do with local history or encourage them to use local sources for their research." P7 also asserted that a relationship between local

history and the curriculum should exist, which is indicative of this account of his professional practices:

> In my classes, it adds a richness and personalizes some of the details. It makes the study more interesting and the student is often able to relate their learning to things they know from other sources, which helps make the new learning more permanent.

P7 seemed to suggest that the study of local history should not be viewed as a "fad" or the latest "cottage industry" because its value rests in positioning students to be lifelong learners who are able to make connections to past learning and experiences, which can serve as reference points for future learning.

Even though other participants were able to provide examples of local history in their teachings, P3 admitted that "Local history is really not focused that much in my teaching." Moreover, P3 provided the following rationale for what was deemed a lack of local history in the curriculum, in addition to a call to action to revamp the curriculum:

> I think that we're just going to have to re-design of the curriculum.
>
> My perception is...in our competitiveness we have universalized education…and then with globalization we have washed some hands of the specialties within our own local area…and so, with that, I think that the local history is very significant when it comes down to re-designing the curriculum where we can re-concentrate on what makes us a little different, what makes our morals and ethics a little different, what makes people a little different as far as how they relate to their own environment.

The analysis provided by P3 singled out globalization as the culprit which drives a need to revise the curriculum to focus on local history. Hence, P3 positioned stakeholders to consider local history as an environmental factor which could be just as potentially influential on human development as outside forces.

Subtheme 2: Include local history within the context of history courses. Participants 1, 2, 4, and 10 held the opinion that local history could be included as a component or section of history courses. This brief statement which was shared by P4 succinctly captured the synthesis of this opinion: "I feel that primarily it should be an asset in the actual history class." This viewpoint was consistent with the data collected on the history and humanities course' syllabi, which revealed educators' attempts to engage students in local history learning through the use of assignments including field trips, brief research papers, assignments, required texts, and suggested texts. This situation makes a continued focus viable.

Subtheme 3: Local history as a separate course. Participants 9, 10, and 11 held the opinion that local history could be offered as a separate course. The following insight provided by P11 reflected participants' support for this option: "I think it would be a wonderful, separate course on the history of the region." In the process of pondering this option, P9 raised an issue also covered by P2, in terms of reminding stakeholders that transferability of credits should be a legitimate concern, in the context of new course offerings and the implications for curricula changes. P9 stated:

> I think it should be a separate course only because of the nature of colleges and universities. But, to say let's center a U.S. History with a lot more local history themes to it, we might end of changing the nature of the

> course and when it's time for you to transfer to another state or another city, or a 4-year college, whatever you're doing, wherever you're transferring, whatever is going on, now your credits are not transferable.

In fact, one trend in higher education has been community college systems brokering "guaranteed transfer agreements" with 4-year institutions. To date, RSCC has been the beneficiary of approximately 20 such agreements which allow students who complete associates degrees admission to partner institutions, providing they have earned the requisite GPA. Based on participants' previous comments, to offer local history as a separate course would entail a lengthy process involving addressing accreditation issues, communication with K-12 entities and community partners, negotiation with K-12 schools, and final approval at the state community college systems office. As demonstrated below, Participant 11 cautioned against developing a separate course for local history:

> Most people believe that it's so much work that you take the 'fire out of the belly' of your faculty member who tried to do it. So, I think that third semester ends...for that person who was all excited, do they finally get this approved course? So, this is why we do topics...So, if all that's done...does it leave time to put it on the schedule?

This response means that the separate course option may be the least appealing due to the time-intensive nature of the process and the potential for faculty leading the process to lose passion for the endeavor.

Subtheme 4: Local history as an elective course. Participants 5, 10, and 11 held the opinion that local history could be offered as an elective course in the credit-based

curriculum. P11 shared that an elective, in the form of a topical course (History 195) might be a viable option. To illustrate the synthesis of this opinion, according to P5, "I think it would be a great elective course." In particular regard to students enrolled in RSCC's associate degree granting programs, there is some flexibility in earning elective credits, which at first glance makes this option appealing. A closer look at participants' feedback revealed the need to gain state-level approval before the course can be offered. This option may not as appealing as other options due to the time-intensive nature of the process.

Subtheme 5: Local history as a required course. RSCC currently offers seven associate degree programs which require students to earn a minimum of six semester hours of history credits. Participant 1 stated that she believes local history is so important that students enrolled in associate degree programs should be required to take a local history course: "I think it should be able to be used as meeting a core requirement for a degree." Coupled with the lengthy review and approval process and the fact that none of the other participants recommended local history as a required course, this option may not be a viable one.

Subtheme 6: Local history as a non-credit course. Participants 5 and 11 shifted the focus to non-credit programming by suggesting that a local history course could be offered by the regional workforce development center (WDC). This option was enthusiastically presented as demonstrated by the following comment made by P5: "I think it'd be a great course to offer to the community as well. We could advertise...have courses other than just academic or technical that would serve the community, and it [local history] certainly could do that sort of thing." This option may be viable because

RSCC is responsible for the functions of the regional workforce development center which offers industry training and non-credit courses.

Subtheme 7: Local history as an interdisciplinary approach. As demonstrated by participants' responses throughout the interview process, to some extent, there have been attempts to include local history in the curriculum. These efforts were reflected in responses from participants 2, 5, 6, and 10 which focused on conceptualization of and experiences regarding an interdisciplinary approach to including local history study in the curriculum. Participant 2 reflected this synthesis in the following statement:

> I don't think that it has to be an elective course or a course in general. I think that it should be blended in with all courses, just as we have a desire to incorporate *practical reasoning* or any other element into the curriculum.

P3 received support from P5 whose perspectives reflected the high level of enthusiasm participants communicated in support of the interdisciplinary approach to including local history in the curriculum. P5 stated, "I would be very happy to cooperate with a history teacher...if he or she were committed to this. It would be a...learning across the curriculum type of setup...I would be very happy to do that." The willingness to collaborate, as communicated by P5, provides a realistic interpretation of what interdisciplinary studies at work looks like. In consideration of the options offered by participants, the interdisciplinary approach seems the most feasible because faculty supplied evidence of professional practices that are already aligned.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 4 findings were compared to data collected from the history syllabi and humanities course syllabi and I determined the information to be consistent in terms of the evidence provided by participants which

demonstrated their efforts to focus on aspects of local history in the curriculum. Theme 4 findings were also consistent with the professional literature which suggests a relationship between local history and the curriculum should exist, and that a variety of instructional approaches can be used to support those efforts (Knupfer, 2013). In this regard, research revealed a focus on local history in the history curriculum through the use of interactive learning (Strauss & Eckenrode, 2014), as well as across disciplines and through service-learning activities, which improved students outcomes in the community skills milieu (Astin & Sax, 1998; Netecki, 2011). These research findings were defined as important tenets of Theme 4. Moreover, the professional literature revealed the need for community colleges to provide academic programs and workforce training with a common goal—to produce lifelong learners who can apply critical thinking skills (Finegold, et al., 2012, Hainline et al., 2012; Rose, 2012). This information aligned with Theme 4 recommendations that stakeholders should consider various approaches to addressing local history in the curriculum including an interdisciplinary, credit-based course in the traditional curriculum, and/or as a non-credit based course offered by the workforce development center.

Summary of Theme 4: To summarize, Theme 4 emerged from participants' perceptions of the relationship between local history and the curriculum. The findings indicated that participants advocate for such a link, to varying extents, from recommending a separate course to an elective course for non-credit. Additionally, the findings indicated that participants across disciplines were able to provide examples of the use of local history in their classrooms. When the aforementioned findings are coupled with concerns related to time, compliance, and negotiating with internal and

external stakeholders, an interdisciplinary approach to addressing local history in the curriculum seems more realistic then creating a new course (credit or non-credit). This is a legitimate conclusion because even when participants could not provide examples of local history in their teachings as highlighted by Participant 3's response, they advocated for the inclusion of local history or more local history in the curriculum.

Theme 5: Participants Recommended a Number of Strategies to Include Local History or More Local History in the Curriculum

Participants were asked to share insight on strategies that could be used to include local history or more local history in the curriculum. Participants were very enthusiastic and creative in their responses. One salient point that was consistently conveyed by participants was captured by P7 who communicated that faculty at RSCC enjoy some level of "academic freedom" to implement strategies that would result in the inclusion of local history or more local history in the curriculum. The findings also indicated that participants' recommendations fell into the following three categories which are presented as subthemes: (a) faculty, students, staff, and community input; (b) instructional activities; and (c) change requires a "sales" pitch and takes time.

Subtheme 1: Faculty, students, staff, and community input. Participants 2 and 10 communicated that two groups of stakeholders should be involved in strategizing for the local history curriculum—faculty and students. The importance of faculty buy-in is reflected in the following comment made by P7: "At the small college, the only other thing required is a 'champion' who wants to run the course, which was echoed by P11 who stated: "It would have to come from a faculty member who has that burning

passion." The following perspective offered by P2 echoes the recommendations of several participants in regards to involving both faculty and students:

> Involving your instructors…to understand what is it they are focusing on. Here we teach specific history classes...Women in History and the History of [the state where the study site is located] and we teach World History, U.S. History. So, I would think that the first strategy would be to communicate with the faculty that are teaching those classes. Find out how they're bringing local history into their curriculum. Identify and explain what local history is to the students when you say local history.

The suggestions made by P2 did not limit revisions to the curriculum by faculty who teach history. This idea was not lost on P10 who captured this approach as a collaborative effort, involving faculty and students, as follows:

> I would recommend contacting the faculty in the history department to gather their input. Additionally, I would recommend polling the students to gain insight into the interest for more local history to be added to the curriculum.

While P10 identified history faculty as central figures in the curriculum development process, P12 mentioned that students, staff, and faculty who do not teach history can be valuable resources as well if they possess knowledge of the region.

According to P12, community stakeholders should have input into the local history curriculum because

> I think it [revising the curriculum to address local history] needs to be done as much as possible from within, what I mean by that is we have students here that are very knowledgeable on local history. We have faculty and staff, we have

> people in our community that can come in and offer their expertise. An advisory committee made up of people from the community and they would give me input. I was arguing against students in [a new program under development] having to take English 111, but allowing them to take English 101. Center heads [leaders of community organizations]…they would say 'we need them to know how to read and write well.'

This recounting of lessons learned by an RSCC faculty collaborating with community stakeholders to develop a new curriculum underscores that such work should not be done in isolation. Thus, it may be prudent for institutions to consider that the risk of not including community input may result in outcomes that do not adequately support students' career goals, community skills development, or the needs of local communities.

Subtheme 2: Instructional activities. Participants recommended a number of instructional activities designed to address local history in the curriculum. These activities focused on using primary research and sources to explore local history which included journaling, interviews, artifacts/documents, field trips, scavenger hunts and technology to conduct research. The following perspective offered by P4 reflects the range and participants' level of enthusiasm for the aforementioned strategies:

> In those particular history courses students can conduct scholarly research where they're looking at primary sources, where they're looking at artifacts, where they're actually interviewing people who have actually been involved in the actual history themselves. They can do scavenger hunts, they can do field trips. I mean they can do a whole gamut of things that can make that history come alive in the class.

Furthermore, the account provided by P4 gives hope that positive student outcomes may result if educators consider employing interactive or hands-on instructional strategies to advance student learning.

Subtheme 3: Change requires a "sales" pitch and takes time. Despite participants' overall support for addressing local history in the curriculum, one salient point revealed by the findings was the need to acknowledge that change takes times and must be adequately managed in order to produce positive outcomes. P11 hinted at the need to consider change management in regards to curricula changes with the following statement: "The role should be one of awareness…get people curious." P12 put things into perspective with the following statement:

> I remember when one time we had a grant here for some wonderful curriculum in terms of technology, but the problem was no one could get a job using that degree here because there were no job opportunities at that time, so the curriculum died. So, I don't want us to get the horse before the cart. It takes a big sales pitch, it's going to take time because change takes time. It needs to mellow in, not a blitzkrieg...like getting medicine to a child, you've got to mix it with some sweet and not choke them with it.

Essentially, P12's description of what is needed to effectuate change in the curriculum at RSCC to address local history serves to caution stakeholders that even the most well-intentioned ideas and efforts may not garner positive outcomes. Moreover, this account positions stakeholders to ponder the various ways to effectively communicate the goals, objectives, expectations, and vision for curriculum changes.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 5 was consistent with the professional literature which provided support for a variety of learning opportunities to address local history in the curriculum (Knupfer, 2013). This connection was further made by Davies' (2001) study which demonstrated how faculty engaged students in hands-on learning with the support of primary and secondary resources to explore elements of American history. Research also indicated that faculty have engaged students in oral history projects which involved interviewing and recording key informants in their communities in order to preserve local history (Blumenreich, 2012; Maschi, et al., 2012), which was suggested by participants in this current study.

Summary of Theme 5. In summary, Theme 5 revealed that participants provided feedback on a number of instructional strategies to support inclusion of local history in the curriculum. The range was very impressive, which primarily focused on gathering suggestions from faculty, students, staff, and the community, in addition to engaging students in primary research through interactions with people, places, documents, and using technology as a research tool. Even though participants indicated a clear way forward in terms of the academic freedom that they enjoy at RSCC, the need to manage change effectively, to sell the idea of change to stakeholders, and change takes time were salient points. The strategies recommended by participants were in alignment with the professional literature.

Theme 6: Identification of Key Individuals, Decision-Makers, and Internal Processes to Support Inclusion of Local History or More Local History in the Curriculum

Participants were asked to identify personnel and processes that would be involved in curricular changes related to local history. Participants' feedback in some cases was fragmented, while in others more defined. This information was pieced together to capture findings which are presented in the following two subthemes: (a) role of faculty and (b) key individuals, decision makers, and processes.

Subtheme 1: Role of faculty. Participants' responses reflected that their level of involvement in curricular functions varies depending of their roles, employment status, and department. To illustrate, P3 who teaches and serves in a leadership role mentioned that coordinating curricular functions and "the advantage of selecting the material and designating assignments." Similarly, P6, who is an adjunct instructor, shared that "Sometimes I'm asked to pick out the texts that best suits our courses. I get to review them." Additionally, the option to select textbooks was also communicated by P11 who is a full-time faculty. Moreover, P9, who is an adjunct instructor, provided the following detailed account of his role in the curriculum development process which suggests some level of academic freedom:

> My role in the curriculum development process is to create a curriculum, more lessons, the syllabus based on the topic prescribed through the [the state community college system]. They give us a course description, we have to create the syllabus that matches that course description. We have the freedom to add

> anything we want to or use any example we want to, so the freedom to put local history is there.

Like P9 and P6, P8 is also an adjunct instructor. P8 offered a somewhat different experience in relation to her role in the curriculum development process, as follows: "As far as choosing the book, don't have a lot of say in that, it's a committee. But, how I use it and any supplement that I ask for, that's really up to me," which suggests, to some extent, academic freedom exists at RSCC.

The opportunity for faculty to express their opinions was supported by P7 who serves in a leadership role which involves reviewing and assessing curriculum and requests for changes, as illustrated by the following comments: "As for local content [local history], instructor interest can generate inclusion in a course at some level, and this can be done in the context of standard academic freedom."

A salient point communicated by Participant 12 was that students are "never" included in the aforementioned processes. Additionally, Participant 12, who accumulated decades of experience teaching and serving on curriculum initiative committees at RSCC, provided the following historical perspective of the curriculum review and development at the institution:

> Depends on how involved a faculty member....students hardly are ever, ever, ever involved. But, the process is supposed to be that the curriculum is written based on the input of the community, students, people in area, and I'm sorry, this is the process on paper. The truth of the matter is it depends upon the faculty and the administrator because if it happens to be in the area of the administrator's expertise, then they are going to micromanage it and the faculty member is not

> going to hang in there too long. Or, if you've got a faculty member who really knows their stuff and can argue points that the supervisor can't, then they [faculty] usually have the strong suit.

Participant 12 also provided the following counter narrative of the curriculum processes at RSCC:

> I mean I wrote [the curriculum for a new program] here at [RSCC]. I wrote every course outline…I ordered every book. I was the [specific title of position], which as you know here [at RSCC] just means I have more to do than I've had. But, I listened a lot to my students, and I made changes in my curriculum when I would hear a student tell me something that surprised them or problem they were having in their childcare because most of those students were already working.

In addition to the importance of students' voices, Participant 12 also mentioned how her experience serving on an advisory committee made up of college personnel and community representatives resulted in giving adequate attention to making a college-level English course a requirement due to community needs.

The accounts provided by Participant 12 highlighted the valued role of faculty and to a lesser degree students, and community engagement in the curriculum design processes at RSCC. Overall, the perspectives offered by faculty both full and part-time, all of whom teach in different disciplines, reflected that the level of involvement in curricular functions varies at RSCC.

Subtheme 2: Key individuals, decision makers, and processes. Participants' responses reflected that RSCC has established a process for curriculum development, review, and approval, which involves several key individuals and decision makers. P10

described the early stages of curriculum development as follows: “Once interest is established, creating course content would be the next step for the history department or the individual who has taken on the new course.” Similarly, P5 shared the following scenario:

> Well, you have to start with the idea...if I were to start it, I would go find a history teacher and talk to that person…I think you’d definitely have to have the buy-in of the Dean, the Vice President of Academic Services [Vice President of Academic and Student Development].

Based on this analysis, it is apparent that several key individuals and decision makers are involved in the curriculum processes at RSCC, which strongly suggests that collaboration is key.

The following comments offered by P4 echo the responses of other participants regarding involvement of RSCC personnel and processes:

> Recommendations for any changes would be made first to the professors and the department as a whole, and then they can assess it to see if the recommendations or suggestions align with the [state community college system] curriculum for that particular course and then from that I believe that the faculty can make recommendations to the Educational Programs Committee for any possible curriculum changes, and then as far as the people who would be key decision makers, I believe that would be the history faculty...department...those involved in the [President’s Advisory Council]...and then finally, also believe the Vice President of Academic and Student Development would be those key individuals involved in curriculum change.

Essentially, the perspective offered by P4 captured the curriculum development and approval process as a collaborative effort which included input from faculty, staff, adjuncts, and administrators.

In a more succinct manner, P7, who has decades of institutional knowledge regarding RSCC, identified key personnel and decision makers as the chair of the committee, deans, VP of Instruction [VP of Academic and Student Development], and the individual faculty member. P7 also clarified that the President's Advisory Council (PAC), the group which advises the president on matters related to the mission, goals, and objectives of RSCC, serves by invitation only and reviews requests for new curriculum or modifications to existing curriculum versus acting an official approval agents. According to P7, such requests are submitted by a committee to PAC as an internal policy rather than a requirement established by the state community college system; hence, final approval rests at the state level for consideration of new courses. This information was consistent with the processes outlined in the state community college system's policies which govern curricula approval.

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 6 revealed the collaborative nature of the curriculum review, revision, and development process at RSCC with faculty being the driving force. Theme 6 was consistent with the professional literature which illustrated that community college curriculum has primarily been the domain of faculty (Snyder & Dillow, 2012; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Moreover, the expectation of a high level of faculty interaction with curriculum development and administrators providing adequate support (i.e., policies and procedures consistent with mission-curricula alignment) is explicitly communicated by the Southern Association of Colleges

and Schools (SACS, 2012), which evaluates member organizations including RSCC.

Summary of Theme 6. To summarize, Theme 6 was generated from participants' responses to questions designed to (a) garner feedback on their role in RSCC's curriculum development, review, and approval process, (b) identify internal processes, and (c) identify key individuals and decision makers. Participants shared varying amounts of information which was put together like a puzzle in order to discern what occurs during the aforementioned stages and who is involved. The findings indicated that across disciplines and employment statuses, those in teaching roles are allowed various levels of flexibility—in some cases there is more latitude than in others. Yet, participants communicated that they enjoy academic freedom when it comes to selecting instructional materials and/or instructional approaches. Moreover, the findings revealed that in order to effectuate changes in the curricula, faculty buy-in is the starting point and driving force, but the support of administrators, committees, and state approval agents may be necessary at various stages.

Theme 7: Resources Are Sufficient to Support the Inclusion of Local History or More Local History in the Curriculum

Participants were asked to explain any internal and external resources that would be required to include local history or more local history in the curriculum at RSCC. Participants shared that both internal and external resources are sufficient to support initiatives related to local history, which are presented as subthemes.

Subtheme 1: Internal resources. The work of faculty alone is not always adequate enough to support instructional activities. In addition to personnel, it is common for institutions of higher learning to leverage other internal resources in support of

curricular functions. For example, adequate internal resources, such as technology, can be used to positively impact student learning outcomes by supporting research and writing objectives. For the purpose of this study, internal resources (i.e., space, personnel, equipment, etc.) were delimited to those available on RSCC's two campuses, the satellite location, or the WDC, which could be utilized to support local history in the curriculum. None of the participants communicated concerns related to internal resources. To illustrate, Participant 8 responded that "We have all we need internally." More specifically, Participants 2, 5, 10, and 11 mentioned that RSCC has adequate technology, instructors, and classroom space to support the study of local history. Specifically, Participant 10 stated,

> As far as space is concerned, teaching a course would only require the use of an existing classroom. For personnel, see if the existing faculty would be interested or an adjunct could certainly be found to pick up the extra course. I would imagine that the classrooms we already have would accommodate the course using the equipment already in there.

The following analysis offered by P4 is reflective of participants' overall assessment that RSCC had sufficient internal resources, specifically in the form of space, equipment and personnel to support expanding its curricula to address the inclusion of local history:

> Well, internally, I believe that using the current history faculty, presently, would be ideal...I think our college have...our campuses have already been equipped with the necessary technical devices such as SMART boards, computers, and projectors and things like that and the spaces as well as...you know if you're

having lecturers come in or key individuals…from the cities or counties...that we have the resources provided that will accommodate those individuals.

Participant 7 cautioned, "Depending on the topic, but I can envision many topics that could be included with no special resources." Essentially, participants' responses in terms of the availability of internal resources, aligns with their responses on the availability of external resources.

Subtheme 2: External resources. Rural community colleges located in agricultural regions such as RSCC are less likely than institutions located in urban areas to have the economic and social supports primarily provided by businesses and public service agencies. The pairing of internal and external resources can be an effective approach to supporting curricular functions within institutions of higher learning. This means that a proactive approach to identifying useful external resources would be beneficial. Participants were asked to share any external resources or off-campus assets (i.e., space, equipment, personnel, etc.) that were accessible to RSCC as a community service, partnership, or initiative, which could be utilized to address local history in the curriculum. The following brief statement made by P7 captured participants' overall assessment that RSCC has sufficient external resources: "There's lots of local history content in [the RSCC service region], and so in the history courses it's easy to link to those resources." Participants also recommended the following six community or external resources which were determined to be accessible:

1. Invite quest speakers on campus or offer a lecture series which highlights local authors and historians.
2. Partner with museums and cultural arts organizations.

3. Collaborate with public school history teachers.
4. Access resources available at government agencies, municipalities, public libraries, historical societies, and foundations.
5. Sponsor a fair or festival on campus with the support of photographers exhibiting visuals of aspects of local history.
6. Sponsor field trips to historical sites and museums.

More specifically, several participants communicated that the focus should be on collaborating with external individuals and groups involved in agriculture due to the community's rural location and long-standing history of relying on this industry as a commodity. For example, Participant 12 responded: "This whole area is based on agriculture and you know forestry…we have wonderful experts all over the place." Similarly, Participant 10 listed the local heritage, agriculture, and forestry museum as a preferred community partner. Additionally, Participant 3 recommended contacting local agricultural departments located within city or government agencies and developing partnerships.

Participant 10 expanded the scope of potential external resources to suggest that "Materials and resources could be purchased and housed in the college library collections" which seemed to imply that is possible that RSCC's budget could accommodate expanding the curriculum to address local history.

Essentially, the recommendations made by participants captured the essence of the historic role of community colleges as demonstrated by P3 who stated: "I think that the strategy is the community would be involved because the college serves the community." Given this type of a response, RSCC is clearly situated to continue to

contribute to a partnership that started back in the early 1900s when the first 2-year institution was built (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Connections to the professional literature. Theme 7 was consistent with a search for local history resources in the RSCC service region which revealed that the public library houses archives and databases that link citizens to museums, artifacts, and historical societies. Moreover, studies conducted by Cohn et al. (2009) and Tebeau (2013) helped to shed light on what learning looks like when internal and external resources are used to support the study of local history. This information revealed that when the curriculum is focused on real-world learning and problem-solving linked to internal supports (instructional activities) and external supports (community resources), citizens are better positioned to make local history connections (learning outcomes), which is aligned with Theme 7. In the context of similarly situated community colleges such as RSCC, in terms of serving a significant number of historically marginalized students (Katsinas & Tollefson (2009), the marrying of internal and external resources stood out in the professional literature as an effective approach to using local history in the curriculum to advance student success, which is a salient point made by Theme 7.

Summary of Theme 7. In summary, Theme 7 was generated from participants' communication that the RSCC service region offers a wealth of internal and external resources that would adequately support the inclusion of local history or more local history in the curriculum. Specifically, participants' recommendations included space, equipment, personnel, and technology which are available to support both on and off campus activities. This current situation suggests that the reality exists for local history initiatives housed at RSCC.

Theme 8: Educators Value the Opportunity to Engage in Reflective Practices

This study was anchored in research on reflection and reflective practices which posit that when educators engage in reflective activities their professional practices improve, in addition to students' outcomes. None of the questions in the interview guide included the word "reflect" or "reflective practices" because the nature of the open-ended questions situated participants accordingly. The last discussion prompt in the interview guide was "Please provide any additional comments." In some instances participants stated "no" or "nothing." In other instances, participants circled back to their previous assessment that local history is important and valuable, while others restated their interest in collaboration with other faculty to include local history in the curriculum. P7 also noted that the process was a reflective one:

> The only comment I have is that this really got me to reflect on my own courses. I'm not certain that I recognized that I was doing local history content. I examined my courses. I said, 'really' I am bringing in a lot of personal examples…a personal history of [a major discipline].

Furthermore, the account provided by P7 demonstrated the need for educators to be more self-aware and continually reflect on how and what they do given the possible implications for student outcomes in terms of stakeholders demands for better results in retention, enrollment, and persistence. Moreover, the experience communicated by P7 seemed to suggest the need for RSCC to provide educators more opportunities to reflect on professional practices.

Similar to P7, P5 described the following outcomes of her experiences which provide corroboration that a need may exist for professional development opportunities at RSCC with more of a focus on reflective activities:

> I have not had anything with it [local history], although the more you ask questions, the more I keep in my head…start thinking of things (Laughter) I could do. I feel I could do it from a research standpoint...and that would be really fascinating.

The value of engaging in reflective activities communicated by P7 and P5, in regards to the benefits to educators and students, was also supported by the findings from the "informal" discussions which took place immediately before and after the recorded interviews.

During informal discussions which took place prior to starting the recording of each interview with participants' permission, participants were afforded the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns as they reviewed the consent form, demographic data form, and interview guide. During these brief interactions, participants appeared open and honest regarding how they felt about the interview process and the focus on local history. To illustrate, P6 stated, "I never participated in anything like this before…just shaking off the nerves…I had to take some time to do some research…I really had to think about local history and what I do in my classrooms." As part of the informed consent process, participants were reminded that feeling nervous was normal as it relates to being interviewed. To demonstrate, P6 was offered an opportunity to take a break or reschedule the interview, which she declined. Additionally, permission was gained from participants to include relevant data communicated informally. The experience communicated by P6

is important because it provides valuable insight on key elements of reflective activities which are synonymous with reflective concepts—hence, the stage for discovery through self-analysis and scholarly inquiry (Brookfield, 1995). Similarly, other participants provided descriptions of what the reflective process look liked throughout their participation in this current study, as depicted below:

> Never really focused or considered my teaching experience being part of local history…I had just had never applied that [local history]. But now that I think back, I see where it could benefit students. (P2)
>
> This process was thought-provoking in terms of thinking about what local history is and how I use it in my classroom. (P4)
>
> These were really good questions to ask…it made me think. We live and walk each day on grounds where history was made. (P9)

In addition to these brief accounts, which clearly express positive experiences, other study participants offered more detailed responses.

P8 appeared open and honest with sharing her initial confusion with what was expected of participation and the process of moving out of a comfort zone toward embracing the opportunity to reflect on professional practices.

> When I first saw these questions, I thought o.k. what do I know about the local history in this area…but, then I realized that I needed to reflect on what I do in the classroom. So, this was a chance for me to reflect on how and what I teach, and how it [the study of local history] can benefit me and students.

The account provided by P8 further demonstrates that engaging in reflective activities can situate educators to consider that benefits may exist for themselves and students.

Even though participants primarily situated themselves and students in the context of reflective practices, P10, who is an administrator charged with allocating resources in support of RSCC curricular functions, expanded the discussion to challenge stakeholders to consider the implications of this study for the community college-community relationship. To illustrate, P10 described welcoming the opportunity to analyze the department's functions, in relation to how it may be positioned to address the role of local history in the curriculum, as follows:

> This is a good research study because of the connection between community colleges in rural areas and their communities…I was able to reflect upon what I do and how my department fits in the role of local history in the curriculum.

Indeed, the analysis provided by P10 gives stakeholders pause to revisit the role of what has become a piece of the American DNA—community colleges, which in many cases are rurally-situated and often play a role in serving the needs of local communities.

Connections to the conceptual framework and the professional literature. The very nature of this current qualitative case study situated participants to engage in a reflective activity, as demonstrated by the open-ended nature of the interview questions. Not surprisingly, all of the themes revealed links to the literature on the role of reflection due to the deliberative approach to engage participants in a reflective activity. Specifically, Theme 8 is consistent with the work of researchers who posited that engaging in reflective activities is beneficial to adults (Brookfield, 1995; Dewey, 1933; Mezirow et al., 1990, 2000), which anchored this study. Despite using different language to define key terms related to reflection theories, consensus has been gained among the aforementioned researchers that when educators engage in reflective activities

possibilities exist for them to learn and grow and for student outcomes to improve.

Theme 8 indicated that educators value the opportunity to engage in reflective activities. To illustrate, by participating in this current study, participants communicated a positive experience which allowed them to "reflect," "think," or revisit previously held assumptions about their professional practices and to generate new ideas (Brookfield, 1995). Based on these outcomes, Brookfield's (1987) analysis would suggest that the participants in this current study are developing as critically reflective practitioners. Without mentioning the word "transformation," the extent of participants' descriptive accounts clearly indicated that positive changes occurred in terms of their efforts to move from thinking about how they defined local history to actually researching the topic prior to the interview, assessing their instructional practices, and brainstorming strategies and resources that could situate local history in the curriculum. Mezirow et al. (1990, 2000) referred to this process as "transformative learning" due to the possibilities of reflective activities to positively impact educators' perspectives and actions.

Summary of Theme 8. In summary, Theme 8 emerged from participants' experiences which indicated that this study presented an opportunity to reflect on professional practices—a study anchored by the tenets of reflection and reflective practices. Any nervousness or confusion initially communicated by the participants was quickly overcome and offset by their ability to provide descriptions which is indicative of qualitative research data. The findings were the result of the interview process and information gleaned from informal communication which occurred directly before and after interviews took place. Participants' perspectives on their involvement in this current study revealed the following: (a) a certain level of self-awareness was gained regarding

their own professional practices; (b) there is a need to continually reflect as a means to grow and develop; (c) reflecting on professional practices can move educators outside of their comfort zone; (d) a need exists to routinely revisit, acknowledge, and revise instructional practices; and (e) there are benefits associated with engaging in reflective activities for educators, students, RSCC, and the community. A synthesis of these findings is best captured by the following assessment made by P4: "I would think that with the college providing some professional development to help the history faculty incorporate the local history into their actual curriculum, I think we would see an extreme difference." To this end, these findings may serve as an impetus for RSCC to consider what professional development opportunities can be offered that would support educators' involvement in reflective activities given the interest communicated by participants.

In the next section, I summarize the outcomes of the study which are logically presented and identify the project that was developed as a result.

Summary of Outcomes Logically Presented

In summary, I utilized a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at a rural community college located in the southeastern United States. As demonstrated, multiple data collection sources which were triangulated, increased the trustworthiness of this study, including participants conducting member checks of data, themes, and reviewing interpretations and findings for accuracy; a demographic data form was utilized to select participants to be interviewed and allowed me to create a visualization of participants' backgrounds and the setting; a researcher-maintained journal allowed me to document reflections and quell bias; and the use of a

peer debriefer who was not employed at the study, was able to challenge assumptions and interpretations. Thus, the selected methodology for this project study was consistent with the qualitative case study research tradition due to its focus on generating rich, thick descriptions of the human experience. Moreover, given that research involving human participants requires due diligence in protecting their rights and providing detailed information regarding the study, using an informed consent form supported by communication systems such as password protected documents, personal email, codes for participants, and pseudonyms for the study site and the peer debriefer, adequately addressed ethical concerns.

The findings revealed 8 themes and 19 subthemes in the context of the problem addressed, the research questions, and the data collected and analyzed. Themes and subthemes aligned with the conceptual framework and the professional literature and past studies. A synthesis of participants' perspectives revealed: (a) definitions of local history vary; (b) local history is important and valuable to educators, students, and communities; (c) educators believe that there should be a link between local history and the curriculum; (d) strategies for revising the curriculum should be shared with stakeholders including faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community partners prior to making any changes; and (e) change requires a "sales pitch" and takes time; thus, assessing the curriculum to address local history will require effectively managing change. As a result, the project deliverable is a white paper which includes three recommendations based on the study's findings. Section 3 provides a description, rationale, review of the literature, evaluation plan, and implications for the proposed project.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This qualitative case study addressed the role of local history in the curriculum. The study's findings were generated from 12 face to face interviews with administrators, faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff. Additionally, data were collected from history and humanities course syllabi, demographic data forms, a researcher-maintained journal, and the researcher serving as the primary data collection instrument. Data were triangulated and credibility was increased by member checks of themes and interpretations of findings, in addition to a peer debriefer who provided feedback on the proposal and the final study. The findings revealed 8 themes and 19 subthemes which helped to guide the literature review and resulted in the development and dissemination of a white paper. Three recommendations related to curriculum review, community college-community partnerships, and professional development (faculty reflective practices) based on the study's findings are highlighted in a white paper entitled *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College: A Data-Driven, Evidence-Based Position* (herein referred to as *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum*).

A salient point revealed in the findings was the need to "sell" the idea of change to participants which prompted the development of a white paper. This section focuses on the white paper as the project genre, including a description and goals, scholarly rationale, connections between research and theory, a literature review, project implementation, implications for social change, and concluding thoughts. Connections are made between, research, theory, the white paper, and recommendations for future actions based on the study's findings.

Description and Goals of the White Paper

The project developed as a result of this study's findings was entitled *A White Paper: The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College--A Data-Driven, Evidence-Based Position* (herein referred to as *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum*), which is located in Appendix A. The goal was to communicate the study's findings and recommendations to RSCC stakeholders, including faculty and adjunct instructors; administrators who teach and/or allocate resources in support of curricular functions; and staff who teach. This goal was supported by study participants' recommendation to pursue an interdisciplinary approach to teaching local history and a collaborative approach to determining the feasibility of implementing the recommendations. For these reasons, specific teaching disciplines or departments are not specified. Moreover, as RSCC continues to manage major restructuring, employees' duties, roles, and responsibilities are continually being shifted, revised, or outsourced.

First, it was anticipated that the recommendations outlined in *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* would lead the aforementioned stakeholders to a deeper understanding of the meaning and value of local history and strategies to address local history in the curriculum. Second, it was expected that the identified stakeholders would consider the benefits associated with faculty engaging in reflective activities for the purpose of improving professional practices and student outcomes. Third, *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* provides future researchers with a framework for studying problems associated with the link between the curriculum and student learning outcomes.

In this section, I argue that the focused, clear, and concise format of *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* was the appropriate vehicle to communicate with the stakeholders identified in this study.

Scholarly Rationale for the White Paper as a Project

In simple terms, a white paper is a formal report that is utilized to persuade a specific audience to embrace the benefits of supporting particular concepts, products, or services (Hoffman Marcom, 2012; Kemp, 2005; Mattern, 2013).The scholarly rationale for developing a white paper rested in the findings revealed in Section 2. Significantly, this study generated 8 themes and 19 subthemes which highlighted (a) participants' perception that a relationship between local history and the curriculum should exist; (b) the value of local history to educators, students, and communities; (c) numerous strategies to address local history in the curriculum; (d) participants' communication that engaging in reflective activities is important to improving professional practices, and (e) a caution that change requires a "sales" pitch and takes time.

Initially, my research interest in local history, as it pertains to the history of segregated schooling in the region of the study site, set the stage for this current study. Based on the recommendation of my doctoral study committee, I met with a key informant at RSCC who communicated that addressing local history in history curriculum should be a priority, which broadened my focus. Moreover, due to the historic role of community colleges in serving the needs of local communities (Boggs, 2012), it became apparent that an opportunity existed to address this expectation.

Further inquiry revealed that local history in relationship to the curriculum has not received its just due in the professional literature and research studies. Research also

indicated that the United States is becoming increasingly culturally diverse—it is projected that within the next 50 years, a majority group will not exist (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). As society continues to change, citizens will require both "hard skills" (technical) and "soft skills" (interpersonal) (Mishra, 2014). Both of these skill sets can be learned from studying aspects of history, including local history (Hunner, 2011). This information helped to support the decision to conduct research on this topic.

Additionally, stakeholders are demanding that institutions of higher learning produce students that are civic-minded and prepared to participate in a democratic society (Billings & Terkla, 2011; Coley & Sum, 2012; Hatcher, 2011; Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2011). Civic-mindedness relates to the extent that a person is willing to gain knowledge of a community and take action on that knowledge by actively participating in that community (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Damon, 2011). To illustrate, Perez and Kite (2011) engaged students enrolled in public history courses in two separate local history projects. The researchers' overarching goals were to improve professional practices and student learning outcomes by moving beyond traditional forms of instruction such as a lecture, to include more hands-on learning, interactions with the community, and the use of current technologies to conduct research. The setting was Fort Hays State University, a liberal arts institution located in Kansas, which is rurally-situated similar to RSCC. Project one focused on students developing narratives of the history of local businesses and sharing findings with the current proprietors. Project two focused on students developing podcasts on local subjects and making them available to the public. The collective findings of the projects revealed the following key outcomes:

- Students developed an appreciation for local history by developing critical analysis, thinking, research, writing, and technology skills which positioned them to be competitive in the job market.
- Businesses benefitted by having access to the written historical backgrounds of their establishments to support marketing efforts.
- The community benefitted because the commercial sector was highlighted which elevated the need for revitalization and preservation.
- The Public History Department at the study site benefitted because enrollment and community partnerships increased.

Perez and Kite's findings stood out in the literature as a model example of the manner in which participants in this current study communicated that knowledge of local history is important and valuable to educators, students, and communities, in addition to the numerous strategies offered to include local history in the curriculum.

I further supported my project development efforts by conducting a thorough review of the literature, data analysis, and findings which directed the development of a white paper. Communicating this study's findings and recommendations required a marketing mechanism which made the white paper appropriate. White papers, also referred in the literature as grey (gray) literature and position papers, are mechanisms that can be used to argue a position on an issue or to sell an idea (Sakamuro, Stolley, & Hyde, 2015). White papers highlight key information in a manner which is more abbreviated than an extensive research document; thus, key individuals are better positioned to make informed decisions without the hassle of sifting through highly technical and lengthy documents (Creswell, 2008; Kantor, 2009). This means that a white paper should be

focused on providing evidence-based solutions or recommendations for further actions. To put into context, P12 who has almost three decades of experience developing and implementing curriculum and collaborating with campus and community stakeholders on related matters stated,

> I think it [local history] should be an integral part of every curriculum, but it has to be integrated almost like when you're trying to get a child to take medicine and you mix it with something else to change the flavor of it.

These words of wisdom represent institutional knowledge which is valuable to organizations (Hartman & Delaney, 2010; Jain, 2011; Javernick-Will & Levitt, 2010). This information, along with the themes generated from interviews conducted with a diverse pool of 12 participants and the findings from the document analyses, helped to formulate the three recommendations contained in *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* which are discussed later in this section. These recommendations are not a panacea to address the role of local history in the curriculum, but they do provide a foundation. Moreover, given that this is the first study of its kind at RSCC, the white paper as an outcome provides positive directions for assessing and improving professional practices and student learning outcomes.

In the next section, I present a review of the literature related to the white paper project genre and the contents of the white paper which included three recommendations.

Literature Review for the Project

The purpose of the literature review was to locate scholarly and peer-reviewed references focused on white papers, managing change in organizations, and the recommendations contained in the white paper. I discovered that white papers are also

addressed in the literature as position papers and grey (gray) literature, which determined use of the following Boolean descriptors to aid in searches: *grey or gray literature; collecting data for white papers; organizational change; position papers;* and *white papers*. I engaged in an exhaustive search of the literature in order to reach saturation which was accomplished by visiting bookstores, public libraries, and institutions of higher learning in the region; reviewing online sites including Google Scholar; and utilizing Walden University Library's databases, including Academic Search Complete and Premier, ERIC, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Even though the scholarly literature was very "thin" on specific references to white papers, I garnered better results by using the search term grey (gray) literature. It was discouraging to learn that in many instances these references were informative but published over 5 years ago. Also, the majority of the references pertaining to white papers were located on Internet sites and blogs, and related to short articles and advertisements—consistently, references to the same sources were revealed. Additionally, I learned that other researchers have encountered similar problems with locating scholarly references on white papers, yet the use of this medium is increasing and diversifying.

Moreover, I utilized the following Boolean descriptors to locate references related to the theoretical foundations that supported development and dissemination of the white paper: *change; change in higher education; change management; diffusion of innovations;* and *organizational change*. Additionally, I utilized the aforementioned databases to support the recommendations contained in the white paper by applying the following Boolean descriptors: *community college collaborations; community college partnerships; curriculum development; curriculum review; curriculum implementation;*

professional development; and *reflective practices*. Overall, the literature review provided much needed insight on how theory and research connected to support development and dissemination of the white paper, including the content.

Conceptual Framework Supporting the White Paper Project Genre

To reiterate, this study situated educators to reflect on professional practices viewed from the lenses of reflection offered by Dewey (1993), Schon (1983, 1987), Brookfield (1995), and Mezirow et al. (1900, 2000), as demonstrated in Section 1. As a result, participants communicated that a relationship between local history and the curriculum should exist, in addition to innovative and creative approaches to educating students related to the study of local history. The selected project genre for this study, a white paper, will provide stakeholders a tool for weighing the evidence and making a determination on the next steps.

Stakeholders have placed a host of demands on community colleges such as RSCC, including the need to produce more positive student outcomes in retention, connecting instruction to real-world applications, workplace readiness (Graham & Stacey, 2002; Smith, 2013) and community engagement (Lester & Klein, 2014; Prentice & Robinson, 2014; Smith, 2014). In particular, community colleges are under tremendous pressure to demonstrate that decision-making is evidence-based and data driven (Baker & Sax, 2012; Ndoye & Parker, 2010; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Rutschow et al., 2011). These trends are occurring at time when institutional budgets are shrinking (Bers, Head, Palmer, & Phelan, 2014; Hermes, 2012; Joch, 2011), which means institutions have less money to address increasing demands. To illustrate, Lorenzo (2011) conducted in-depth email and telephone interviews with 11 community college leaders

which revealed the following eight concerns: (a) college readiness, (b) remedial education, (c) workforce development, (d) educational technologies, (e) student services, (f) data analysis, (g) funding/grants, and (h) the future. Overall, participants in Lorenzo's study were cautiously optimistic about the future of community colleges.

Similarly, a report issued by Hanover Research (2013) confirmed the challenges faced by community colleges in terms of (a) shrinking fiscal resources, (b) increasing enrollments, (c) students' college readiness, (c) creating a culture of evidence, (d) technology integration, and (e) aging leadership. The Hanover Research study concluded that innovation and strategic planning can be used to overcome challenges faced by community colleges. Collectively, these findings mean institutions of higher learning must be willing to evolve and manage change processes effectively in order to remain viable.

Developing and disseminating the white paper included in this study required a conceptual framework which could support managing change and assessing the numerous recommendations offered by participants in regards to improving professional practices and addressing local history in the curriculum. The white paper offered solutions to the problem addressed in this study (Vaiou, 2011). Moreover, the white paper was supported by the connection between theory and research (Mattern, 2009; Walsh, 2011). These connections were captured by Burke (1987) who advocated for Lewin's (1951) organization change model. Burke (1987) defined organizational development [OD] as "A planned process of change in an organization's culture through the utilization of behavioral science technologies, research, and theory" (p. 11). In this vein, the white paper presented in this study represented a data-driven, evidenced-based, and

theoretically grounded planning tool for RSCC to make connections between local history and the curriculum, and to apply the necessary strategies to address local history in the curriculum.

Lewin's (1951) seminal work on organizational change and change management which has been supported by Burke (1987), Kotter (1996), and Schein (1985), in addition to Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory, served as the foundations for the development and dissemination of the white paper. To put into perspective, participants in this current study communicated numerous creative and innovative strategies related to addressing local history in the curriculum, but cautioned that the curriculum assessment and revision process can be complex, lengthy, and requires input from multiple stakeholders including faculty, adjuncts, administrators, students, and the community prior to making changes. To reiterate, this study did not include students and community stakeholders as participants which underscores the fact that more input is required in order for RSCC to fully assess the implications of the study findings. Institutions of higher learning are pressured to change by forces from both within and outside (Odagiu & Piturlea, 2012; Patria, 2012). Thus, the recommendations outlined in the white paper were based on participants' suggestions that gaining support to revise the curriculum would take time and should include input from students and the community.

Lewin's model. Lewin (1951) is oftentimes cited by others as laying the foundation for research on organizational change and change management (Burke, 1987; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 1985). Lewin theorized that change should be a planned activity that involves a 3-step process: (a) unfreezing, (b) changing (movement), and (c) freezing. Lewin defined the first step of the change process as unfreezing of long-held beliefs and

actions within an organization. The purpose of the unfreezing stage relates to raising stakeholders' level of consciousness regarding institutional issues, problems with processes, or cultural factors, in order to illicit feedback. Hence, Lewin's reference to the term culture suggests that it would be difficult to promote and sustain change in an organization without knowledge of values, beliefs, policies, procedures, resources, and the mission. Lewin's first step involves communicating a warning to stakeholders (within and outside the organization) that change needs to occur. The second step is referred to as the changing (movement) phase which focuses on putting the old way of doing business behind and making way for new ways of thinking and doing that will allow for improved organizational performance. This step is supported by activities and interventions that change behaviors and organizational culture which results in progress and increased levels of performance. The third step in the model is where the new behaviors become the standard for performance and the old ways of doing things are not acceptable. Essentially, in order to sustain acceptable practices, affected parties must coalesce and remain committed.

Applicability of Lewin's model. In terms of the utility of Lewin's (1951) work, several recent studies have drawn upon this thesis to address problems in higher education (e.g., Bishop and Verleger, 2013; Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano, 2011; Patria, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012; Schriner et al., 2010; Suter et al., 2013). Other researchers have used Lewin's model to explore how organizations can effectuate positive outcomes by planning change (e.g., Michel, By, & Burnes, 2013; Shirey, 2013; Stichler, 2011; Wells, Manuela, & Cunning, 2011). A synthesis of the aforementioned research revealed that change requires negotiation and change can be successfully

implemented when there is a commitment to change. These recent research efforts highlight the continued relevancy of Lewin's work even after 50 years. According to Burnes (2009), Lewin's model should be viewed as the gold standard for planning and managing change.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. In addition to Lewin's (1951) theory on planning and managing change, Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory helped to provide direction for the development and dissemination of the white paper included in this current study. According to Rogers, diffusion is "the process in which an innovation is communicated thorough certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). In simple terms, diffusion relates actions taken to spread innovation throughout an organization (Rogers, 2003). The four major elements of Roger's model are as follows: (a) innovations relate to new ideas and concepts, (b) new ideas and concepts need to be communicated through appropriate channels, (c) it may take considerable time to adopt innovations, and (d) social systems involving internal and external influences determine if an innovation is adopted. Rogers also identified the following five stages of the innovation-decision process which includes communication at all levels: (a) new knowledge is introduced to individuals or organizations, (b) persuasion occurs as the affected parties become interested and seek to learn more about the innovation, (c) decisions are made on the cost and benefits of embracing or not embracing the innovation, (d) implementation relates to steps that are employed to test the utility of the innovation, and (e) confirmation involves final decisions related to whether or not to adopt the innovation. Rogers (2003) further stated that when a decision is adopted "full use of an innovation as the best course of action available" and rejection

is a decision "not to adopt an innovation" (p. 177). Rogers conceded that even when it is obvious that adopting new ideas may be advantageous, resistance may occur at various levels of an organization.

Steeped in traditions, values, and customs, institutions of higher learning have become known as notorious resisters of change (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Chandler, 2013; Delprino, 2013). The most well-known resisters are faculty who seek to remain autonomous and resort to the stance of academic freedom (Purinton & Alexander, 2013; Root, 2013; Tagg, 2012). To put into perspective, Rogers (2003) classified innovators as being open to new ways of doing things; early adopters as individuals more likely to wait until colleagues embrace new ideas; early majority as individuals do not have the leadership roles of early adopters and usually will not be the first or the last to buy-in to change, and laggards hold similar positioning as those in the early majority as they do not serve in leadership roles—they typically do not possess the knowledge to weigh in on innovation and opt to wait until they see whether or not an idea or concept works before making a decision. Rogers posited that "opinion leaders" (respected individuals within the social system) and "change agents" (individuals outside of the social system) can influence innovation. Despite resistance to change, the world is ever-changing. Change is inevitable whether or not an individual or organization accepts or rejects it, which means institutions of higher learning would be better served by seeking innovation and employing best practices in change management.

Applicability of Rogers' model. Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory has gained broad-based appeal as it relates to change management. Using Rogers' model, researchers have addressed problems associated with organization change in variety of

disciplines including economics, education, communications, history, political science, and public health (Dooley, 1999). In essence, Rogers' work can be applied to innovations in almost any field of study.

As it relates to the field of education where this current study is housed, Woolvard's (1996) work was leveraged by Vanderslice (2000) who opined that one of the most successful applications of Rogers' work is the National Writing Project which was implemented in the early 1970s. By using successful teachers as change agents to communicate best practices, this project targeted primary and secondary students—the results indicated that innovation in teaching related to writing across the curriculum instruction within primary and secondary schools' level (Vanderslice, 2000). Effective communication and understanding organization culture are keys to planning, managing, and implementing change in higher education due to tendencies to operate autonomously and in a bureaucratic manner (Caruth & Caruth, 2013).

Gainforth, Latimer-Cheung, Athanasopoulos, Moore and Ginis (2014) applied the tenets of Roger's diffusion of innovations theory to conduct a study at a community-based organization which provided direct services to individuals diagnosed with spinal cord injuries. The purpose of the Gainforth et al. (2014) study was to determine the role of interpersonal communication in "knowledge mobilization—the act of moving research results into the hands of research users" by using network analysis—"an empirical approach to examining how the overall pattern of interpersonal communication within an organization affects the process of knowledge mobilization" (p. 3). Based on the responses of 54 participants to a survey designed to assess interpersonal communication and adoption of resources, the researchers discovered that a practice or resource is more

likely to be accepted and implemented when increased opportunities exist to share information, which affirmed Rogers' (2003) position. Additionally, other researchers have found support for the tenets of Rogers' theory (e.g., Doyle, Garrett, & Currie, 2014; Hebert, 2012; Kardasz, 2013-2014; Post 2011; Soffer, Nachmias, & Ram, 2010).

In the next section, supported by the evidence which connected the white paper to theory and research, I delve into the professional literature related to white papers and the three recommendations outlined in the white paper which related to (a) curriculum review, (c) community college-community partnerships, and (d) faculty professional development (faculty reflective practices).

White Paper Genre

A brief history of white papers. Government agencies have been credited with establishing the use of white papers as a means to synthesize massive amounts of technical information and research data, in order to advance support of government initiatives (Kemp, 2005; Sakamuro et al., 2015; Stelzner, 2010). The *British White Paper of 1922*, also referred to as the Churchill Paper, has been labeled as one of the most well-known, politically-inspired white papers (Stelzner, 2010). Kantor (2009) linked the use of white papers to the early 20th century and Britain's Parliament.

White papers have been classified as "gray (grey) literature" because such works are not easily located (Osayande & Ukpebor, 2012). Historically, gray literature has included "theses and dissertations, faculty research works, reports of meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops, students' projects, in-house publications of associations and organizations, white papers produced by businesses and all forms of government publications including legislative materials, budgets and development plans"

(Okoroma, 2011, p. 189). White papers are a form of gray literature which highlights findings as the result of collecting data typically associated with original research, including surveys and interviews (Juricek, 2009).

White papers can be utilized to provide timely, fact-based, and useful information on micro (individual) and macro (organizational) levels (Okoroma, 2011). To illustrate, "it [a white paper] serves scholars and lay readers alike with research summaries, facts, statistics, and other data that offer a more comprehensive view of the topic interest" (Osayande & Ukpebor, 2012, para. 4). This means that stakeholders who embody differentiation in experiences, knowledge, credentials, and roles at RSCC will be positioned to consider the evidence presented in the white paper and offer multiple viewpoints on how to respond to participants' suggestions that there should be a relationship between the curriculum and local history.

Even though white papers originated within government agencies, the use has grown during the last century in purpose and number (Ferris, 2010; Minchardani, 2010). To demonstrate, Gordon and Graham (2003) listed the following categories of white papers: (a) technology guide, (b) position paper, (c) business benefits, (d) competitive review, and (e) evaluator's guide (p. 3). Similarly, Kemp (2005) categorized white papers as a "technical overview, position paper, case study, and so on" (p. 5). Kemp also introduced the term "educational white paper" to redefine the white paper as "a detailed and authoritative report…any business document that educates its readers" (p. 5). Researchers have reached some level of agreement that the white paper is indeed a "position paper," which helped to establish a precedent for the terminology used to describe the project genre for this current study (Gordon and Graham, 2003; Kemp,

2005). According to Graham (2015), it does not matter whether the label applied to white papers is a "special report… backgrounders…briefings—this approach to communication can be a powerful and persuasive tool" (para. 1). Essentially, white papers have evolved from political tools to having utility in the wider world in order to offer address a wide range of problems and to offer solutions.

In order to demonstrate the progressive use of white paper, Gordon and Graham (2003) reported results of a 2001 web-based search using the term *white papers*—2.85 million hits were discovered. Using the same search term, I identified 17.4 million hits in 2015 which captured significant growth in the use of white papers. I conducted a similar search of the Walden University library dissertations database by focusing on the following timeframes: 2000 and before and 2001 and after. The search yielded 20 hits for the first time frame, and 304 for the latter, which signified growth in doctoral students at the institution utilizing the white paper as an acceptable vehicle to communicate research findings and positions (recommendations) across a variety of disciplines, including allied health and nursing, education, management, nursing, and technology—with the goal of advancing a social change agenda.

As it relates to searches for "position papers," the results yielded two hits in the Walden database—both published since 2014. Based on this information, when I faced a dilemma related to terminology (white paper versus position paper), I determined that white paper was more the appropriate term to consistently refer to the project included in this current study.

How to develop a white paper. Even though scholarly resources on developing white papers are virtually non-existent and there is no right or wrong way to develop a

white paper (Stelzner, 2010; Graham, 2015), the available information can be useful to researchers. A white paper is "distinctive in terms of purpose, audience, and organization" (Sakamuro et al., 2015, para. 1). To illustrate, Kantor (2009) described a white paper as "a document between six and twelve pages whose purpose is to educate, inform, and convince a reader through the accurate identification of existing problems and the presentation of beneficial solutions that solve those challenges" (p.11). Stelzner (2010) offered the following guidelines for developing white papers: (a) the audiences' needs should be a priority in developing a white paper; (b) background information can be an effective approach because it allows readers to see how the problem has progressed; (c) the length of the white paper should be approximately 10 pages; (d) key points should be supported by pictures, charts, and sidebars; (e) the solution should be mentioned after the problem and an argument has been made for options to address the problem; and (f) in order to support credibility of the solution, evidence is required.

Gordon (2015) argued that low readership will result from the use of a white paper that is not supported by illustrations. Gordon added that the use of sidebars, quotes, tables, bullets, and headings should be employed in order to capture and maintain the attention of readers. For example, "diagrams break up the text and make it easy on the reader" (White, 2010, para. 5). If the goal of a white paper is to influence a decision or introduce a new solution to a problem such as the project offered in this current study, the document should be approximately eight to 12 pages in length, in addition to including facts, conclusions, and issue a call to action (Gordon, 2015). The most effective white papers include information that is useful to the intended audiences and offered in a format that is easy to read (Haapaniemi, 2010). Gordon and Graham (2003) added that

technology should be used to publish a white paper in the form on an online PDF file or printing copies to handout to stakeholders.

Applicability of white papers. The research on the history of white papers and insight on developing and dissemination white papers provided a foundation for the project genre. White papers have been applied to various settings for the purpose of recommending solutions to problems, including business (Benefit Corporation White Paper, 2013; Reis & Macário, 2014; Willerton, 2013), government (Ehrlich, Sverdlove, Beauchamp, Thomas, & Stockman, 2012; Madsen, 2013; Gupta, 2013; Pearlstein, 2014), technology (Hohlmann, 2013; Payette, 2014; Vay, 2013), higher education (Barr, 2012; Burgher & Snyder, 2012; Salter, 2013), and medical (Buttriss, 2011; Hammock, 2011; Spellberg, et al., 2012). Kemp (2005) produced the most scholarly, well written set of directions designed to guide researchers in applying white papers to a variety of settings and problems, as demonstrated below:

1. Assess needs
2. Plan
3. Acquire information
4. Organize content
5. Design the look and feel
6. Write
7. Illustrate
8. Review, revise, and approve
9. Publish (p. 6)

It is a fair assessment that a white paper can be produced for just about any topic imaginable to present a position on a problem and to offer solutions. But, as demonstrated by Kemp, when scholarly value is the intended outcome it is important to critically assess the professional literature and data, to support recommendations with research and theory, and to present the information in a format that draws readers' attention.

Curriculum Review

The term *curriculum* in the context of higher education has been defined using many different terms. For example, Awais (2011) described curriculum as a rules-based, teacher-centered learning process focused on students meeting learning objectives through the use of education-related activities and events. On the other hand, Eisner (2004) posited that curriculum relates to engaging students in both educational and learning activities, in a student-centered approach to learning. More specifically, curriculum in higher education is typically categorized as "an educational plan to engage learners in the acquisition of knowledge and skills leading to a degree, diploma or certificate" (Wang, 2014, p. 31). Wang (2014) added that review of curriculum can take place at the "institutional, faculty, programme, course or class levels" (p. 31). Changes to individual courses and instructional approaches are part of the landscape in higher learning.

Brooman, Darwent, and Pimor (2014) conducted a case study which involved collecting and analyzing data from multiple focus groups and survey data both qualitatively and quantitatively in order to address a gap in research related to student involvement in higher education curriculum design. The researchers sought to answer the following question: "What might students' voices give to the process of curriculum

development that teachers in higher education (HE) cannot provide?" (p. 1). Students communicated that lectures were "confusing," "boring," and difficult to understand even though they considered instructors to be competent. As a result, the curriculum was redesigned and reassessed which revealed students' grades improved.

Brooman et al.'s (2014) findings underscored Zepke and Leach's (2010) determination that teacher-student interactions are important to curriculum development. Zepke and Leach arrived at the aforementioned conclusion after reviewing and synthesizing 93 studies, spanning 10 countries. To illustrate, Bovill, Cook-Sather, and Felten (2011) provided examples of educators allowing students' voices to be heard in curriculum design and instructional approaches, which demonstrated the potential for positive outcomes. Bovill et al. found that the curriculum should be at the core of students' learning experiences; therefore, students should be invited to the table as it relates to input to the curriculum. Bovill et al.'s stance strongly suggests that curriculum design should include a student-centered component, which involves students acting as co-creators of elements of the curriculum. Bastedo (2011) suggested,

> In short we must come to a more nuanced understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the curriculum and society. While the curriculum can be seen as a lens for social change, it can also serve society by defining the boundaries of knowledge and thus serve as a force for social change itself, as we will see in the development of technology and the study of women and minorities (p. 463).

Bastedo's comments strongly suggest that institutions of higher learning should act as agents of social change by leveraging curricular functions, with the support of community input.

A synthesis of the professional literature revealed that regardless as to how one chooses to label curriculum or approach its review, it is one of the most important functions in higher education (Oliver & Hyun, 2011). In the final analysis, the common thread that binds research on curriculum review is that it would behoove institutions of higher learning to consider that student engagement is crucial to successful curriculum design initiatives.

Community College-Community Partnerships

It is well documented that community colleges were designed to serve the needs of local communities (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). For these institutions, this expectation has meant providing open access, workforce development training, remedial education, civic engagement, and preparing students to transfer to 4-year institutions (Levin & Kater, 2013). External forces are contributing to the mounting interest in community and higher education collaborations and partnerships. For example, as public funding diminishes and social needs increase, community-based agencies, particularly those rurally-situated in settings such as RSCC, are seeking to work with other organizations in order to address social maladies (Cheyney, 2014; Shakelee, Bigbee, & Wall, 2012; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011). This trend is happening at a time when institutions of higher learning are responding to pressures to return to their civic purposes while producing citizens that are workplace ready, by seeking partners to support these functions (Alssid, Goldberg, Schneider, 2011; Campus Compact, 2015;

Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Gray, 2012; Rochenbauch, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014). Foundations and other grant funding organizations that make significant financial awards to community organizations and institutions of higher learning typically require evidence of a comprehensive approach to addressing problems in communities; hence, applicants should be prepared to demonstrate the involvement of multiple agencies who are committed to collaborate and partner (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015; Dignity Health, 2015; Grants Space, 2015; Rural Assistance Center, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Given these trends, it would be wise for organizations to consider the benefits of forming relationships with other entities that embody similar goals and objectives.

In fact, community college-community partnerships are the key to achieving positive outcomes in any endeavor that relates to improving the quality of life of citizens and the sustainability of communities (Baquet, Bromwell, Hall, & Frego, 2013; McCabe et al., 2014; Murray & Orr, 2011; Ullman, 2012). Community colleges are uniquely situated for these endeavors because most Americans are within an hour's drive of the nearest main campus, branch, or satellite location (AACC, 2015). For example, Conway, Blair, and Helmar (2012) conducted a study of six community college-community partnerships designed to provide both academic and non-academic supports to low income participants, for the purpose of helping them to achieve both education and career goals. The findings revealed high program completion rates, the ability of participants to gain employment and increase earnings, and continued success in the academic setting and the workplace. Researchers also highlighted the fact that the program's outcomes exceeded national statistics.

Institutions of higher learning can provide discipline-specific resources, human capital, and facilities in support of community partnerships which may not be offered by other organizations (Dunavin, 2010; Thornton, 2013; Yarnall, 2013). Moreover, institutions of higher learning typically have access to the latest research which can be used to support communities' understanding of and solutions to address local issues; therefore, these organizations are positioned for advocacy (Burbank, Hunter, & Gutiérrez, 2012; Goodman et al., 2011; Sherman, 2013). Likewise, communities can provide institutions of higher learning including students, faculty, staff, and administrators with access to real-world learning experiences and an understanding of local history and culture (Kevany & MacMichael, 2014; McAreavey & Das, 2013; Schwartz, 2011). These trends demonstrate that the landscape of community college-community partnerships is fertile ground for new initiatives.

Professional Development and Faculty Reflective Practices

Amundsen and Wilson's (2012) extensive review of the literature encompassed the researchers initially reading abstracts for 3,048 peer-reviewed journal articles and subsequently reviewing the associated full-text versions of 428 of those articles. The findings revealed that what is described as professional development, is also labeled in the literature as "academic development, educational development, faculty development, and instructional development in higher education" (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012, p. 90). The common thread in the aforementioned terminology is the presence of deliberate actions taken by faculty and individuals collaborating with faculty for the purpose of improving teaching (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012).

In stark contrast to their K–12 colleagues, faculty in higher education typically are subject matter authorities on the disciplines that they teach, but lack other formal professional experience or training as it relates to theoretical foundations of teaching, learning, and motivation (Jensen, 2011; Minter, 2011; Robinson & Hope, 2013). In terms of this current study taking place at a community college, O'Banion's (1974) argument that the majority of community college and junior college faculty have very little knowledge of their work environments and are not prepared to teach in those settings because they are taught by "discipline-oriented, narrow, subject-matter specialists or secondary school-oriented, college of education graduates" (pp. 28–29), is noteworthy. O'Banion (1997) posited that community colleges should transform into "learning colleges" where all aspects of the learning environment, including facilities, polices, programs, activities, and teaching are learning-centered. If community colleges such as RSCC embrace O'Banion's assessment, then it is reasonable to expect that faculty will need to possess the training and skills that are necessary to educate all students.

Research indicates that skilled faculty are a key determinant of student success which makes professional development imperative (Bendickson & Griffin, 2010; Daly, 2011; Mundy, Kupczynski, Ellis, & Salgado, 2012; Public Agenda, 2011). Reflective activities as an important factor in faculty professional development has gained traction in research studies related to higher education (Attard, 2012; Cheng, 2010; Felder & Brent, 2010; Kinsella, 2010; Mchatton, Parker, & Vallice, 2013).

Williams and Grudnoff (2011) conducted a qualitative study which included semi-structured interviews with 12 inexperienced and 12 experienced educators, for the purpose of exploring the role of reflection in professional development. Williams and

Grudnoff employed Smyth's (1989) model of critical reflection which makes connections between teaching and the role of socio-economics and politics, in order to situate educators to improve professional practices. More specifically, Williams and Grudnoff applied the following tenets of Smyth's framework to engage participants in a reflective activity which involved coursework and practical exercises: (a) describe (provide details of the issue or problem), (b) inform (examine the issue or problem), (b) confront (examine assumptions regarding the issue or problem), and (c) reconstruct (identify alternative views and actions related to the issue or problem) (p. 283). The salient finding of Williams and Grudnoff's study was that in the process of reflecting on the aforementioned experiences, both groups of educators reported being less wary of the process and more willing to engage in reflective activities as a means to develop professionally.

The findings discussed in this section provided support for the recommendations outlined in the white paper which are presented in the next section.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study and the professional literature, the following three recommendations are highlighted in the white paper:

Recommendation #1: Curriculum Review

The institution should consider reviewing and assessing curricula beyond what was offered in this current study, to include major disciplines (e.g., English, social sciences, math, education, computer science, and health sciences), in order to determine the extent that students are offered opportunities to study local history, and make adjustments as necessary.

Recommendation #2: Community College-Community Partnerships

The institution should consider identifying and developing partnerships with external/community partners, in order to advance the study of local history in connection with its curricular functions.

Recommendation #3: Professional Development and Faculty Reflective Practices

The institution should consider assessing its professional development program for the presence of opportunities that allow faculty to engage in reflective practices, in order to improve teaching and learning, and make adjustments where necessary.

In simple terms, as noted by Tagg (2012), with the white paper "What we are addressing here is *designed change,* alteration of the rules of the game for a purpose, the intentional introduction of novel processes or activities into our lives" (p. 3). Thus, the recommendations outlined in the white paper provide a blueprint for RSCC stakeholders to shape the role of local history in the curriculum in a manner that supports improved teaching and learning.

In the next section, I provide a project description in terms of personnel, equipment, and space. I also define the project evaluation approach, the overall goals of the project, the overall project evaluation goals, and the key stakeholders.

Project Description

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The resources needed to produce and distribute *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* white paper are cost effective and easily accessible. Local printing and binding services are available within a few miles of the study site. Once the final research paper is approved by Walden University, I will provide a printed copy to the regional

library and RSCC, in addition to electronic copies to RSCC and the peer debriefer. I will maintain electronic, printed, and bound copies for my personnel files.

Existing supports are also available to implement the white paper. The RSCC leadership has been very supportive of this study. I secured a Letter of Cooperation signed by the president of RSCC which demonstrates this support. I plan to request permission from the Vice President of Academic and Student Development (VP of ASD) to present the white paper at the fall 2015 professional development session which is scheduled to take place in September. This event is scheduled to be held at the regional workforce development center (WDC) which is supervised by RSCC. Implementing the white paper will require facilities, technical, human, and fiscal resources.

The WDC is a state of the art facility which routinely serves as the preferred location in the community for industry training, non-credit programs, business expos, summer programs, and large scale special events such as weddings. The WDC offers classrooms, labs, and a technology theatre which are fitted with Internet and email capabilities, chairs, computers, computer software, overhead projectors, and tables which will adequately support presentation of the white paper. The facility is also supported by administrative, training, and technical staff that are available to respond to the needs of presenters as it relates to space, equipment, supplies, and onsite troubleshooting of technical, emergency management, and housekeeping problems. It has been my experience that RSCC secures local grant funding to support professional development activities, which equates to a cost effective opportunity to present the white paper.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

The white paper will be utilized as a vehicle to recommend changes or innovations (ideas, concepts, and thoughts) related to reviewing the curriculum, developing community partnerships, and assessing professional development (reflective activities). In order to increase the chances that the innovations will be embraced, the focus will be on effective dissemination (Gannaway, Hinton, Berry, & Moore, 2013). Institutions of higher learning are well-known for resisting change (Watson & Watson, 2013). Participants in this current study communicated the need to secure administrators' buy-in and faculty support of the study's findings and recommendations which highlighted two potential barriers to implement the white paper—resistance from administrators and resistance from faculty.

Resistance from administrators. One potential barrier to implementing the whiter paper could be lack of support from the RSCC leadership team. The decision to gain buy-in from the Vice President of Academic and Student Development (VP of ASD) to present the white paper at the fall 2015 professional development event was a wise step. The role of this position entails oversight of instruction, curriculum development and review, in addition to overseeing learning resources which aligned with this study's exploration of the role of local history in the curriculum and strategies that could be employed to include local history or more local history in the curriculum. The VP of ASD has communicated that the aforementioned event will focus on student success and retention—hence, my research aligned with the institution's long-term strategic plan due to its focus on improving teaching and learning. Additionally, the president of RSCC has communicated his support of my research efforts both verbally and in writing. Moreover,

administrators included in the participant pool provided positive feedback on their experience and a desire to review the study's findings. I will also provide RSCC leadership with a copy of the final paper, including the 2-page executive summary at least 30 days prior to the fall 2015 professional development event which will allow ample time for discussion. In the final analysis, I determined that RSCC leadership would be fully supportive of my request to present the white paper at the fall 2015 professional development event.

Resistance from faculty. Another potential barrier to implementing the white paper could be resistance from faculty. Faculty are well-known for coveting the classroom as their domain and resisting change (Tagg, 2012). Faculty in this current study mentioned that they enjoy academic freedom at RSCC which has allowed them to address local history in the curriculum, as demonstrated by instructional activities and learning objectives outlined in the history and humanities course syllabi. Faculty were included in the participant pool which communicated respect for their ability to answer the research questions. This approach allowed me to assess potential faculty support for communicating the study's findings and sharing recommendations. Based on this perspective, I determined that faculty would support dissemination of a synopsis of my study to stakeholders, including peers, adjuncts, administrators, and staff. For instance, Participant 4 suggested a professional development activity designed to educate employees on what local history is and how to cover aspects of local history in the curriculum, which aligned with other participants' responses and the recommendations outlined in the white paper. Moreover, full-time faculty participation in the fall and spring professional development event is required. On the other hand, adjunct instructors

are not required to participate in the aforementioned activity, but are routinely in attendance. Therefore, it is expected that a breakout session focused on this study will garner a high level of faculty and adjunct instructors' participation.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

RSCC schedules two professional development events each academic year, which are held in fall and spring semesters. All full-time, administrators, faculty, and staff are required to attend. Adjunct instructors and part-time employees also routinely participate. I plan to present the white paper at the fall 2015 professional development event which is planned for September, because my final research paper was not approved by Walden University in time for the spring 2015 event which was held in January. The aforementioned events are typically one-half day events, which include 45-minute breakouts sessions facilitated by employees and guest speakers. With the permission of the VP of ASD, I plan to present the white paper at one of the timed sessions.

Roles and Responsibilities

The primary purpose of the white paper was to provide recommendations to address the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. The following stakeholders were identified as having key roles and responsibilities in implementing the white paper: (a) the researcher, (b) administrators, (c) faculty and adjunct instructors, and (d) staff.

The researcher. I served as the primary researcher and data collection instrument for this qualitative case study. I collected, analyzed, and coded all data from interviews and history and humanities course syllabi. I developed a white paper entitled *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum* which included recommendations related to (a) curriculum review, (b) community college-community partnerships, and (c) professional

development (reflective practices). It is my responsibility to provide RSCC leadership, the regional library, and the peer debriefer a copy of the white paper after approval of my final paper by Walden University. It is also my responsibility to seek the VP of ASD permission to present the white paper at a RSCC-sponsored professional development event in the fall of 2015. Moreover, it is my responsibility to review the white paper presentation training evaluation findings, and to discuss with the VP of ASD. I do not foresee any barriers to undertaking the aforementioned responsibilities.

Administrators. Initially, administrators provided verbal support for me to conduct the study at RSCC which was encouraging. Once I provided proof of Walden University IRB approval, the VP of ASD identified one of the deans who provided data as requested and permission to make direct contact with faculty which resulted in securing additional copies of history and humanities course syllabi. The VP of ASD is responsible for developing the agenda and selecting participants for the two mandatory professional development events which are planned for fall and spring semesters each academic year. I served as a co-presenter for a breakout session at the spring 2015 event which focused on linking research and theory to student success and retention—overall, this session received the highest evaluation ratings. The VP of ASD mentioned the possibility of my participation in future sessions with the aforementioned themes. Based on the fact that white paper recommendations are anchored in improving student learning outcomes and faculty professional practices, I am confident that the VP of ASD will support my request to share this information with campus stakeholders. Moreover, based on the institution's history of sharing formative evaluative feedback regarding the professional development events college-wide, I look forward to the VP of ASD

authorizing institutional research personnel to share and discuss the results of the online survey with me. I also look forward to the VP of ASD agreeing to meet with me to discuss the implications of the online survey results and the white paper. The *Data Use Agreement* signed by RSCC's president provides support for this type of information sharing.

Faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff. Initially, a key informant who had significant teaching, research, and leadership experience communicated concerns defined as a lack of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. Faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff volunteered to participate in this research study after receiving an email invitation. Once selected as a participant, individuals responded to 14 open-ended interview questions based on a researcher-developed interview guide. The primary role of faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff as it relates to the implementation of the white paper, will be to attend the professional development event planned for the fall of 2015. Additionally, I will ask those in attendance to provide feedback on the white paper presentation by responding to an evaluation administered by RSCC institutional research staff. Typically, this evaluation has been used by the institution to garner confidential feedback on professional development sessions, in order to address concerns and to improve the future experience of participants. It is expected that faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff will voluntarily provide input on the relevance of the study's findings and recommendations—thereby, serving as potential catalysts for decision-makers to keep the lines of communication open with me regarding the next steps to address the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC.

In the next section, I define formative evaluation which was selected to assess the white paper presentation. I also provide a justification for this approach.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation involves taking actions to change or make improvements to a program after it has started; whereas summative evaluation determines a program's results or "outcomes" (Spaulding, 2008, p. 9). I selected formative evaluation because the white paper (a) addressed the current status of local history in the curriculum and (b) offered recommendations which were malleable due to the potential for responses over time from faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, staff, students, and community organizations. Evaluating the white paper will require a forum where I can engage stakeholders in discussion and encourage timely feedback. As mentioned earlier in this paper, all full-time employees are required to attend organization-sponsored professional development two times a year, in addition it is commonplace to observe adjunct instructors in attendance even though they are not required to do so. Community organizations and students are not the target audience for the institution's professional development activities. Therefore, based on the recommendations outlined in the white paper, as it pertains to involving the key stakeholders in the curriculum review process, collaborative partnerships, and assessing the professional development program (reflective practices), it was anticipated that a formative approach to evaluating the white paper presentation would serve as the first step or the impetus for RSCC to determine the next steps. This means that I will respect the institution's decision as to whether or not to engage students and the community and to what extent.

I will coordinate with the VP of ASD to present the white paper in a 45-minute breakout session at the fall 2015 session. At the conclusion of each professional development session, institutional research personnel email an online survey to all employees. In keeping with the institution's policy, respondents will be assured of a sense of confidentiality; hence, responses will not be publicly connected to individuals. Respondents have the option of volunteering to participate on the planning committee for future events and are informed that the research staff will contact them to confirm their interest. Typically, RSCC utilizes this information to address any concerns or comments as evidenced by the nature of subsequent communication, and the content and design of future events.

Justification for Formative Evaluation

I determined that the white paper should be evaluated formatively based on an existing data collection and analysis tool (an online survey) which has been utilized by RSCC to gain feedback from participants in order to assess the content, applicability, and participants' feedback regarding the white paper professional development sessions. Formative evaluation is best used when new ideas or ways of thinking are interjected into a program that is already in place (Spaulding, 2008), which is indicative of the recommendations (innovative and creative ideas) highlighted in the white paper, as it relates to revising the current curriculum, determining the feasibility of community partnerships, and assessing the presence of reflective components in the professional development program at RSCC. Based on Hall, Freeman, and Roulston's (2014) assertion that formative evaluation should be a participatory process or "the partnership established between the evaluator, educational researchers or managers, and other relevant

stakeholders" (p. 152), I plan to use the online survey because it will allow for input and buy-in of the white paper from multiple stakeholders. Using an online survey as a resource will also allow me to conduct a formative evaluation of faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff responses to the white paper who did not participate in the study.

Moreover, the online survey will provide participants attending the white paper presentation the opportunity to offer both quantitative (a 5-point Likert scale, which includes ratings of strongly agree-5; agree-4; neutral-3; disagree-2; and strongly disagree-1) and qualitative (a series of open-ended questions) feedback regarding the professional development session, which are strategies commonly used in conjunction with formative evaluations (Lodico, et al., 2010). The participatory approach to formative evaluations mentioned by (Hall et al., 2014) is an aspect of the online survey, as demonstrated by the fact that the institution routinely shares the data collected (qualitative and quantitative) college-wide; subsequently, organizational policies, procedures, and professional development sessions are sometimes changed to reflect recommendations made by employees.

I will request permission from the VP ASD to analyze the feedback generated from the online survey in order to formatively evaluate the white paper presentation and prepare for the possibility of ongoing communication with RSCC stakeholders, including internal and external groups. Data-driven decision-making is essential to informing professional practices (Mandinach, 2012). In this regard, a formative evaluation is appropriate in keeping with my plans to meet with the VP of ASD to discuss the

implications of the online survey feedback and thereafter entrust RSCC stakeholders with making decisions that are deemed appropriate to address the recommendations.

The formative evaluation in no way signals a note of finality as it relates to assessing the white paper. As the author of this project, I will make myself available to engage in ongoing discussions with RSCC regarding future directions after the white paper presentation and review of the online survey results. Table 2 represents an alignment of the online survey questions relative to analyzing the white paper presentation (both quantitatively and qualitatively).

Table 2

Alignment of Online Survey Questions – Quantitative and Qualitative

Type of Analysis	Questions
Quantitative (5-point Likert scale: Strongly agree-5; Agree-4; Neutral-3; Disagree-2; Strongly disagree-1)	10.1: The session was applicable to my work at the College. 10.2: The session provided relevant and useful information. 10.3: The presenter was knowledgeable about the subject. 10.4: The presenter engaged the audience. 10.5: The presenter responded effectively to the questions.
Qualitative (Open-ended questions)	12. What future topics would you like to see covered in an in-service meeting? 13. Please share your comments and suggestions for improvement of future in-service meetings (e.g., content, facility, materials, presenters, handouts, breakout sessions, etc.). 14. If you would like to serve on a committee to plan the next in-service, enter your name in the space below. 15. Other Comments.

Note. This information represents select quantitative and qualitative analysis extracted from the online survey utilized by RSCC to evaluate professional development sessions, which will also be utilized to evaluate the white paper presentation.

Overall Goals of the Project

The overall goals of the white paper are to: (a) Provide RSCC administrators with access to information that could be used to make informed decisions regarding the recommendations and (b) engage stakeholders, including faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff, who could be potentially impacted by the recommendations outlined in the white paper prior to RSCC taking action(s).

Overall Evaluation Goals

The primary goals of the formative evaluation are to elicit and assess feedback and input regarding the white paper presentation, in addition to opening dialogue with key stakeholders, including faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff regarding the findings of this qualitative case study and the resulting recommendations. In succinct terms, the aforementioned formative evaluation goals are designed to support the organization's efforts to garner more positive student learning outcomes and to improve teaching.

Description of Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders targeted for the white paper presentation are (a) faculty, (b) adjunct instructors, (c) administrators who teach and/or allocate resources in support of curricular functions, and (d) staff who teach. Participants in this study also identified students, community partners (current and future) and community organizations, including businesses, K–12 schools, and non-profit institutions that have similar missions and goals, as stakeholders who should be involved in revising the curriculum. Participants cautioned that exploring the feasibility of implementing the recommendations will require an interdisciplinary approach and collaboration among stakeholders. Since students, community partners, and community organizations were not included in this study, it will be up to RSCC to determine their level of involvement (if any) in regards to addressing the recommendations after the white paper presentation. The white paper that will be presented as a result of the study's findings and the accompanying recommendations have both local and far reaching implications in terms of the possibilities for educational change, which are discussed in the next section.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

Effecting positive social change requires action at various levels, including individual, group, and institutional (de la Sablonnière, Bourgeois, & Najih, 2013). I conducted this qualitative case study in response to a key informant's concern that more attention needed to paid to including local history in the curriculum in relation to the breadth and depth of the community's culture. The white paper promotes social change on the aforementioned levels, as evidenced by key stakeholders' voluntary participation in the study, the study site's support of this research endeavor, and the proposed involvement of multiple stakeholders in addressing the study's recommendations. This project has implications for the institution, faculty, adjunct instructors, staff, local citizens, community partners, and community organizations.

First, the institution will benefit from the findings and recommendations provided in the white paper because this is the first study of its kind conducted at RSCC. This project will provide RSCC administrators with data-driven, evidence-based solutions to address local history in the curriculum. Stakeholders, including policymakers and funding agencies are demanding that institutions of higher learning create a "culture of evidence" to support decision-making (Peck & McDonald, 2014), which is the substance of the white paper.

Second, faculty, adjunct instructors, and staff will benefit from the white paper because it validates their (a) institutional knowledge as a valued resource, (b) role in the curriculum review and development, (c) innovative and creative strategies offered to address local history in the curriculum, and (d) interest in self-reflection in order to

improve professional practices and student learning. Faculty are more apt to embrace change when they are (a) provided evidence-based rationales, (b) have a voice in the process from the onset and throughout, (c) have reason to believe that students will benefit, and (d) are allocated adequate resources such as time and space (Sinclair & Osborn, 2014).

Third, the white paper addresses the needs of local citizens, namely current and future RSCC students, who will require certain life and career skills, including analyzing, oral and written communication, critical thinking, information management, and research—skills that can be learned from studying history (Liang & Ghadessi, 2013), which is where local history is embedded. RSCC is situated to produce citizens with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to meet their academic, career, and personal goals.

Fourth, the white paper is also important to community partners and community organizations, because it encourages RSCC to respect their needs and potential contributions to the curriculum. In particular, collaborations between community colleges and community organizations can be mutually beneficial as both entities experience dwindling resources (Henry, 2015). RSCC has established a history of partnering with the local agencies for the purpose of achieving common goals.

Moreover, RSCC stakeholders will have access to the research study and the accompanying white paper through a variety of media: hard copy, email, and the regional library archives. In addition to the implications for social change at the local level, the white paper embodies far-reaching significance.

Far-Reaching

An extensive review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of research which addresses the problem identified in this current study as the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum. This situation limits the academy's access to information which could contribute to improving teaching and learning. Meanwhile, opportunities for college students to study history and humanities, which is where local history has a place, are diminishing (Bell, 2010). Americans are unable to pass tests on basic knowledge of civics, based on pre-requisites to earn a high school diploma and the requirements to gain U.S. citizenship (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2008). Moreover, on the world stage, leaders have gathered for the purpose of participating in scholarly discourse on roles and responsibilities of higher education.

Consensus among the world's leaders has been gained in terms of institutions of higher learning having a social responsibility to (a) contribute to the construction of knowledge based on diverse perspectives; (b) actively promote creative and innovative thinking and actions; and (c) engage in research that addresses real-world problems and solutions by engaging in "education, training, research and outreach activities" (Nagoya Declaration, 2014, para. 5). The aforementioned declarations situate the white paper as a valuable resource to initiatives from local to international.

Once the final study is published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database, access will transcend geographical boundaries and time zones. Essentially, this study has far-reaching implications because it contributes to the community and researchers' understanding of the value of local history to multiple stakeholders and

provides a blueprint to effectively address local history in the curriculum through the use of internal and external resources.

Summary

In this section, I provided a description of the proposed project (a white paper) which included recommendations related to curriculum review, community college-community partnerships, and professional development (faculty reflective practices). The white paper can be used as a vehicle for social change because it is persuasive, evidenced-based, and offers solutions to addressing local history in the curriculum at RSCC. By utilizing a formative evaluation (online survey), I will be able to assess participants' responses to the research study and the recommendations, in addition to leveraging this information to engage in discussions with RSCC stakeholders.

In Section 4, I discuss my doctoral journey including what was learned, how I would do things differently, and how I intend to apply my education to my passion for assisting historically marginalized populations with accessing higher education. Section 4 includes a message that will serve to capture the salient points of the study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. In this section, I reflect on the strengths and limitations of the project entitled, *A Data-Driven, Evidence-Based Position on the Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College*—herein referred to as *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum*), as it relates to addressing the problem and recommendations for remediating limitations of the project. Additionally, I discuss alternative approaches to addressing the problem and why alternative solutions were limited. Moreover, I provide reflections on what I learned about scholarship; leadership and change; and myself as a scholar, practitioner, and program developer. I also reflect on the overall importance of the study in terms of social change implications. I also discuss the implications, applications, and directions for future research. The perspectives offered in this section are based on multiple roles that I serve: coach, community volunteer, educator, mentor, researcher, and voice for historically marginalized populations. This section concludes with a message designed to accelerate scholarly inquiry on the value of local history and why it should have a role in the curriculum.

Project Strengths

The major strength of this project is that it addressed the problem as a gap in practice. In the 40-year history of the school, this was the first study of its kind to consider the value of local history to multiple stakeholders and its relationship to the curriculum. This approach will help to strengthen the institution's efforts to improve teaching and learning because participants communicated numerous strategies to include

history or more history in the curriculum at RSCC. Faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff were key informants in this study which helped to strengthen professional practices through the use of self-reflection. The white paper was used to provide a synopsis of the study, and to recommend changes related to curriculum review, community partnerships, and reflective practices with the support of peer-reviewed references, which helped to demonstrate scholarly value.

Additionally, due to the fact that qualitative case studies provide opportunities to delve deeply into the meaning participants make of a phenomenon, I was able to gather participants' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge related to local history. This information, coupled with the data derived from history and humanities course syllabi, can be used by decision makers at RSCC to assess current practices and programs. Actions taken as a result of the aforementioned assessment could result in improved curriculum that could better support development of students' community skills, teaching that is supported by reflective practices and is student-centered, and student learning outcomes that support success in life and the workplace.

Moreover, sustainable change within community college-community collaborations requires effective communication, common goals, and flexibility (Dunavin, 2010). In this regard, the strength of the white paper format is that it represents a synopsis of the study, which can be leveraged to communicate the complex intricacies of the research study in brief, non-technical, and easy to understand terms. The recommendations outlined in the white paper focus on a collaboration between internal and external stakeholders, which provides an opportunity for RSCC to build and strengthen relationships that can be mutually beneficial. Employing a collaborative

approach will help RSCC to strengthen efforts to sustain its student success agenda and, in turn, give communities a voice in helping to meet the needs of local citizens and businesses.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

The white paper has weaknesses as well as strengths in regards to addressing the problem. One limitation of the white paper is linked to the review of syllabi which focused on history and humanities courses with either HIS or HUM designations. Initially, I thought it was a sound decision to limit the courses reviewed due to public documents indicating that the study site embedded the study of history within humanities courses, which suggested a narrow approach to the interdisciplinary study of local history. During the interviews, several participants provided examples of their efforts to incorporate the study of local history across disciplines (intentional and unintentional), including English, reading, psychology, sociology, and technology, which suggested that an expanded review may have been warranted. The aforementioned disciplines were not the target of this study; thus, I did not include data collection and analysis of those syllabi in my methodology. This limitation of the study was supported by the professional literature which indicates that interdisciplinary studies in higher education are common (Newell, 2010). The second limitation of the study was the fact that the population sample was relatively small (12 participants) which may not support generalizing the findings to other institutions. Generalization is typically not the focus of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2008), which is why I communicated this key insight in the study and the white paper. Even though the study's findings and subsequent recommendations may

not transfer to other settings, organizations may find the information useful or malleable enough to fit their needs.

The limitations could have derailed implementation of the white paper, but were remediated because I utilized multiple data collection and analysis processes, including (a) revealing my biases up front as the primary researcher and taking a participant-focused stance; (b) selecting a diverse participant pool that was able to articulate the curriculum review and development processes at RSCC and conduct member checks of the themes, interpretations, and findings; (c) analyzing history and humanities courses in conjunction with interview data which helped to confirm the presence of local history in the curriculum; and (d) gathering feedback from a peer debriefer who was qualified to assess and determine whether or not the white paper was reflective of the study's findings and free of bias. This approach helped to increase the trustworthiness of the study and feasibility of RSCC implementing the recommendations outlined in the white paper.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Alternative Approaches

Even though I employed multiple data collection tools in order to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC, there were alternative approaches that I could have taken. First, in addition to conducting the 12 face to face interviews with faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff, I could have included the voices of students and community stakeholders. O'Banion (1997) posited that community colleges should be "learning colleges" where student learning takes center stage. When students' voices are respected in the curriculum design process, teaching and learning improve (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011). The professional literature also cited that students can

serve as “change agents” (Dunne & Zandstra 2011; Healey, 2014), “change consultants” (Cook-Sather, 2009), and “co-creators of knowledge” (Müller-Christ et al., 2013), which situates students as key players in curriculum design processes. Moreover, respect for community collaborations is important to meeting the goals of community colleges which were designed to serve the needs of local communities, and communities that need skilled employees and citizens that are prepared to participate in a democratic society (Compass Compact, 2015). To put this into perspective, RSCC has a history of collaborating and partnering with local K–12 schools, community organizations, and businesses; hence, the organization may be receptive of participants’ recommendations to leverage those partnerships, in addition to building new ones that align with both institution’s missions and goals.

Second, focus groups could have been added as data collection tools. To illustrate, this study focused on aspects of teaching and learning which placed it in the realm of pedagogic research and in alignment with focus group interviews (Winlow, Simm, Marvell, & Schaaf, 2013). Including students and community stakeholders would have brought all groups possibly impacted by the study into a forum which welcomed diverse input. Conducting focus group interviews would have included the same target population, open ended interview questions, and confidentiality protocols as the face to face interviews, for the same purpose—to garner feedback on the role of local history in the curriculum. This approach would have provided the opportunity for participants to discuss the problem, brainstorm, and create synergy (Acocella, 2011). The focus groups could have been broken down to include five to 12 participants (Fallon & Brown, 2002; Longhurst, 2003), or even in smaller or “mini” focus groups of three to four participants

(Onweugbuzie, Dickenson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Essentially, real-time interactions provided by the focus group interviews would have allowed for the creation of new ideas as participants reflected on past experiences, which may have resulted in additional recommendations outlined in the white paper. Other researchers will have an opportunity to learn from the conduct, outcomes, and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

Alternative Definitions of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was defined as the perception of the lack of local history in the curriculum because of the insight provided by a key informant who communicated a sense of urgency to include local history in the curriculum. During the process of reviewing the professional literature, I confirmed the lack of research in this area, and the potential for students to develop community skills by studying local history and engaging in civic and service learning activities. The potential benefits associated with students studying local history was of paramount concern to me.

For the purpose of this study community skills were framed in terms of civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues (AACC, 2012; AACU, 2012). Thus, an alternative definition of the problem could have addressed the role of civic engagement and service learning in the curriculum in relation to students' learning outcomes. Instead of a qualitative approach, I could have employed a mixed method approach which would have allowed me to quantitatively measure (before and after the intervention) students' learning outcomes in terms of hours of service in relation to GPA, class attendance, and graduation rates, to name a few. Qualitatively, I would have been able to capture the meaning students make of civic engagement and

service learning experiences by conducting face-to-face interviews supported by open-ended questions. This line of inquiry would have been similar to the work of Astin and Sax (1998) and Netecki (2011), which revealed the potential for community-embedded activities in the curriculum to positively impact development of students' academic performance and community skills.

Alternative Solutions to the Local Problem

The three recommendations outlined in this study (curriculum review, community college-community partnerships, and professional development-faculty reflective practices) were offered as solutions to address the local problem. These recommendations were based on participants' responses which were triangulated with history and humanities course syllabi. Other solutions, including developing a local history course or planning a three-day professional development event to promote reflective activities were considered, but deemed not as appropriate. First, I do not possess the requisite experience with history curriculum design or the credentials to develop a local history curriculum independently. This type of endeavor would require collaboration with a faculty member who possesses the knowledge, skills, abilities, and passion. As Participant 7 mentioned, such an endeavor would require a "champion." Second, the current culture of the study site will not support a multiple day professional development event. Currently, two such events are held each academic year which last only one-half day each. To further explain, due to a reduction-in-force and ongoing restructuring which started in late-2013, many uncertainties exist with regard to the future organizational structure of RSCC and the potential impact. In this regard, I followed Lewin's (1951) assertion that one must carefully consider the culture of an organization prior to recommending changes.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, Leadership and Change

Scholarship

I learned three key aspects regarding scholarship during my doctoral journey. First, I learned that scholarship requires following a formalized plan to conduct scholarly research. To put into perspective, I earned a bachelor's degree with a general studies focus, which did not include a research component. I also earned a Master of Science degree in Postsecondary Education, with a concentration in Foundations of Education. My master's degree program included one research methodologies course which was 8½ weeks in length. While my graduate degree program informed me on the foundations of education, adult learning theories, and the history of higher education, I was not required to conduct a research study. In fact, my research efforts were limited to completing a short proposal based on a self-designed template, which did not involve data collection. The templates, rubrics, guides, and checklists provided by Walden University throughout this journey were crucial to developing scholarly work. This information assisted me with editing my work, and communicating questions and concerns to my committee. I learned that in order to successfully complete the doctoral journal, I needed to embrace the process as a committee-student collaboration; hence, when I found my own voice and was able to advocate for myself, the process moved forward more swiftly.

Second, I learned that a history of academic excellence does not necessarily equate to a successful doctoral journey. For example, throughout this journey my emotions have ranged from uncertainty, anticipation, confusion, frustration, and a sense of accomplishment. It was not until the prospectus development stage of this journey that I began to fully understand what was required to successfully produce scholarly research

at the doctoral level. The prospectus development form prompted me to seriously consider what type of study would contribute to the body of knowledge on a given topic and capture my attention long enough to influence me to complete the journey. Initially, my research efforts revealed a narrow focus on local history, but with the guidance of my committee I learned how to complete a project study with a broader focus. Collaborating with my committee allowed me to focus on a problem in the local setting. The professional literature and the data collected confirmed that the problem existed, opened a line of inquiry, and revealed viable solutions.

Third, I learned that in order to conduct a doctoral study a student must develop a range of skills. Walden University designed the doctoral program in Higher Education and Adult Learning (HEAL) to allow students to enroll in one course at a time, in a specific order. For me, this meant being able to focus my efforts in a more productive manner instead of being distracted with completing assignments for courses with different areas of focus.

To this end, I learned from my coursework that scholarship requires building a foundation for success, with an ongoing emphasis on developing APA-style writing, synthesizing scholarly resources, triangulating research, collaborating, learning to align research methodologies with addressing a specific problem, and concluding with writing the final paper as a subject matter expert.

Project Development and Evaluation

According to a key informant at the study site, RSCC has never offered a local history course. Due to the historic role of community colleges serving the needs of local communities, it became apparent that an opportunity existed to explore the role of local

history in the curriculum. Participants in this study revealed the value of local history to educators, students, and communities, in addition to strategies to include local history in the curriculum. After reviewing templates, rubrics, and checklists provided by the University, I gained a better understanding of the project development requirements. Based on this information, I understood that this study would be evaluated based on contributions to the local community, the field of education, and social change. I further supported my project development efforts by conducting a thorough review of the literature, data analysis, artifacts/documents, and findings which resulted in developing a white paper.

The white paper was designed to educate and convince RSCC and its stakeholders of the value of local history in relation to the curriculum and to advance implementation of the recommendations based on the study's findings. Based on participants' experiences that revising the curriculum would require convincing RSCC leadership of the need, I also selected change management to support the conceptual framework in order to address the potential for resistance to change. Moreover, by utilizing built-in mechanisms at RSCC, including the semester-based yearly professional development event and the online survey, I imagined that a cost-effective, trusted vehicle would be sufficient to review and assess stakeholders' receptiveness to the recommendations outlined in the white paper, and to follow-up with RSCC leadership regarding the next steps.

Leadership and Change

As an emerging leader in higher education and my community, I realize that change requires action. I am very committed to pursuing professional development opportunities that will pave the road for me to assume leadership roles in a variety of

settings. My goal is to promote student-centered learning that is focused on helping historically marginalized students to achieve their academic, career, and personal goals. The students in my target population include low-income, first generation, ethnic/minority, and veteran/military-connected. In order to achieve this goal, I plan to continually engage in scholarly research and to identify best practices in serving the target population. My dual roles at RSCC (College Success Coach and Instructor) speak to fact that I am well-positioned to develop relationships campus-wide in regards to effecting positive social change.

Based on the research findings, I plan to inform and collaborate with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community stakeholders on issues that impact student success and development. In particular, I plan to continue my efforts in the workplace and the community to help remove financial barriers to higher education access by mentoring students and providing assistance with identifying and applying for scholarships. Moreover, I will seek to share an overview, findings, and recommendations based on this study as a vehicle to promote self-reflection among educators and change within the education setting. These planned efforts speak to my commitment to embody Walden University's goal to create agents of social change.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

Prior to enrolling at Walden University, I never really considered myself a scholar even though I earned a bachelor's degree with honors and a master's degree with distinguished honors. Even though the word scholar is made up of only seven letters, to label myself as such seemed a lofty goal. In professional circles, I have heard the terms historically marginalized, underrepresented, or underserved to describe me and similarly

situated students. Demographically, this means that I am less likely to earn a college degree when compared to my more affluent and academically-prepared counterparts. In fact, as someone of African American and Native American descent who is also from a low-income background, I became the first person in my family to earn a college degree. This process has, in part, been about breaking a cycle of lack of educational attainment in my own family.

Upon reflection, I made the right decision to enroll in a doctoral program in October 2008. To put this journey into perspective, the instructor for the first course I enrolled (Foundations) made a statement to the effect that students would be forever changed by the doctoral journey. At that time, I dismissed the aforementioned commentary because I was feeling good about the recent completion of my master's degree and confident that I would have the same level of success earning a doctoral degree. Upon reflection, I realize that I am not the same student or person I was over six years ago when this journey began. In fact, I am better positioned to apply critical thinking and facts to an issue or problem than before.

In early 2011, I completed my coursework at Walden University. This accomplishment has had numerous implications for my professional life. The research skills developed throughout this journey have allowed me to employ a scholarly approach to locating, analyzing, interpreting, and managing voluminous amounts of information. Specifically, these skills served me well in developing the literature review sections of my doctoral study which required reviewing hundreds of articles and determining which ones were applicable to my study. Moreover, I am more capable of developing data collection tools and producing the complex and technical reports that are required in my

role working with a grant-funded program. These new skills have allowed me to manage my time more wisely and balance my duties which involve teaching, coaching, and serving on committees.

My writing skills reveal higher order thinking and language that is authoritative. Thus, I lean more towards communicating as a subject matter expert, instead of communicating to inform. For example, when I compared papers written in my master's degree program to my doctoral work products, it was shocking to see the metamorphosis of my writing and development of out of the box thinking skills. This new form of writing and thinking demonstrates my ability to formulate new ideas and opinions based on research, in addition to succinctly presenting information in a manner that contextualizes the setting and engages the reader.

In the final analysis, I found that there is no universally accepted definition of a scholar. If someone asked me the following question: What is your definition of a scholar? I would respond that based on my doctoral journey, being labeled a scholar extends beyond academic accomplishments. There are other characteristics such as ethics, integrity, persistence, and tenacity that are also characteristics of a scholar because without these attributes completing a research-based study would not have been possible. One of the keys to developing as a scholar was maintaining a research journal which allowed me to document and analyze my thoughts and actions–as a result, I was able to persist and complete an ethical study.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

A teacher once told me that the earlier I found my "passion," I would be happier and more successful. It has always been my belief that being an educator was my calling.

As a child and teenager, I immersed myself in books—I preferred books to toys and the public library was my second home during summer months. The best job that I ever had was working in my high school library without pay because I could read books and magazines during my breaks and less than peaks times. My love of books sparked a burning desire to be an educator—I have always liked learning new things and I envisioned myself sharing knowledge with others.

Even though I had prior professional experience in the fields of counseling, human resources management, training and development, and adult education, in order to be competitive in the field of higher education, I realized that I required more formal education. I was drawn to the HEAL program due to its practitioner-based focus. As a practitioner, throughout this journey my critical thinking skills have evolved to the extent that I approach problem-solving from a scholarly lens; hence, I seek research-based, data driven solutions. My goal is to contribute to the "culture of evidence" that stakeholders are demanding of institutions of higher learning. For example, with the support of my coursework at Walden University in program development and adult learning theories, over 2 years ago I developed a student success and development model that was implemented at the study site. I continually share this information with my colleagues on an individual basis and across the state community college system.

Moreover, I am able to prepare abstracts and position papers that address pressing issues, including the benefits of implementing learning communities to improve services to veterans, financial aid policies and the potential impact on historically marginalized groups, and the role of non-academic supports in student success. This information has served to inform colleagues, faculty, and leaders in higher education. The feedback on

this work has been positive and resulted in collaborative efforts aimed at advancing RSCC and state-level student success and retention initiatives.

At this stage in my career, I realize that as a practitioner, it is imperative to continually seek best practices, collaborate, and share one's knowledge. Notably, as a practitioner I learned that sharing knowledge in higher education is one of the keys to student success and development because varying perspectives can contribute to creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. I look forward to continuing to grow on a professional level as an educator and promoting social change through knowledge sharing, which is aligned with the goals of Walden University.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

Completion of this doctoral study surpassed all of my other efforts developing projects. In fact, my experiences developing grant proposals, desktop manuals, human resources policies, standard operating procedures (SOP), training manuals, and professional development curriculum pale in comparison. At times, the rigor required of the doctoral study challenged my capabilities on mental, emotional, and physical levels. At various stages, I considered whether or not the doctoral process was comparable to the challenges I faced completing the U.S. Army's basic training and serving on active duty. The jury is still out on this issue. However, I feel a sense of accomplishment in terms of completing a project study that addressed a real-world problem in my own workplace, in addition to developing a project that was research-based, data-supported, and responsive to addressing the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC.

As a projector developer, I learned that engaging in a social change agenda is not easy on the mind or body. For me, it was downright painful at times due to the amount of

time and effort required to collaborate with my committee and to make revisions to my work. I shed my fair share of tears and exhibited frustration with understanding what was required of me. I also learned that in order to be a successful project developer, I must be willing to accept that in the context of the life span development of humans, the project development process involves a series of phases, processes, and stages that must be navigated. Thus, as a novice researcher, the experience of developing a project taught me that successfully advancing a social change initiative such as the doctoral journey takes time and resources—this journey requires both an unwavering commitment and intestinal fortitude. This rings true because statistically speaking very few students complete the doctoral journey. I am honored to join such an accomplished group of individuals.

I believe that social change starts at the individual level. Developing my first extensive, research-based project has increased my intellectual capabilities, confidence, and sense of empowerment. As an emerging scholar with a social change agenda, I realize that I have a voice and I must continue to take action on my ideas, beliefs, and passions absent fear of being labeled as "going against the grain." To this end, I am in it for the long haul when it comes using the skills learned at Walden University to research, develop, implement, evaluate, and revise programs, for the purpose of supporting more positive outcomes for historically marginalized groups.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

Characteristics of communities include economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. Effecting social change involves a sustained commitment to improve conditions of the human experience, as demonstrated by the work of Freire (2006). According to Walden University (2008), "Social change is at the heart of" its mission and

the University "provides a diverse community of career professionals with the opportunity to transform themselves as practitioner-scholars so that they may transform society" (p. 5). I translated this information to mean that social change does not simply occur because it should—it requires people that are actively engaged in achieving it.

This study was grounded in the work of social change. To reiterate, this study captured local history as a knowledge system which focused on human experiences at the community level. Although participants did not agree on a definition of local history, the terms applied, including all walks of life, backstory, behaviors, community culture, customs, daily norm of an area, economic, events, historical details, natural events, policies, political things, social background, social events, social system, and traditions, suggested educational and social significance.

Participants also identified students, family members, community members, and colleagues as the primary sources for their knowledge of local history. In terms of students as potential social change agents, participants communicated that local history knowledge instills a sense of pride which positions students to be active in their communities, as evidenced by their efforts to incorporate aspects of local history in the curriculum as "teachable moments." Additionally, participants mentioned that their personal and professional decisions have been altered by knowledge of local history. This level of insight regarding this study helps to position future students and educators as social change agents.

Essentially, this study is important because it established a precedent at RSSC as the first research endeavor which addressed the role of local history in the curriculum. The opportunity to explore perceptions of key informants and strategies to include local

history in the curriculum helped to develop a series of recommendations which framed curriculum review and revision as a collaborative effort between on and off campus stakeholders. Armed with this information, stakeholders will be better prepared to take the necessary actions to improve teaching and learning.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

This project study has implications for decision-making at RSCC due to its focus on the curriculum for the following reasons: (a) it is the first of its kind at RSCC; (b) the value of local history to educators, students, institutions, and communities was captured; (c) the findings offer research-based, data driven solutions to addressing participants' call to action for more local history in the curriculum; and (d) resources and strategies for including local history in the curriculum were revealed. Stakeholders can leverage the results of this study to convince decision-makers of the need to implement an interdisciplinary approach to the study of local history as recommended by participants, by highlighting the data and evidence. Moreover, participants indicated that RSCC has access to both internal and external resources needed to support the aforementioned endeavors, which implies that resistance to change and implementing the study's recommendations may be minimized. These implications situate the white paper as a vehicle to advance positive social change.

Applications

In terms of applications, this study provides decision-makers a road map for implementation of curricula changes. To illustrate, participants' suggestions that a need exists to revise the curriculum and to include on and off campus stakeholders manifested

in Recommendation 1 (curriculum review) and Recommendation 2 (college-community partnerships) respectively. Additionally, Recommendation 3 underscored the desire of faculty to engage in reflective activities, which suggests applicability in terms of improving the institution's professional development program. In regards to methodology, even though this qualitative case study was not focused on generalizing the findings to other settings, stakeholders in similarly situated rural, community college settings may find this information applicable as they consider modifying old curriculum and implementing new initiatives. This is an important observation in the context of this study because of the significant number of public, rural community colleges such as RSCC and tribal colleges which are typically located in rural areas, which "serve 3.3 million students at 600 colleges and 800 campuses, and are the fastest growing sector of U.S. community colleges" (Rural Community College Alliance, 2012, para. 3). This study demonstrated the need for institutions to afford opportunities for faculty to reflect on professional practices as an approach to improve the curriculum and students' learning experiences. Viewed from the lenses of this study, and given the significant number of institutions that could be impacted by the findings and recommendations for action, further inspection is warranted—hence, decision-makers in other settings should consider the possible applications.

Directions for Future Research

Directions for future research may include expanding the participant pool to include students and community stakeholders because addressing curriculum issues should be a collaborative process (Brooman et al., 2014). Students and community stakeholders' perspectives were not included in this study due to its focus on gathering

feedback from those involved in teaching; curriculum development, review and assessment; and allocating resources in support of curricular functions. This means that other researchers may decide to reference this study as the basis for further inquiry, in addition to considering using similar research and interview questions. I am open to discussion related to my research efforts and providing other researchers permission to duplicate tools I developed to conduct this study (i.e., the researcher-developed guiding/research questions and the interview guide).

Conclusion

This study was undertaken due to a suggestion to include local history in the curriculum, as expressed by a key informant. The purpose was to gather multiple perspectives (faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff) on the role of local history in relation to the curriculum, and strategies to include local history or more local history in the curriculum. This study was a first for the study site which established it as history-making. The fact the local history has educational and social implications (Dymond, 1999), placed this study within the realm of social change. Social change is an action-oriented process which involves multiple stakeholders on individual, group, and organizational levels (de la Sablonnière et al., 2013). Participants volunteered to have a presence in this study which situated them in the role of agents of social change. Participants were able to provide significant insight on the value of local history to themselves, students, institutions, and communities. As a result, the three recommendations included in the white paper were based on the study's findings—curriculum review, community-college partnerships, and professional development (faculty reflective practices). Social change can be advanced by determining what should

or should not be included in the curriculum (Bastedo, 2011), which positions this study as a catalyst.

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Appendix A: A White Paper: The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College--A Data-Driven, Evidence-Based Position

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 1, 2015

Highlights of white paper SECTIONS

INTRODUCTION:

This white paper summarizes key elements and offers recommendations based on the findings of a recent research study entitled *The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community*. The study site was Rural Southern Community College (RSCC, a pseudonym).

THE PROBLEM:

The problem addressed in the study was the perception of a lack of local history in the curriculum.

METHODOLOGY:

This qualitative case study included face to face interviews with 12 volunteer participants, including faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff. Data were also collected from a demographic data form and history and humanities course syllabi. Additionally, a research journal was maintained. Two research questions guided this study, as described below:

- Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How do faculty and staff at RSCC perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum?

- Research Question 2 (RQ 2): What possibilities and strategies could be developed to include local history in curriculum at RSCC?

Stakeholders should consider that qualitative research findings may not be transferrable (applicable) to other settings.

RESULTS:

Eight themes and 19 subthemes were developed. A synthesis of these results indicate participants' support of a link between local history and the curriculum, including strategies to include local history or more local history in the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study's findings resulted in three recommendations, as follows:

- Recommendation #1: Curriculum Review
  - The institution should consider reviewing and assessing curricula beyond what was offered in this current study, to include major disciplines (e.g., English, social sciences, math, education, computer science, and health sciences), in order to determine the extent that students are offered opportunities to study local history, and make adjustments as necessary.
- Recommendation #2: Community College-Community Partnerships
  - The institution should consider identifying and developing partnerships with external/community partners, in order to advance the study of local history in connection with its curricular functions.
- Recommendation #3: Professional Development and Faculty Reflective Practices
  - The institution should consider assessing its professional development program for the presence of opportunities that allow faculty to engage in

reflective practices, in order to improve teaching and learning, and make adjustments where necessary.

The recommendations support an interdisciplinary approach to teaching local history and the collaboration among stakeholders to address local history in the curriculum, as suggested by the study's participants and supported by the professional literature.

CONCLUSION:

This study establishes a precedent at the study site because it is the first to explore the role of local history in the curriculum. The salient point of the findings is participants' perception that local history has value to students, educators, and communities. These findings are supported by the professional literature. Once the study's findings are disseminated, the final determination of the "next steps" will be in the hands of decision-makers at the study site. As the primary researcher, I will continue to make myself available to discuss the study, recommendations, and related initiatives.

The author of this white paper is Ms. Sandra Walker. Ms. Walker is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Higher Education and Adult Learning (HEAL) at Walden University. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Illinois University and a Master of Science degree from Troy University. Her other research interests include best practices in advancing higher education access for historically marginalized students and helping military veterans transition to institutions of higher learning. Ms. Walker can be reached by email at xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu

A White Paper: The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College—A Data-Driven, Evidence-Based Position

By Sandra L. Walker

The Goals of the white paper are to:

- **Capture the findings and recommendations based on a recent qualitative case study designed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum.**
- **Communicate a synopsis of the study to stakeholders, including faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff.**
- **Lead stakeholders to a deeper understanding of the meaning and value of local history to faculty, students, and communities, and strategies to address local history in the curriculum.**
- **Highlight the benefits associated with faculty engaging in reflective activities for the purpose of improving professional practices and students' learning outcomes.**
- **Provide future researchers with a framework for studying problems linked to the curriculum and students' learning outcomes.**

Introduction

Local history knowledge is very important to individuals, communities, and the nation. To put into perspective, local history knowledge gives citizens a sense of pride, belonging, and self-identity (Dymond, 1999). Moreover, local history knowledge is very personal and informs citizens of the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of their communities, which positions them to be active participants (Carr, 2008). Armed with knowledge of their communities, citizens are better prepared to make connections to the world that exists outside their communities and to apply learning in a global context (Kolb, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC, a pseudonym).

This study is timely because Americans are receiving failing grades when tested on knowledge of basic civics (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2008) and the ability to identify key political figures (GfK Roper, 2012). These dismal findings should not be surprising because stakeholders have issued a call to action for community colleges to focus more on developing and assessing

the skills students need to succeed in an increasingly globalized society, such as navigating diverse workplaces, transitioning to 4-year institutions, and managing everyday life (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Salas-Isnardi, 2011).

This study challenged stakeholders to consider the local history curriculum as a key factor in supporting students' learning outcomes and developmental needs within the community skills milieu. For the purpose of this study, the community skills milieu encompassed civic engagement, respect for diversity, and knowledge of local and global issues as defined by the American Association of Community Colleges (2012) and the American Association of Colleges & Universities (2012).

Moreover, the historical role of community colleges such as RSCC has been to serve the needs of communities (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Boggs, 2012); hence use of the term "*community*" to describe these institutions appears intentional. This study may provide the impetus for community colleges to serve as viable vehicles to support the acquisition and transmission of local history knowledge through curricular and instructional decisions.

The Problem

A close inspection of the curriculum at RSCC revealed the absence of a local history course. Additionally, a key informant at RSCC mentioned a "dire" need existed to include local history in the curriculum. This situation was identified as a problem because rural communities such as RSCC rely on local knowledge for sustainability (Gruenewald & Smith, 2014). This means RSCC and the 896 similarly situated rural institutions throughout the United States (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007), should be concerned with the status of the role of local history in the curriculum. Miller and Tuttle (2007) situated rural community colleges as key players in addressing the learning needs of communities.

> ***"The potentially strongest agency to influence the livelihood of rural communities is the rural community college."***
>
> **(Miller & Tuttle, 2007)**

The Community College Curriculum

In the 21st Century, stakeholders including the federal government, private foundations, non-profit groups, and business industries have tasked community colleges with preparing citizens to compete on a global scale due to concerns with the nation's economic future (Kolb, 2011). This trend has resulted in community colleges being criticized for abandoning traditionally liberal arts curriculum in favor of workforce development initiatives (Ayers, 2011). Opportunities for students to study history and humanities at community colleges are dwindling (Tai, 2004). This problem persists despite the fact local history knowledge has been

deemed value laden (Brown & Woodcock, 2009). These findings translate to a sense of urgency to advance scholarship in the area of local history knowledge, as communicated by Hicken (1964).

> ***"In fact, local history is so significant and vastly important that almost every literate American must give something of himself to its study."***
>
> **(Hicken, 1964, pp. 162-163)**

In order to address the problem as the role of local history in the curriculum, the following definition offered by Dymond (1999) was applied in this study: "Local history is about ordinary, everyday life, and therefore has an educational and social importance" (pp. 15-16). This definition captures local history as a knowledge system which focuses on human experiences at the community level. This study situated community colleges as an important aspect of the fabric of the American way of life and key to addressing the problem.

Methodology

A qualitative case study research design was selected to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. I conducted face to face interviews with 12 volunteer participants, including faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How do faculty and staff at RSCC perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum?
- Research Question 2 (RQ 2): What possibilities and strategies could be developed to include local history in curriculum at RSCC?

Data Collection and Analysis

I served as the primary research and data collection tool. Data collection did not start until after approval was provided by Walden University (IRB# 10-10-14-0150866), and a *Letter of Cooperation* and a *Date Use Agreement* form was secured from the study site. Data collection and analysis primarily took place between November 2014 and January 2015. In addition to the 18-question demographic data form which was utilized to select participants, I analyzed data gathered from a 14-question interview guide, and three history and one humanities course syllabi. I also maintained a research journal.

Due to the lack of research on the role of local history in the curriculum, priori or *predetermined* codes were not available. Themes and subthemes were allowed to naturally emerge from the data which

were analyzed, color-coded, and recorded in word processing documents, and transferred to spreadsheet files.

Results

Eight themes and 19 subthemes were developed based on the findings. Themes and subthemes aligned with the professional literature on reflection. The data revealed the following:

- Definitions of local history vary.
- Local history is important and valuable to educators, students, and communities.
- Educators believe that there should be a link between local history and the curriculum.
- Strategies for revising the curriculum should be shared with stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community partners prior to making any changes.
- Change requires a "sales pitch" and takes time; thus, assessing the curriculum to address local history will require effectively managing change.

Recommendations for Action

Participants in this study were well versed in the curriculum review, development, and implementation processes at RSCC. According to this feedback, due to the fact that employees wear several hats, the aforementioned processes typically involve faculty, adjunct instructors, administrators, and staff. These individuals teach, serve on committees with curriculum and policy implications, and/or are tasked with allocating resources in support of curricular functions.

Additionally, participants possessed the institutional knowledge to offer insight on the culture of the organization and the process for instituting change. For example, a participant who acquired almost three decades of experience teaching and serving on curriculum initiative teams at RSCC, cautioned that gaining buy-in to revise the curriculum to address local history will take time and consensus building.

> ***"I think it [local history] should be an integral part of every curriculum, but it has to be integrated almost like when you're trying to get a child to take medicine and you mix it with something else to change the flavor of it. It takes a big sales pitch, it's going to take time because change takes time. It needs to mellow in, not a blitzkrieg."***
>
> **-Participant Response-**

Organizational Culture and Change

RSCC has been experiencing unprecedented changes, including a reduction-in-force, employee turnover, decreasing enrollment, low student retention, and services shifted to the authority of other institutions. For

example, in the last three years long-standing administrators, including two vice presidents, two deans, a director, and a coordinator have retired.

Additionally, several key mid-level employees have departed. In early-2014 the organization's Business Office functions were transferred to a sister institution. Moreover, in October 2014, the president of the college announced that he would be retiring in July 2015.

Given these trends, dissemination of this white paper is undertaken with the understanding that the institution may need time to consider the implications of continued restructuring, as it relates to making a determination on the feasibility of implementing the recommendations.

Researchers in the field of change management suggest that an organization's culture should be considered prior to recommending and implementing changes (Lewin, 1951; Rogers, 2003). Based on the current culture at RSCC, and in alignment with the study's findings, the following three recommendations are offered:

Recommendation #1: Curriculum Review

The institution should consider reviewing and assessing curricula beyond what was offered in this current study, to include major disciplines (e.g., English, social sciences, math, education, computer science, and health sciences), in order to determine the extent that students are offered opportunities to study local history, and make adjustments as necessary.

The findings of this study revealed support for Recommendation #1, as follows:

- A relationship should exist between local history and the curriculum.
- During the curriculum review process, develop a definition for "local history" and communicate to stakeholders.
- Consensus was not gained regarding a definition of local history.
- The majority of the participants defined local history in terms of educational and social importance, as follows: all walks of life, backstory, behaviors, community culture, customs, daily norm of an area, economic, events, historical details, natural events, policies, political things, social background, social events, social system, and traditions.
- The study of local history is beneficial to educators, students, and communities.
- Local history can provide educators a platform to develop positive interactions with students because of the opportunity to learn more about and develop a sense of respect for students' cultures and backgrounds.
- Knowledge of local history can instill a sense of community

pride in students, allows students to make connections between current learning and the past, and provides students opportunities to learn analyzing, researching, writing, and technology use skills.

- Knowledge of local history can help communities to learn from past mistakes and supports future decision-making.

- Teach local history and review the curriculum from an interdisciplinary perspective.

- To some extent, instructors are providing students opportunities to study local history, including oral discussions, field trips, research projects, and writing assignments.

- Participants communicated a high level enthusiasm with the prospect of collaborating with colleagues, for the purpose of advancing the study of local history across disciplines.

Support for Recommendation #1 from the professional literature:

- There is no universally-accepted definition of local history—local history can be interpreted in many ways and the study of local history can be very expansive (Kammen, 2003).

- Review of curriculum can take place at the "institutional, faculty, programme, course or class levels" (Wang, 2014, p. 31).

- Changes to individual courses and instructional approaches are part of the landscape in higher learning. One of the most important functions of institutions of higher learning is curriculum review (Oliver and Hyun, 2011).

- Understanding students' culture and backgrounds can improve educators' professional practices and student learning outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

- Students can learn valuable workplace and life skills by studying history, including critical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal, change mange, research, and self-regulation (Koenig, 2011).

- Local history has educational and social importance (Dymond, 1999)

Recommendation #2: Community College-Community Partnerships

The institution should consider identifying and developing partnerships with external/community partners, in order to advance the study of local history in connection with its curricular functions.

The findings of this study revealed support for Recommendation #2, as follows:

- Internal resources, including space, equipment, and personnel are adequate to support the study of local history.
- Internal resources include: SMART boards, computers, projectors, classrooms, transportation (to support field trips), and instructors.
- The community offers a wealth of history content and resources that are accessible, which can be utilized in conjunction with internal resources to address local history in the curriculum.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on developing relationships with the community, in order to meet students' learning needs in the area of local history.
- Potential external resources include: Authors, cultural arts organizations, government agencies, guest speakers, historians, historical sites, historical societies, libraries, museums, and public school history teachers.

Support for Recommendation #2 from the professional literature:

- In order to meet missions and goals, it would beehove rural institutions such as RSCC and the communities they serve to collaborate, as public funding diminishes and social needs increase (Cheyney, 2014).
- College-community partnerships help to improve the quality of life of citizens and the sustainability of communities (Baquet, Bromwell, Hall, & Frego, 2013).
- A search of the regional library system's database, which is located within community served by RSCC, revealed a wealth of resources, including links to archives, museums, artifacts, and historical societies.

Recommendation #3: Professional Development and Faculty Reflective Practices

The institution should consider assessing its professional development program for the presence of opportunities that allow faculty to engage in reflective practices, in order to improve teaching and learning, and make adjustments where necessary.

The findings of this study revealed support for Recommendation #3, as follows:

- Participants communicated the desire for faculty professional development which focuses on how to incorporate local history in the curriculum.
- In several instances, participants indicated they were "nervous,"

had never participated in the type of reflective activity offered by the study, and/or had not thought of their teaching in regards to local history content, best described in their own words, as illustrated below:

"I never really participated in anything like this before…just shaking off the nerves…I had to take some time to do some research…I really had to think about local history and what I do in my classrooms."

"I'm not certain that I recognized that I was doing local history content. I examined my courses."

- Throughout the study, participants communicated that they were transforming into more reflective practitioners and focused on strategizing ways to include local history in the curriculum, as illustrated below:

"The process was thought-provoking in terms of thinking about what local history is and how I use it in the classroom."

"This was a chance for me to reflect on how and what I teach, and how it [the study of local history] can benefit me and students."

"These were really good questions to ask…it made me think. We live and walk on grounds where history was made."

- The process of reflection and transformation resulted in strategies designed to provide students opportunities to study local history, as follows: Conducting scholarly research using primary resources; journaling; conducting interviews; analyzing artifacts and documents; field trips; scavenger hunts; and using technology to conduct research.

Support for Recommendation #3 from the professional literature:

- Professional development refers to deliberate actions taken by faculty and individuals collaborating with faculty, with the aim of improving teaching (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012).

- Skilled faculty can also positively impact student outcomes, which makes professional development important (Mundy, Kupczynski, Ellis, & Salgado, 2012).

- Participating in reflective activities can improve teaching and learning Giamio-Ballard and Hyatt (2012).

Implementation

This study focused on improving teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are interactive and social activities. Social change is an action-oriented process which involves multiple stakeholders on individual, group, and

organizational levels (de la Sablonnière, Bourgeois, & Najih, 2013). This white paper is designed as a vehicle for positive social change. I plan to present the white paper at the fall 2015 session, with permission of the college leadership.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study was grounding breaking because it was the first to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. Local history has both educational and social value (Dymond, 1999), which positions it as a catalyst for positive social change. The findings revealed the value of local history to students, educators, and communities. Themes generated from interviews conducted with a diverse pool of 12 participants and the findings from the document analyses helped to formulate three recommendations contained in this white paper.

Even though the recommendations, which related to curriculum review, community college-community partnerships, and professional development (faculty reflective practices) are not a panacea to address the role of local history in the curriculum, this information does provide a foundation for future directions. This white paper provides data-driven, evidenced-based solutions to address the role of local history in the curriculum, which adds to the "culture of "evidence" demanded by stakeholders in regards to improving teaching and learning.

Ultimately, it will be up to the decision-makers at RSCC to determine the next steps in addressing the problem defined in the study after the white paper is presented. As the primary researcher, I will continue to make myself available to discuss the study, recommendations, and related initiatives.

The author of this white paper is Ms. Sandra Walker. Ms. Walker is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Higher Education and Adult Learning (HEAL) at Walden University. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Illinois University and a Master of Science degree from Troy University. Her other research interests include best practices in advancing higher education access for historically marginalized students and helping military veterans transition to institutions of higher learning. Ms. Walker can be reached by email at xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu

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Appendix B: Demographic Data Form

Informed Consent: *The completion and submission of this form constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research study.*

1. What year were you born? _____

2. Gender: Please place a check mark in the space provided.

__ Male __ Female

3. Please answer BOTH Question #3 and Question #4 regarding race. For the purpose of this study, Hispanic origins are not considered as races. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

__ No, not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
__ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
__ Yes, Puerto Rican
__ Yes, Cuban
__ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Please specify _____

4. Which is your race? Please check all that apply.

__ American Indian or Alaska Native __ Black, African-American, or Negro
__ White __ Some other race (Please specify) _____

5. What is the highest level of education you completed? _____

6. Please list your education beyond high school, to include name of institution, degree(s) and areas of concentration, and year earned:

_____
_____

7. Please provide your city or county and state of birth:

_____

8. Please provide your current city or county of residence, state and the length of time you have resided at this location:

_____

9. Please indicate the total years of collegiate teaching experience you have. _____

10. How long have you worked at RSCC? Please list the number of years and time period(s) (e.g. 14 years, 2000 – 2013): _____

11. Did you teach at RSCC during the 2012-13 academic year? If so, please list all courses that you taught.

_____

_____

12. Other than teaching, what roles/titles did you hold at RSCC during the 2012-13 academic year? (i.e., administrator, staff, standing committee member, etc.). Please list all.

_____

_____

13. Which RSCC campus or satellite location did you primarily teach or work during the 2012-13 academic year?

___ Franklin campus ___ Suffolk campus ___ Smithfield (satellite location) ___

14. Have any of your duties at RSCC involved allocating resources in support of curricular functions in the following areas: history, humanities, English, or social sciences? If so, please explain.

_____

_____

15. Please specify the total years teaching experience by discipline at RSCC, in the following areas: history, humanities, English, or social sciences.

_____

16. Please specify the total years of curriculum development, review or assessment experience at RSCC, in the following areas: history, humanities, English, or social sciences.

_____

_____

17. What roles have you held within the RSCC service region that were service-oriented (e.g. volunteer, community service, organizational membership, etc.)? Please include the name of the organization, a brief description of your duties and responsibilities, period of service, and length of service (e.g., Boys and Girls Club; mentored youth; 06/2002-Present; 12 years).

_____

_____

18. What is your current role or title at RSCC? How long have you held this position?

_____

Appendix C: E-mail for Individuals Not Selected to Participate in the Study

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my invitation to participate in a study designed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). Unfortunately, you were not selected to participate in the aforementioned study. This decision does not negatively reflect on your willingness to contribute to this scholarly endeavor.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me via my Walden University email account (xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu) from your personal email account that is not affiliated with RSCC. This is a research protocol designed to ensure confidentiality of communication regarding your interest in participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Walker
Doctoral Student

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study that is designed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). You are being invited participate in this study because you have been identified as an administrator, faculty, staff or adjunct who was employed at RSCC during the 2012–13 academic year. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named **Sandra L Walker**, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. The researcher is also currently employed at RSCC. This study is separate from the researcher's role at RSCC.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at RSCC.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a demographic data form that will be utilized to select individuals to be interviewed and to develop a brief biographical sketch to be included in the final research paper.
- Participate in a one to two hour, face-to-face interview that will be recorded with your permission. Interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon date, time and place.
- Participate in one follow-up interview (if necessary).
- Participate in a member checking process: This follow-up process allows you the opportunity to review your interview transcripts, interpretations of your experiences, feelings and perspectives, and representations of findings, which will allow you the opportunity to offer clarifications prior to the research being published.

Here are some sample questions:

- Please identify your title, role and duties at the study site.
- How would you define and describe what "local history" means?

- What have been your experience(s) as a learner as it relates to local history?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. Declining or discontinuing will not negatively impact the participant's relationship with the researcher. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study may involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life or associated with being interviewed, such as fatigue or nervousness. The researcher will take care to minimize all such risks.

The knowledge gained from this study will afford students, educators and researchers the opportunity to learn from voices absent from history annals before time negates the opportunity to capture their stories. This study will contribute to positive social change because it has the potential to identify ideas, concepts, and resources which may more effectively support students' learning outcomes and developmental needs within the community skills milieu with particular regard to local history knowledge.

The expected benefit for participants is the opportunity to have a voice in informing community college curricular and instructional decisions and the opportunity to contribute to scholarly research on faculty which is virtually non-existent in the literature.

Payment:

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure at the researcher's place of residence and stored in a locked cabinet to minimize accidental disclosure. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the University.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu. The

researcher's advisor and committee chair is Dr. Caroline Crawford; she can be reached at xxxxxxxx.xxxxxxxx@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Leilani Endicott; she is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxxxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-10-14-0150866** and it expires on **October 9, 2015**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above and I am also confirming that I am 18 years or older.

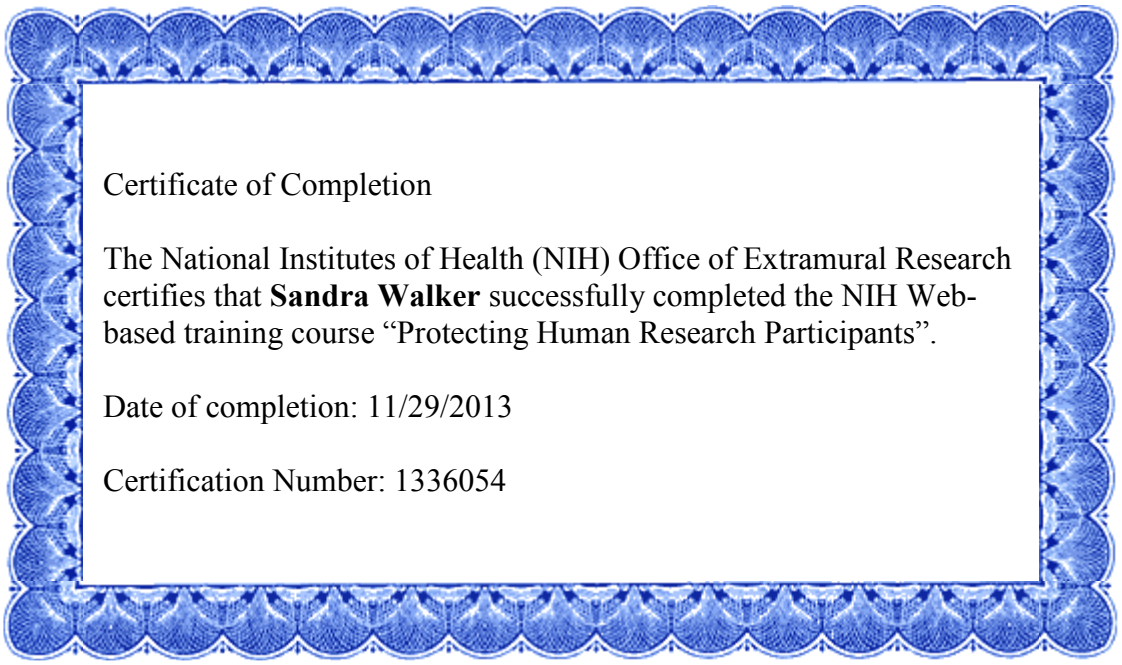
Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E: Human Research Certificate



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Sandra Walker** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 11/29/2013

Certification Number: 1336054

Appendix F: E-mail Invitation to Participate

Dear Colleague:

My name is Sandra Walker. I am a doctoral student at Walden University pursuing a concentration in Higher Education and Adult Learning. This email is being forwarded to you for the purpose of requesting your voluntary participation in a qualitative, case study designed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as an administrator, faculty, staff or adjunct who was employed at RSCC during the 2012–13 academic year. Your reply to this email will demonstrate your interest in participating in this study, which includes a face-to-face interview and one follow-up interview (if necessary).

If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond by emailing me from your personal email not associated with RSCC, to my Walden University email (xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu). Please follow this same email procedure for all future email communications. Next, you will also be asked to a fill out a few forms. I will email you a demographic data form and a consent form at the same time. The demographic data form will be utilized to select individuals to be interviewed and to develop a brief biographical sketch to be included in the final research paper. Please complete and return this form within three days and emailing only if you wish to be interviewed.

If you are selected to be interviewed, I will contact you by telephone to determine a date, time and location for the individual interview. I will email you the interview guide which provides a listing of questions at least three days before the scheduled interview. The individual interview will be audiotaped with your permission and transcribed for data collection and analysis purposes only.

You will be sent an email asking that you review the accuracy of your interview transcripts, interpretations of your experiences, feelings and perspectives, and representations of findings, and asked to send a confirmation email. If you have any questions regarding the accuracy of the aforementioned information, you will be asked to discuss your feedback telephonically. Based on your feedback, I will edit the information as needed, return to you in an email, and ask you to confirm the accuracy by emailing me. All requests to verify accuracy of the aforementioned information not responded to within three days will be interpreted to mean that no changes are required. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to working with you.

Sandra L. Walker, Doctoral Student

Appendix G: Interview Guide

Project: The Role of Local History in the Curriculum at a Rural, Southeastern Community College

Time of Interview (Begin and End):

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position/Title of Interviewee:

The interview will take approximately 1 hour. The interview session will be audio taped to assist in the data analysis process. Do I have your permission to audio tape this interview?

Questions:

1. Please identify your current title, role and duties at RSCC.

2. For the purpose of this study, the following definition of local history offered by David Dymond, a historian, will be applied: "Local history is about ordinary, ` everyday life, and therefore has an educational and social importance." Thus, this study captures local history as a knowledge system which focuses on human experiences at the community level.

   How would you define and describe what "local history" means?

3. What have been your experiences or knowledge as a learner as it relates to local history?

4. What have been your teaching experiences or knowledge as it relates to local

history?

5. What have been your other experiences or knowledge outside of your own learning environments and teaching duties, as it relates to local history?

6. In what ways have your experiences or knowledge as a learner, teacher or other experiences influenced your views on local history?

7. How would you explain the value of local history knowledge to you, communities and students?

8. How do you perceive the role of local history and its relationship to the curriculum?

9. To what extent do you think local history should be included in the curriculum at RSCC?

   Probe: As separate course?
   Probe: Within the context of another? Which disciplines?
   Probe: As a required or elective course?

10. What strategies do you suggest that would support the inclusion of local history or more local history in the curriculum at RSCC?

11. Please explain any internal processes that need to be adhered to in order to support the inclusion of local history in the curriculum at RSCC?

    Probe: What is your role in the curriculum development process?
    Probe: Please describe the curriculum development and approval process?
    Probe: Who are the key individuals or decision makers involved the curriculum development and approval process?

12. Please explain any internal resources that would be required to include local history in the curriculum at RSCC (e.g. space, personnel, equipment, etc.).

13. Please explain any external or community resources that could be identified and utilized to support the inclusion of local history in the curriculum at RSCC. (e.g. space, personnel, equipment, etc.).

14. Please provide any additional comments.

Appendix H: Member Checking E-Mail

You are receiving this email because you signed an informed consent form agreeing to take part in a research study that is designed to explore the role of local history in the curriculum at Rural Southern Community College (RSCC). You were invited to participate in this study because you were identified as an employee at the selected study site. You participated in a one on one interview which was audio taped with your permission and transcribed. This email is part of a process called "member checking" to allow you the opportunity to review your interview transcripts, interpretations of your experiences, feelings and perspectives, and representations of findings for accuracy.

After you review the aforementioned information, please send me an email to confirm whether or not the information provided is accurate. In the event you indicate that you have questions or concerns, I will contact you by telephone to discuss your feedback. Based on your feedback, I will edit the information as needed and resend to you via email. I will ask that you confirm the accuracy of the information by emailing me. All requests to verify accuracy of transcripts, interpretations of your experiences, feelings and perspectives, and representations of findings for accuracy not responded within three days will be interpreted to mean that no changes are required. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential.

Please email your response to me at xxxxxx.xxxxxxx@waldenu.edu from your personal email account that is not affiliated with Rural Southern Community College. This is a research protocol designed to ensure confidentiality of your participation. Thank you for participating in the study.

Sandra L. Walker
Doctoral Student

Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement and Peer Debriefer

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in accessing and reviewing data for this research: I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

8. I agree that I will not be compensated for my work on this project.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**