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The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity Development

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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An Abstract of

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Black young adults not only experience the same difficulties and discomfort when developing an identity as all young adults, but they are also tasked with reconciling their identity within the context of race. Racial identity development (RID) and the role it plays in the life outcomes of Black young adults is a well-researched area of focus within education. Equally important to the development of identities for Black students is the curricula they are taught, which is less studied. The problem addressed in this study is the way in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula impact how young Black college students conceptualize their RID. The current study examines how Black young adult college students describe their experiences with the K-12 curricula, view their RID, and discover if negative experiences with the K-12 curricula exacerbates a negative view of racial identity. This study used a convergent mixed methods research design by interviewing students (n = 15) and surveying their racial identity (n = 38) at a public metropolitan, research-intensive University. The quantitative data showed that significant positive relationships were found between centrality, private regard, and nationalist subscales on the MIBI-T. The qualitative data yielded several important findings. Participants shared that several factors including curricular content as well as relationships and interactions with the school environment and their teachers either

positively promoted their RID, or acted as threats to their RID. This study discusses findings that include educational factors that impact students' conception of, and feelings toward their racial identity, as well as the saliency and meaning that Black young adult college students attach to their Black identity.

For Lila Grace and Chayce Lee. May you always remember your strengths and your purpose. I hope this body of work inspires you to be change-makers in your own right one day.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Like the educational reformer Horace Mann, I have always believed that education is the great equalizer. I attended the now demolished Horace Mann Elementary School, and it was ingrained in all the students that Horace Mann's words were universally true. These words should be true, and for many, they are. Education certainly has the power to bring balance and power to the marginalized. However, education likewise has the potential to harm students, particularly Black students, who have been identified in countless studies as being more vulnerable, having lower academic achievement and academic engagement, experiencing higher teacher turnover rates as well as suffering from educational inequality, tracking and internalized racism in schools (Howell & Caisey, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Oakes, 2005).

Black young adults not only experience the same difficulties and discomfort when developing an identity as do all young adults, but they are also tasked with reconciling their identity within the context of race. The latter is integral to their healthy development as human beings, not only academically but in virtually every aspect of being (Plummer, 1995; Tatum, 2000). Racial identity encompasses how an individual's concept of self is related to race and includes the social and political impact that visible group membership has on psychological functioning (Hypolite, 2020; Johnson & Arbona, 2006).

Racial identity development (RID) (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990), and the role it plays in the well-being, educational achievement, and life outcomes of Black adolescents is a well-researched area of focus for many psychologists and educators alike from the early post-slavery period to the present day (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016). RID is an

important developmental task for multiple reasons, including (a) acting as a buffer against attacks on one's racial and/or ethnic identity; (b) creating connections to one's racial group; and (c) establishing pride through learning of the accomplishments of one's racial and ethnic groups (Branch, 2020).

Indeed, researchers have made positive linkages between Black students' RID and various positive outcomes in academics and beyond (Chavous et al., 2008; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Ford & Harris, 1997; Hypolite, 2020). Research from a myriad of authors show that there are many non-educational influences that impact racial identity, including parents, family, culture, and racial discrimination (Caldwell et al., 2004; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Townsend & Lanphier, 2007). Research also shows that, by and large, most teachers are not equipped with the pedagogical or curricular tools to support Black students in their racial and/or ethnic identity exploration in the classroom, resulting in Black children not being supported during one of the most crucial developmental periods in their lives (Branch, 2020).

Of equal importance is the ethnic-racial socialization of children, or how messages about race and ethnicity are transmitted to young people. Researchers have explored how various aspects of ethnic-racial socialization vis-à-vis schooling impact students' racial identity development. Ethnic-racial socialization is a concept within racialized societies that refers to the process where racialized messages are transmitted to and received by members of a given society regarding the meaning and consequences of one's racial group membership (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Del Toro & Wang, 2021; Watford et al., 2021). Researchers have found that the racialized messages that children receive are powerful and long lasting by shaping the way children view, experience, and

intermingle with the world (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Del Toro & Wang, 2021; Umana & Hill, 2020; Watford et al., 2021).

According to the Glossary of Education (2015), curriculum refers to the specific lessons or academic subject matter that is taught in schools or in specific courses and/or programs. However, this definition limits itself in that it conceptualizes curricula as purely academic material. In other words, this definition only captures curriculum in the sense of academic curricular content (i.e., Mathematics, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies). A more detailed, inclusive definition as put forth by Mulenga (2018) states that curricula encompass the intentions of education. Curricula represents the beliefs, values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that make up education in its totality (Mulenga, 2018).

RID in the context of *curricula* offers less robust research than other topics under the RID umbrella, when compared to researched areas of interest such as student's well-being, educational achievement, and sense of belonging. Based on a database search of articles written between 2012 and 2015 in the University of Toledo Libraries, specifically utilizing EBSCO host, I discovered only 62 articles when using the keywords *racial identity development* AND *curriculum*. When searching the same database with the key words racial identity development AND well-being AND educational achievement OR belonging and limiting to scholarly (peer-reviewed journals), I discovered over 500,000 articles. An understanding of the connection between K-12 curricula and Black students' RID is necessary to recognize the different ways in which students are impacted by what they are (and are not) taught in schools, and how curricula interact and impact their perceptions of their own RID.

For this research study, I operationalize curricula like Mulenga (2018), which is viewing curricula as a representation of the beliefs, values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge that make up education in it's totality. but more specifically, this study is informed by the school of thought of Eisner (2002), who asserts that three forms of curricula exist: the explicit curricula, the implicit curricula, and the null curricula. According to Eisner, schools teach much more (and much less) than what they publicly purport to teach. I offer a brief breakdown of the three types of curricula that form the basis of conceptualization for this study:

1. **The Explicit Curricula** – The curricula that is presented to the public, and includes the content, goals, and objectives for various content areas and instruction. According to Eisner (2002), the explicit curricula is an educational menu offered to the students, their families, and the community.
2. **The Implicit Curricula** – The "hidden" curricula that is taught to students. It teaches students what should be valued in school and in life through the teaching of compliant behavior, competitiveness, and placing emphasis on the significance of various subject areas like math and the sciences over other subject areas such as the arts. Eisner (2002) defines the implicit curricula as the omnipresent expectations and rules that define the cultural system that is formal schooling. This cultural system in and of itself is geared toward teaching powerful and important lessons to its pupils.
3. **The Null Curricula** – Eisner (2002) posits that the third curricula do not exist because it is not taught to students. The null curricula include two dimensions to consider: (a) the intellectual processes that schools emphasize and neglect, and (b) the content or subject areas that are present and absent in school curricula. Eisner defines

the null curricula as options that are not provided to students: perspectives they may never be taught about and unable to utilize as well as concepts and skills that are not meant to be included in their intellectual skillsets.

Taken together, the three curricula types have serious consequences for what students walk away knowing and not knowing and further impact the students' opportunities and futures. The classroom is a key arena where Black students develop a racial identity via learning experiences and social interactions with classmates and teachers. An understanding of how RID is influenced by school curricula is critical; it is a vital piece in the development of non-hegemonic curricula that impacts Black students academically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially (Lea et al., 2020). Mims and Williams (2020) assert that schools and classrooms are largely ignored as important socializing environments that influence the RID of Black adolescents, and thus require an expanded view of the messages and experiences that influence RID.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the way in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula impact how young Black college students conceptualize their racial identity development RID. The construction of a racial identity is an important developmental task and period for young adults of color, and research shows that a secure identity is key for passage into adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Rivas-Drake et al., (2014) state that construction of a racial identity in youth of color is important because a healthy racial identity influences normative development of youth and promotes positive adjustment from youth into young adulthood. Racial identity is connected to one's perceptions of their racial group within the larger social context

(Nasir et al., 2009). Research shows that children understand stereotypes about their own and others' racial groups from a young age (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Nasir et al., 2009). I argue that subjecting Black students to stereotypical representations throughout their K-12 educational experiences negatively impacts the way they view their racial identities in lasting ways. Indeed, Spencer (2006) argued that the existence of such negative stereotypes that children face makes the developmental task of managing an ego-supporting identity that much more difficult when they must reconcile with negative imagery.

Howard (2003) declares that schools have become sites of resistance, where many students of color have been alienated, silenced, and have failed. In line with Howard's declaration, Eisner (2002) warns against the null curricula, and the dangers of neglecting different forms of knowledge. To exclude different experiences and viewpoints simply because those differences go against the closely held traditions that make up schooling in America does a disservice to all students, but specifically our most underserved students. Eisner further asserts that withholding knowledge and information from students impacts what they can contemplate, know, understand, and utilize. These withheld forms of knowledge impact the very lives that they can lead.

The consequences of poor representation of Black people in curricula goes beyond the academic realm of students' lives. By extension, their identity and perception of their race, an integral component of Black people's identity, are affected. Instead of affirming the identities, experiences, and diversity that students bring to schools, Howard (2003) argues that students find their academic and cultural identities under constant attack. Likewise, poor representation of Black students in their schooling harms Black

student academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2009), academic engagement (Goldenberg, 2016), and motivation (Hannover & Zander, 2019).

Classrooms are ideal places to understand and engage Black students in their RID. Gaining an understanding of how the classroom may impact Black students' racial identity will enable educators to support Black students' RID in a safe space, where they are nurtured, valued, and respected. Furthermore, by supporting Black students processing of their RID, academic and social outcomes are highly likely to increase.

Failing to recognize and address the lack of emphasis placed on Black students and their RID within the classroom creates inequity because the whole student is not being engaged in their classrooms and schools. If true equity is to be achieved for all students, specifically Black students, then research must investigate and address issues that pose barriers to those students' development. As Chamberlain (2003) asserts, from an incredibly early age, students learn in their schooling whether their background is valued, and this assessment of value is then connected to their personal identities. Although there is limited literature on RID for Black students in relation to Social Studies/History curricula, the consensus is, this subject fails to engage Black students in their RID (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Current research in content areas outside of Social Studies, such as Science, Mathematics, and Language Arts/English show that curricula impact RID in several ways, including students' educational persistence, academic achievement, and the setting of lofty goals in predominately White male fields (Brown, 2004; Emdin, 2016; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Varelas et al., 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe in detail the experiences that Black young adult college students have had with the K-12 curricula as well as the way in which these students view their RID.

Significance

More research is needed in to fully understand the role that schools and curricular content play in the development of Black students' understanding of race and identity, as well as the development of their racial identity (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). This study has the potential to inform practical and pedagogical considerations for schools, teachers, and researchers who are interested in the healthy RID of Black students and other minoritized groups. Furthermore, this study will introduce greater in-depth qualitative and quantitative research that explores how students view curricular content that they have learned, and how their views have developed over time.

Expected Outcomes and Their Educational Implications

The predicted results of this research study are to describe in detail the experiences that Black young adult college students have had with the K-12 curricula as well as the way in which these students view their RID. Additionally, it is expected that this research study will uncover if these students have had negative experiences with the K-12 curricula, as well as how they view their own RID. These outcomes will help inform the practical and pedagogical considerations for schools, teachers, and researchers alike to craft curricula that is inclusive of the RID of Black students. Furthermore, Black students who participate in the study will become more aware of their own RID than they were before through participating in the focus group interviews where they will reflect

upon their past experiences with the K-12 curricula while viewing those experiences through a racial lens. Lastly, these outcomes will inspire greater in-depth qualitative and quantitative research studies that aim to explore how students view the content they are learning, and how these views mature and change over time.

Research Questions

1. How do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences?
2. What do Black young adult college students think about the *representation* of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula?
3. Do Black young adult college students feel they are *represented* in K-12 curricula?
4. What are Black young adult college students' perceptions of the salience and value attached to their racial identity?
5. What is the correlation between Public Regard and an individual's endorsement of one of the ideology subscales within the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity -Teen (assimilationist, humanist, minority, or nationalist)? (Scottham et al., 2008).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis #1. Higher scores on the Centrality subscale will correlate to a higher score on the Private Regard ideology subscale on the MIBI-Teen (Scottham et al., 2008). That is, the higher the degree one defines themselves as Black, one will feel more positivity towards beings Black and towards the Black community.

Hypothesis #2. A higher score on the Private Regard subscale on the MIBI-Teen survey will correlate to a higher endorsement of the Nationalist subscale, and a lower endorsement of the Assimilationist subscale. That is, the more positivity one feels towards being Black, there will be a higher level of endorsement for the Nationalist Ideology, where greater appreciation and association is placed upon Black culture and resistance to the marginalization of Black people.

Glossary

Curricula – Curricula personifies the intentions of education and can be considered the blueprint for education. It holds within it the beliefs, values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, as well as everything else that makes up education (Mulenga, 2018).

Identity – A broad term that is used to describe a person's general sense of self as well as the various beliefs and attitudes that they hold (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Explicit Curricula - The curricula that is presented to the public, and includes the content, goals, and objectives for various content areas and instruction. (Eisner, 2002).

Ethnic-Racial Identity – Refers to the extent in which individuals have explored their ethnic and racial background, resulting in a resolution of what it means to be a part of that ethnic or racial group. One's ethnic-racial identity is informed by their ethnic heritage as well as one's racialized experiences (Umana-Taylor et al., 2014).

Ethnic-Racial Socialization – Within racialized societies - refers to the process in which racialized messages are transmitted to, and received by members of that society regarding the meaning and consequences of racial group membership. (Watford et al., 2021).

The Implicit Curricula - The "hidden" curricula that is taught to students – it teaches students what should be valued in school and in life through the teaching of compliant behavior, competitiveness, and placing emphasis on the significance of various subject areas like math and the sciences, compared to other subject areas such as the arts. (Eisner, 2002).

The Null Curricula – These curricula do not exist, because it is not taught to students. The null curricula include two dimensions to consider: 1.) the intellectual processes that schools emphasize and neglect, and 2.) the content or subject areas that are present and absent in school curricula. (Eisner, 2002).

Race – A social construct that is utilized as means to designate human beings based upon common physical characteristics, ancestry, or language. Race can also include other characteristics including geographic location, culture, religion, and national group association (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Racial Identity – The attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that an individual holds in reference to their racial group, as their racial group is related to the majority racial group (Wee et al., 2021).

Racial Identity Development Theory – One's sense of group or collective identity that is based upon one's own perception of the common ties shared with a particular racial group. Racial identity development theory places emphasis on the psychological implications of racial-group membership (Helms, 1990).

Racial Salience – Refers to the level of importance or significance one places on race in how they approach life (Vandiver, 2001).

Summary

The problem addressed in this study is the way in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula impact how young Black college students conceptualize their RID. The construction of a racial identity is an important developmental task and period for young adults of color, and research shows that a secure identity is key for passage into adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2012).

Racial identity is well studied and explored in relation to educational attainment, self-esteem, well-being, and academic identities. However, more scholarship can be expanded in terms of how exactly racial identity is impacted by K-12 curricula (Branch, 2020; Legette, 2018; Seaton et al., 2011). The classroom is a key arena where Black students develop a racial identity via learning experiences and social interactions with classmates and teachers. Yet research shows that many teachers lack the curricular and pedagogical tools to support Black students in their racial and/or ethnic identity exploration (Branch, 2020). Understanding how RID is influenced by school curricula is critical; it is a vital piece in the development of non-hegemonic students academically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

The purpose of this study is to be able to describe in detail the experiences that Black young adult college students have had with the K-12 curricula as well as the way in which these students view their RID. This study has the potential to enlighten educators and researchers who are interested in RID by introducing them to new RID data that includes the perspectives of Black students' experiences regarding their RID and how it is impacted by the K-12 curricula. Furthermore, this research may be applicable to other minoritized groups.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter addresses the different conceptualizations of RID as well as the numerous ways RID is thought to develop in adolescents, including the difference between viewing RID as a stage-like process, where researchers view identity development as a progression through a specific stage before one is able to move onto the next stage, versus a back-and-forth process, where researchers posit individuals move back and forth between identity statuses as they continue to interact with the world around them, gain new experiences, learn and grow. I will discuss the differences and similarities between racial identity and ethnic identity and make a case for the operationalization of racial identity throughout the current study. Furthermore, I also connect RID to the stereotypical representation of Black students in K-12 curricula and how those stereotypical representations may impact Black students' perceptions of their racial identity. Prior research that has looked specifically at RID and its connection to K-12 curricula will be addressed (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010: Emdin, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Introduction

Castenell and Pinar (1993) fiercely argued that curricula is a racial text – a text which teaches its pupils not only what knowledge is worth knowing, but also teaches them *who* they should be, and *how* they will be represented in society. To ignore curricula as a racial text, Castenell and Pinar assert, is to be ignorant of the human reality that we exist in, as it is neglectful of how race is ingrained in our educational system, and

how race is impacted by curricula. Therefore, curricula, identity, and race are inextricably linked and intertwined, especially in the context of the U.S. education system.

Additionally, Castenell and Pinar (1993) argued that racial representation within curricula portrays, suppresses, and redevelops one's racial identity. The authors (Castenell & Pinar) argue that curricula are a significant and influential form of racial representation. As such, arguments over curricula are arguments around who we are as Americans as well as how we want our children to see themselves and those around them as they develop. In many ways, Castenell and Pinar lay the foundation for future research that examines RID through the context of standardized curricula.

Race is a central and consistent theme to the identity of students of color, and due to the historical significance of race in America, as well as the impact that race has on Black people in the U.S., Black students will face challenges throughout their lives that differ incredibly from their White counterparts. (Akos & Ellis, 2008). According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2022), race is a social construct that is utilized as means to designate human beings based upon common physical characteristics, ancestry, or language. Race can also include other characteristics including geographic location, culture, religion, and national group association. To elaborate, unlike their White counterparts, Black students' educational and life challenges are influenced by race. Racial identity encompasses how an individual's conception of self is related to race and includes the social and political impact that visible group membership has on psychological functioning (Hypolite, 2020; Johnson & Arbona, 2006).

For my research study, RID is to be defined as the attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions that one holds about his or her own racial group as it relates to the majority racial group (Wee, 2021). Racial identity, its development, and the role that it plays in the well-being, educational achievement, and life outcomes of Black youth is a well-researched area of focus for many psychologists and educators alike from the early post-slavery period to the present day (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016). Several researchers have made positive linkages between Black students' RID and stronger academic outcomes (Chavous et al., 2008; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Ford & Harris, 1997; Hypolite, 2020). The research on RID that began as early as the 1960s, and continues to this day, shows that there is an interest in, and need to, operationalize RID in numerous contexts, including the context of school curricula, which lacks substantial quantitative or qualitative research studies. I argue that an overlooked next step in RID scholarship is research geared toward gaining a greater understanding of how representation within the K-12 curricular content impacts one's RID.

In this integrative review, I draw on the extant literature that exists regarding RID, schooling, and curricula to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the lack of representation of Black people in educational curricula impacts Black students' RID. In framing my research for this literature review, I follow in the steps of Spring (2013) by examining the current literature and research in existence in a critical and historical lens. The goal of the literature review is to explore what we know about how stereotypical representation within K-12 curricula impacts Black students while acknowledging and closing the gaps found in the extant literature, thus establishing a justifiable need for my research study (Randolph, 2009). Indeed, there is a lack of research concerning how

exactly representation within curricula impacts Black students' RID. However, what this literature review will illustrate is that K-12 schools and pedagogical practices have a strong correlation with the identity development of students. These findings therefore are the impetus for the present study.

Search Description

To begin this search description section, I draw upon the practices laid out by Randolph (2009) for data collection and data evaluation when conducting a literature review. I followed a strict and exhaustive data collection process to ensure that the data presented in this literature review can be replicated by any researcher or student. To find useful resources including research studies, peer reviewed journal articles, and books (physical and e-books), I utilized the *UTMOST Discovery for University of Toledo Libraries* and *OCLC World Cat Databases*. I searched for "racial identity development" AND "curricula" AND "African American" OR "Black students"; "racial representation" AND "curricula" AND "identity": "identity development" OR "identity formation" AND "African American" OR "Black students"; "culturally relevant education and representation", AND "curricula"; "race, identity, and representation in education" AND "discrimination in education"; "racist curricula" AND "African Americans" OR "Black Americans".

Although I wanted to include studies conducted between 2018 - 2022, I also knew it would be imperative to include historical literature that was conducted as early as the 1960s, as research on RID and curricula reform are not new. Rather, a wealth of studies on both subjects has been conducted in a multitude of areas of interest. Additionally, research regarding schooling and racial identity development was conducted to provide a

robust picture of the experiences that Black students have with schooling and curricula. Again, using the *UTMOST Discovery for University of Toledo Libraries,* I used the search terms “racial identity” AND “school socialization”.

I did not only cull resources through searching through electronic databases, but most of the articles and research studies that I found were gathered through searching the references of articles I collected electronically. As outlined by Randolph (2009), this started a process of searching references or articles that were retrieved, determining which articles were relevant, finding them and reading their references, and repeating the process until a point of saturation was reached. When I finally reached this point of saturation, I eliminated articles that did not meet the following inclusion criteria:

1. The study included one of the following variables: race/ethnicity; racial identity development; attitudes toward educational curricula; culturally relevant education; African American education; Black identity development; identity formation; socialization; school socialization; self/identity; adolescents.
2. The study was written in English; and
3. The article or study focused on Black students or other minority groups, including Hispanic or Latinx, Asian American, and/or Arab-American.

Exclusion criteria for the study included studies that did not discuss curriculum in relation to the RID of Black or other minority students, articles and studies that were written in other languages or conducted in countries other than the United States of America, and articles that did not include a combination of the aforementioned keyword search variables. My initial searches provided me with approximately 49,156 hits, and the

studies and articles were eventually narrowed down to approximately 140 articles that were used for the final literature review.

Identity in Early Childhood

A brief discussion of the early identity development of children is needed, as children begin developing an identity early in life. Much of the discussion on identity development in scholarly research focuses on adolescence when children begin forming more abstract conceptions of their identities. However, one cannot ignore the building blocks that enable those complex, abstract identities to begin to flourish. Early childhood serves as the foundation for virtually all quality-of-life markers for a human, including one's physical and mental health, identity, and developmental milestones (Raburu, 2015). Identity is a broad term that is used to describe a person's general sense of self as well as the various beliefs and attitudes that they hold (APA, 2023). Children begin establishing concrete understandings of themselves in early childhood, where their views of themselves as well as those around them are informed by the obvious behaviors and appearances that they can observe. In early childhood, children do not have the ability to reflect on the self in an abstract way, rather, they are building the foundations for self-reflection that begins in adolescence. (Tatum, 2017).

Many factors influence one's burgeoning identity and its development, including the family unit, relationships with friends and peers, age, gender, religious background, and culture (Tatum, 2017; Raburu, 2015; Umana-Taylor, 2018). As children grow and develop, their identities become more complex in response to being a part of a world that is just as complex as their developing identities. Children continue to go through unique and novel experiences, and they begin to be self-reflective, asking questions about who

they are, and who they want to become. Factors outside of the family unit, including the community, schools, friends, teachers, and the media, further impact children's capacity for self-reflection as they develop. (Raburu, 2015; Tatum, 2017).

According to Eccles (1999) during the elementary and middle school years, children are rapidly developing and mastering different skills and competencies, including becoming independent people, establishing a sense of identity, becoming self-aware, and becoming more involved in the world around them outside of their family unit. Eccles further asserts that these rapid and dramatic changes are driven by children's need to seek opportunities for themselves where they can master and demonstrate new skills, become independent by making their own decisions and being the one controlling their own behaviors, as well as forming social relationships with peers and adults alike.

Racial Identity Development

An equally important aspect of the development of Black children is that of racial identity development (RID). RID is of great importance for Black youth, who typically begin this important process in early adolescence (Tatum, 2017), and has been one of the most widely studied constructs among Black people in the United States (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 2017). During this dynamic and active time in their lives, Black youth must sort out and determine educational and professional goals as well as discover who they simply are as human beings (Tatum, 2000; Verhoeven et al., 2018). According to Tatum (2017), the messages that humans receive from the world around them shape their self-perception. For young Black men and women, upon entering adolescence, the racial content of these messages deepens.

For Black students, the messages they receive in school are oftentimes negative or incongruent with a healthy development of a sense of self. Examples of this incongruency include when Black students (a) are taught that slavery is the beginning of their history, (b) experience educational settings in which only one month of the year is dedicated to Black leaders and heroes, or (c) are not taught anything about their histories and achievements. According to Bakari (1997) establishing a positive racial identity builds the space for one to produce a cheerful outlook and self-confidence. Thus, I argue that a positive racial identity is a contributing factor in the academic and personal success of Black students.

The RID with which Black students must reconcile has implications for their future; this development determines how they view themselves and their same race peers as well as others outside of their racial group. One's RID has implications on their interest in and commitment to school that, in turn, impacts their future educational and professional careers, and, by extension, their quality of life (Ritchey, 2014). Research shows that RID is an ongoing, meaning-making process that resembles a staircase more than a linear process; this process may look different depending on the student and their experiences (Seaton et al., 2006; Tatum, 2017).

Indeed, many authors agree that RID is a dynamic process that changes over time, and is dependent on contextual factors including age, school setting, the society that one lives in, as well as teachers and parents. (Piper, 2019, Hypolite; 2020, Tatum 2004, 2017). Tatum (2017) argues that the nature of human beings to evolve and adapt as we have varying interactions with others, and as the salience of our racial identity changes. The dynamic, ongoing process of racial identity is captured by Hypolite, who conducted

a study that explored racial identity development through black cultural centers on a college campus by utilizing individual interviews and participant observations with Black college students. A primary finding that Hypolite discovered was that Black college students were still developing an understanding of their racial identity, and that support at the college via professional staff members was integral in helping students answer their own questions of identity as they went through the process of self-reflection.

Furthermore, researchers acknowledge that because school is a place where adolescents spend a great deal of time, it is a place where their RID can be fostered, supported, and nurtured by being introduced to new ideas, activities, or novel possibilities (Coll & Falsafi, 2010; Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Verhoeven et al., 2018). Likewise, the inverse of this statement is also true; school can be a place of harm to one's RID (Tatum, 2017).

William Cross' Nigrescence Theory. William Cross developed the groundbreaking theory of Nigrescence in 1971. Cross' theory is widely held as the Black RID model used as a framework for Black identity scholarship (Vandiver et al., 2002). Nigrescence is a French term which essentially refers to the process individuals go through in developing into their Blackness (Cross, 1971; 1994). Cross (1971; 1991; 1994). Nigrescence theory sought to capture and explain the stages that Black Americans experience when encountering a change or shift in their racial self-identification (Cross, 1971; 1994), and builds upon the work Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980) had done on identity development.

The purpose of Cross' Nigrescence theory was to provide a framework that captured the stages that Black Americans underwent whilst experiencing a shift in their

racial self-identification (Cross, 1994). Furthermore, it sought to explain how Black individuals form a positive racial identity, as the previous theories did not specifically address Black youth, which left a gap where there was a need. The experiences that Black Americans in particular experience, Cross explains, are comparable to the experiences that other identity groups go through as they experience moments that raise their consciousness of self (i.e., a man or woman identifying as male or female, or the coming out process for LGBTQIA+ individuals) (Cross, 1994).

Since the 1960s, a significant group of Black and White scholars have attempted to develop theoretical and empirical conceptions of the process Black people navigate in their identity development. Cross (1991) revised his original Nigrescence model, where the model became more inclusive of the diverse experiences of Black Americans in key areas, including (1) arguing that multiple identities existed within each stage, (2) associating low self-esteem with the Pre-Encounter stage only if an individual is seen as anti-black, (3) re-naming the pro-white identity to an "American identity", and asserting that an American identity is not an indirect marker of a Black person exhibiting self-hatred, (4) the Internalization stage includes pro-black identities that were not originally included in the 1971 model, and (5) the fourth (Internalization) and fifth (Internalization-Commitment) stages of Cross' (1971). Nigrescence models were combined, because few observable differences were found between the psychology of Black people in these two stages. In the end, Cross created a four-stage model of RID that includes Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. Regarding his revisions, Cross discussed the evolution of the numerous Black RID models that were created by other theorists since the introduction of his theory of Nigrescence. In this, Cross (1994)

discusses four stages that comprise the stages of Racial Identity Development: *Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization.*

1. **Pre-Encounter** describes an individual of having little to no salience of race as an identity for numerous reasons (i.e., self-hatred, denial, identity grounded in another salient identity). People who find themselves in the pre-encounter stage hold attitudes that range from low salience, to race neutrality to anti-Black (Ritchey, 2014). Quite often, within this stage Black individuals attempt to be more like their White counterparts and either intentionally or unintentionally disengage from other Black people (Tatum, 1992).
2. **Encounter** describes where one typically has a negative encounter with race and is then thrust into a stage of transition. As stated by Tatum (1992), **"**Movement into the encounter phase is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that forces the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one's life" (p. 10). When one finds themself in the encounter stage, they are beginning to find their previously held notions about their Blackness being challenged, and they must work through these changes in their understanding of what it means to be Black. In fact, experiences and information on racism leads individuals in this stage to feel anger and frustration, especially when others sit by and let it happen (Tatum, 199). Cross notes that the encounter stage leads to an identity change, and that encounter can be a single event, or a series of events (Cross, 1994).
3. **Immersion-Emersion** begins with old and new identities being at war with one another, and when his happens an individual typically seeks better connection to their Black identity. Black people begin to shed their old worldview and construct

a new frame of reference with the information they have gained regarding race (Ritchey, 2014). Tatum (2017) asserts that this is a key stage for young adults and characterizes it as a phase of active exploration, where the developing Black person typically moves from anger towards White people to seeing White people as simply irrelevant. Tatum (2017) further characterizes the immersion-emersion stage as a phase of excitement over learning more about oneself and one's racial group by finding out that there is more to Africa that what is represented within animated movies, and there is more to Black history than victimization. Should the process of RID follow a healthy path, Black youth should leave this stage beginning the process of Internalization.

4. **Internalization** involves becoming more comfortable with their identity; within this stage an individual can internalize their identity as a Black person, while also appreciating and relishing interactions and relationships with those who are non-Black, particularly White persons (Cross, 1994; Vandiver, 2001). According to Ritchey (2014), it is during the internalization phase that Blacks experience the ultimate transformation when one can achieve a healthy racial identity by shedding a poor self-worth and embracing more positive views and definitions of their racial identity.

For my literature review and research study, one of the most useful conceptualizations of RID that has aided in my understanding of the evolution of racial identity development is that of Beverly Daniel Tatum (1992; 2017). Tatum draws heavily upon Cross' theory of Nigrescence while also significantly extending Cross' theory by providing a more complex view of RID.

Tatum's Racial-Ethnic-Cultural Identity Development. In her theory, Tatum (2017) most recently has created a theory where she integrates race, culture, and racial identity together into what she describes as Racial-Ethnic-Cultural (REC) development. William Cross' theory of RID served as the framework for Tatum's (2017) own understanding of the RID of Black students. Tatum (2017) argues that race, ethnicity, and culture overlap in the lived experiences of students in such a way that they must be viewed together.

Tatum (2017) acknowledges the fact that children of color, in particular Black children, are faced with negative, stereotypical, and racist images and misinformation as early as their preschool years. She emphasizes the importance of Black parents as well as teachers being race-conscious with children from an early age by reassuring and fostering an atmosphere where race is viewed positively through offering children cultural artifacts, knowledge, images, and messages regarding what it means to be Black. When these race-conscious steps are taken to help reinforce positive racial identity in children, Tatum (2017) asserts, the impact of the dominant society's negative messages are reduced.

Tatum (2017) outlines the stages that children go through as they develop their racial identity, from pre-puberty to adolescence, into young adulthood. Her stages echo Cross' (1994) stages; however, a key difference is that Tatum's conceptualization of identity and racial identity offers a more complex, dynamic view and understanding of RID. Tatum's conceptualization of racial identity is conscious of the contextual factors that influence one's racial identity (i.e., gender identity, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and socialization, to name a few). In adolescence, Black children start to

develop an ever evolving and increasingly complex understanding of their racial identity that begins to include not only information about themselves, but also an understanding of their racial group membership. Tatum (2017) states that this development in adolescence is marked by a growing understanding that there exists a commonality of experiences and destiny for those who share ethnic or racial group membership. This growing understanding extends to how these shared experiences differ from individuals who are part of other groups.

The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies pre-adolescence as before the age of 10, adolescence as the phase of life that exists between childhood and adulthood, between the ages of 10 to 19 (2021). Furthermore, the WHO defines young adulthood as being between the ages of 20 to 24 years old. Tatum (2017) asserts that pre-adolescent children are in a state of pre-awareness in relation to their racial identity. As children get older and gain more experiences, they develop more complex views of their racial identity. When children reach young adulthood, many will enter the immersion-emersion phase of racial identity. Tatum (2017) asserts that this is a key stage for young adults because they begin to actively explore their racial identity.

Although college is an ideal place for young adults to explore their racial identity, Tatum (2017) acknowledges that college is not the only place where young adults are able to explore who they are as a Black person, as well as their histories. On the contrary, Black young adults will learn about their Blackness and their histories outside of the educational landscape as non-college students who are seeking alternative, positive definitions of what it means to be Black, aside from what is taught by default. Young people continue to learn what it means to be Black for themselves as they develop in their

racial identity. Tatum argues that this occurs in virtually every aspect of young Black people's lives in different ways: from embracing religion or spirituality, immersing oneself in civic participation, establishing informal relationships with friends and family, to creating connections with formal organizations that aim to strengthen Black peoples ties with one another.

Schooling and Racial Identity Development

Psychologists have studied the way in which children gain understandings of race and how their understanding is shaped over time for decades, (Quintana, 1998; Watford et al., 2021). How and what information is transmitted to children regarding their race and ethnicity is known as racial-ethnic socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). The messages that young people receive throughout their lives regarding the meaning and consequences of their racial group membership has been shown to influence young people's wellbeing, psychosocial and academic development (Hughes et al., 2006; Watford et al., 2021). Socialization is a dynamic process whereby multiple sources deliver messages to the youth. Young people then select from these messages and interpret meaning and value from them based on their own personal experiences, beliefs, and knowledge (Byrd and Legette, 2022). School is an important factor in the socialization process for children due to the influence that school has on students, directly and indirectly. Not only do students spend a great deal of time in school, but schools are also positioned to shape young people's career goals and aspirations as well as the way they view themselves in society (Byrd & Legette, 2022).

Davidson (1996, as cited in Nasir et al., 2009) argued that one's racial identities are negotiated in school and in the classroom, and these contexts can support or fail to

support whether a student views schooling as a contributor to their racial identity formation, or as an oppositional force working against their racial identity. These oppositional forces that create disengagement in schooling for students of color often manifest through academic tracking, low or negative expectations, racial discrimination, and barriers to knowledge (Davison, 1996).

School Cultural Socialization. Cultural socialization is an aspect of socialization first identified by Byrd (2015; 2017), who combined literature on parental socialization and multicultural education to identify five dimensions of school Ethnic-Racial Socialization: 1) cultural socialization: opportunities for students to learn about their own culture(s); 2) promotion of cultural competence: opportunities to learn about other cultures; 3) critical consciousness socialization: opportunities to learn about prejudice and discrimination; 4) mainstream socialization: refers to the messages about mainstream U.S. norms and values; 5) color-blind socialization: refers to the messages that encourage students to ignore the role race plays in their daily lives and in society. Byrd and Legette (2022) argues that affording students with opportunities to learn about their own culture is significantly related to racial identity commitment and exploration. Furthermore, Del Toro and Wang (2021) assert that adolescents of color who possess a positive ethnic-racial identity show promising academic adjustment, school performance, and attitudes toward school and learning.

Literature on parental socialization shows positive linkages between cultural socialization messages from parents and positive racial identity development, so it would be fair to argue that the same positive linkages would be found if students learned about their own culture in school, thus helping students further develop the meaning of racial

group membership. Del Toro and Wang (2021) posit that when schools decide to embrace their roles as sources of cultural socialization and make conscious efforts to promote their students' ethnic-racial affect and pride, teachers can aid students in integrating their ethnic-racial group membership into their school identities. Furthermore, when the congruence between one's ethnic-racial identity and school curricula is increased, Black students' academic self-confidence is boosted, and teachers are better positioned to ascertain students' academic interests and even instill a strong sense of competence. School belonginess, school engagement, and willingness to complete school-related tasks are also likely to benefit from school cultural socialization (Del Toro & Wang, 2021).

Students can learn about culture in school through various means: Social Studies and History classes, ethnic studies courses, student organizations and teachers who incorporate culture into their teaching (Byrd & Legette, 2022; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Del Toro and Wang (2021) conducted a longitudinal study where they examined whether school cultural socialization predicted Black adolescent students' grade point averages through their ethnic-racial identities. In this study, the results showed that students who perceived more school cultural socialization had higher grades 1 and 2 years later.

Students' perceptions of RID and schooling. Watford et al., (2021), conducted semi-structured interviews with 64 Black adolescents, where they examined how the adolescents described their own experiences with, and understandings of, race. They found that not only do parents and school curricula shape children and adolescents' racial beliefs, but also that ethnic-racial socialization messages emerge from young people's

experiences with racial discrimination and inequality in the school systems they are a part of public places they frequent and the media they consume.

Nasir et al., (2009) propose that there are two levels of context that are influential on one's racial/ethnic and academic identities: the school and local context, and the historical and national media context. Nasir et al., assert that these two levels of context work in tandem with one another and shape adolescents' development of their racial identities, and that to understand racial identities and their development, the nature of schooling practices that students experience and engage with is a factor that must be considered. The impact that the school context has on students' various identities including racial, ethnic, and academic is well studied and supported by research (Nasir et al., 2009; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

The second context that Nasir et al., identify as having an important bearing on the racial identity development of Black students is the historical and national media context. That is, the messages that have been conveyed to Black adolescents through the media historically. The messages that Black people received in the 1950s, for example, are markedly different than the messages that Black people receive from the media today. In the 1950s, although racism was more explicit and Black people were rarely portrayed in film and television, the values for many Black people included little connection to Africa and more of a connection to their American identity, and an emphasis on education being the key to upward mobility. Furthermore, things like hairstyles and dress were done in a way to fit in with American society (e.g., Black women straightening their hair, and Black people wearing formal clothing during the day). Today, racism is generally considered less explicit, and there are greater representations of Black people in

film and television, however, many of those representations are stereotypical (e.g., the Black man being an athlete, entertainer, or rapper, and the Black woman being hypersexualized). One could argue that what it means to be Black today has changed from even ten or twenty years ago.

Media portrayals of Black people cannot be discussed without acknowledging the long history of racism, discrimination, stereotypes, and exploitation that the Black community has been plagued with. For Black youth, these media images often reinforce stereotypes that portray Black people as dangerous, unintelligent, and demoralized (Nasir et al., 2009). The impact that these stereotypes have on Black adolescents is that they become internalized as reality. Spencer (2006) argues that these same negative and harmful stereotypes make the task of identity development that much more difficult, and Black students may not have access to the supports necessary to cope and deal with such difficult developmental tasks.

Nasir et al., (2009) investigated the variation in the meanings of racial identity for Black high school students who attended a predominantly Black urban high school in a study where they utilized observational, interview and survey data. In their study, they identified two distinct types of racial and academic identities for Black students: a "street savvy" Black identity, and a "school oriented and socially conscious" Black identity. The street savvy identity is characterized as a student who wears popular clothing styles, speaks Ebonics, and does not see one's Black identity being connected to school. Nasir et al. (2009) also identified a "thug" or "gangsta" persona as a characteristic of the street savvy identity. Contrarily, the "school oriented and socially conscious" Black identity centers around one being connected to their school and community as well as a cultural

and historical legacy. An individual who aligns with this identity also sees themselves as a positive force for change within their community. Nasir et al., argue that the two configurations of Black racial and academic identity that they identify in their research study are not representative of all students; on the contrary, these two configurations of identity may be viewed as possibilities available to students. One's experiences and environment have an incredible influence on their racial identity development and what it means to be Black. A student's perception of race and their racial identity will vary and those perceptions are distinct and personal for each individual regardless of shared membership with the Black race. Indeed, Nasir et al,. (2009) point out that although each student in both identity types consider themselves to be Black, the meaning of being Black as well as the level of critical thought each student considered regarding their racial identity differed from student to student.

Prior Studies on Racial Identity Development

Previous research on RID focuses on the malleable nature of the developmental processes as Black adolescents traverse through the different stages. According to Helms (1994) virtually all other racial or ethnic identity models share at least one element or aspect with one another. Black racial identity theories to date have largely focused on the idea that one's healthy racial identity development is achieved when Black people progress through a series of linear stages beginning with negative thoughts and feelings about themselves and other Black people (and inversely, holding positive or idealized thoughts about White people) and ending with internalized positive feelings about themselves, other Black people, and other racial and ethnic groups (Constantine et al., 1998).

Racial and ethnic identity development are often mentioned in the same research studies; however, researchers have argued that racial identity development and ethnic identity development are social phenomena that are connected by social, economic, and political forces that shape racial and ethnic meaning for individuals, and should not be seen as separate entities but rather interconnected identities (Aldana and Byrd, 2015). Although this literature review focuses specifically on racial identity development, many studies that are discussed examine racial and ethnic identity together.

One study that illustrates the flexible nature of racial identity development is a study that was conducted by Seaton et al., (2006) where RID was examined using the identity formation model. Seaton et al., incorporates the four identity statuses (diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved) that were created by James Marcia (1966; 1967; 1993) into their research study, where these four statuses were examined through a longitudinal sample of 224 African American adolescents. Seaton et al., (2006) found that while some adolescents progressed, other adolescents in the study regressed or remained constant across time periods. They found that the results supported the assumption that individuals who have reached the achieved status exhibited the highest levels of psychological well-being, parallel to the findings of Marcia (Seaton et al.,2006). The findings of this study illustrate the idea that racial identity development is a process that looks different for everyone, and depending on a number of factors and contexts, adolescents do not arrive to the classroom at the same place in the racial identity process.

Understanding that racial identity development is an ongoing process adds to the relevancy of finding ways to promote racial identity development in classrooms. It has already been established that Social Studies classrooms can promote the progression of

one's racial identity development through culturally relevant education, communal practices of instruction, and challenging students to think critically about the topics and subjects that they are learning (Ladson-Billings, 2003). More research is needed to investigate exactly how other content areas, such as science and Language Arts, can also promote racial identity development.

Racial Identity Development Measures and Instruments.

DeCuir-Gunby (2009) conducted a review of research on RID of African American adolescents in the field of education, focusing on how exactly Black Racial Identity (BRI) has been examined in the past. This is an important study as it offers a detailed view of the operationalization of RID, in this case, (BRI) development. DeCuir-Gunby explored several measures or instruments that have been used to measure BRI, including a brief description and a review of the instrument. In total, DeCuir-Gunby (2009) reviewed 12 different measures of BRI and sorted them into four types: developmental, nationalistic/worldview, reactions to racism, and multidimensional.

DeCuir-Gunby found that many facets of BRI have been explored and a lot of knowledge has been gained through the study of BRI. However, due to the complex and multifaceted nature of BRI, it is a difficult task to assess, especially when attempting to assess BRI within the context of education. DeCuir-Gunby (2009) asserts that because schools are complex themselves (i.e., the social, cultural, and political aspects that impact education), they are ideal sites to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of Black students' subjective experiences.

According to DeCuir-Gunby (2009) future research that explores BRI within the education field should discuss in detail the intersectional nature of identities, including

Black students' feelings regarding how others perceive them, including their skin color, hair texture, heritage, gender, and sexuality. This is an interesting finding, and I argue that the inclusion of how Black students feel they are perceived within the educational curricula is a natural extension of the work done by DeCuir-Gunby (2009).

DeCuir-Gunby (2009) acknowledges the impact school context has on students, including interactions with teachers, relationships that are built with peers, and various academic issues. To combat the negative interactions that Black students often face, DeCuir-Gunby (2009) argues that space must be created in the classrooms that will foster support for the RID of Black adolescents. Although DeCuir-Gunby was referencing how educators conceptualize Black students' actual adolescence, and the treatment that Black adolescent students receive from their teachers, DeCuir-Gunby's (2009) assertions can easily be applied to the curricular impact on the RID of Black adolescent students.

Oyserman et al., (1995) conducted an experimental study with eighth grade African American students to assess a new model of racial-ethnic identity, which posited that adolescents whose racial-ethnic identity simultaneously contains feelings of in-group connectedness, an awareness of racism, and a belief that achievement is fixed in group membership will possess greater academic achievement than their peers who do not possess those components at the same time. This study is of great importance because it investigates what aspects of racial identity are connected to one's academic achievement.

Oyserman et al., (1995) gave African American eighth grade students a math assignment where some were asked to write about their racial-ethnic identity before the math task and others were not. Oyserman et al., (1995) found that students who wrote about their racial identity before the math task and described their racial-ethnic identity in

terms of all three components, performed better on the math task than youths who had not written about their racial identity before the math task.

In general, many authors found that racial identity development is a dynamic process that changes over time, and is dependent on contextual factors including school, society, teachers, and parents (Hypolite, 2020; Piper, 2019; Tatum, 2000). Furthermore, the racial identity development processes that occur during adolescence have far reaching implications and extend into young adulthood and adulthood. Researchers who have conducted studies with college students (Hypolite, 2020; Scottham et al., 2010) find that many young adults are still exploring and traversing through the stages of racial identity development. These findings, when taken together, provide strong support for a need to explore racial identity development and its relationship with educational curricula through deeper and meaningful research.

Curricula and It's Relation to Racial Identity Development

When examining literature in content areas including Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Language Arts, research indicates that there is a substantial lack of racial representation within the curricula across content areas (e.g., a lack of characters of color in children's books) (Bishop, 1990; Emdin, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Loewen, 2018). A compelling understanding of curricula can be found in Eisner's (2002) text *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, where he provides a basic, refined definition for curricula, stating that the curricula of a school or of a course is a series of planned events with the intent to have educational consequences for one or more pupils. This definition provides a basic understanding of curricula, and Eisner (2002) notes that curricula is not an entity with characteristics that can be realized

once and for all. In other words, curricula, its objectives, and the means to achieve those objectives differ depending on the situation and the environment.

What is needed for this research study is a radical definition and conceptualization of curricula, beyond simply the planned content, learning materials, and activities that a teacher uses to educate students. This is needed to understand the different ways in which students are impacted by what they are (and are not) taught in schools, and how the curricula interacts and impacts their own perceptions of their racial identity. For the purposes of this research study, I conceptualize curricula in the school of thought of Eisner (2002), who asserted that there existed three forms of curricula: the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum, and the null curricula.

Eisner's Three Types of Curricula. According to Eisner (2002), schools teach much more (and much less) than what they publicly purport to teach.

Explicit Curricula. The explicit curricula are what is presented to the public, and includes the content, goals, and objectives for various content areas and instruction. According to Eisner (2002), the explicit curricula is an educational menu offered to the students, their families, and the community.

Implicit Curricula. The "hidden" curricula that is taught to students – it teaches students what should be valued in school and in life through the teaching of compliant behavior, competitiveness, and placing emphasis on the significance of various subject areas like math and the sciences, compared to other subject areas such as the arts. Eisner (2002) defines the implicit curricula as the omnipresent expectations and rules that define the cultural system that is formal schooling. This cultural system in and of itself teaching powerful and important lessons to its pupils.

Null Curricula. Eisner (2002) posits that the third curricula do not exist, because it is not taught to students. The null curricula include two dimensions to consider: 1) the intellectual processes that schools emphasize and neglect, and 2) the content or subject areas that are present and absent in school curricula. Eisner (2002) defines the null curricula as options that are not provided to students, perspectives they may never be taught about and unable to utilize, as well as concepts and skills that are not meant to be included into their intellectual skillsets.

Representation in Curricula. What we see in our educational system is a tradition of the dominant culture stripping everything that is "other" away from minority groups, in place of a tradition of assimilation, to be a "good" American. The issue with this approach to education is that it neglects the diversity that makes our society so rich and vibrant. Indeed, Chisholm (1994) refers to the composition of America as a mosaic of vibrant and diverse colors that derive from a medley of cultures, producing the American culture. Within this mosaic, each culture retains its unique aspects while enriching the American culture.

Chisholm's (1994) idea of an American culture is indicative of the importance of representation in curricula, as we see the demographics of the student body in United States schools changing as minority groups grow – the experiences, culture, and achievements of students of color must be reflected in what we teach if we are to truly engage them, as well as have an educational system that reflects the mosaic that Chisholm speaks of. Furthermore, research has proven that the instructional materials that students are provided with can significantly impact their understandings and development of knowledge (Chapman & Hobbel, 2010).

Now more than ever, we must look at curricula as we see racial tension erupting in the public sphere for everyone to see. Students are living through a new civil rights era, where the Black Lives Matter movement has sparked national and global conversations around race and racial injustice, while simultaneously, conservative politicians are working to eliminate the teaching of Critical Race Theory in the classroom, limiting or removing important conversations surrounding race, and eradicating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs from state funded colleges and universities. Now is the time to re-examine how race and, by extension, RID fit into our educational system. I will discuss three content areas that can focus on racial identity, including Science, Language Arts/English, and Social Studies/History. Varelas et al., (2012) argue that studies that have explored racial identity among Black adolescents show that possessing a positive racial identity may promote positive academic identities as well as buffering different risk factors. I will discuss in detail research studies that show these content areas being used to positively impact the racial identity development of Black students.

Science and Mathematics. The research on Science and Mathematics and the lack of representation of Black students experiences and culture within the curricula focuses largely on the lack of Black and Brown students in science and math focused careers, and how this impacts their academic selves as well as their RID. However, in a small-scale study conducted by Macintyre and Hamilton (2010), students' responses were analyzed in order to understand the relationship between the students' perceptions of Mathematics curricula and the students' perceptions of their identity. The findings in this study concluded that the selection and presentation of content and materials in classrooms influenced learners' participation and success in math class. Furthermore, Macintyre &

Hamilton (2010) assert that, to maximize the learners' engagement with the subject matter, selection of the content should be not only realistic, but also relevant to the experiences and aspirations of the pupils, for future employment and career paths. The results of this study offer strong evidence in support of larger scale studies that examine the relationships between students' identities and the curricula they are exposed to.

Bryan and Atwater (2002) assert that children of color are portrayed in Science education in ways that view them from a deficit lens. As suggested earlier, one of the negative factors that stems from a lack of representation in the curricula is that if students do not see themselves in what they are learning, they may not believe that they can ever achieve or become what they are being taught – thus impacting their academic achievement as well as determination to aspire to greatness in their futures.

Emdin (2006) similarly asserts that a deconstruction of the modes of thought and practice which influence urban education must take place. He suggests that this can be done through dialogue between students and teachers, whereby they are enabled to discuss their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom and come to cooperative decisions regarding rules, roles, and responsibilities to rule their everyday lives. The research discussed in this section draws upon the ideas discussed by Bryan and Atwater (2002) and Emdin (2006) which suggests that students of color, and in the interest of this literature review, Black students, must see themselves reflected in the science and mathematics content being taught as it is impactful of their academic and professional selves.

In the 2006 study conducted by Emdin, he sought to engage student and teacher researchers in practices that are supportive of the Science success of a school's

predominantly Latino/a and African American student population. Emdin found that there is a need to expand approaches to teaching and learning that includes what children already know. In his study, Emdin discusses how most urban schools teach in a militarized format, where they are conditioned to practice processes in a specific structure to adhere by. Emdin (2006) further posits that a flaw of the current Science education structure abandons important student contextual factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, socioeconomic status etc., and that to abandonment of these factors can be traced to populations that are set up for success (predominately White males) in the United Sates. This abandonment of important contextual social and demographical factors is important, because if curricula and pedagogy neglect their students experience, then the teaching and learning process is flawed.

Likewise, in a study conducted by Brown (2006) that sought to identify how students' assimilation into the science classroom reflected their interpretation of Science itself in relation to their academic identities, Brown found that students experienced ease when tasked with assuming the theoretical and cultural behaviors of Science. However, the students had difficulty in appropriating the broad and informal practices of Science. Brown (2006) further argues that, based on the findings, there was a need to place greater emphasis on the relationship between students' identity and their scientific literacy development. This is an interesting finding as it suggests that Black students in science classrooms are not truly learning how to think as a scientist thinks and are not truly being prepared for future careers in science, as Emdin (2006) suggests, they are simply learning processes and how to follow said processes.

In a published article by Varelas et al., (2012), the authors present a theoretical framework which views learning as a dynamic process that involves content learning (CL) and identity construction (IC), named the CLIC framework. Varelas et al., synthesizes empirical findings from their previous studies that centered around younger and older Black students as well as their parents and community members, and interpreted and reformulated the sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives regarding learning and student participation to culminate into the CLIC framework. (Kane, 2009; Martin, 2000, 2006; Tucker-Raymond et al., 2007, 2012; Varelas et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to create a framework that would emphasize the construction of racial identities simultaneously with disciplinary and academic identities to help Black children succeed in Science and Math. Content learning and identity construction, Varelas et al., (2012) argue, are intertwined processes that differ in how they unfold, but they both require meaning making; therefore, the two concepts should not be considered separately, rather, they should be considered as two parts of a whole.

The importance and relevance of this study is that the findings show a strong correlation between identity construction being interwoven with knowledge construction. Engaging students' identity with academic content, Varelas et al., (2012) assert, shows that students gain an increased ability to be placed in the shoes of practitioners in whatever field they are learning, to think, socialize, read, and write as the practitioners do. In the example of a science class, students became increasingly affectively engaged in Science the way a scientist would be. That is, students will engage more meaningfully and deeper with science and mathematics under the CLIC framework than they may if not engaged with this framework. This provides a bridge to the issues Emdin (2006)

addresses, including the issue of a lack of emphasis on minority students' identity in Science (and by extension, Mathematics) as well as including engaging Black students more meaningfully within the content.

In conclusion, the research that surrounds science and mathematics curricula and its relation to the RID of Black students largely focuses on the development of academic selves, and how a lack of representation lowers Black students' determination and interest in school and careers in STEM fields (Varelas et al., 2012). Emdin (2006) argued that the contextual factors that students bring to school with them must not be ignored by their teachers and through the curricula, and minority students must be engaged meaningfully with content, instead of a militarized, standardized process of learning. Varelas et al., (2012) further supported this with their study on content learning and identity construct (CLIC) which they argue is strongly connected *to* Black students' success and determination in learning Science and Mathematics and pursuing future careers in relevant career fields. The research shows that there is a gap in the literature that explicitly addresses RID and its connection to a lack of representations of Black students in curricula, however, the research shows there is a strong leaning towards the lack of representation of Black students within Science and Mathematics having a bearing on one's RID.

Language Arts and English. As stated by Ladson-Billings (2009) the nation's literacy rate is one of the most critical indications of national progress, and literacy campaigns in America strive for individual and personal advancement. This is further complicated when taken in with the achievement gaps between Black and Hispanic students and their White peers (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2009).

Gadsden (1991) highlighted the fact that that Black Americans have had a particular tenuous struggle with literacy in the United States, and traces that struggle to slavery where literacy was denied to enslaved peoples, to limited access in the early 1900s, and then to segregated schools who had subpar textbooks and learning resources, extending to present day with underrepresented and underprivileged school districts and communities.

Representation within Language Arts and English curricula has been a struggle for decades. According to the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (2019) only 15% of NYC public school students are White, however, the authors of the books that are commonly used in elementary school curricula in NYC, on average, are 84% White. This is startling when combined with the fact that New York is a city with over 800 languages and numerous racial and ethnic (NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, 2019).

Indeed, Bishop (1990) argued that when children do not see themselves reflected in the books they read, or they only see themselves depicted as laughable stereotypes, they learn powerful lessons about how the society they belong to undervalues them. This is a strong statement, and when taken together with the value placed on reading and writing success, African American students learn many things about how they are perceived from very young ages.

A study which was conducted by the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice examined what they call the *Exclusion of People of Color from NYC Elementary School Curricula*. Their findings were striking for several reasons: one would argue that one of the most diverse cities and school systems in the country would have curricula that reflects that diversity. However, the findings show us this is not the case. The NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (2019) examined more than 700 books across ten

commonly used English Language Arts (ELA) curricula and booklists in NYC public elementary schools, and more specifically, looked at the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the authors as well as the characters pictured on the books' covers. This data was compared to the demographic composition of NYC public schools across six grades (K-5) and NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (2019) found an overrepresentation of White authors and characters across all six grades, with the stark reality that many of the students could graduate 5th grade without having read a book by an author of their ethnic or cultural background.

In a study which examined the activities of four classrooms, three that practiced culturally relevant teaching and one that did not, Ladson-Billings (2009) found that the culturally relevant practices in two literature classrooms treated literacy as a communal activity and created ways that made learning to read and write more meaningful and successful for Black students. The classrooms that utilized culturally relevant practices in their literature classrooms saw students becoming intellectual leaders in the classroom, becoming apprenticed in a learning community rather than simply being taught in an isolated and unrelated way, having their real-life experiences legitimized as they become a part of the official curricula, and engage in a collective struggle against the status quo in partnership with their teacher (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These practices illustrate culturally responsive teaching, which is discussed in a later section, and they illustrate the positive outcomes that arise when students are affirmed through the curricula. This shows when you bring greater representation into the classroom, students thrive.

Conversely, Tatum (2000) conducted an inquiry into examining the instructional practices and classroom dynamics to understand how reading and writing skills of

disadvantaged, low performing middle-school students could be combined with culturally relevant practices. Through an eight-month study via in depth interviews with students, Tatum (2000) identified barriers that prevented the students in the study from success in reading. Fear of embarrassment, deficient word-attack strategies, or derogatory remarks from pervious teachers, as well as limited vocabularies were identified as the barriers (Tatum, 2000). Tatum (2000) argues that culturally relevant teaching in literature is needed in conjunction with developing the basic skills of learners as it is a way to strengthen cultural competence and nurture students' identities.

The research on Language Arts and English curricula shows great disparities between the academic achievement of students in Reading and Writing, as well as disparities between the representation of racial and ethnic minority groups within the curricula. Other research studies show that barriers, including lack of representation and destructive pedagogical practices prevent students from academic success within reading and writing, and Language Arts.

Social Studies. Perhaps the most demonstrative of the problem identified in this literature review is that of Social Studies curricula. Social Studies and History classrooms are naturally positioned to tackle topics and themes that are congruent with the positive development of a racial identity (Busey and Russell, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2003). Hawkman (2019) assert that the Social Studies curricula make it possible for students to understand race in the current racial landscape in America as well as giving them the opportunity to learn about racial justice which aids in the development of a racialized and positive sense of self. However, research findings from numerous studies state Social Studies and History curricula generally only support the development of White learners

as curricula stories and accounts focus on the dominant culture (Busey & Russell, 2016); it is this lack of representation of people of color within curricula that reinforces the hierarchical status-quo of White supremacy and renders the race and cultures of non-Whites inferior (Kohli et al., 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2012) asserts that there are several negative effects of the dominant culture which threatens our education system. These negative effects, Ladson-Billings explains, are brought about when one does not see one's history, culture, and background represented respectfully and honestly in the textbook or curricula that they are taught from; instead, what they receive is a distortion of their history, culture, or background. Indeed, current History curricula and textbooks favor narratives where White, middle-class, European American men's stories are front and center; oftentimes, these histories are misleading or untruthful (Lowenthal, 1998; Loewen, 2018). As a result, the histories of Black students, and other minority groups is either negative, reduced to background information, or not included at all (Busey & Russell, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2003).

Ladson-Billings (2003) asserts that, although race is prevalent in history and Social Studies curricula, students are not learning anything of substance in these courses. Building off Loewen's (1996, 2018) seminal text *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, and his critique of History and Social Studies textbooks, Ladson-Billings discusses the typical, lackluster construction of African American history within the U.S. History Textbook. Ladson-Billings (2003) posits that students are not leaving History courses with a coherent sense of the experiences of Black Americans. On the contrary, Black Americans as well as their experiences and contributions are virtually invisible in Social Studies

curricula. Ladson-Billings (2003) extends this invisibility to other minorities who too have experienced the erasure of non-White histories and experiences within the nexus of History and Social Studies curricula.

When examining literature in content areas including Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and Language Arts, research indicates that there is a substantial lack of racial representation within the curricula across content areas (Bishop, 1990; Emdin, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Loewen, 2018). The existing literature suggests a major theme across academic content areas: Black students are at a higher risk of intaking negative stereotypes of their culture and race within the standard curricula (St. Amour, 2020). In general, Black students are not being critically and meaningfully engaged across content areas (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Emdin, 2006); when greater representation is added to the classroom and the curricula, more non-hegemonic students will be provided the opportunity to thrive academically, intellectually, and socially (Bishop, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and Black students' determination in establishing ambitious career aspirations is strengthened or diminished based on what and how they are taught (Tucker-Raymond, Varelas, & Pappas, 2007, 2012; Varelas & Kane, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

In the current study, I utilize the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as the theoretical framework. The MMRI reflects an amalgamation of several theoretical frameworks that attempt to make meaning of the significance of Black identity in one's individual self-conceptualization, as well as the meaning one places on being associated with the Black community as a collective (Baber, 2012). According to Grant and Osanloo (2014) a theoretical framework should serve as a blueprint of sorts, which

adds to a research study by supporting the study, as well as providing a structure to define the philosophical, epistemological, methodical, and analytical approach to the dissertation or research study. The current study views racial identity as an essential aspect within human development that represents how an individual personally identities with their racial and/or ethnic group(s) as well as the meaning that an individual places on and draws from their racial and/or ethnic group affiliation. Given this view of racial identity, a theoretical framework that affirms and validates this perspective is needed.

The (MMRI) explores four dimensions of the racial identity of Black people, including: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology (Sellers et al., 1998). Constantine et al., (1998) assert that the MMRI fuses the strengths of the two distinct approaches that scholarly research on racial identity has taken, which they refer to as the *mainstream* and *underground* approaches in racial identity research. The mainstream approach consists of scholarship which focuses on examining the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes that Black people have historically undergone to achieve a healthy racial identity, with little regard to culture, whereas the underground approach to racial identity research asserts that there are positive cultural influences that may help Black people shape a healthy racial identity without having internalized a negative view of their racial identity. The underground approach also places emphasis on the complex and unique experiences of the Black community, including the Black community's oppression and cultural experiences. These themes are not included in the mainstream approach in racial identity research (Constantine et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 1998).

Sellers et al., (1998) explain key differences between the mainstream and underground approaches to racial identity development scholarship, stating that the

mainstream approach views racial identity in the context of other identities individuals may possess (i.e. gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status), whereas the underground approach provides the framework that has been utilized to study the cultural and experiential contexts which encompass the qualitative characteristics of Black racial identity. The MMRI merges together these two approaches, which strengthens information obtained regarding racial identity. Indeed, Sellers et al., (1998) assert that a strength of the MMRI is the fact that these two approaches have different foci, which in turn provides researchers with an opportunity to engender a more thorough understanding of Black people and their racial identity than either approach could provide by itself. Four assumptions undergird the MMRI:

1. Identities are both situationally influenced as well as stable properties of a person.
2. People have several different identities, including race, and these identities fall in hierarchical order based upon the meaning and importance an individual places on each identity.
3. The individual's self-report or perception of their racial identity is the most significant and valid indicator of their racial identity. The MMRI does not characterize healthy versus unhealthy racial identities. That distinction is left to the individual to decide in their own evaluation of their racial identity.
4. The MMRI is primarily concerned with an individual's racial identity at a specific point in time, rather than a linear progression of stage racial development.

The MMRI aims to provide a framework for understanding the significance of race in the self-concept of Black people as well as understanding the qualitative meanings

that Black people attribute to being members of the Black race (Sellers et al., 1998). According to Scottham et al., (2008), the MMRI emphasizes that the degree to which race is important to individual self-concept has both situationally specific and cross-situationally stable components that determine how race influences behavior both in specific situations and across situations.

The MMRI proposes four dimensions of racial identity which address the significance and qualitative meaning of race in the self-concepts of Black people (Sellers et al., 1998). These four dimensions, include Salience, Centrality, Regard, and Ideology. According to Scottham et al. (2008), each dimension can be defined as follows:

1. Salience refers to the degree to which race is relevant to an individual's self-concept within situational contexts.
2. Centrality refers to the placement of one's racial identity in the hierarchy of all of the identities that individual possesses. This dimension measures the importance of race to that individual's life.
3. Regard refers to an individual's feelings, either negatively or positively, toward the racial group(s) to which they subscribe. This dimension is further divided into two sub-dimensions: Public and Private. Public regard refers to the external displays of one's feelings towards their racial group whereas private regard refers to an internal, psychological closeness towards one's racial group as a collective.
4. Racial Ideology is the final dimension of the MMRI, and it refers an individual's philosophy about the ways that members of the Black community should behave or act. The racial ideology dimension of the MMRI is divided into four subscales which represent racial ideological philosophies: (a) a Nationalist philosophy

(emphasizes the idea that Black people should be in control of their own destinies with little to no input from other groups), (b), an Oppressed Minority philosophy(emphasizes the similarities the Black community has with other oppressed groups, (c) an Assimilationist philosophy (places emphasis on similarities with dominant group, as well as working together), and (d) a Humanist philosophy (places emphasis on finding commonality with all people). (Scottham et al. 2008; Sellers et al., 1998).

Summary

Curricula should be viewed as a racial text as it shows students what knowledge is good knowledge and worth obtaining, as well as teaching young people who they should be, and how they will be represented in society. There are issues with our educational curricula and how it impacts the RID of African American students. This integrative literature review reviewed the extant literature surrounding RID and curricula to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the stereotypical representations of Black people in K-12 curricula impact how Black students may view themselves through the lens of their racial identity.

RID is a dynamic process which changes over time, and depends on contextual factors including school, society, teachers, and parents. Adolescence is an incredibly important time for the racial identity development of African American youth and the process of RID continues well into adulthood. Research studies suggest that RID is an ongoing process and closely intertwined with the content that children learn in school, providing strong support for a need to explore RID and how specifically stereotypical representations within curricula impacts RID and how students view their racial selves.

The representation within the curricula of science and mathematics, Language Arts/English, and Social Studies/History courses was explored in this integrative literature review. When examining literature in these content areas, research indicates that there is a substantial lack of racial representation within the curricula (Bishop, 1990; Emdin, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Loewen, 2018). The existing literature suggests a major theme across content areas: Black students are at a higher risk of intaking negative stereotypes of their culture and race within the standard curricula when they are faced with stereotypical depictions of Blacks within the curricula (St. Amour, 2020).

In the second place, research shows that Black students are not being critically and meaningfully engaged across content areas (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Emdin, 2006); when greater representation is added to the classroom, course content and the curricula, more non-hegemonic students will be provided the opportunity to thrive academically, intellectually, and socially (Bishop, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and Black students' determination in establishing ambitious career aspirations is strengthened or diminished based on what and how they are taught (Tucker-Raymond et al., 2007, 2012; Varelas & Kane, 2011).

This literature review identified numerous gaps in the literature to inform future scholarship, including a lack of literature that explores specifically how stereotypical representations of Black people within curricula impacts Black students' RID. Additionally, research regarding school cultural socialization, which has its roots in the research regarding parent ethnic-racial socialization, shows that there is a connection between students' school cultural socialization, their academic performance, and their ethnic-racial identity (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Byrd & Legette, 2022; Del Toro & Wang,

2021). This literature review illustrates that there is a connection between RID, schooling and curricula, and that there is a need for more research that further explores the relationship between the three of these contexts. As such, I will be conducting a two phased, convergent mixed methods research study that will get to the heart of the experiences that Black young adult college students describe they've had with K-12 curricula through focus group interviews, and examining how central and meaningful their Black identity is to them by deploying a survey and hosting focus group interviews. The predicted results of this research study are to be able to describe in detail the experiences that Black young adult college students have had with the K-12 curricula as well as the way in which these students view their RID. Additionally, it is expected that this research study will discover if these students have had negative experiences with the K-12 curricula, as well as how they view their own RID at the current stage in their lives.

Chapter Three

Method

This chapter provides an overview of the different methods that I utilized in the current study. A two-phased, convergent mixed methods research design provided the structure for my systematic collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The current study focuses on understanding the ways in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people in K-12 curricula negatively impact how Black young adult college students view themselves through the lens of their racial identity. The purpose of the current research study is to examine the ways in which Black college students describe their experiences with the K-12 curricula, view their RID, and ascertain how those students make meaning of their experiences with K-12 curricula in connection to their RID.

A two phased, convergent mixed methods research design provided the structure for my systematic collection and analysis of quantitative data and qualitative data at the same time. I administered one assessment instrument to thirty-eight (n=38) college students who self-identified as Black through the online survey platform Qualtrics XM. The assessment instrument I administered was the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen (MIBI-T; Scottham et al., 2008), which measures the participants perceptions of what it means to be Black, and the importance participants place on racial identity. Included in the Qualtrics survey was a demographic assessment, which captured participation information such as age, gender identity, and class standing (freshman, sophomore, etc.). Participant scores on the assessment instrument were summed, totaled, and aggregated for analysis. I then used descriptive statistics for the MIBI-T. The second

phase of the research study were focus group interviews. Fifteen (*n*=15) students participated in the focus group interviews.

The first section of this chapter provides a description of the research study, including the research questions and hypothesis, research methodology, and research design. This section also includes a description of the University that was chosen for this study as well as the study's participants, and an explanation of the participant recruitment process. The second section of this chapter provides an overview of the data collection process, which describes the online survey process and administration, as well as a synopsis of the MIBI-T instrument. The third section describes the focus group session process, which was conducted with a segment of the online survey participants. The fourth section consists of the data analysis, which includes Qualtrics XM data analysis features. Also included in the data analysis is a description of the thematic analysis process for the analysis of qualitative data, and the process of integrating the quantitative and qualitative data into overarching findings.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

1. How do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences?
2. What do Black college students think about the *representation* of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula?
3. Do Black college students feel they are *represented* in K-12 curricula?
4. What are Black young adult college students' perceptions of the salience and value attached to their racial identity?

5. What is the correlation between Public Regard and an individual's endorsement of one of the ideology subscales within the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity -Teen (Assimilationist, Humanist, Oppressed Minority, or Nationalist)? (Scottham et al., 2008).

Hypothesis #1

It is expected that higher scores on the centrality subscale will correlate to a higher score on the private regard ideology subscale on the MIBI-Teen (Scottham et al., 2008). That is, the higher the degree one defines themselves as Black, one will feel more positivity towards beings Black and towards the Black community.

Hypothesis #2

It is expected that a higher score on the private regard subscale on the MIBI-Teen survey will correlate to a higher endorsement of the nationalist subscale, and a lower endorsement of the assimilationist subscale. That is, the more positivity one feels toward being Black, there will be a higher level of endorsement for the nationalist ideology, where greater appreciation and association is placed upon Black culture and resistance to the marginalization of Black people.

Research Design

The aim of this study is to use a convergent mixed methods research design to answer the research questions. The research questions outlined in this study aim to get to the heart of the lived experiences of Black young adult college students at a public metropolitan, research-intensive University. I distributed the online survey first, followed by focus group interviews.

Setting and Sample

The institution that served as the study site is a large public metropolitan, research-intensive University institution of higher education (IHE) that serves undergraduate and graduate students through a total of over 270 bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and certificates. This institution was chosen primarily for convenience as the study site because they are typical representations of large public institutions. The pseudonyms "University Z" will be used throughout this dissertation to refer to the institution instead of using its actual name to protect the participants of this study.

Participants

Survey Participants. Thirty-eight (*n*=38) Black young adult college students attending a Metropolitan, research-intensive University participated in this study. I collected data between September 2022 and February 2023. Thirty-eight students participated in the online survey, and fifteen of the thirty-eight (*n*=15) students participated in both the survey and focus group interviews.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants (N = 38)

Variable	*f*	%
Age (in years)		
18	24	63.3
19	11	28.9
20-21	3	7.9
Gender		
Female	25	65.8
Male	11	28.9
Non-Binary	2	5.3

All participants self-identified as Black or African American. Eighteen and nineteen-year-old students made up most participants (n= 38, 92.1%) whereas only three students were 20 or 21 years old (n=3, 7.9%). Participants who identified as female (n=25, 65.8%) represented the largest gender group in the online survey, followed by male identifying participants (n=11, 28.9%). Non-binary participants made up the smallest group in the online survey (n=2, 4.8%).

Focus Group Interview Participants. The following is a description of the fifteen focus group interview participants. All the students self-identified as Black and attended University Z. This sample included seven female participants (n = 7) and eight male participants (n = 8).

Table 2

Characteristics of Focus Group Participants (N=15)

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Intended Major
Taylor	Female	Pre-Med
Sabrina	Female	Nursing
Imani	Female	Psychology
Pierre	Male	Undecided

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Intended Major
Laurie	Female	Pharmaceutical Sciences
Michael	Male	Exercise Science
Kelly	Female	Psychology
Hakeem	Male	Engineering
Marcus	Male	Pharmacology
Anthony	Male	Political Science
Nick	Male	Undecided
Darshawn	Male	Social Work
Lyrica	Female	Public Health
Brittany	Female	Law and Social Thought
Colby	Male	Undecided

Recruitment Process. I chose participants on a volunteer basis, and I used snowball sampling to identify additional participants. Only students who met the inclusion criteria of being Black first- and second-year students were able to participate. Other inclusion criteria include participants between the ages of seventeen to twenty-one years and completed and agreed to the informed consent for both phases: the online survey and the focus group interviews.

Because student identifiers are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I initially contacted the University's Registrar Office to help recruit participants. The Registrar's office shared Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet with the names and emails of all Freshman students currently enrolled, and I then sent a recruitment email to those students. Attached to that email was a OneDrive form that potential participants were asked to fill out to confirm their eligibility to participate in the study by self-identifying their race and class standing.

The participants were chosen out of convenience based on the accessibility to the researcher. Initially, the population for this study was going to only include Freshman, direct from high school. However, based on data received from the University's Institutional Research department, only 211 students fit that criterion. Because of a low number of initial responses via the first round of recruitment efforts, I submitted an amendment to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to allow Black Sophomore students to also be included in the current research study. Additionally, the recruitment procedure was modified to include reaching out to other offices at the University to help with recruitment by advertising the study to their students, including University Z's Multicultural Center, Upward Bound Office, and academic colleges. In the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester, an instructor at University Z offered to assist in recruitment after learning about the current study through the Multicultural center on campus. An additional fifteen students were recruited to participate in the survey and focus group interviews in the Spring 2023 semester through this instructor's class.

Data Collection

This study utilized a convergent mixed methods design, by simultaneously collecting both the quantitative and qualitative data at the same time. I then merged the data and used the results to understand my research problem. I chose this specific design to strengthen the data drawn from the study, counterbalancing any potential weaknesses from either quantitative or qualitative data. There are two phases of this study, the surveys, and the focus group interviews.

Online Survey

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen (MIBI-T). Scottham et al.'s (2008) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen (MIBI-T) instrument was used to measure seven subscales: Centrality, Private Regard, Public Regard, Nationalist, Humanist, Assimilationist, and Oppressed Minority, each containing three items. Respondents were asked to identify the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For example, one of the three items on the public regard subscale is "Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people of other races." The MIBI-T is shorter than the original MIBI that it is based upon, which contained 56 items all together. Scottham et al., (2008) recognized that there are developmental differences between adults and adolescents, which called for a shorter version to accommodate these developmental differences, making it ideal to use with the current study's sample population. The higher an individual score on a subscale, the greater their endorsement is for that ideology (Scottham et al., 2008).

The MIBI-T was an appropriate tool to utilize for the current study because it acknowledges that the Black community and Black culture are not homogeneous, and the MIBI-T enables respondents to subjectively define and organize what it means for them to belong to the Black community. Indeed, Tatum (2017) acknowledges the notion that the traversal through one's racial identity is nonlinear, but a circular experience where individuals move back and forth, recognizing what they have already experienced as they progress through the stages. Furthermore, Tatum (2017) acknowledges that racial identity development is personal to the individual, and not every Black person will experience

every aspect of RID in the same way, or in the same order for that matter. In addition to the above reasons mentioned, the MIBI-T was selected to be used for the current study because it was shorter than other versions of similar scales, with a total of 21 items. A shorter survey would take less time, which would be more attractive to potential participants.

Online Survey Administration. The online survey was administered through Qualtrics XM distribution tool, where students were sent emails directly from Qualtrics XM with a message and the link to the survey. It was administered multiple times throughout the semester for students that had not yet completed the survey.

The recruitment email explained the purpose of the survey and students were able to ask questions about the study or the survey at any time. The email emphasized to participants that there were no right answers to the survey, and that they should answer as honestly and fully as possible. Confidentiality of their information was stressed, and before they began the survey they had to click "I agree" on the landing page to acknowledge that they read the informed consent document and fully understood it. All participants in the survey portion of the study were entered into a random drawing for one of three $30 Amazon gift cards.

Focus Group Interviews

Two rounds of focus group interviews were conducted, the first beginning in the fall of 2022, and the second continuing in the spring of 2023. Initially, once students expressed their interest in the focus group interviews after completing the google interest form, they were contacted via email and invited to a specific focus group interview date. In that follow up email, I re-introduced myself as the primary researcher, and I reiterated

the purpose and details of the current study were reiterated as well as the criterion for participation in the study and the date, time, and Microsoft Teams link for the respective focus group interviews. Potential participants were asked to respond via email if they planned to attend their assigned focus group interview. If the date and time of the focus group the students were placed into was not convenient for them, they had the option of selecting a date and time that was more convenient, as well as the option of a one-on-one interview if they were more comfortable with that format. The first round of focus group interviews yielded little participation, so I extended data collection into spring of 2023.

In total, three focus group sessions were conducted, and a single one-on-one interview was conducted. The first round of interviews had very few students in attendance. To address this, invitations continued to be sent to potential participants. The second round of focus group interviews took place in February of 2023 when an instructor at University Z expressed interest in the current research study after learning of it through an email that was sent to the Multicultural Center on University Z's campus. To incentive participation, the instructor gave his class extra credit to participate in my research study if they met the inclusion criteria. I then organized two additional focus group interviews with six students in each group.

Breen (2006) suggests conducting interviews and focus-group discussions until one reaches theoretical saturation, i.e., the point that a new interview does not reveal new themes to the researcher. According to an analysis conducted by Guest et al. (2017), when conducting focus groups where each focus group had between six to eight individuals, three focus groups showed to be enough to identify the most prevalent themes within the data set or reaching a point of saturation. Furthermore, Merriam and

Tisdell (2016) assert that most writers agree that the ideal number of participants in a focus group is between six to ten people. Given limited resources, including time, money, and assistance, as well as having such a complex study and data analysis, I conducted three small focus group interviews, and one one-on-one interview to provide rich data (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Focus group interviews offer understanding directly from the source, providing rich contextual answers to my research questions 1, 2 and 3, and the hypotheses. Each participant in the focus group interviews were entered into a random drawing for one of three $30 Amazon gift cards.

Conducting the Sessions. The focus group interviews were semi-structured, which include both structured and unstructured interviewing techniques through pre-formatted, open-ended questions. Semi-structured focus group interviews offered greater flexibility in word choice and moderating a balanced discussion in each session (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Fifteen of the thirty-eight survey participants self-selected to participate in virtual focus group interviews. One participant was the only person to show up to a virtual session, which ended up becoming a one-on-one session.

I provided each participant with informed consent forms before beginning each online session, allowing participants the opportunity to ask questions or get clarification on any part of the consent process. I also informed the participants that they were able to withdraw consent at any point in the focus group interview. I used Microsoft Teams to conduct every focus group session, and the record function on Microsoft Teams was used to record video and audio. Microsoft Teams offered high quality features and served multiple uses in its video conferencing, recording and transcribing abilities, as well as

being accessible to each student through their student accounts with University Z for no additional charge.

I provided a brief description of the study, including an explanation of frequently used terms and concepts, before beginning the focus groups. I emphasized that each participant should feel comfortable sharing their experiences and contributing to the overall discussion, so it was important that every participant allowed opportunities for everyone to speak. Since the focus group interviews were virtual, I encouraged students to mute themselves when they were not speaking, as well as raising their virtual "hand" in Microsoft Teams when they wanted to speak up. I called on students to speak as their hands rose, which helped to keep the conversation flowing, and give every participant the opportunity to share their thoughts.

The first focus group session was conducted in October 2022, immediately after I administered the online survey. This session included three Black female students and ran for one hour and forty-nine minutes. The next focus group was also held in October 2022, but only one student attended this focus group session, and so this second session turned into a one-on-one session and lasted for one hour and ten minutes. The third and fourth focus groups both took place in February 2023, with students enrolled in a course at University Z, who were given extra credit by their professor to encourage participation. The third focus group session was attended by seven students and ran for a total of one hour and sixty minutes. The fourth and final focus group included five student participants and ran for a total of one hour and twenty-three minutes. Pseudonyms are used for each participant.

The focus group interviews gave participants an outlet to expound on their responses from the online survey, as well as to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and feelings as it pertained to the research questions. Focus group interviews were helpful for the current research study as it enabled me to gain information directly from the source that cannot be ascertained through quantitative methods. Each participant in the focus group interviews was entered into a random drawing for one of three $30 Amazon gift cards.

Research Ethics

Because this study is mixed methods, I made ethical considerations for both forms of inquiry (quantitative and qualitative). On the quantitative side, I ensured that I obtained permission from all participants and that their information was confidential and protected throughout the research process by keeping any collected data saved in an encrypted Microsoft OneDrive account on an encrypted computer. Pseudonyms were also used to further protect participants privacy. For the qualitative aspect, participants would be discussing personal information that could bring up potentially negative memories or emotions. I avoided deceptive practices in conducting qualitative interviews with participants by stating clearly (both verbally and in writing), that participation in the current study was voluntarily. I gave participants opportunities to ask questions at any part of the research study, and they had the ability to rescind consent at any time. Additionally, participants who participated in the focus group interviews were asked to join the Microsoft Teams meetings in a quiet and private space to eliminate any outside parties that were not a part of the study, and to create a comfortable space for participants to share their experiences. Participants were also asked not to share conversations held

during the sessions with individuals who were not a part of the focus groups. If participants decided to withdraw their participation, their data would be destroyed and not included in the current study. Participants were also provided information to University Counseling Services, if necessary. Furthermore, data gathered were not shared with outside participants or individuals. Care and attention were paid to ensure the highest level of ethical standards were consistent throughout the study.

Positionality and Reflexivity

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) it is important for researchers who are engaging in critical research and examining social issues such as race, racism, gender, sexuality, etc., through a critical lens to acknowledge power dynamics in those issues, and their positionality as a researcher. Further, Merriam and Tisdell two factors to consider when reflecting on the relationship that the researcher has with the research and participants is that of positionality and of researcher reflexivity. Researcher positionality refers to aspects of a researcher's being, including race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation as it relates to the study's purpose and participants. Conducting research and gaining access to and developing trust with participants is easier when one's positionality aligns somewhat with the participants that one is studying, although matching positionality with the researcher and study participants is not a requirement to conduct research. To this end, I acknowledge my positionality as a Black male educator who is from a working middle-class background. My positionality gives me "insider access" to the population that is the focus of the current research study, meaning that my race and educational background is like that of the participants who were Black college aged

students. I believe that this "insider status" made the participants feel more comfortable to share their experiences with me during our virtual focus group interviews.

Additionally, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) researcher reflexivity refers to a researcher's awareness of the power relationships that are inherent in research itself, in addition to the effect that the researcher has on the subject or topic being studied, and how the researcher is affected by the research. To be reflexive is to consider one's positionality and insider/outsider stances in research, to be aware of the effects these aspects may have on the research. As such, I practiced reflexivity through the qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation stages by being aware of my positionality and ensuring that qualitative data collected was unadulterated and directly from the participants.

Permissions

Since this research involves human subjects, I sought out and obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent was requested and collected from every participant before the start of the current study to ensure they understood the study and what was being asked of them. I assured participants that their relationship with University Z would not be impacted in a negative way should they decide to decline participation or cease participation once the study has begun. I further informed students that the data gathered would not be shared with non-participants or other outside sources not associated with the research team.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis. To answer RQ #4, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) were computed for scores on each subscale on

the MIBI-T. To answer RQ #5, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between scores from subscales of the MIBI-T. The level of significance that was used to determine statistical significance was 0.05. Because it was expected that positive correlations would be observed between Centrality with Private Regard and Private Regard with Nationalist, and a negative correlation between Centrality with Oppressed Minority, one-tailed tests were performed. Also, due to the many correlations being tested, we risk finding small *p*-values which may lead to a high false discovery rate (FDR). As such, I applied the Benjamini-Hochberg correction procedure to control for the FDR.

Qualitative Data Analysis. The purpose of data analysis in qualitative research is to make sense out of the data gathered throughout the data collection process (Creswell, 2014). I used a thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the three focus group interviews and the one-on-one interview session. The thematic analysis approach identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns, themes, and subthemes within data, while also providing data that is rich and detailed while complex in nature (Braun and Clark, 2006). A theme refers to data that is made up of codes that share a common point of reference as well as a high degree of generality that unites ideas regarding the topic being studied and the study's research questions, whereas subthemes are components of themes that add a fuller view of data by uncovering additional patterns in participants accounts (Vaismoradi et al., 2020).

The basic purpose of the thematic data analysis approach is to organize and simplify complex data into meaningful and practicable codes, categories, and themes which made it the appropriate approach to use in the current research study. I approached

the coding, categorizing, and identification of themes by following qualitative data analysis steps as outlined by Hesse-Biber (2017) who provides four helpful steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: (1) data preparation; (2) data exploration; (3) specification and reduction of data; and (4) interpretation.

In addition to following these steps, I utilized the long-table method that Krueger and Casey (2000) suggest as an approach to sort and arrange data. The long table approach is useful in sorting and arranging data as it enabled me to compare data in a visual way, which made it easier to arrange and rearrange information as needed. I used the long table process by cutting and organizing pieces of each interview transcript on large pages of flipchart paper for each research question in the current study, which enabled me to view the transcripts as answers to the research questions.

Firstly, I was thoughtful in how I prepared the focus group interview data by transcribing each interview session by hand and practicing deep listening, analysis, and interpretation for each interview. Ensuring that the data provided rich and thick descriptions of the participants lived experiences was of immense importance, as outlined by Creswell (2014) and Braun and Clark (2006). Indeed, the preparation of the data aligns with Braun and Clark's first step in thematic analysis, which is familiarizing oneself with their data. The transcription of the interview recordings was meticulous and verbatim through using the recording function provided by Microsoft Teams. This is seen as an interpretative process where meanings are created and is key to successful data analysis.

Next, I began to explore the data by comparing and contrasting interviews and clustering interviews together that were similar or different, and drawing similarities or

differences among each interview. I clustered interview data by key words that were consistently used by participants, as well as sentences and ideas that were frequently used in each interview. It was integral to understand not just similarities between participants, but also the differences in their experiences and their perceptions and feelings. I also utilized memos that I wrote using shorthand during each interview which were helpful in adding description during the exploration stage. These memos were initial thoughts, ideas, and observations that I made during the focus group interviews that I felt were important and wanted to remember once I began data analysis. According to Hesse-Biber (2017) memos are the beginning of analysis and interpretation and often helps researchers get a descriptive picture of their data and helps to draw out findings early on.

To begin the third step of specifying and reducing data, I began to code my data. Hesse-Biber (2017) views coding as a process of assigning meaning to chunks of text. For the current study, I utilized descriptive coding by assigning labels to participants words by using the table function in Microsoft Word. Examples of descriptive codes that I created include “lack of diversity in curriculum”, “teachers didn’t care” or “pro-Black”. I further extended the coding process by creating categorical codes, where I began to group those descriptive codes into more general categories, such as “curricula impact”, “the impact that teachers have on students’ racial identity development” and “school environment”. I then used the descriptive and categorical codes to create analytical codes, which are codes that give meaning to the actions and feelings that participants describe, which lead to creating analytical ideas in one’s data. As I progressed in the coding process, I was able to modify the analytical codes by clarifying the meanings that I identified and expand on what the participants were talking about.

Lastly, to interpret the qualitative data, I followed Hesse-Biber's (2017) recommendations of viewing the process as fluid and recognize that interpretation of data happens simultaneously with the data collection and data analysis steps through engaging in the focus group interviews and early memo writing. An important aspect of the interpretation step is establishing validity and reliability of one's data. I aimed to establish validity and reliability by ensuring that the authorship of each participant's words and ideas were true and authentic, and that that the meaning that I attributed to the participants' stories was truthful. Additionally, I asked myself internal questions throughout the interpretation process as suggested by Hesse-Biber, to ensure that readers would be able to understand the meaning of my findings, that my findings are connected to the literature, and that the data was aligned with my research questions. Furthermore, Braun and Clark (2006) add that rich descriptions are important to give the reader a sense of the predominant or important themes.

Aligning the qualitative data analysis approach with the theoretical framework of the current study was important to ensure the current study's individual components are all connected and supported by one another (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Hesse-Biber, 2017). Thematic analysis is a method that allows a researcher to report participants' lived experiences and the meaning of those experiences that each participant holds dear. Indeed, the theoretical framework used in the current study, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity or MMRI, asserts that the meaning and significance one places on their racial identity and racial group membership is specific to the individual, and as such, racial identity must be treated as a unique aspect of every individual's self-concept,

therefore, the thematic approach supports the theoretical framework and the research questions posed in the current study.

Triangulation

Triangulation of data is a strategy used in mixed methods research to identify a convergence of research findings, thus enhancing the credibility of the research and its findings (Hesse-Biber, 2017). I used the triangulation strategy in the current study to build a coherent justification for the themes identified and connecting the quantitative and qualitative data. Denzin (1978) proposes four types of triangulation: using multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories. These methods of triangulation are used to confirm the emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the current study, I utilized Denzin's method of using multiple sources of data to confirm the emerging findings. More specifically, I compared and cross checked what participants shared in the focus group interviews with the observable data gathered from the MIBI-T, as well as comparing both quantitative and qualitative data with the extant literature. Thus, I employed triangulation by using three methods of data collection – focus group interviews, survey data, and literature.

Validation Strategies

It is extremely important as a researcher to establish a consistent understanding of how Black young adult college students describe their experiences with the K-12 curricula, and how they view their RID. To this end, I sought to ensure validity in the current study to maintain the quality, rigor, and trustworthiness of a qualitative study through multiple efforts (Golfshani, 2003). While validity is affected by the researchers' perception and assumptions, I explicitly discuss every step of the research design to add

clarity surrounding all terms and processes. Other measures that were taken in the current study to increase the validity of the findings include purposefully selecting participants, triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data, using rich, thick descriptions when discussing findings, and clarifying any biases that I as the researcher may bring to the study (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, ensuring that interpretations of qualitative data are valid and reliable must be established for any credible study. Hesse-Biber (2017) suggests that when analyzing and interpreting qualitative data, researchers must put their interpretations against competing knowledge claims to see how one's own results stand up, as well as provide strong arguments for any knowledge claims made. The current study followed a number of techniques suggested by Hesse-Biber to ensure validity of qualitative findings in the current study, including: (a) telling a convincing story, (b) theorizing from data interpretations, (c) look for and address any negative cases, (d) make interpretations available for discussion among others in the field, (e) understanding how the findings impact those who participated in the research, and how findings impact the wider social context where the research occurred.

Summary

The current study seeks to understand the impact that stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula has on the way Black college students view their racial identity. The purpose of the current research study is to examine the way in which Black college students describe their experiences with the K-12 curricula, view their RID, and ascertain how those students make meaning of their experiences with K-12 curricula in connection to their RID. Data analysis for the

quantitative data included descriptive statistical analysis and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the focus group interviews.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study is the way in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula impact how young Black college students conceptualize their RID. I sought to investigate this problem in the current study by employing a convergent mixed methods research design by using an online survey as well as virtual focus group interviews, simultaneously collecting quantitative and qualitative data. In the results chapter, I will present the data in a way that answers the current study's research questions and hypotheses.

The qualitative focus group interviews were meant to answer research questions one, two and three: (1) How do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences? (2) What do Black college students think about the representation of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula? (3) Do Black college students feel they are *represented* in K-12 curricula? Whereas the quantitative statistical analyses aim to answer research questions 4 and 5: (4) What are Black young adult college students' perceptions of the salience and value attached to their racial identity? (5) What is the correlation between Private Regard and an individual's endorsement of one of the ideology subscales within the MIBI-T? Furthermore, there were two hypotheses proposed in the current study: (1) Higher scores on the centrality subscale will correlate to a higher score on the private regard ideology subscale on the MIBI-T. That is, the higher the degree one defines themselves as Black, one will feel more positivity towards being Black and towards the Black community; (2) A higher score on the private regard

subscale on the MIBI-T will correlate to a higher endorsement of the Nationalist subscale, and a lower endorsement of the Assimilationist subscale. That is, the more positivity one feels towards being Black, there will be a higher level of endorsement for the Nationalist ideology, where the participants place greater appreciation and association upon Black culture and resistance to the marginalization of Black people. The results chapter will present the results from the focus group interviews that were interpreted through qualitative thematic analysis, as well as the quantitative results that were discovered through statistical analyses.

Qualitative Findings

I conducted three focus group sessions and one one-on-one interview between October 2022 and February 2023. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted beginning with transcribing 329.11 minutes of video and audio recordings of the online focus group interviews. I used a long-table process to code, sort, and categorize important chunks of the transcribed text into themes (Blueford, 2014). Themes were defined as significant and explicit comments, expressions, and ideas from the participants that are directly related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In line with Hesse-Biber's (2017) recommendations for writing and representing qualitative research, I carefully considered the representative pieces of data in the form of interview excerpts to ensure summarized data is trustworthy. Trustworthiness, according to Stahl and King (2020), assures readers that they can have confidence in the data a researcher has reported. This idea of trustworthiness aligns with Hesse-Biber, who asserts that building trustworthiness within qualitative research leads to validity (credibility) for the overall research results. For research to be credible, one must check for patterns, consider

multiple explanations, including rival explanations, employ triangulation of data, and consider negative cases. Furthermore, I transcribed the words, ideas, thoughts and meanings behind each excerpt verbatim, and did not edit them in any way.

As further outlined by Hesse-Biber, I chose excerpts that would provide the richest, more nuanced, and multidimensional portrayals of the participants in the current study. To this end, to illustrate the themes that I have identified, I include two to three representative quotations from the coded transcripts, as well as contextual information to aid the reader in understanding the nature of each quotation and the rationale behind including each quotation in the qualitative findings (Hesse-Biber, 2017). When delineating participant statements and discussion, a participant's name, for example, Sabrina, will be underlined to indicate the start of that specific conversation or statement from the interviews. Names that are not underlined represent a continuation of that conversation.

Significant Themes. The current study, in part, sought to discover if participants that had negative experiences with the K-12 curricula also held a negative view of their racial identity. Through qualitative focus group interviews, the current study was able to identify negative experiences that the participants recall and associate with the curricula from kindergarten through twelfth grade; however, the participants in these focus group did not describe their conception of their racial identity as a negative. On the contrary, they saw themselves as agents of change. Negative experiences with the K-12 curricula, by and large, has fueled these students to be the representation that they did not see growing up.

I identified three themes and six subthemes through implementing the long table thematic analysis process as discussed in the method chapter. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2020) a theme refers to data that is made up of codes that share a common point of reference as well as a high degree of generality that unites ideas regarding the topic that one is studying with the study's research questions. Additionally, subthemes are components of themes that add a fuller view of data by uncovering additional patterns in participants accounts.

In line with Krueger and Casey (2000), I used the long table approach to sort and arrange the interview data, where I then compare and contrasted transcript data. I went through multiple steps of arranging and re-arranging information as I continued to organize data. I used the long table process by cutting and organizing pieces of each interview transcript onto large pages of flipchart paper for each research question in the current study, where I then organized the transcripts and quotes from participants as answers to the research questions. The themes that I identified appeared in each of the focus group sessions, and in the one-on-one interview.

The first theme is ***teacher impact***, which includes the role that teachers play in shaping Black students' experiences with their racial identity in the context of their educational experiences. A subtheme of teacher impact is that teachers often take on one of two roles in the eyes of students, as neutral bystanders in their development of a racial identity, or as mediators in Black students' racial identity development process by serving as positive role models, and providing mentorship, inspiration, and encouragement.

A second theme identified is ***school impact***, which refers to the role that the school environment impacts the academic, curricular, and social experiences of Black students in indelible ways, and the impact that the school context has on the development of their racial identity. I identified two subthemes connected to school impact, including the differences in experiences depending on the type of school a student attended, and the complexity of Black students' perceptions of Blackness based on their school-based experiences with microaggressions and discrimination.

The third and final theme identified is the ***curricula impact***, which refers to the impact that the curricula that is taught (and that which is not taught) in the school influences students' racial identity development. Two subthemes were identified in this theme, including students being forced to seek out information and knowledge that is not taught to them in school, on their own, and students viewing what is taught regarding Black history as largely negative, misrepresentative portrayals of the Black experience, Black history, and achievements of Black people.

First theme: Teacher impact. The first theme that I identified was the impact that teachers have on students view of themselves through a racial lens. Teachers have a very impactful role in the lives of students, knowingly and unknowingly, which resulted in two types of teacher impact: (a) teachers who act as neutral bystanders to students both in their academics and in students developing racial identities, and (b) teachers, especially Black teachers, who act as mediators in Black students' racial identity development by serving as positive role models and providing inspiration and encouragement. This theme is critical as research explicitly states the importance of teacher-student relationships as a

paramount dimension of the school environment (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Slaughter-Defoe & Carlson, 1997).

The following representative texts is extracted from the transcripts of the focus group interviews, and illustrate the findings related to teacher impact. In the conversation, Taylor discusses how transferring to numerous schools after negative interactions with teachers affected her perception of her Blackness.

> Taylor: I transferred to two other schools before transferring to a private catholic school where a lot was going on. Like racism, sexism, a lot of "isms" and a lot of stereotypical, like, stuff just being thrown at me, microaggressions, to the point where I transferred to another private catholic school after the first one.
>
> Moderator: What or whom were the sources of those negative experiences?
>
> Taylor: So, say, for instance, I could just be having lunch in the lunchroom, like, I'm out here getting accused of stealing. And like, I'd have to go over to the principal's office and literally get interrogated for something that I didn't do. And it really was because the color of my skin. The teachers and staff played a huge part in why I did decide to transfer and why I just did not like being there. I felt like I really would have gotten a better education had I stayed there. But you know, there's only so much you could take before you just are like, okay, I can't do this anymore. Like, I don't even know, like, who I am anymore. I don't know why I'm even allowing myself to keep getting all of this negativity thrown at me when it's like I did absolutely nothing wrong just because of my skin color.

Participants voiced issues with the lack of teachers who they perceived were not invested in their learning. The following representative texts illustrate those perceptions and feelings, in a discussion of having to seek out knowledge for themselves which they felt should have been taught in school:

> Imani: I look at history as old gossip. So, I mastered that old gossip that was just kind of like taught about the curriculum. But then once I started doing research and things on my own as a student, I kind of learned how sugar coated everything is and I kind of feel robbed of my education. I kind of feel like, you know, I don't really know all the things that I thought I knew. So, it kind of, uh, put a lot of self-doubt into me thinking that I was this smart student that came from a gifted program to now learning that all of it was sugar coated and not all of it was directly true.

> Sabrina: …when you look at our textbooks, and you look at like the information you learn, there's always people that don't look like me. And when we do talk about people who are like me, it's always just slavery. But there's more to us than just like, slavery. There's cultural differences. And I feel like I didn't really learn about like cultural appropriation, all those different topics and stuff until like, I started doing the research on my own and like, getting it from my friends. I had to help myself and help educate others on things that they should have been taught in school.

Imani: Yeah, I also want to chime in on that. Not even financial literacy is taught. I didn't learn about any of that kind of stuff. And that kind of, I felt like, sets us up for failure. I'm going out into the real world. You know, a lot of people have a different culture, they probably were born into it, their family sets them up a credit card at a young age and stuff like that. And they actually get that education.

These comments illustrate how participants felt about the content that they were taught in school, as well as what they were not taught in school, and how these two factors impacted them. For example, Imani states how she felt "robbed" of her education because she felt that the information, she learned regarding Black people was not true or was whitewashed, which prompted her to do her own research to fill the gaps that were left from the school curricula. Similarly, Sabrina discussed the lack of cultural relevancy within the curricula. That is, learning about Black history did not go beyond the topic of slavery, and other important topic such as Black achievements, culture, and social justice, were not a part of the official curriculum. Again, Sabrina reiterates the sentiment that Imani shared that she was responsible for doing her own research and sharing what she learned with her peers. In the same conversational exchange, Imani also added that topics such as financial literacy are important for Black children to learn because from Imani's experience, financial literacy would help to empower Black students who do not have the means to learn about financial wellness from their parents or families. In the third focus group interview, participants voiced the disconnection between themselves and their teachers. What the following texts will show is the extreme impact that connections with teachers can have on students' willingness to learn from them, and their motivation to do well in their classes, and by extension, their schooling all together:

Laurie: …I just feel like when the teachers are teaching, you know, it's like their way or no way. And it's like, okay, if I don't understand your way, like, you need to show me, you know, another way…a lot of teachers are going by book taught, and it's like, just because the book says it, to do it that way, like, there's more than, you know, just that way to do it. So it's just pretty much like, if you don't know how to do it based off of what the teacher's doing, either you learn yourself or you, you know, you just don't know, at all.

Marcus: …so I was actually doing pretty well in my classes. But after a while, I kind of lost a lot of motivation and feel, you know, confidence after like, you know, I never really got support or motivation from the teachers and like, there's this one huge incident that I…(pauses) that kind of happened that kind of like, completely sucked out any joy of like actually trying in classes and then like, after that, I never really felt like learning to a serious degree for a long time. And like, I kind of feel like that impacts a lot of my schooling, but you know, I'm not about to, like, make that like a giant excuse for anything. But like, yes, I think it made a giant impact, my skin color, and how people saw me in a different light and treated me different, both students and teachers.

Laurie's comment illustrates the disconnect that happens between pupil and teacher when the instructor's teaching is rigid and inflexible. Laurie recognized that if she was struggling to grasp concepts, then she needed her teachers to help her learn the same information in an alternative way, to ensure that she was learning and retaining information. What she perceived as her teachers' unwillingness to modify their method of

instruction prompted her to also find ways to teach herself, instead of learning directly from her teachers. Marcus discusses a negative incident involving his teachers and although he did not go into detail about the specific situation, he was very clear that the incident in question had an incredible impact on his motivation and interest in school. From his perspective, he lost the "joy" he once had in learning and working hard in his classes, and he mentions not having received any support from his teachers when that loss of motivation began, which further enhanced the lack of motivation. He also felt that his skin color was a contributing factor to the lack of support that he received. Marcus attributes his experiences with his teachers as having a major impact on his schooling career, and if he had different relationships, maybe his schooling experiences would have been different and more positive. Taken together, these two representative texts show the that there are serious implications when students feel disconnected from their teachers, their learning is hampered, and their motivation and connection to the classroom is also

The theme of teacher impact on how students view their racial identity and engage with the development of their racial identity is an important one. The other side of teacher impact is the teachers who support their students by affirming their Black identity, and offering mentorship, inspiration, and encouragement. These teachers leave a lasting impression on students and their influence has multiple effects: students are inspired by their teachers to further their education and to set ambitious goals for themselves, they are given the strength to navigate a world they feel does not want them here, as well as being affirmed that they are valued and worthy of existing. The following representative text illustrates the positive aspect of teacher impact:

Hakeem: For a Black person, for somebody that's not white that did inspire me, was probably my teacher Miss Collins (pseudonym). I had her for my senior year of high school, and I had almost changed my career path completely to being a trades worker. And she had, I told her that one day, and she kind of pulled me aside and told me that she almost felt that I was too smart to go into trades, and not go to college and see what I can do with myself. So she gave me an extra credit assignment to go find something that interests me, and I kind of went back to the astronomy and space stuff. And I just kind of went on that track from there.

Hakeem discussed the way his high school teacher inspired him to set ambitious goals for himself, and to see his abilities in the way that she saw his abilities. Hakeem, who is an engineering student with aspirations to become an astronaut one day, attributed his teacher Miss. Collins as truly guiding him and encouraging him to go to a four-year college or university versus a trade school. Miss. Collins, who knew Hakeem well, was concerned by Hakeem's deviations in his plans, and took the time to speak with him one-on-one. Miss. Collins saw Hakeem as an individual, and showed genuine care for him, by assigning him a project to research future careers he may be interested in. Indeed, Miss. Collins may not know it, but she set Hakeem on a path of success by doing what she may have seen as insignificant deeds, but they were deeds that meant the world to Hakeem. Similarly, Kelly discussed the impact her high school orchestra teacher had on her:

Kelly: For me, it was orchestra, and we were required to take lessons and my lessons teacher was Black. So, it was very…(pauses), we, I learned more than just orchestra and especially having her my senior year I was able to just…she was able to give me advice that no other teacher could give me based off just

navigating myself in a world that doesn't want me here. And even if it's music or just life in general.

In the following excerpt, Michael discussed the effort that teachers at his school, which was predominately White, made to show that they were allies and that they valued and respected their students of color. Michael felt supported, seen, and understood by his school, which fostered strong relationships between he and his teachers to this day.

Michael: …despite going to a predominately White high school, there were still a lot of teachers and or just faculty and staff there who really wanted to showcase that they were allies and that they understand what's going on and they just wanted to let all the minorities there know that they're here to make sure that they got an education and they are fed and they are just held responsible for their well-being while they're there. So just the whole, the whole, institution as a whole, I love the high school I went to. All of the faculty there, I'm still very close to, I still speak to them to this day. And they still check on me and they still want to make sure that I…that all the people who go through the high school are okay, and they make sure that they did their jobs. So, yeah.

Kelly discussed the impact that her teacher had on her, as a mediator to the negative experiences she was absorbing. Similarly, Michael discussed how teachers who showed genuine care for his wellbeing fostered a sense of love not just for his teachers, but for his school. Howard (2003) argues that students' find their academic and cultural identities under constant attack, and this representative quote from Kelly and Michael

illustrates the importance of educators in supporting students through those perceived attacks, and when students are supported in such a way, they become more resilient to outside attacks.

Second theme: School impact. The second theme that I identified is school impact. School impact refers to the role that the school environment impacts the academic, curricular, and social experiences of Black students in indelible ways, and the impact that the school context has on the development of their racial identity. Two subthemes were identified in school impact: the differences in experiences depending on the type of school a student attended, and the complexity of Black students' perceptions of Blackness based on their school-based experiences with microaggressions and discrimination. More specifically, a consistent trend I uncovered showed that students who attended private schools, including Catholic or Christian schools, shared a mixture of different and similar experiences that shaped their outlooks on their racial identity compared to students who attended public schools.

> Taylor: …once I transferred to Ohio in my fifth-grade year, school was completely different. Like the teachers there, I feel like they were definitely underpaid. But they weren't there to kind of like, help the students out and the curriculum was very vague. And since I already came from a background where I got a lot of advanced material, I was just kind of put in a stuck place.
>
> Moderator: You say you were stuck, how so?

> Taylor: My parents and I were like just telling my teachers, you know, like, hey, I feel like I'm not being challenged and I'm too advanced for this classwork. And they weren't able to help me. Either because they didn't have the resources or they were just like, I don't know what you want me to do. Like, this is the only thing I'm able to give you guys, like, I don't have anything extra.

> Sabrina: …I've always grown up in like a Catholic setting, like high school, K-12. And I feel like it's the whole sense of like, teachers just don't want to have those uncomfortable conversations (race conversations.).

In the above representative texts, Taylor discussed her experiences growing up in Ohio schools from fifth grade onward, where she felt that she was not being challenged enough through her classwork, and although her parents tried to advocate for her to possibly be placed in a gifted program, or to receive more challenging classwork from her teachers, their requests fell on deaf ears. This led Taylor to feeling like she was "stuck", or stagnant. Taylor speaks more about her experiences, stating that she went from learning advanced and in-depth material when she lived in Arizona that was culturally relevant that reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of her classrooms, to learning more vague material, especially around race and culture once she moved to Ohio. Sabrina offers an additional perspective of her experiences with school, where she talks about how she felt the atmosphere of the catholic schools that she attended, particularly high school, was not a space where uncomfortable yet relevant conversations regarding race were able to be had in the classroom.

During a conversation about their experiences as Black students, participants had varying experiences that illustrate the complexity of their school-based experiences and how these experiences teach students about their racial identity. In the following exchange, Brittany and Lyrica discuss what their experience was like attending public schools:

> Brittany: Personally, everything I've ever grew up in was predominately Black. So as a Black student, I was treated like normal students, but when it came to history and what I was taught that I should do, I was taught that I should strive better, aim higher, because I'm in a society that naturally wants to put me down because that's just our history and that it was predominately white society. That's just what I was taught.
>
> Moderator: Thank you for sharing that. Who's next?
>
> Lyrica: My school, it was a predominately White school. And it was almost like, they would treat the Black students too nice. Which it sounds weird, but it was (chuckles). When I was there, I would see them doing stuff for me that they weren't doing to like the White kids and stuff like always trying to make sure I understood the work and always trying to see if I needed help after school or whatever, it was to seem like they actually cared about me.

Brittany's school-based experiences were in an environment where most of peers looked like her – for Brittany, being Black was the norm. She attended a school that she says constantly pushed their pupils to set lofty goals for themselves and to aim higher and

higher, because the success would propel her in a society that she may have difficulties in. Brittany saw these teachings as her school truly trying to prepare her to survive in what she calls a predominately White society. On the other hand, Lyrica attended a predominately White school, where although the teachers were attentive to her, Lyrica felt that it was artificial, and didn't quite understand why her teachers would do things for her that they weren't doing for the White students, but Lyrica was skeptical of the treatment that she received as she felt that it was not genuine. These two pieces of representative text are illustrations of the complexity of the experiences Black students may have with their school environment. School is a place where students are able to have their identities affirmed, and how schools choose to affirm students can be helpful, or it can be a hinderance.

In the same conversation, two students who both attended private schools, one racially diverse, and one a predominately white school, discuss how race was not really something that seemed to set them apart in their view from their classmates or from the school, but for very different reasons:

> Darshawn: For me, I really didn't feel any sort of, like…like I was being shielded from any other students. Because our school was like, really had a lot of diversity. So, like, I'd never felt really disconnected because there were always people that I could see, people that are like me, so yeah.
>
> Paris: I also went to a PWI all my life. And I really didn't feel any, like difference in how I was treated. But um, there'll be sometimes where like, somebody at the

PWI's would say something that they don't think is offensive but like, you know, you know what I mean?

Again, like Brittany, Darshawn felt that because his school was a racially and ethnically diverse school, he never felt disconnected to his peers or to his school, rather, he felt connected to the school environment because he saw people that looked like him, and who shared similar experiences as he did. For Paris, who attended predominately White schools his whole life, his experience was different in that he couldn't recall specific instances where school officials or classmates treated him differently because of his race, however, he did recall moments where others at his school would say racially insensitive or offensive remarks. This is another instance where the experiences of the participants within the school context shows complexity and nuance. Whereas Darshawn did not have to consider his Blackness much because his school was diverse and he saw himself reflected throughout his school, Paris did not feel any different because of his race except for moments where he experienced microaggressions.

Participants expressed moments when they realized they were Black within the context of school, and how those experiences culminated into their struggles with their Black identity. The excerpts illustrate the complexity in the experiences themselves, and in how it impacted how each student viewed themselves through their racial identity as well as the school environment:

Taylor: "…going to [a catholic school] where it's predominately White, that affected a lot of my self-identity too. Because I just wanted to fit in, I would definitely code switch a lot. I would definitely just try and not do anything that associated like the Black norm, like culture. I would go out and see all these

concerts that people liked, like Taylor Swift. I would definitely just try like disassociate myself from anything that had to do with being Black. And it took me a long time to get out of that, because I was just so conditioned and brainwashed, unintentionally and intentionally.

Taylor goes into detail about how attending a predominately White catholic school negatively affected how she viewed her racial identity. Many factors from Taylor's perspective affected how she viewed her Blackness, where she found herself distancing herself from Blackness and disassociating herself from anything she felt was related to being "Black" or Black culture. Instead, Taylor tried to assimilate by participating in activities that her White peers were engaged in. This disassociation with her Blackness had a profound impact on Taylor, and she refers to it as being conditioned or brainwashed, consciously and unconsciously, which she says took a long time for her to break out of that state of mind. Taylor's excerpt illustrates the idea that racial identity development is not linear, and that it is a process that one negotiates as they continue to have experiences. In this case, Taylor's school environment was a key site for her racial identity development.

I asked the participants "Can you recall the first time you realized you were Black in the context of school?"

Nick: (laughs) It was in the summer in elementary school. Like there was always like, they always put on sunscreen on. I tried to rub sunscreen on my skin, and it didn't rub it, it was just pasty. That's when I first remember…yeah.

Moderator: So, do you relate that first experience with realizing the pigmentation of your skin color was different than your classmates?

Nick: Yeah.

Marcus: …well, the first time I realized I was Black was probably in fifth grade. I went to a Christian school, and it's just me and one other Black kid. And we're both there on sports scholarships. So, we were taking our mandated tests by the Ohio government. And I feel that we were the only two people that got put into a separate room to take our tests. And me and him, I didn't even talk to the dude, he just happens to be the only other Black kid there. So I don't know why we're the only people that get took. But then things like that consistently keep happening, where nobody else in the school is there. And we're the only people being taken in secluded rooms, like we're being separated from the rest of the group. And later, I found out that its because the teachers thought we were slower.

Nick and Marcus recall when they first realized they were Black in the context of their schooling, and although they both recall realizing they were Black in school around the same time (elementary – fifth grade), the situations differed quite a bit. Nick became aware of his Blackness by realizing his skin color was different than his classmates because of how the sunscreen lotion looked on his skin compared to how it looked on the skin of his White peers. Marcus on the other hand, recalled an experience in the fifth grade where he and the only other Black student in his class were separated from their peers when it came time to take Ohio state tests. Although Marcus says he always noticed

that it was strange that they were separated by their teachers from the rest of the class to take exams, he says that it wasn't until later that he learned it was because his teachers thought he was "slower". Again, these two representative quotes demonstrate that the school environment and its influence in shaping student's racial identity development is a complex one, but that influence has a clear and lasting impact on Black students.

When asked the question "Tell me, in detail, about your experiences as a Black student," which is directly related to the myriad of ways the school context impacts Black students' experiences with their school environment, participants said the following:

> Hakeem: "There's always gonna' be ups and downs. But I think the Black students may have it a little bit worse than other races, per se. Because it's stuff like you're in the classroom and kids don't even completely know what racism is yet. But the lights may go off and it's bright. It's still bright, the sun is out. You're in the middle of a school day. And then somebody will say, "where's this person?" Where's that person because they're dark skinned and it's not even just other races. It'll be Black students trying to insinuate this as well, to try to get onto the other race's good side and stuff like this continues throughout all of my schooling career."

Hakeem speaks about his experience as a Black student. His comment is illustrative of the importance peer relationships are a part of the schooling context, and how the relationships that students have with their peers also influence how Black students connect with their school environment. For Hakeem, he recalled moments where his peers, Black and non-Black, would often make jokes about other Black students' skin

color, and that this is something that he has experienced throughout his entire schooling career. From Hakeem's perspective, when Black students made these types of insults, it was to get on the other races' "good side." Like Taylor who tried to distance herself from anything associated with being Black, Hakeem's Black peers were also trying to distance themselves from their Blackness by picking on other Black students.

One participant expressed a lack of support and resources for students with disabilities, and how they felt that those lack of resources made their learning in school that more difficult when compared to their peers' academic performance. The following excerpt expresses these sentiments:

> Nick: "…I know for me personally, speaking from a K-12 standpoint, um, I was never allowed, like certain disability resources, K-12, they never gave me that option. Um, I didn't really get the option to get disability resources until my sophomore to my senior year of schooling. So, I know for me personally, as a disabled student, who needs those resources, I wasn't allowed to get those resources. Yeah.
>
> Moderator: How did not having access to those resources impact you as a student?
>
> Nick: Well, before I was able to have access to those resources, I was always, technically I was always right above the benchmark for those resources. So I was never allowed to [access them]. So, I was always being kicked to the next grade since I was above the benchmark a little bit. But my grades started dropping as I

got higher throughout K-12. So kicking me through, I was a smart kid, I just wasn't smart enough to meet the minimum standards as I got higher, and they still wouldn't give me disability status. Preventing me from doing as good as I could have. Yeah.

Another aspect of the school impact is how students living with disabilities are impacted when there is a lack of academic resources and support at the school that they are a part of. Nick discusses how he was denied the proper support resources by his school leaders impacted his experience as a student, where he felt that he was pushed into the next grade level without getting proper diagnosis as a student living with disabilities. This was impactful for Nick, who was not eligible for disability support without an official disability status, which he considers having been a major barrier to academic success. Nick's experience as a Black student with disabilities adds extra depth and context to the current study as it adds a perspective that is marginalized in different but compounding ways.

Third theme: Curricula impact. The third and final theme that was identified through the qualitative focus group interviews was the impact that curricula have on students understanding of their racial identities, and thus, their development. Students overwhelmingly stated how they felt the K-12 curricula was whitewashed, and that there was little to no representation or racial diversity: from the authors of the books they read, the history that they were taught, to the achievements and historical figures they learned about in classes like math and science:

Imani: …Once I started, like, doing research and things on my own, as a student, I kind of learned how sugar coated everything is, and I kind of feel robbed of my

education, I kind of feel like, you know, I don't really know all the things that I thought I knew. So, it kind of put a lot of self-doubt into me, thinking that my schooling til' now, learning that all of it was sugar coated, and none of it was directly true.

Sabrina: …As for like representation in the curriculum, I honestly, I feel like we aren't represented as well in the curriculum.

In the above exchange, Sabrina and Imani discuss their feelings towards the K-12 curricula. More specifically, they were speaking of the lack of racial representation within the curricula itself. Sabrina reiterated the idea of students being forced to do their own research upon coming to the realization that what was taught to them in school regarding Black history was whitewashed. For Sabrina, this put self-doubt into her, feeling that everything she had learned in school up until that point was a lie. Sabrina agreed with Imani that Black people are not represented as well in the curriculum.

I asked the participants the following question: "How do you feel about how you are represented in the K-12 curricula based on what you were taught in your classes," which sought to understand directly from students their perceptions and feelings regarding racial representation in curricula. Participants cited feelings of being disrespected or viewed negatively because they are Black:

Michael: Personally, I feel that especially specifically African Americans are…what's the word I'm looking for? I feel like disrespected is the right word that I'm looking for. I feel that, um, a lot of the things that have been said about us as people lately have been amplified to the extremes, even though we're here,

regular people just like everybody else. So by based on what has been taught in classes, I feel that people seem to lose their sense of identity. And learning who they are and where they come from, and who they really are supposed to be, is a negative connotation when you are being taught about Black people. For example, like slavery, slavery is the most talked about topic when in K-12 curriculums, in terms of speaking about African Americans and stuff like that. So, I feel that when…when…when we're being spoken about, it's always negative, and it's always bad, hence the negative connotation not only from ourselves, but from others around us.

Moderator: I appreciate that response. Who else wants to answer that question?

Hakeem: Okay, I can answer that. I was gonna' say a little, basically what he was saying. But to add on to it, I feel like there's a lack of anything positive. Like, there might be only like I said, that slavery is the only negative connotation. Some of the worst things that have happened to Black people in history. But without a lot of things that have been going great because of Black people, or how Africa looks today, and how it's beautiful, and there are skyscrapers and all that. It almost brings back to how some people in the world really think that people in Africa live in huts still. So they don't broadcast the current African history, where the architecture and land is so rich, and I don't know how to say rich and just…full of life, instead of being almost a complete desert or jungle area, where people are fighting with spirits and stuff.

Lyrica: Um, for me, it kind of looks like not just having like, classes about like diverse groups, or like having a certain time you dedicate to diverse groups, like once a year, like into integrating Black people throughout the year and all the curriculum, not just like…we have a Black history month where we read Black authors or not just having a class where you read African American literature, but like, having that be a part of the normal American literature curriculum.

The above representative quotes from Michael, Hakeem, and Lyrica discuss what racial representation within the curriculum looks like and means to them. Michael discussed feeling that Black people are disrespected by the way they are spoken about in the curriculum, and how Black people are portrayed. Specifically, Michael emphasizes the negative connotation that is placed upon being Black, and how Black history is almost always associated with chattel slavery in America, and nothing else. This negative connotation associated with Blackness, Michael argues, becomes ingrained into Black students, and from his perspective, many lose their sense of identity and who they are meant to become.

Hakeem agreed with Michael in that there is very little positive regarding Black people within the K-12 curricula. Again, Hakeem emphasizes the belief that chattel slavery is one of the only topics in Black history that is covered from K-12. From Hakeem's perspective, this means that some of the worst things that have happened to Black people (slavery) is consistently covered, while positive things such as Black or African achievements, or the modern-day state of Africa is not taught about or covered.

Hakeem acknowledges that the perception many have of Africa is outdated, and attributes that to the lack of educational opportunities to learn more about those topics.

Lyrica talks about what racial representation looks like to her, which is learning about and celebrating cultures and diverse people throughout the year, not just in February during Black History Month. For example, Lyrica believed that incorporating Black history into the American History curricula would be an important and more meaningful step in creating racial representation, rather than regulating Black history to February and not touching on it before or after.

Other students could not quite put into words what representation in curricula looked like or detail their experiences with the K-12 curricula:

> Nicole: Representation in school curriculum? (pauses). It's almost like I want to say, I can't tell you what it looks like because I feel like I haven't seen enough of it. Like, I guess I could say, I have a picture in my mind, of, I don't know, just like, me, personally…I like diversity. And not seeing a lot of that, it's hard to, like, explain what it means for there to be a lot of representation around me because there just wasn't.

For Nicole, she could not answer what representation in the K-12 curricula meant to her, although she had an idea in her mind of what racial representation would look like. The struggle to put racial representation into words, Nicole says, is because there just wasn't a lot of racial representation around her for her to be able to describe it.

When I asked participants to "Give me an example of something you learned in school that had an impact on how you viewed yourself as a Black person"; this related to students' perceptions of the connection between their racial identity and the curricula.

Common trends that the participants expressed included noticing their experiences as Black people were different from their white peers, and internalizing the negative connotations associated with being Black:

> Michael: I know, one thing that really resonated with me the most would have to be freshman year in high school. I was, um, I was in my English class, and we had talked about Maya Angelou. And, and this is like, that was my first time being introduced to her and her work. And it just, just reading it, and we had to annotate it (pauses)…so annotating this poem and going over it numerous amounts of times and really breaking it down and figuring out the questions that she talked about, or the topics that she talked about. It really, it hit a different spot. And like, being able to, and just being in that setting, with a whole bunch of people who do not understand what's going on, and who do not know the experiences of being discriminated against, in a setting where everyone's supposed to be professional, is something that really made me realize like, I really am a Black student, who has always been in this kind of environment where it's very few people who look like me.

Michael recalled a scenario during his freshman English class where they were studying the poet Maya Angelou, and through those assignments, Michael was able to for a deep connection with Maya Angelou's work. He also realized in that moment, as he began to connect with the poetry and meaning behind Maya Angelou's words, he noticed that his fellow classmates that were not Black were not having the same experience as he was. For him, the experience was emotional, almost spiritual, as he connected with his experiences with discrimination because of their race or skin color. In that moment,

Michael felt that his White peers did not connect to Maya Angelou's work because they lacked those experiences that he shared with her.

In another instance, Michael spoke to his feelings of intaking negative messages regarding his Blackness while also feeling pressure to live up to great change-makers like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

> Michael: Um…when Black people are being taught or talked about its usually the best of the best. Even though it is a negative connotation. We still talk about the historical figures that literally changed the way of life. We talk about men like Martin Luther King, one of the most…he has to be the biggest, um…what's the word for like, a notable person?
>
> Moderator: Notorious?
>
> Michael: Yeah. Like he has to be, yeah, that person. It's like, not only are we being put down mentally, because of the, the stereotypes and derogatory terms, towards ourselves, but when we are being talked about, it's from somebody who sparked a whole revolution. So not only is the negative being put on us, but now the utmost expectations are being flipped on us as well. So it's kind of hard to combat both things while going through life. But it's been done for years, and we're gonna' keep doing this, so.

Michael discussed the contradictory nature between the negative connotations that is attached to Black history, and the emphasis that is also placed on great Black leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For Michael, the curricula communicate conflicting

and confusing messages: on one hand, he is taught that students are taught about slavery in a surface level manner, as one of the only experiences that Black people have had in America, and then the curricula leads directly to Martin Luther King Jr., with no context, and students are encouraged to live up to the achievements of one great man. For Michael, that is a confusing, harmful, and frustrating message that Black students are forced to reconcile with throughout their lives.

Another major trend was that participants also felt that they only time they would learn about Black history was during Black history month, and each year they learned about the same people, only scratching the surface of Black history:

> Hakeem: …I think how things are handled when we are taught about, you know, the history of Black people and the things they do, I think that is also kind of disrespectful. How it's just so little discussed because like, you know, Africans, they've had just as much impact and have just as much history as other, you know, white people. Yet a lot of our history is just summed up in a single month before we continue something else. And it like, it kind of feels like we have so much equal history is only summarized when that should be something that's just as equivalent we taught throughout the whole semester, you know, we shouldn't be given just a small sample of time, we should be given a large chuck of time because we, you know, a lot of history in America would not have been a thing without the impact of Africans.

When discussing the lack of time that is given to Black history, and the quality of instruction regarding Black history, Hakeem talked about feeling disrespected because of the lack of discussion regarding Black history, Black achievements, and contributions to

society; especially when compared to the emphasis placed on other non-Black groups histories and contributions to society. Instead, Hakeem says that Black history is summed up and condensed into one month, which effectively takes away the richness of an entire group of people. This is a sentiment that was shared throughout the focus group interviews, across multiple questions that participants were asked.

To further demonstrate this point, when I asked participants the following question "What would you have liked to have learned as it relates to being a Black person?" participants responded:

> Hakeem: The achievements of Black people through uh (pauses) how do I say this? Ok, so like, I'm an engineer, so the achievements of people through other things, other than like history and overcoming segregation. Like, the achievements of them creating stuff that changed the world, the achievements of people doing things that nobody has ever done and stuff like that. Things that don't necessarily have to do with the empowerment of Black people, just the empowerment of everybody, how they helped everybody, and not just us and how the affected the entire world.

> Michael: As much as I agree with that, I really do feel that credit and um, (smacks teeth) what's another word, just, I feel like the credit should definitely be, I feel like that's something that should be amplified. Because as much as, as much as history is being taught in schools, the shortest month of the year is not nearly as much time as people need and should have. But I just feel that as much as this

nation has been built on the backs of those being taken from their homes and stuff, I feel that, um, the K-12 experience should definitely magnify that.

Brittany: I would liked to have learned about Black history a little sooner because K through 12, all the way up to eight grade, they only teach you the light stuff and all the great things but they don't teach you about all the damage and the blood that was spilled in order to get us to this point, and all the things that we had to fight through in order to reach a place where we can actually go to whatever bathroom, whatever restaurant, and be wherever we want without getting murdered. That's it.

Largely, participants would have liked to learn about positive aspects of Black people within the context of history, but also regarding how Black people have contributed in various ways, and within various industries, to better America and the world. Hakeem spoke about wanting to know how Black people have changed and impacted the world, not just the Black community. Michael agreed with Hakeem, but also reiterated his belief that Black history should not be regulated to just one month out of the year, rather, Black history is something that should be taught throughout the entire school year. Brittany spoke about the benefits of learning about Black history earlier than high school, and how learning about the realities of the Black experience is important for them as Black students; adding that it is important to acknowledging the journey of the Black community from the past into present day. These representative texts from the focus

group sessions and one-on-one interview served to clarify, support, and provide context to the qualitative findings.

Qualitative Results Summary. Participants in the focus group interview shared their experiences with school, the curriculum they were taught, and their teachers. The focus group interviews shed light on the complexity in experiences that students have had with teachers, school, and curricula, and how these experiences have shaped their understanding of their racial identity development, and how they view themselves through a racial lens. As it relates to the developmental aspect of the participants racial identity, there were a range of experiences and the participants discussed instances where they felt ashamed about their Black features (e.g., skin color, hair texture or hair style), or how Black people are perceived by others that is directly connected to the participants RID. The participants also discussed the shame and embarrassment that they felt in relation to their Blackness. These experiences were not the same across the board, as some of the partiicpants could not quite put into words what their experiences with the curricula was, or recall racialized experiences in school. Many of the participants discussed becoming more comfortable with their Blackness as they grew older, began associating with peers who looked like them, saw themselves reflected in their schools and teachers, and did their own research on influential and successful Black people throughout history and across fields and industries.

Related to the impact that teachers have on students' racial identity development, participants noted how in their experiences there have been teachers who acted as bystanders regarding their understanding, appreciation and acceptance of their Blackness, and teachers who have acted as allies in that developmental process. Many students

voiced that they did not feel that their teachers were committed to their learning, academically or socially. To that end, participants agreed that they were responsible for seeking out their own knowledge regarding their Blackness, Black history, and achievements, which were things they felt were glossed over or ignored by their teachers.

School-based experiences have an important effect on Black students' racial identity development, as students spoke about their experiences with not feeling connected to the school itself. Students that attended private schools, including Catholic and Christian schools, varied in their experiences, while some felt that their schools were diverse and even celebrated diversity, other participants spoke to their schools lacking racial diversity, and how that culminated into feeling like outsiders. On the other hand, students who attended public schools agreed that a benefit of their schools was being surrounded by students who looked like them. A common theme regardless of the school one attended is the threat of microaggressions that often came from various directions, most notably teachers, staff, and non-Black students. Participants expressed the "ups and downs" of being a Black student, and how their identities were often highly contested by the schools that they were a part of. Despite these oppositional forces, the participants cited these school-based challenges as forces that have pushed them to be successful in life, to aim high and to reach the goals that they set for themselves.

The third and final theme that was uncovered through the qualitative research process was that of curricular impact on Black students and their racial identity development. Participants in the current study discussed their feelings regarding racial representation within the curriculum, and the consensus was that there was little to no racial representation. Furthermore, participants perceived the lens that Black history is

often viewed through in the curricula as negative and disrespectful, not representative of the true Black experience, and not helpful in their emerging racial identities. Another finding was that Black history month is generally the only time that Black history was taught or celebrated, which left the participants wanting to know more, and feeling that they were being shielded from the truth. Altogether, the three themes that were identified through the focus group interviews was the impact that teachers, school, and curricula impact Black students' racial identity development in very significant and lasting ways.

Qualitative Research Questions Results

RQ#1 Results. Research question number one asked how do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences? Students offered a wealth of experiences that show the complexity of the Black experience, and that their school-based experiences are impacted by relationships with peers, teachers, the curricula, as well as the culture and environment of the schools that they attend.

RQ#2 Results. Research question number two asked what do Black college students think about the representation of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula? By large, the participants felt that there is little to no discussion about achievements of Black people in the K-12 curricula. For the achievements that are covered, they are typically limited to only a couple figures, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Rosa Parks, and these figures are only discussed during Black History Month in February. Participants agreed that it would have been beneficial to their personal development and development as students to have learned about achievements of Black people across industries, in classes besides just Social Studies or History.

RQ#3 Results. Research question number three asked do Black college students feel they are *represented* in K-12 curricula? The participants in the current study agreed that Black people are rarely discussed or taught about in class discussions and assignments, meaning there is little to no racial representation within the curricula. Additionally, participants shared that in the rare instances where Black people were taught about, the depth of the lessons and materials were surface level, whitewashed, or not accurate at all. The participants were clear that they felt there is a lack of racial representation within the K-12 curricula, and that the coverage of the Black community and the Black experience is not accurate to their lived experiences. Indeed, a major trend was that many of the participants mentioned slavery being the main topical area where Black people were the focus of the instruction, whereas more modern topical areas are ignored.

Quantitative Results

RQ#4 Results. Descriptive statistics for the MIBI-T by subscale are provided in Table 2. As observed in Table 2, students had the highest endorsements (agreement levels) for Private Regard and the Nationalist ideology based on the observed means near the maximum value of 5 (Strongly Agree) and the range of observed values (min, max) are near the middle to higher endorsement levels of agreement. In contrast, students had the lowest endorsement for Assimilationist based on the observed mean near the minimum value of 1 (Strongly Disagree) and the range of observed values (min, max) are closer to the lowest and middle endorsement levels of agreement.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Scores on the Subscales of the MIBI-T (N = 38)

Subscale	***M***	***SD***	***Min***	***Max***
Centrality	3.63	0.82	2.00	5.00
Private Regard	4.71	0.43	3.33	5.00
Public Regard	2.79	0.86	1.33	5.00
Nationalist	4.10	0.63	3.00	5.00
Humanist	3.39	0.76	1.67	4.67
Assimilationist	1.78	0.67	1.00	3.33
Oppressed Minority	3.94	0.73	1.67	5.00

Note. Scores per subscale were computed by summing responses and dividing by the number of items within a given subscale. Each subscale consisted of 3 items. Minimum possible score per subscale is 1 with a maximum possible score of 5.

RQ#5. Table 4 shows the Pearson correlations (*r*) among the subscale scores of the MIBI-T. Correlations for scores on the seven subscales of the MIBI-T ranged from -.37 to .50. As predicted, the strongest positive correlations were observed between Centrality and Private Regard (r = .50) and Private Regard and Nationalist (r = .48), whereas the strongest negative correlation was between Centrality and Oppressed Minority (r = -.37). Furthermore, as expected, the weakest correlation was between Assimilation and Private Regard (r = .11), and Centrality and Public Regard (r = -.16).

Table 4

Pearson Correlations Among the Seven Subscales of the MIBI-T (N = 38)

	Central.	**Pub. R.**	**Nat.**	**Human.**	**Assim.**	**Opp. M.**
Pub. R.	-.16 (0.170)					
Nat.	.17 (0.160)	-.30 (.04)				
Human.	-.04 (0.41)	-.15 (.018)	.08			
Assim.	.25 (.066)	.12 (.24)	-.01	-.08 (0.325)		
Opp. M	-.37 (.010)*	.16 (.18)	-.15	.20 (0.12)	-.04 (0.41)	
Priv. R	.50 (<.001)*	-.11 (<.001)*	.48** (.015)*	.21 (0.11)	.11 (0.26)	-.18 (0.15)

Note. Central. = Centrality; Pub. R. = Public Regard; Priv. R. = Private Regard; Nat. = Nationalist; Human. = Humanist; Assim. = Assimilationist; Opp. M. = Oppressed Minority. Correlations were conducted using listwise deletion. One-tailed *p* values are provided in (). The B-H procedure was used to correct for the FDR and those correlations found significant are represented with a *. The overall alpha level was set at .05.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The current study investigated the experiences that Black young adult college students have had with the K-12 curricula as well as the way in which these students view their RID. The current study was designed to gain an understanding of the salience value and meaning that Black students attached to their racial identity, as well as learning about their experiences with K-12 curricula. Specifically, the goal of this study was to understand how students described how stereotypical or misrepresentative depictions of Black people within the curricula impacted their RID. Research shows that the construction of a racial identity is an important developmental task and milestone from adolescence into adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Indeed, Black young adults are still traversing through the racial identity developmental process, as they continue to learn about who they are, and what their racial identity means to them (Tatum, 2017). Furthermore, the development of a healthy racial identity is integral for humans not just in the academic sense, but in virtually every aspect of one's life (Plummer, 1995; Tatum, 2000).

The problem that I identified in the current study is the way in which stereotypical depictions and representations of Black people within the K-12 curricula impact how young Black college students conceptualize their RID. More research is needed if we are to fully understand the role that schools and curricular content play in the development of Black students' understanding of race and identity, as well as the development of students' racial identity (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). This study has the potential to inform the

practical and pedagogical considerations that schools, teachers, and researchers may take, who are committed to ensuring environments are conducive for students belonging to minoritized groups to develop a healthy racial identity. Furthermore, this study will hopefully introduce greater in-depth qualitative and quantitative research that explores how students view curricular content that they have learned, and how their views have developed over time.

Integral to the current study's conception of curricula is that of a racial text – which teaches its pupils what knowledge is worth knowing, as well as teaching them *who* they should be, and *how* they should be represented within society (Castenell & Pinar, 1993). Additionally, Castenell and Pinar argued that racial representation within curricula portrays, suppresses, and redevelops one's racial identity, emphasizing the idea that curricula are significant and influential forms of racial representation. Castenell and Pinar (1993) lay the foundation for the current study which seeks to examine RID through the context of standardized curricula.

For this reason, the current study utilized a two phased, convergent mixed-methods research design, which incorporates quantitative and qualitative approaches to the data collection and analysis process, strengthening the results for both methods. The research questions outlined in this study aim to get to the heart of the lived experiences of Black young adult college students attending a public metropolitan, research extensive University. To do this, the voices of students needed to be authentic and described richly, truthfully, and meaningfully. Hesse-Biber (2017) asserts that combining both qualitative and quantitative methods is a promising way to provide a fuller, more robust understanding of a research problem.

The results from descriptive and correlational analyses of the quantitative data, and the interpretations of the three themes and subthemes identified through the thematic analysis of the qualitative data were integrated to enable further discussion of how the findings provide answers to the current study's five research questions:

1. How do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences?
2. What do Black young adult college students think about the representation of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula?
3. Do Black young adult college students feel they are represented in K-12 curricula?
4. What are Black young adult college students' perceptions of the salience and value attached to their racial identity?
5. What is the correlation between Public Regard and an individual's endorsement of one of the ideology subscales within the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity -Teen (assimilationist, humanist, oppressed minority, or nationalist)? (Scottham et al., 2008.)

Summary of Results

Qualitative Findings. The qualitative focus group interviews were meant to answer research questions one, two and three through qualitative thematic analysis. The focus group interviews allowed me to hear directly from the participants to understand what their experiences have been with schooling and the K-12 curricula in America. More specifically, the current study was interested in understanding how Black college students thought about the way Black people are represented within K-12 curricula.

Research question number one asked how do Black college students describe their K-12 school-based experiences? Participants talked about how their experiences with schooling from K-12 was impacted by multiple factors, including relationships with their peers, the type of school they attended (i.e., private vs. public; Catholic vs Christian) the relationships that they had with their teachers, and the type of culture that their school provided them (i.e., if diversity was celebrated or not; if conversations regarding race and racism were encouraged or not). Additionally, participants shared their experiences with microaggressions as being a major component of their K-12 educational experiences. These microaggressions shaped their view of their Black identity in different ways; some students discussed trying to separate themselves from their Blackness and assimilate into White culture, whereas other students talked about having support from teachers or other peers that acted as protective factors against those microaggressions, lessening the blow of said microaggressions.

Some students, on the other hand, recalled their K-12 school-based experiences as being "color-blind" or race neutral, where race was not an important factor or something that they consciously considered as they navigated their day-to-day lives. Another trend in discussing the participants K-12 school-based experiences is that most participants recalled learning that they were different racially at a very young age, where most participants agreed that this realization happened as early as elementary school. These discussions shed an incredible light on how the participants view their K-12 school-based experiences, and furthermore, how those experiences have shaped who they have become as college students. Moreover, these discussions further support the notion that Black

racial identity is a complex process that is influenced by many different factors (Tatum, 2017).

Research question number two asked what do Black college students think about the representation of the achievements of Black people in K-12 curricula? Participants discussed their feelings about the lack of attention paid to the achievements of Black people, especially achievements and contributions that have changed America or the world. From the participants perspective, there is little to no discussion about Black achievements, which has forced many of the participants to do their own research through searching online, speaking with family members, or taking college courses. Through conducting their own research and seeking out information and knowledge for themselves, the participants were able to find stories that instilled a sense of racial pride in themselves, connect with the past, as well as finding inspiration which gave them the allowance to dream incredible dreams for themselves, and find ways to make those dreams a reality. For example, one student recalls the moment he learned about the first Black woman to travel into space, Mae Carol Jemison, after doing his own research on the internet. This research led him to learning about her achievements and her story, which sparked his interest in, and eventual passion for engineering and aeronautics, which is his major today. His goal is to follow in Mae Carol Jemison's footsteps and travel into space as an astronaut. This short anecdote is an example of how powerful, uplifting stories can inspire the next generation of Black leaders in their respective chosen fields of study.

For the achievements that are covered, they are typically limited to only a couple figures, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Rosa Parks, and these figures are only

discussed during Black History Month in February. Many of the participants take issue with this because it perpetuates the idea that the contributions of Black people are insignificant when compared to the contributions of non-Black, mostly White people that is taught about in school. For the participants, it would have been beneficial to their personal development as well as their development as K-12 students to have learned about achievements of Black people across fields and industries, in the classroom besides just Social Studies or History, and outside of the month of February.

Research question number three asked do Black college students feel they are *represented* in K-12 curricula? The participants in the current study agreed that Black people are rarely discussed or taught about in class discussions and assignments, meaning there is little to no racial representation within the curricula and in the rare instances where Black people were taught about, the depth of the lessons and materials were surface level, whitewashed, or not accurate at all. The participants were clear that they felt there is a lack of racial representation within the K-12 curricula, and that the coverage of the Black community and the Black experience is not accurate to their lived experiences. Several participants mentioned the representation of Black people in the curricula as being negative or being "Black" frequently having a negative connotation associated with it, which bleeds into their interactions with their teachers, peers, and the school environment itself. For example, a major trend that was uncovered through the focus group interviews was that many of the participants mentioned slavery being the main topical area where Black people were the focus of the instruction, whereas more modern topical areas are ignored. For the participants, although slavery is an important piece of American history and should be taught, when it is the only part of Black history

being taught, it is a source of trauma and pain that is akin to an open wound left to bleed out, instead of being sterilized, dressed, and healed. In this example, the "healing" would be in the form of uplifting Black students by showing them positive stories of Black people, including achievements, contributions, and areas of progress that go beyond the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

For the fifteen participants who took part in the focus group interviews, central to their experiences with K-12 curricula were the curricula itself, the school context, and teacher interactions and experiences. Although at first glance these contexts may seem separate, they are interconnected and all influence Black students' racial identity development, just as K-12 curricula is influenced by both the school (e.g., the administration, environment, student body make up) as well as the teachers employed at these schools (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012). That is, teachers and the school context have great influence on Black students' RID, and can promote and reinforce positive or negative racialized messages through multiple avenues, including: the curricula, interactions with students, and the culture of the school that is embraced and upheld.

Curricula Impact. One of the first themes identified through the qualitative focus group interviews is that of the curricula impact, which refers to the ways in which the curricula that is taught (and in many cases not taught) influence students' RID. Many students were able to speak to this theme and their experiences with the curricula that they were taught, regardless of the type of schools that they attended. This theme answers research questions one, two and three, in that students directly discuss what their experiences were with K-12 curricula, how they feel Black achievements are represented

in K-12 curricula, and how they feel they themselves are represented in K-12 curricula as Black people.

There were two subthemes that were identified within this theme, including students having to seek out their own knowledge and information regarding Black history and the achievements of Black people, as well as students viewing what they were taught about Black history as mostly negative misrepresented portrayals and depictions of the Black experience, Black history, and achievements of Black people. This finding is at the core of what this study wanted to understand. For students, the fact that they had to seek out most of the information and knowledge regarding Black history and achievements outside of school was a major critique that most gave regarding representation within curriculum. Many students stated that there was no racial representation in the curricula, and that they could only recall instances of learning about Black history and achievements during Black history month – February being the shortest month of the year was not lost upon the participants in their evaluation of racial representation in curricula. Research has shown that most high school U.S. history curricula habitually cover Black history incompletely and in a racially biased manner (Loewen, 2017; Thornhill, 2014). This finding is in line with several studies that assert that students of color find their academic and cultural identities under constant attack (Howard, 2003). Furthermore, Eisner (2002) warns against the null curricula or the curricula that does not exist because it is not taught to students. That is, students are denied learning about the range of possibilities that exist for their futures, they are not allowed to consider differing perspectives, and many useful concepts and skills will not be taught. For many of the participants in the current study, they recognized the null curricula as Black history.

Teacher Impact. Student participants shed light on their experiences with teachers, and how those experiences impacted how they viewed themselves through a racial lens. Largely, teachers either acted as neutral bystanders in students' view, or as mediators who were consistently encouraging the students, supporting them, and holding them accountable. For example, Hakeem credited his mediator teacher as having a hand in his current position in life as a college student, mentioning that if not for his teacher pushing them to aim high and set lofty goals for himself, he probably would have taken a different route other than a four-year University. This information extends findings from previous research that have shown that Black students who have an adult at their school who is invested in them and shows care about their success are much more likely to pursue a college degree (Anderson, 2018).

Alternatively, when there is what McGrady and Reynolds (2013) call racial mismatch, where teachers – especially White teachers – show bias due to preferences that stem from racial stereotypes and evaluate Black students' behavior and academic skills and potentials much more negatively than that of White students. The outcome of racial mismatch is that classroom interactions are complicated and academic achievement is undermined. According to participants, negative interactions with teachers impacted the quality of teaching that they perceived having received, which they connected to their race and skin color. Participants distinguished between teachers that they felt were not invested in their education from teachers that they saw as sources of encouragement and inspiration.

School Impact. The school impact was the second finding that I identified through the qualitative focus group interviews and refers to the role that the school

environment impacts Black students' racial identity development through multiple fronts – academically, curricular, and socially. Two subthemes are identified in school impact, (a) the differences of experiences depending on the type of school a student attended, particularly public versus private schools, and (b) the complexity of Black students' perceptions of their Blackness based upon their school-based experiences with microaggressions and discrimination. Indeed, DeCuir-Gunby et al., (2012) assert that the school environment can both affirm positive aspects of Black students' identity and communicate negative racial stereotypes to Black students. Similarly, Gonzalez (2009) argues that the school context is responsible for facilitating the racial and ethnic identity of its students.

Participants who attended private schools shared similar experiences with their public-school peers, but they also shared some dissimilarities with the Black students who attended public schools. The private schools that the majority of the participants attended were not very racially diverse and were predominately White schools. Additionally, students who attended private schools felt that they were prepared academically for college through the coursework they were taught and having access to honors and AP courses, yet they did not feel as if the environment would allow them to discuss issues important to them, namely that of race and racism. The theme of the school context being an influencer on Black students' RID is in line with findings from DeCuir-Gunby et al., (2012) who suggest that private schools may elevate the quality of education for Black students, but many of these students will experience social isolation from their peers. Taylor mentions how attending a private, Catholic PWI affected her self-identity by forcing her to have to code switch and disassociating from anything that

was Black. Marcus discussed an experience he had in the 5th grade while attending a private Christian school, and he and the only other Black student were separated from the rest of their classmates for exams. This was a regular occurrence, and it was a moment that stuck with him, making him feel that he was different from his White peers in a negative way. Research suggests that Black students who attend predominately white schools face unique challenges, including an increase of experiences with racial discrimination (DeCuir et al., 2012; Hamm and Coleman, 2001).

On the other end of the schooling spectrum, participants who attended public schools largely attended mostly Black schools, where they were socialized with students and sometimes teachers who looked like them. For the public-school students, a lot of the negative messages regarding their race came from their peers who would make jokes based on skin color, for example. Research has suggested that peer issues, with peers of the same race and other races, can also complicate Black students' school-related adjustment. However, according to the participants, the public schools that they attended did a better job of allowing discussions of race and current event issues in the classroom and in the school culture. Students also connected their experiences with other aspects of their identities (i.e., being a woman, a man, being a person with disabilities, etc.), further adding complexity to their RID. Indeed, Baber (2012) noted that students in the first year of their college experience began to discuss and consider ways in which other identities that were salient to them interacted with their RID.

Quantitative Results. The results from the descriptive statistics help to answer RQ#4 by indicating the salience and value that participants attached to their racial identity at the time of taking the survey. These findings correlate with the descriptive

statistics for the MIBI-T subscale as provided in Table 3. Each subscale was computed to include the Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum for the possible score of 5 indicates that the Private Regard subscale and Nationalist ideology subscale had the highest endorsements (agreement levels) based on the means being closest to the maximum value of 5 (strongly agree), as well as the observed values (minimum, maximum) being closest to the middle to higher endorsement levels of agreement.

Additionally, the results from the Pearson correlation coefficient analysis help to answer RQ#5 by providing a correlation between Private Regard and an individual's endorsement of one of the ideology subscales within the MIBI-T. The Pearson correlation coefficient analysis indicated that there were significant correlations between three dimensions on the MIBI-T (a) *centrality and private regard* (r = .50, p = .002); (b) *private regard and nationalist* (r = .48, p = .003); and (c) *centrality and oppressed minority* (r = -.37, p = .02). There were no significant correlations indicated regarding the *assimilationist* ideology subscale. The significant positive correlations suggest that as one variable increases, the other increases. For example, as one's racial centrality increases, the level of their private regard also increases. On the other hand, the negative correlation between the centrality subscale and the oppressed minority subscale indicates that as one's level of centrality increases, the level of their endorsement of the oppressed minority ideology subscale decreases.

***Hypotheses*.** Hypothesis #1 predicted that the higher one scored on the centrality subscale, there would be a positive correlation with higher scores on the private regard subscale on the MIBI-T. Participant scores on the *Centrality* and

Private Regard subscales support hypothesis #1, as there was a significant positive relationship between *Centrality* and *Private Regard.* Hypothesis #2 predicted that the higher respondents scored on the private regard subscale, there would be a higher endorsement of the Nationalist Ideology and a lower endorsement of the Assimilationist Ideology. Participant scores on the Private Regard, Nationalist, and Assimilationist Subscale support hypothesis #2. There was a significant relationship between the Private Regard and Nationalist Subscales ($r = .475$, $p = .003$). Furthermore, respondents scored the lowest on the Assimilationist Subscale out of all seven Subscales (see Table 2).

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Participants reported significant levels of Black identity being central to their sense of identity and positive feelings toward being Black and for the Black community, resulting in a significant correlation between the *centrality* and *private regard* dimensions. The participants in the current study were proud of their Blackness, even when they perceived that the world around them thought they should feel otherwise. This was evident in the focus group interviews, where the participants admitted to feeling that the Black community is often looked at in a negative light; however, the participants were clear that being Black is more than the negative messages that are often prescribed to the Black community. This finding is consistent with the work of Scottham et al., (2010) who conducted a study where they examined 204 Black college students and their statuses of development as outlined by Phinney (1989).

Scottham et al., (2010) found that higher levels of RID were associated with higher levels of racial identification (centrality) and more positive attitudes towards one's racial group (private regard). When compared to the qualitative findings, the participants

have had to do their own research on Black history, which they feel is more truthful and positive than what they are taught in school.

By conducting their own research on a quest for knowledge, the participants discussed how they feel in control of their own education. Indeed, this is a trend that seemed to be consistent among many of the participants, and learning about Black people's achievements and the unfiltered history instills a sense of pride in many of the participants. Indeed, the Pew Research Center (2022), which surveyed 3,912 Black U.S. adults, found that although Black people learn about Black history in many ways, the most common way Black Americans cited learning about Black history was through family and friends at 43%, while learning about Black history in K-12 schools was held at the lowest ranking, at only 23%. Other ways that Black people cited learning about Black history was through the media (30%), the internet (27%), and in college or university (24%).

Additionally, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between private regard and the nationalist ideology ($r = .48$, $p = .003$), which suggests that the higher level of positivity one feels about being Black and toward the Black community, the higher level of endorsement one will have of the nationalist ideology, which corresponds to the qualitative focus group interviews, particularly the feelings that students conveyed regarding how they feel about the negative depictions of Black people through curricular and school contexts. Despite those negative messages, the participants stated that they were committed to doing their own research and filling in gaps of knowledge that was not filled through their education. Additionally, the participants

generally agreed that the depictions of Black people through K-12 curricula does not align with their personal views of what it means to be Black. This is supported by Baber (2012), who conducted a qualitative study where the influence of racial identity development on the educational experiences of Black students attending PWIs through multiple semi-structured individual interviews with students. Baber found that students exhibited what he calls racial regard resiliency, which could be understood as students resisting against negative perceptions or experiences with judgements of their racial identity. Instead of internalizing these negative messages, stereotypes, and labels, students confronted challenges of their racial identity. Additionally, Baber found that the participants in his study were also experiencing growth in the salience of their Black identity.

During the current study's focus group interviews, when I asked participants how they felt they were represented in the curriculum, Michael mentioned feeling that Black people are always mentioned in a negative way, and Black people are always discussed as the "extremes." During this session, all the participants showed visible signs of agreement with Michael's comments. The third and final statistically significant correlation identified was a negative correlation between *centrality and oppressed minority* (r = -.37, p = .02). The findings in the current study are supported by a recent study conducted by Willis and Neblett (2020) who conducted a longitudinal study over the course of three years. One hundred and seventy one Black college students attending a predominately White institution made up the sample. Willis and Neblett found that over the course of the three years, students showed increases in racial centrality private regard, and the nationalist ideology, as well as decreases in public regard and assimilationist,

humanist, and oppressed minority ideologies. Additionally, Willis and Neblett assert that higher levels of private regard were associated with declines in psychological distress over the course of the three-year period compared to individuals with higher levels of public regard.

Implications

DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2012) suggested that future research on racial identity and racial socialization of Black Americans include mixed methods research to allow for in-depth explorations of the experiences of Black American students. This research answers that call to action directly. The current study intends to contribute to the body of knowledge of the RID of Black students and the impact that K-12 curricula has on Black students RID.

Black racial identity development is a well-researched area in the field of Educational Psychology (Cross, 1971, 1991, 1994; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 2017), and has been linked to students' academic achievement, wellbeing, and overall adjustment into healthy and securely attached adults (Branch, 2020; Chavous et al., 2008; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Ford & Harris, 1997; Hypolite, 2020). Black students' racial identity development and its connection to K-12 curricular content has a limited amount of research (Branch, 2020; Legette, 2018; Seaton et al., 2011), and there is much more to be understood about how Black students RID is impacted by the K-12 curricula.

The findings of the current study indicate that there is a correlation between what Black students were taught in their time between kindergarten and high school to now as college students. Specifically, this study identifies multiple sources that impact Black students RID, including K-12 curricula, the school environment, and teachers. Better

understanding Black racial identity and its development in the context of school will help educators become safer sites where Black students are able to actively explore their racial identity through having open dialogues surrounding race, and where culturally responsive and relevant teaching is centered in the pedagogy of the teachers. A further implication is that this study will contribute to a small number of studies that have utilized the MIBI-T. The MIBI-T is an instrument that can and should continue to be used in research studies to be further developed.

The theoretical framework of the current study centers the voice of the individual, and their idea of what it means to be Black is of importance. With that, understanding that Black racial identity development is not homogenous, rather, it is a process that is unique to the individual. The Black experience is just as diverse and unique as the racial identity developmental process, and therefore, representing the uniqueness that is the Black experience within teaching and curricula is of immense importance if we are to truly create schools that center the experiences and voices of our most marginalized student populations, to create an educational system that is truly invested in teaching, justice, diversity equity and inclusion. This study and its findings present teacher educators and researchers alike with an opportunity to critically re-examine current classroom and curricular practices to make room for racial identity exploration in the classroom. Indeed, Branch (2020) asserts that helping students explore and affirm their racial and ethnic identity is a social justice action that should be implemented in places that it is currently not. The goal of educational psychology as a field is to not only study the processes of how people learn and retain knowledge, but to also improve the learning process and promote educational success, academic achievement and attainment, and

psychological wellbeing for all students (APA, 2014; Branch, 2020). If these ideals are able to be made into reality, students will find spaces where they spend a great deal of their time transformed as places where their identities are not only accepted, but affirmed and cherished, creating confident and powerful students and change-makers.

Limitations

Firstly, as this study uses a qualitative research methodology, I do not intend to make generalizations about all Black young adult college students and their experiences. Additionally, this study was limited by a small sample size which also prevents the generalizability of the findings. Recruitment of participants to have a large sample size was a main limitation of this study. Due to limited resources, including time, money, and assistance, as well as having such a complex study and data analysis, the recruitment process was unable to be extended indefinitely, which resulted in a smaller sample size. Secondly, I utilized convenience and snowball sampling methods, which may not have been the most effective sampling approaches to recruit participants. Specifically, although over one hundred students were emailed in the early stages of the recruitment process, only a third of those students responded and were active participants.

An additional limitation is the limited access to Black young college students to participate in the current study. Participants were only recruited from University Z, and although University Z is a large, metropolitan research extensive institution, it is a predominately White institution and therefore has less Black identifying students enrolled who would have been able to participate in the current study. Furthermore, due to time constraints, it was not feasible to conduct recruitment procedures at additional colleges or universities. Rigorous recruitment was done at University Z by contacting many

departments and academic college heads to request help in recruiting students that fit the criterion. Multiple reminder emails were also sent to students. To address these limitations, the qualitative interviews were conducted in a way to extrapolate the richest data possible. Future studies like the current study should recruit at multiple institutions to gain a large sample size, which will add even more diverse experiences and perspectives to the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

Racial identity is well studied and has been explored in relation to educational attainment, self-esteem, well-being, and academic identities; however, further scholarship can expand these areas by investigating the connection the K-12 curricula has on racial identity development of Black and Brown students (Blueford, 2014; Branch, 2020; Legette, 2018; Seaton et al., 2011). A research study that has access to a larger sample of Black or African American students will provide the field of educational psychology, and racial identity development with even richer data, both quantitative and qualitative. This study should be replicated on a larger scale, and including students who attend different types of institutions, including HBCUs, to further understand the wide variety of experiences that Black students have had with the K-12 curricula, to gain greater understanding of how Black students from a range of educational and social environments view their racial identity, and to better represent and generalize findings. The current study required college aged young adults to reflect on their past experiences with K-12 curricula, so future studies that are centered around adolescent Black students is immensely needed to understand in real time, the impact that K-12 curricula has have on Black students RID.

Also, studies that continue to utilize mixed methods research methodologies should be employed, as the combing of methodologies helps to not only strengthen the data gathered, but if integrated properly, the data can give powerful insight into trends as well as the experiences of the sample population. Additionally, future studies should attempt to use a diverse range of recruitment methods. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used as recruitment strategies in the current study and was helpful in recruiting participants, but random sampling would decrease the chance of sampling error and may garner participants not normally recruited through the previously mentioned sampling methods.

Understanding racial identity development in the context of the current public sphere is of utmost importance. Since beginning the current study, numerous Conservative politicians have begun the process of eliminating the teaching of Critical Race Theory in the classrooms, limiting, or forbidding important conversations surrounding race in the classrooms, and attempting to eliminate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs from State funded colleges and universities. Understanding how Black students make meaning of these types of events that continue to sprout up throughout the country, and how their racial identity narratives shift, change, or stay the same, is an important direction for the field of educational psychology.

The research literature contends that racial identity is a task that individuals grapple with over the course of their lives, and is dependent on many factors including society, school, family, and friends (Cross, 1991, 2012; Tatum, 2000). Therefore, a longitudinal study that explores racial identity development in the context of K-12 school would offer an in-depth look into the curricular and non-curricular experiences that

adolescents have in school, and how those experiences impact their racial identity development, in real time. This research could potentially follow students from their high school years, into college over a 4-to-5-year period. Such a study would require buy-in and support from local school districts, administrators, parents and students, and Universities, and would require substantial funding, resources, and access.

Understanding the intersectionality between the different identities of Black students and how these identities have been influenced by K-12 curricular experiences, is an important area of research that should continue to be examined and explored. Baber (2014) found that the different identities of Black first year college students began to become even more complicated in their first year of college because they were navigating more complex issues and situations as they emerged into young adulthood. Future research studies should examine different aspects of Black students' identities, such as gender, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, etc., and engage those students in a complex reflection to understand how the K-12 curricula impacts the whole self, not just a part. Linking those experiences to their current place in life (i.e., college) would be an innovative addition to the extant literature on Black racial identity development.

Lastly, it is an important extension of the literature on Black racial identity to understand how non-college students have developed their racial identity and understand how curricular experiences have impacted that development. Tatum (2017) acknowledges that college is not the only place where young adults are able to explore who they are as a Black person as well as their histories. Rather, Black young adults are also seeking out knowledge and information in a quest to figure out who they are, and what their Blackness means to them. Working with organizations or groups outside of academia

including churches, non-profit organizations, and other community-based parties would be an important area of focus to fully conceptualize racial identity development in a population that is often left out of the extant literature.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letters

The University of Toledo
Human Research Protection Program
Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB
2801 W. Bancroft St., MS 218,
Toledo, Ohio 43606
Phone: 419-383-6796 Fax: 419-383-3248
(FWA00010686)

IRB Exemption Granted Notification

To: Michael Toland

Dean-Education

From: Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB

IRB Number: 301503

Title: The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity

Event Review Type: Exempt

Signed Thursday, September 1, 2022 10:40:52 AM ET by Case, Patricia F.

The above-named project was reviewed and determined to meet criteria for exempt research under the following category or categories:

Category 2

by the designee of the University's Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB. Exemption has been granted as of 08/30/2022. The full board will acknowledge this at its next convened meeting.

Please note the following important items:
Failure to submit a progress report by the due date (08/29/2025) will result in study closure. You must submit a final report WITHIN 30 DAYS following the completion of data collection, analysis, and cessation of all study activity.

Changes MAY NOT be made to any element of the current research without prior approval.

Only the most recent IRB approved form(s) listed below may be used when enrolling participants into research. Failure to conduct your research in accordance with what has been approved in your application may result in a finding of non-compliance with institutional policy and regulatory requirements governing research with human subjects.

Documents reviewed and approved as part of this protocol application submission:

- Harris - SBE Waiver of Written Consent Exempt Research - Focus Group Participants 8-30-2022.doc (Consent - Informed Consent Form)
- Harris SBE Waiver of Written Consent Exempt Research - Survey Participants 8-30-2022.doc (Consent - Informed Consent Form)
- Dissertation Recruitment Email - 8-15-2022.docx (Recruitment Materials)
- Focus group Further Instructions Email 8-15-2022.docx (Recruitment Materials)
- Further Instructions for Survey Participants Email 8-15-2022.docx (Recruitment Materials)
- Focus Group Interview Script.docx (Surveys/Questionnaires/Interview Script)

IRB Amendment Approval Letter

The University of Toledo
Human Research Protection Program
Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB
2801 W. Bancroft St., MS 218,
Toledo, Ohio 43606
Phone: 419-383-6796 Fax: 419-383-3248
(FWA00010686)

IRB Amendment Approval Notification

To: Michael Toland

Dean-Education

From: Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB

IRB Number: 301503

Title: The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity

Amendment Summary: In an effort to elicit responses from more students, I am amending this study so that I can open participation to students outside of the University of Toledo.

Signed Thursday, November 10, 2022 3:28:45 PM ET by Case, Patricia F.

The amendment to research referenced above was reviewed by the University's Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB. The amendment has been approved as of **11/09/2022**. This action does not affect your expiration date, your continuing review, your annual status report due date or your exempt status, whichever applies. This action will be reported to the full committee at its next convened meeting.

Documents reviewed and approved as part of this amendment application submission:

Only the most recent IRB approved form(s) listed above may be used when enrolling participants into research.

Please note the following important items:
Per Federal regulations, changes MAY NOT be made to any element of the current research without prior IRB approval, except to eliminate an immediate and apparent hazard to subjects enrolled in the study.

Per UT policy, the IRB requires that you submit a final report WITHIN 30 DAYS following the expiration date or completion of data collection, analysis, and cessation of all study activity (whichever comes first). If no expiration date is indicated, submit a final report WITHIN 30 DAYS following the completion of data collection, analysis, and cessation of all study activity.

Failure to retain current IRB approval and/or to failure to conduct your research in accordance with what has been approved in your application may result in archiving the current study and human subjects non-compliance allegations.

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Survey Participants

Department of Educational Studies
2801 W. Bancroft St.
Gillham Hall 5000
Toledo, Ohio 43606
Phone 419-530-2461

ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM
The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity

Principal Investigator *Dr. Michael Toland, Professor and Executive Director of the Herb Innovation Center, 419-530-6134.*

Other Investigators *Christopher Harris, Ph.D. Candidate, 330-974-8761.*

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of *Principal Investigator Dr. Toland, and Christopher Harris.* The purpose of this study is *to examine the impact of curricular content from Kindergarten through High School has on the racial identity development of Black students.*

Description of Procedures: This research study will take place online. *The online survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, where you will complete a questionnaire, evaluating your racial identity. There will be 21 questions where you will be asked to identify the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each item using a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.*

Potential Risks: *There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. Potential risks include discomfort while discussing or reflecting on certain topics including race, experiences with the K-12 curricular content, and your racial identity. There is a low risk of breach of confidentiality.*

Potential Benefits: Direct benefits to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn about how *mixed methods research studies* are run and you may learn more about *racial identity development.* The field of educational psychology may benefit from this research by introducing greater in-depth qualitative and quantitative research studies that explore how students view the content they are learning, and how the curricular content they are taught impacts their racial identity development. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research. As an incentive for participation, there will be a raffle of three (3) $30.00 Amazon gift cards. Winners will be randomly drawn upon completion of the research study. You must complete the survey in its entirety to be entered in the gift card raffle.

Confidentiality: Your responses on the survey are anonymous. The Principal Investigator, Dr. Toland and Christopher Harris will be the only individuals with access to the data. *You are encouraged to complete participation in a private space.*

Voluntary Participation: Your anonymous data may be used for future research purposes. As a reminder, your participation in this research is voluntary. Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo or any of your classes. You may skip any questions that you may be uncomfortable answering. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Appendix C
Informed Consent for Focus Group Participants

Department of Educational Studies
2801 W. Bancroft St.
Gillham Hall 5000
Toledo, Ohio 43606
Phone 419-530-2461

ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM
The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity

Principal Investigator *Dr. Michael Toland, Professor and Executive Director of the Herb Innovation Center, 419-530-6134.*

Other Investigators *Christopher Harris, Ph.D. Candidate, 330-974-8761*

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled The Impact of Curricular Experiences on Racial Identity which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of *Principal Investigator Dr. Toland, and Christopher Harris.* The purpose of this study is *to examine the impact of curricular content from Kindergarten through High School has on the racial identity development of Black students*

Description of Procedures: This research study will take place in *online via video conferencing. The focus group interviews will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes – 2 hours to complete, where you will be asked 8 open-ended questions in a small group setting of up to 6 people to further understand the relationship between curricular content and racial identity. One on One interviews may be conducted if you request that format.* Please note that the focus group interviews and one on one interviews will be video, and audio recorded. The recordings will not be shared with anyone outside of Christopher Harris and the Principal Investigator, Dr. Toland.

Potential Risks: *There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. Potential risks include discomfort while discussing or reflecting on certain topics including race, experiences with the K-12 curricular content, and your racial identity. There is a low risk of breach of confidentiality.*

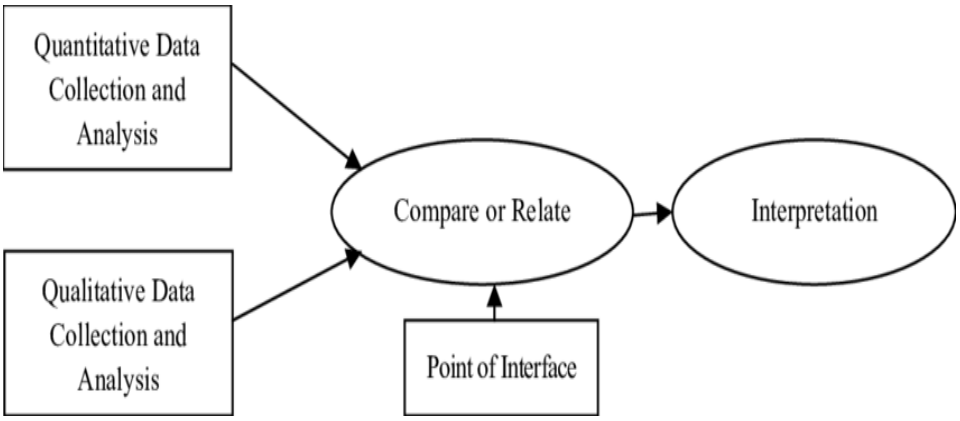
Potential Benefits: Direct benefits to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn about how *mixed methods research studies* are run and you may learn more about *racial identity development.* The field of educational psychology may benefit from this research by introducing greater in-depth qualitative and quantitative research studies that explore how students view the content they are learning, and how the curricular content they are taught impacts their racial identity development. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research. As an incentive for participation, there will be a raffle of three (3) $30.00 Amazon gift cards. Winners will be randomly drawn upon completion of the research study. You must complete the focus group interview to be entered into the gift card raffle.

Confidentiality: Video recordings will be stored separately from other data. The Principal Investigator, Dr. Toland and Christopher Harris will be the only individuals with access to the data. *You will be given pseudonyms to protect your privacy and identity, and any direct quotes that are used will not include any identifying information (i.e., schools, teachers, cities, etc.).*

During the focus group interviews, I will ask everyone in the focus group to keep discussions confidential, however, I cannot guarantee that others in the group will keep discussions confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Your deidentified data may be used for future research purposes. As a reminder, your participation in this research is voluntary. Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your

Appendix D
Convergent Mixed Methods Research Design Diagram



Appendix E
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen (MIBI-T)

Directions: PLEASE CHECK ONE FOR EACH QUESTION.

(1) Really disagree, (2) kind of disagree, (3) neutral, (4) kind of agree, (5) really agree

Centrality

I feel close to other Black people.
I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people.
If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black.

Private Regard

I am happy that I am Black.
I am proud to be Black.
I feel good about Black people

Public Regard

Most people think that Black people are as smart as people of other races.
People think that Black people are as good as people from other races.
People from other races think that Black people have made important contributions.

Nationalist

Black parents should surround their children with Black art and Black books.
Whenever possible, Black people should buy from Black businesses.
Black people should support Black entertainment by going to Black movies and watching Black TV shows.

Humanist

Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as Black.
Black people should think of themselves as individuals, not as Blacks.
Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see.

Assimilationist

It is important that Blacks go to White schools so they can learn how to act around Whites.
I think it is important for Blacks not to act Black around White people.
Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in this society.

Oppressed Minority

People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination.
There are other people who experience discrimination similar to Blacks.
Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups.

Appendix F

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What does representation in curriculum mean to you?
2. How do you feel about how you are represented in the K-12 curricula based on what you were taught in your classes?
3. Tell me, in detail, about your experiences as a Black student.
4. Give me an example of something you learned in school (any subject matter) that had an impact on how you viewed yourself as a Black person.
5. How did the achievements of Black people that you learned about in school influence your educational and career goals?
6. Looking back at your K-12 experiences, what would you have liked to learn as it relates to being a Black person?
7. How easy or difficult was it for you to connect to the curricula you were taught throughout K-12?
8. Tell me about any positive experiences with course content, teachers, projects, and/or assignments that made you feel good about being a Black person.

Table 5

Summary of Item Responses on MIBI-T (N = 38)

Question	*n*	M	SD	Min	Max
1. I feel close to Black people	38	3.92	1.10	1	5
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people	38	3.82	.96	2	5
3. If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things I would say it that I'm Black	38	3.16	1.30	1	5
4. I am happy that I am Black	38	4.76	.54	3	5
5. I am proud to be Black	38	4.82	.47	3	5
6. I feel good about Black people	38	4.55	.69	3	5
7. Most people think that Black people are as smart as people of other races	38	2.61	1.22	1	5
8. People think that Black people are as good as people from other races	38	2.67	1.24	1	5
9. People from other races think that Black people have made important contributions	38	3.13	1.02	1	5
10. Black parents should surround their children with Black art and Black books	38	4.00	1.04	1	5
11. Whenever possible, Black people should buy from Black businesses	38	4.21	.84	2	5
12. Black people should support Black entertainment by going to see Black Movies and Black TV shows	38	4.11	.76	3	5

Question	*n*	M	SD	Min	Max
13. Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as Black	38	3.47	1.27	1	5
14. Black people should think of themselves as individuals, not as Black	38	3.45	1.08	2	5
15. Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see	38	3.24	.85	1	5
16. It is important that Black people go to White schools so they can learn how to act around White people	38	1.87	.99	1	4
17. I think it is important for Black people not to act Black around White people	38	1.68	.90	1	4
18. Black people should act more like White people to be successful in this society	38	1.79	.90	1	4
19. People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination	38	4.32	.93	1	5
20. There are other people who experience discrimination similar to Black people	38	4.03	1.15	1	5
21. Black people should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups	38	3.47	.95	1	5

Note. Each subscale consisted of 3 items. Minimum possible score per dimension is 1 with the highest possible score of 5. Questions are posited using a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.