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Examining Formal and Enacted Curricula for Culturally Responsive Strategies Regarding the Needs of Black Female Students: A Qualitative Content Analysis

Marquita Sherie Hockaday
College of William and Mary, marquitahockaday@gmail.com

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EXAMINING FORMAL AND ENACTED SECONDARY CURRICULA FOR

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES REGARDING THE NEEDS OF

BLACK FEMALE STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

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Doctor of Philosophy

By

Marquita S. Hockaday

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EXAMINING FORMAL AND ENACTED SECONDARY CURRICULA FOR

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Approved June 2017 by

Margaret Constantino, Ph.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Stephanie Blackmon, Ph.D.

Christopher Gareis, Ed.D.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mom and dad. Even though we did not have much growing

up, you both showed me, and continuously told me, that I can overcome adversity and be

whatever I wanted to be. The loving home environment you provided assisted in

developing the strong Black woman I am today.

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Abstract

While K-12 schools have been making efforts to integrate culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, the voice and representation of Black female students has been largely ignored. Overdisciplinary practices, high dropout rates, a likelihood to be incarcerated, exposure to sexual violence, and familial obligations have negatively impacted the academic achievement of some Black female students. Thus, educational leaders can try to find ways to acknowledge the unique needs of Black female students through reconceptualizing curriculum. The purpose of this study was to examine current curricula within a particular school district for strategies and practices that may be responsive to the needs of Black female students, as well as to include the voices of Black female students who attended schools in the same district to examine their perspectives. The reconceptualist theoretical framework, as well as existing literature on Black female students' needs, and culturally responsive curriculum methodology was used to create a coding framework. A qualitative content analysis (QCA) was conducted with the collected data (i.e., existing curricula and interviews from Black female students) using the coding framework. Four categories emerged and maintained throughout the QCA for reconceptualizing the curriculum in response to the needs of Black female students: s*tudent ownership*, *collaborative and authentic experiences*, *critical pedagogy*, and *cultural responsiveness and cultural competence*. Educational leaders can integrate strategies, such as goal-setting, cooperative learning, including diverse perspectives in materials, and assessing students' prior knowledge, into the formal curriculum to respond to Black female students' academic needs.

EXAMINING FORMAL AND ENACTED CURRICULA FOR CULTURALLY

RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES REGARDING THE NEEDS OF BLACK FEMALE

STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Extensive research has been conducted surrounding the academic underperformance of Black males in K-12 education and the importance of mentorship, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, and parental involvement to improve their academic achievement (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008; Joe & Davis, 2009; Rollock, 2007). Thus, selected school systems nationwide have created initiatives and programs (Washington D.C.'s *Empowering Males of Color*, Boston Public School's *10 Boys of Color*, and New York City's Department of Education's *Empowering Boys Initiative*), placing emphasis on how educational practices can be reformed to ensure the academic success of minority males, particularly Black males. With that being said, the Black female student experience in K-12 schools is often overlooked. In fact, Rollock (2007) suggests that Black girls "occupy an invisible or absent presence in schools" (p. 198). Black female students are sometimes ignored, stereotyped, or misunderstood in K-12 classrooms (Evans-Winters, 2005; Hing, 2014; Rollock, 2007). This may be attributed to educators' lacking the tools to integrate culturally responsive strategies targeted to Black female students into classroom practices due to limited research.

Current curriculum practices are not always representative of the diverse populations that make up 21st century classrooms. In particular, many Black female students are not having their unique academic needs met due to cultural and social disconnections between educators and this specific population. For example, perceived

unladylike behavior, such as loudness or aggressiveness (i.e., hostile or violent behavior) instead of assertiveness (i.e., confident behavior), and the long-standing stereotype of the strong Black female persona sometimes inhibits these students from receiving guidance when needed. Also, some Black female students are more socially mature because of family situations, such as caring for younger siblings (Evans-Winters, 2005; Rollock, 2007; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). This social maturity sometimes encourages Black females to become more independent when compared to their peers at a younger age (Evans-Winters, 2005; Grant, 1984; E. W. Morris, 2007). The aforementioned Black female students' attributes sometimes encourage educators to generally ignore the specific needs of Black females, as they are perceived as self-sufficient (Evans-Winters, 2005; Rollock, 2007). With that being said, recent policy briefs and studies conducted by individuals such as Smith-Evans and George (2014), Sherwin, Wedekind, and Reynoso-Palley (2016), and Crenshaw (2015) have demonstrated the importance of responding to the needs of Black female students as this population is suffering from the same educational maladies that plague Black males.

Barriers to Academic Success for Black Female Students

In the K-12 setting, Black female students are suspended six times more than White females and at a rate higher than 67% of males of color (Hing, 2014; United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). These suspensions are often credited to subjective categories of student misbehavior, such as defiance or inappropriate clothing, as opposed to more serious infractions such as, fighting, verbal abuse, or having a weapon on school property (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). The current high level of suspensions for Black girls in the K-12 setting has

been linked to the likelihood of Black females becoming incarcerated later in life (Wald & Losen, 2003). Providing educators with the tools to integrate responsive strategies and practices for Black female students may assist in decreasing disciplinary issues and, in turn, reduce the school-to-prison pipeline.

As well as discipline issues, due to their intersectionality, or overlapping circumstances that can lead to discrimination (e.g., race and gender), Black female students are sometimes overlooked for advanced placement (AP) and honors courses, and they often miss other educational opportunities, such as admission to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses as well as charter programs (Schott Foundation, 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Instead, Black girls in the educational context are sometimes discounted without regard to issues they may face at home, such as acting as a parent to a younger sibling or being a parent themselves (Bryant, 2015; Crenshaw, 2015; Hughes, Manns, & Ford, 2009). Some educators are not aware of strategies to include familial situations and students' home lives in the classroom (Hing, 2014; Rollock, 2007; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Additionally, there is limited research for educators to review regarding what instructional strategies and practices should be integrated in the K-12 setting to best assist Black female students with school success.

The Current Issues: Being a Black Female Student in the United States

Currently, Black female students embody about 15% of female high school graduates and struggle to receive fair representation and compensation in postsecondary endeavors (Smith-Evans & George, 2014). For instance, about 11% of the American workforce consists of Black people and, within that percentage, Black women make up 53.8% of employed Blacks; however, this population experiences a higher rate of

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unemployment when compared to White females, 10.5% and 5.8%, respectively (National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, 2014). As a group, women continue to be undercompensated for comparable work to their male counterparts. With that being said, Black females are paid lower than any other demographic. When compared to White females, Black females make 68 cents to every male's dollar, whereas White females make 77 cents to the dollar (National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, 2014). In general, Black women seem to be the most underpaid and undervalued, despite possessing similar qualifications and producing comparable results in regard to their male counterparts as well as White females. Thus, the intersectionalities of gender and race have an impact on the success of Black females.

To improve their postsecondary success, Black female students should be provided with opportunities to achieve in the secondary education setting. When compared to their peers, Black female students are currently the least likely population to graduate from high school with college credit (Bryant, 2015; Sherwin et al., 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). This can be attributed to a lack of access to AP and dual-enrollment courses. Current research has shown that even though Black students overall comprise about 14% of high school populations, only about 9% of these students are enrolled in AP courses (College Board, 2014). Black students, in general, are encouraged to take lower level courses as opposed to college preparatory classes (Bryant, 2015; Moore et al., 2010). Furthermore, when enrolled in AP courses, Black females tend to perform poorly on the course assessments. In their Annual Report to the Nation, the College Board (2014) found that African American/Black students were the most

underrepresented group in AP courses and also the least successful exam takers due to limited support systems within the schools, such as teachers who are highly qualified.

Black females represent a small portion of the population enrolled in STEM related courses in high schools (Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010; US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014. Females, in general, are underrepresented in AP math courses, such as statistics and calculus (US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Further, gender gaps have been noted on math sections of national standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT (Halpern et al., 2007; Hill et al., 2010). Also, fewer females take STEM-related AP exams, such as computer science, chemistry, physics, and calculus, than males, and, when they do take these assessments, they often receive lower scores than their male counterparts (Hill et al., 2010). Moreover, traditionally marginalized demographics, such as African Americans and Latino students, are less likely to have access to STEM related courses (e.g., advanced science and math courses), negatively impacting their decision to pursue STEM majors in college or pursue STEM related careers (Frizell & Nave, 2008; Hill et al., 2010; US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). For example, currently, only 3.2% of Black female college freshmen demonstrate an interest in majoring in engineering as compared to 14.6% of Black males (Reid, Jefferson, & Thomas, 2016). Considering the aforementioned, the discrimination faced by Black females based on their intersectionalities can explain why this population is often underrepresented in high school STEM courses.

As well as being underrepresented in STEM and AP courses, Black females are often exposed to disproportionate disciplinary infractions (Annamma et al., 2016; M. W.

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Morris, 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Considering the notion that disciplinary issues in school are indicative of prison rates, Black females are currently among the highest population in federal and state prisons when compared to other ethnicities of the same gender. As of 2014, there were 109,000 Black females incarcerated in American state and federal prisons (The Sentencing Project, 2015). That number is double the 53,000 White females that populate American state and federal prisons (The Sentencing Project, 2015). Additionally, Black girls have been identified as the largest growing population at U.S. juvenile detention centers (National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, 2014). These statistics demonstrate a need for responsive strategies for Black female students to ensure they are able to achieve in their secondary setting and move on to become productive citizens upon graduation.

Limited Research on Responsive Curriculum for Black Female Students

Educators may struggle to respond to the specific needs of Black female students due to the limited literature and studies about the specific needs of this population. Several studies and reviews have been conducted about general educational issues that plague young Black students, with a particular focus on Black males; however, limited research exists about the educational experiences of Black females (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008). Research that does exist generally tends to be qualitative studies, including "rich, thick" descriptions of educators' perspectives on the Black female experience (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008, p. 164). These studies also tend to emphasize behavior and disciplinary issues faced by Black female students with a lack of attention given to the curriculum and academic needs of this population. Even though the aforementioned qualitative studies contribute to the discussion about the needs of Black

female students, studies that include the voices of Black female students, as well as

information regarding curriculum and academic success for these students is needed.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Numerous research studies emphasize the impact of culturally responsive

education on the achievement of diverse students. According to Gay (2010) and Ladson-

Billings (1995) when educators integrate culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy,

students are able to connect prior knowledge to new materials and grasp the content. One

of the first steps to implementing culturally responsive curriculum and instruction

includes educators becoming culturally competent. According to Cartledge and Kourea

(2008), children who are divergent from the dominant culture are at risk of being

misconstrued and "having their actions judged unfairly" (p. 352). Black females are

sometimes judged due to their divergent personalities from their instructors. Thus,

infusing culturally responsive practices can curb some of the issues that lead to discipline

infractions and clashes in the classroom. Additionally, hearing from Black female

students and understanding their experiences can provide more insight regarding the

educational needs of this population.

Limited Voices of Black Female Students in Current Research

Voice is synonymous with agency, power, and presence, as well as the ability to

speak up and say what is on one's mind (Cook-Sather, 2006). Black female students'

voices have been included in research; however, they are often included in relationship to

their Black male counterparts (Collins, 2015). Current research has largely excluded the

voices of Black female students in the secondary setting in regard to their educational

needs and curriculum and instruction (M.W. Morris, 2016). In fact, only recently has

educational research begun to include studies that consider race, class, and gender and the interactions of these social constructs (E.W. Morris, 2007). When studies are conducted involving Black female students and education, they often involve disaggregated data about Black female students disciplinary and behavior experiences, without including qualitative data from the students (e.g., studies conducted by Annamma et al., 2016; Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). On the other hand, M.W. Morris (2016) interviewed several Black girls for her book on the criminalization of Black females, providing an "opportunity to center Black girls in our discussion" (p. 188). Through the study, M.W. Morris (2016) discovered Black female students "want to see themselves as fully integrated into the content being taught in schools, and they want to feel that their voices are not just being heard, but respected" (p. 189). Thus, considering the findings from M.W. Morris (2016) and the limited inclusion of Black female students' voices in previous research, the voices of this population was essential in this research to empower this population and assist in the credibility of the study's findings.

Theoretical Rationale for Reconceptualization of the Curriculum Framework

The reconceptualist theory of curriculum, as coined by William Pinar in 1975, seeks to decrease the inequalities perpetuated by traditional curriculum practices (Pinar, 1988). Reconceptualists believe that a traditional curriculum is prescriptive, technical, and insensitive (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Further, Apple (1993) explained that curricula should be subjective, encompassing the diverse cultural, social, and historical backgrounds of student populations. In other words, curriculum must be concerned with recognizing the differences of all students in order to curb inequities (Apple, 1993). Additionally, McLaren (2003) noted society's inequities and schools' ability to emulate

said injustices, concluding that educators should strive to create pedagogy that emphasizes freedom from oppression instead of the traditional focus on skill and knowledge transmission. Thus, the goal of reconceptualists is to provide shifts in curriculum that will emancipate students, and therefore society, from traditional practices and integrate new ideals that are responsive to gender and racial roles and attitudes (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

There are numerous policies and programs in place to assist minority males; yet, efforts to educate and respond to the unique needs of Black females in the secondary school setting have long gone undiscovered and, essentially, ignored. A lack of educational research about Black female students and the specific needs of this population continues to perpetuate increases in disciplinary infractions for Black females in the secondary setting, underrepresentation in honors and specialty programs, such as AP, STEM, and Charter programs (Hill et al., 2010; United States Department Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014), and, most importantly, unresponsive formal, or written, and enacted, or taught, curriculum.

This study seeks to identify and interpret formal, or written, secondary English language arts (ELA) and social studies curriculum documents in a specific school district in relationship to the specific needs of Black female students. Additionally, this study seeks to examine and interpret Black female students' beliefs and perspectives about the formal and enacted curriculum in the same specific school district. The specific problem to be investigated in this study is how current formal secondary English language arts and social studies curricula used in a specific school district aligns with and differs from those

culturally responsive strategies and practices identified to meet the needs of Black female students, as well as how Black female students experienced the enacted and formal curricula.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. In *Southern School District*, how do the formal English language arts (ELA) and social studies curriculum align with and differ from current research on educational strategies and practices that are responsive to the needs of Black female students?

2. What are the perceptions of Black female students who attended various middle and high schools within *Southern School District* regarding ELA and social studies curricula?

Significance of the Study

As previously discussed, this study was conducted to hear the voices of Black female students, as well as provide educational leaders, including curriculum directors, school administrators, and others involved in the design, development, and evaluation of curriculum, with findings that might improve the academic success of Black female students in the secondary setting. Although there are numerous studies focusing on issues for Black youth and problems plaguing minority males, Black females and their educational experiences have long been ignored. The findings of this study can serve as a guide for curriculum changes in various secondary school settings. Curriculum leaders, as well as other educational leaders, can use the discoveries from the study to increase culturally responsive instructional strategies in curricula and encourage top-down shifts in policies and programs that are responsive to the needs of Black female students.

Overview of the Study

      Through a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), the researcher reviewed the written transcripts from seven interviews that were conducted with Black female undergraduate students in which they reflected on their time as students in the secondary setting. Further, the QCA included an analysis of formal, or written, curricula. The analysis of the collected data was completed using hand coding by the researcher. A peer reviewer also debriefed with the researcher, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings. Finally, an external auditor reviewed the study's procedures and the collected data for trustworthiness.

<center>**Definition of Terms**</center>

      The following definitions serve to assist the reader in better understanding specific terms used throughout the study.

Black female students: Students who are currently undergraduates in college, who identify as female, African American, or another race/ethnicity of African descent

Culturally responsive: Educational materials or resources that seem to respond to the social and cultural aspects of diverse populations

Curriculum: A flexible plan of intended and unintended learning outcomes that assist educators with providing relevant and applicable instruction to culturally, ethnically, sexually, and linguistically diverse student populations to influence changes in students and society as a whole.

Curriculum director: An individual who is an expert in creating, revising, and implementing curriculum; can have expertise in administration and curriculum, general content knowledge

Educational administrator: A professional educator in the position of principal and assistant principal in public middle and high school at the urban school district

Instruction: The transferring of new information and/or skills from one person to another

Instructional strategies: Procedures to be included in the formal, written curriculum that should be enacted into the classroom

Instructional practices: The enacting of the formal, written curriculum in the classroom

Intersectionality: Overlapping experiences (e.g., race and gender; sexual orientation and race) that lead to discrimination

Secondary setting: A public school that serves either students attending middle school (Grades 6-8), high school (Grades 9-12), or a combination of the grade range of 6-12

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Substantial literature and studies exist regarding the importance of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, as well as culturally relevant pedagogy for marginalized and underrepresented students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Further, extant literature has reviewed the impact of various educational programs and initiatives implemented across K-12 schools in the United States for Black males in an effort to increase this population's academic achievement (2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys, 2010; Sherwin, Wedekind, & Reynoso-Palley, 2016; Council of the Great City Schools, 2012; Schott Foundation, 2016). However, limited research discusses the specific impact of culturally relevant or responsive curriculum and how these strategies might impact the academic success of Black females.

Culturally responsive curriculum research and its relationship to the academic achievement of minorities is relevant to the proposed study as Black females are a disenfranchised population. According to research conducted by Gafford-Muhammad and Dixson (2008) and Kynard (2010), Black female students are currently not fully benefiting from traditional K-12 practices. Thus, curricula in most K-12 schools may need to be reconceptualized to include responsive practices for Black females. The emphasis on Black males and their academic success in academic research denotes the lack of focus on Black females. To address the absence of Black females' voices in the formal curriculum, this study sought to examine current formal curriculum and the

perception of Black female students regarding the inaction of said curriculum. This review of literature provides insight on the reconceptualist theory of curriculum (Apple, 1993; Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2014; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013) that drives this study, as well as a review of empirical studies and other relevant literature regarding the proposed study's research questions. First, an overview of the reconceptualist theory of curriculum is provided, including specific ideology from Freire (1970) and McLaren (2014) regarding oppression and critical pedagogy. Next, a review of studies concerning the impact of culturally responsive curriculum on marginalized and underrepresented students in K-12 settings is presented. This section is followed by a review of existing, albeit limited, studies and literature in response to the unique academic needs of Black females as well as an examination of national programs and initiatives designed for the academic achievement of Black males. The examination of initiatives for Black males is presented to demonstrate the kinds of programs that could be integrated for Black females. Finally, studies and literature that denote the role of the educational leader (e.g., curriculum director, instructional leader, etc.) in designing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum will be evaluated.

Reconceptualist Theory of Curriculum

Reconceptualists assert that curriculum practices must be modified to reflect modern educational processes and outcomes. Reconceptualists share this belief because they think extant curriculum in K-12 settings perpetuate inequities, oppression, and discrimination for specific groups (Apple, 1993; Freire, 1970; Illich, 1971; McLaren, 2014). Contributions to research from reconceptualist scholars and theorists vary. Some theorists emphasize the negative impact of current schooling on students and society

(Apple, 1993; Illich, 1971), whereas others focus on the impact of pedagogical shifts and how this can enhance academic success (Freire, 1970; Greene, 2000; McLaren, 2014). For instance, Freire (1970) believed that reconceptualist curriculum should underscore human problems and all curricula should be created with the mindset of imparting societal change. Like Freire, many reconceptualists' ideals are deeply rooted in reconstructionist philosophy and, thus, these scholars emphasize gender and race roles and attitudes, the role of an individual's socioeconomic status, and the impact of politics on curriculum development and implementation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and McLaren's (2014) critical pedagogy are two reconceptualists ideals reviewed for this proposed research. Freire's (1970) theory will be used because it emphasizes the impact of educational changes that can be made for groups who are continuously oppressed based on societal norms. McLaren's critical pedagogy theory discusses the importance of questioning the status quo, as well as realizing the role of schools in perpetuating inequities in American society.

Freire's Oppression Theory

According to Freire (1970), those who are oppressed must be included in creating a pedagogy that is responsive to their needs. The pedagogy of the oppressed theory asserts that oppressed people struggle with a duality that makes them fearful of being free from their oppressor. Freire (1970) described the oppressed individual's struggle with freedom as they have become used to accepting the oppressor's ideas and guidelines. If the oppressed rejects the oppressor's perceptions, they then have to replace those ideas with their own, inserting autonomy and responsibility (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) asserts it is essential for those who are oppressed to develop and implement the curriculum that

will liberate them from suppression. Having the oppressors develop or design the curriculum would be a contradiction, as the pedagogy would most likely be lacking in liberating content (Freire, 1970).

The goal of creating curricula based on Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is to encourage students from marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds to develop self-realization. When students develop self-realization, Freire (1970), believed this could lead to the liberation of said students as well as others who may be oppressed. Those who are oppressed, according to Freire (1970), are viewed as agents of change. These individuals are tasked with breaking a cycle of self-deprecation and the self-fulfilling prophecy of laziness and limited understanding. Instead, the oppressed should engage in humanizing processes, reminding themselves and others that students are not subjects to be manipulated by teachers, but instead, students enter classrooms with differing levels of prior knowledge, varied interests, and unique cultural backgrounds (Freire, 1970; Greene, 2000).

Haymes (2002) recognized the impact of Freire's works on radical educational change, denoting that Freire's writing, specifically *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, has influenced literacy efforts in Latin America and the United States. However, Haymes (2002) asserted that Freire's theoretical and philosophical approach to pedagogy might not have considered all aspects of what it meant to be an African American in the United States. The basic model behind popular education in Latin America encouraged working class individuals to understand their collective condition and thus work to become educated enough to stop relying on their oppressors. Haymes (2002) stated then that Freire's pedagogy is based on class and not race, despite Brazil's large Afro-Brazilian

culture. Haymes (2002) criticized Freire for ignoring the lower class African culture and instead emphasizing the working class Latino culture. Additionally, Haymes (2002) asserted that Freire's pedagogy is limited in that it does not focus on liberating "black people" (p. 157) considering the theory ignores racism and emphasizes class and social status.

Further, in their article about integrating critical consciousness in the classroom from the point of view of privileged individuals, Allen and Rossatto (2009) discussed the difficulties of collective consciousness and dialogic relationships in diverse classrooms. Allen and Rossatto (2009) stated that Freire's ideas are more ideologic and not representative of American classrooms as students come from varied backgrounds but are often instructed by those from privileged backgrounds. Allen and Rossattto (2009) asserted that the oppressed student might not always recognize that they are, in fact, oppressed. Subsequently, the instructor, or the oppressor, may not realize they are doing anything wrong by continuing to provide students with assistance or responses throughout instruction (Allen & Rossatto, 2009). Awareness and cultural competence training becomes important in situations such as the aforementioned (Allen & Rossatto, 2009).

Despite the aforesaid critiques, Freire's (1970) theoretical ideas, such as critical consciousness and the dialogical relationship between students and instructors, led to further reconceptualist philosophies. Amongst these theorists and philosophies is McLaren (2014) and the idea of critical pedagogy. This reconceptualist approach is a radical educational theory that encourages shifts to current curriculum and instruction practices in K-12 classrooms.

McLaren's Critical Pedagogy

Current curricula and pedagogical praxis often emphasize the ideals associated with the majority social class, making assumptions about students' readiness, beliefs, and values (McLaren, 2014). Those who align with the views of critical education are dedicated to "creating engaging and vibrant spaces where students—adults and young people alike—are encouraged to question dominant epistemological, axiological, and political assumptions that are often taken for granted and often prop up the dominant social class" (McLaren, 2014, p. 8). The critical educator wonders how and why knowledge is constructed in a particular manner and further questions why some constructions of knowledge are legitimized by the dominant culture as other knowledge constructions are left out of pedagogical praxis (McLaren, 2009).

As well as discussing critical pedagogy, McLaren (2014), like Freire (1970), recognizes the impact of oppression in education. In *Life in Schools*, McLaren (2014) discusses oppression in a modern context, distinguishing among various oppressed groups, such as women and Black people. Further, McLaren (2014) discusses how these individuals are impacted by current curriculum practices. For instance, McLaren (2014) asserts that there are various facets of oppression that impact the aforesaid groups and it is vital that we recognize how modern oppression is manifested. According to Young (1992), oppression is the "unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media, and cultural stereotypes…and the normal ongoing processes of everyday life" (p. 177). Also, McLaren recognized that oppression of specific groups could lead to disenfranchisement (McLaren, 2014).

To avoid disenfranchisement in education, McLaren (2014) suggested that the critical educator critique the status quo. The critical educator is someone who recognizes the importance of posing questions as opposed to seeking answers and solutions (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2014). Those who ascribe to critical education theory, thus believing that curriculum and instruction must be reconstructed or reconceptualized, argue that schools are not serving the purposes that many Americans have assumed schools should fulfill. On the other hand, critical education theorists assert that schools are doing the opposite, suggesting that schools do not provide opportunities for social and economic mobility, or self and social empowerment (McLaren, 2014). Curricula are currently being created to serve those who are powerful while ignoring the populations who are disenfranchised, perpetuating inequalities amongst the dominant majority and those who are oppressed (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2014).

McLaren (2014) has asserted that students must be involved in their educational change. Further, he has provided ideas about deconstructing inequities through curricula as students become agents of change. With that being said, Ellison (2009) has criticized McLaren's theories, calling McLaren "utopic" (p. 327) in his approach. Ellison (2009) also stated that McLaren's view of radical and socialist educational change does not live up to McLaren's Marxist school of thought. Basically, Ellison (2009) is saying that McLaren's critical pedagogy theory has attempted to infuse Marxism; however, McLaren's philosophy goes too far Left. McLaren has also been criticized by feminist and postmodern scholars due to his lack of representing the struggle of women and emphasizing class and social structure (Ellison, 2009). Thus, McLaren responded to these

critiques by applying his critical pedagogy theories to deconstruct capitalist society and accentuate the need for a new social structure (Ellison, 2009).

Summary of Reconceptualist Theories

Several reconceptualists are varied in their approach to changing curricula in K-12 education; however, Freire and McLaren, as well as many other reconceptualists, share some philosophies. The reconceptualist theory of curriculum states that curricula should liberate as opposed to dehumanizing or oppressing students (Apple, 1993; Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2014) McLaren's critical pedagogy and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed theories discuss the societal divide that perpetuates the cycle of marginalized groups receiving limited representation in current curriculum practices. The theories suggest that educators must provide opportunities for reflection, questioning, and co-creation with those who are oppressed in an effort to challenge the status quo. With that being said, there have been recent efforts to integrate responsive curriculum for disenfranchised and oppressed groups in K-12 schools; however, the research remains limited surrounding Black females and the formal curriculum.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Marginalized Populations

As the United States continues to become more diverse, public school populations mimic national demographics. According to Bireda and Chait (2011), Black and Latino students make up over 46% of students in elementary and secondary schools while only 17.3% of educators are Black and Latino. This disconnect is apparent in the lack of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum and instruction for specific marginalized populations (Gay, 2010; Harry & Klingner, 2006). With that being said, several school

districts and researchers have made concentrated efforts to include curriculum and instructional strategies that are responsive to diverse populations.

Reflecting Marginalized Students in the Curriculum

An aspect of culturally responsive curriculum includes integrating students' cultural background into the design and development of the learning plan (Chigeza, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billing, 1995). Castro and Sujak (2014) conducted a qualitative study to determine how sexual minority students, or individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning, could feel more included in the formal curriculum. The researchers interviewed six Hispanic students and took the written statements of 10 faculty members to examine the "heteronormative" (Castro & Sujak, 2014, p. 455) hidden curriculum's role in a high school's academic and social curriculum and what impact it had on the exclusion of homosexual teens. Upon reviewing the data, Castro and Sujak (2014) determined that sexual minority students felt ignored and as if their culture was not reflected in the formal curriculum. In other words, the homosexual teens at the particular school reported that their culture was not mentioned in the classroom and they did not feel supported by their educators (Castro & Sujak, 2014). The researchers noted that the teachers had the ability to exercise freedom in their classroom and deviate from prescribed curriculum; however, sexual minorities still reported feelings of exclusion (Castro & Sujak, 2014).

Further, Harris and Reynolds (2014) developed a mixed methods study with the goal of understanding what kind of content was included in history curriculum at schools in England, why this content was included, and how students, specifically minorities, responded to the history curriculum. The study was conducted with two classes at four

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different schools, simultaneously. The researchers solicited survey responses from students and also conducted focus groups, dividing students into small groups based on their race or ethnicity. Harris and Reynolds (2014) decided to split the students up into ethnic majority and minority groups during the focus groups to encourage students to not feel hindered about sharing issues related to ethnicity. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that the students in the minority groups did not have strong personal connections to the history content and did not have a sense of understanding history in terms of developing a sense of identity (Harris & Reynolds, 2014).

Much like sexual minorities, students who are ethnically diverse often feel underrepresented by the formal curriculum (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Castro & Sujak, 2014; Harris & Reynolds, 2014). For instance, Black students may note that they are rarely mentioned in the history curriculum, unless there is a discussion about slavery (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Harris & Reynolds, 2014). In a mixed-methods text analysis of history curriculum conducted by Anderson and Metzger (2011) the researchers discovered that at least four states include African Americans within the curriculum. However, the inclusion of African Americans in said curricula is generally "superficial and trivializes systemic institutional contexts of slavery and racial hierarchy" (Anderson & Metzger, 2011, p. 401). The researchers also concluded that the curricula did not inspire students to think critically about race and race relations, instead encouraging nationalism and a sense of "social cohesion" (Anderson & Metzger, 2011, p. 401). The curricula reviewed for the abovementioned study did not allow for students to consider various perspectives about content such as the ideology of slavery. Additionally, a common thread among the curricula reviewed is the tendency to "depersonalize"

(Anderson & Metzger, 2011, p. 401) slavery, portraying the institution, and all of the consequences that followed, as a minor barrier to modern American nationalism.

Further, Asian and Latina/o students also find themselves not reflected in curricula or misrepresented by content placed in learning plans (Bondy, 2012; Endo, 2012; Rubin, 2014). In a study conducted with six Japanese American high school students, Endo (2012) collected these students' narratives to determine if they felt represented by their schools' curricula. After reviewing and analyzing the data, Endo (2012) concluded that "Asian Americans were mostly absent from the curricula" (p. 7). The students noted that some of the participants did acknowledge that their schools offered ethnic studies elective courses; however, all students were not required to take these courses thus not becoming exposed to Asian cultures (Endo, 2012). Similarly, Rubin (2014) asserts that in modern classrooms Latina/o students are almost invisible in English language arts (ELA) curricula (Medina, 2004). Further, Rojas (2010) stated that practitioners and researchers do not seem to be making efforts to reflect the culture of Latina/o students through the literature and assignments in ELA curricula. According to Rubin (2014), Latina/o students should be equipped with the tools to view their curriculum through a social justice and multicultural lens. Thus, if minority students are expected to question the status quo and think critically about academic curricula, educators must be trained on how to provide students with these skills (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Castro & Sujak, 2014; Endo, 2012; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Rubin, 2014).

Training Teachers to be Culturally Responsive and Competent

The findings of the aforementioned studies (Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Castro & Sujak, 2014; Endo, 2012; Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Rubin, 2014) are demonstrative of the need for increased training for all educators. Teachers who are not exposed to professional development that provides them with skills to instruct students from diverse background are not prepared for a 21st century classroom (Council for Exceptional Children, 2002). Cultural competence training for faculty and staff members can eliminate biases in the classroom as this training usually requires educators to acknowledge implicit, and sometimes explicit biases toward marginalized groups in K-12 classrooms. According to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2002), "administrators, faculty, and staff bring into the workplace their own assumptions, theories and beliefs about students" (p. 30). Therefore, it becomes the administrators' task to eliminate these biases through training and staff development to alter the school's climate. When educators are aware of their own biases and are more familiar with their students' cultures, they become more culturally aware (Guiberson, 2009). Cultural competence is a step toward building teacher preparedness and administrators are responsible for helping educators build upon this leadership skill. According to the CEC (2002), "cultural competence assumes that individuals are able to relate and communicate effectively with individuals who do not share the same culture, ethnicity, and/or language" (p. 31). The concept of cultural competence requires teachers to do more than just receive content (Guiberson, 2009). Educators who are "culturally responsive" (CEC, 2002, p. 31) demonstrate the ability to respect students' "ethnic, sociocultural, and linguistic diversity" (CEC, 2002, p. 31).

To respond to cultural competence needs, school administrators should include diversity training in all professional development activities and they also need to consider cultural competence when seeking new hires (CEC, 2002). When creating professional development activities, administrators can require teachers to take a pre and post surveys, such as the Cultural Competence Self-Reflection Tool (Beatty, Moore, & Perez-Mendez, 1995). During training sessions, administrators can also set up scenarios that may occur during class time to ensure that teachers can handle situations that may result in biases and/or racism. Guiberson (2009) suggested several methods for training teachers in cultural competence, such as participating in "field experience [that] may foster cultural sensitivity and competence and compel educators to incorporate instructional strategies into their teaching to match the cultural and linguistic needs of students" (p. 170). The use of coaching and hands-on learning has been found to increase in-service teachers' awareness of cultural competences (August & Seigel, 2006; Guiberson, 2009). Another strategy for cultural competency is when administrators employ new teachers who are highly qualified and also from diverse backgrounds (CEC, 2002; Guiberson, 2009). When administrators incorporate diverse faculty and staff so students can see mentors who look like them "in light of changing demographics" (CEC, 2002, p. 32), the school climate becomes healthier.

Limited Studies on Black Female Students' Academic Success

Policymakers and educators are beginning to recognize a growing need for responsive instructional strategies and programs for Black female students. As noted in Chapter 1, it has been observed that Black females are often misunderstood in the general classroom due to cultural misperceptions. As observed by M.W. Morris (2016), in

general, society lacks cultural competence and is unable to understand the distinctions of a specific gender, thus, Black females are often punished for their behaviors and personalities. This punishment manifests in the form of Black females being subjected to unfair disciplinary practices, or being stereotyped and ignored in the classroom (Annamma et al., 2016; Apple, 1999; Evans-Winter, 2005; Hing, 2014: M.W. Morris, 2016; Rollock, 2007).

When conducting a qualitative study with over 50 participants, Rollock (2007) asserted that although Black females were generally ignored in their metropolitan secondary school, they also suffered from a high number of suspensions and exclusions. Black females are twice as likely to be "permanently excluded from school compared with the total school population and their White female peers" (Rollock, 2007, p. 198). Upon conducting semi-structured interviews, Rollock (2007) stated that the school exclusions could be attributed to educators associating Black females with their race. Rollock (2007) found that "the visibility and negative meanings afforded to Blackness…is evident also in the nervous gaze leant to their Black bodies" (p. 201).

Similar to the statistics included in Rollock's (2007) study in regard to discipline issues, M.W. Morris (2016) noted that Black females make up about 16% of the female student population in American public schools; however, they make up about one-third of all girls referred to law enforcement, as well as one-third of all females arrested on school grounds (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014). Further, Black students constitute about 18% of students enrolled in preschool; however this same population makes up about 42% of preschool aged students who have experienced out of school suspension (United States Department Office of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). These statistics

demonstrate a need for educational practices and disciplinary strategies that are responsive to the needs of Black students, particularly Black females.

In an empirical mixed method study conducted by Annamma et al. (2016), the researchers attempted to determine whether or not Black girls are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline practices. The authors also sought to discover whether or not Black girls were referred for disciplinary infractions based on objective or subjective behaviors. To find answers to their research questions, Annamma et al. (2016) employed quantitative methods in which they reviewed disciplinary infractions for Black females in the largest urban school district in Colorado to determine patterns for referrals and any exclusionary outcomes. Next, the researchers used qualitative methods to determine if the reasons for educators submitting disciplinary referrals for the Black female students were for objective or subjective behaviors and if they aligned with the Black female students' accounts.

Using a sample of over 3,000 participants, Annamma et al. (2016) found statistically significant differences between Black females and other females of racial backgrounds in five out of 16 of the referral categories. These five categories were detrimental behaviors, disobedience and defiance, third-degree assault, drug possession, and alcohol violation. After gathering these results, the researchers sorted the Black females' violations into subjective (based on perceptions) and objective (based on verifiable actions) categories based on definitions found in the school district's handbook. The researchers' goal was to determine whether Black females were punished more often for subjective referrals. The results indicated that Black females were most likely referred

for subjective reasons, and conversely, they were less likely to be referred for objective reasons (Annamma et al., 2016).

Rollock (2007) acknowledged that Black girls occupy an invisible space in schools as emphasis is often placed on Black males when educators are asked about academically successful Black pupils. Additionally, Rollock (2007) stated that Black females are not acknowledged during conversations about academic successes or failures (Apple, 1999). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 school staff members and 24 students at an inner-city secondary school in London to determine why Black females are often ignored in their environment. After conducting over 50 interviews, Rollock (2007) found that Black females are usually ignored in the classroom because by the nature of their gender, educators viewed them as motivated and organized, situating the girls in a position of needing less "surveillance" than the boys (p. 199). Additionally, during their interviews the educators did not give the females identifying features, whereas they attributed gender and ethnic features to the males, using phrases like "Afro-Cuban" during their interviews (Rollock, 2007).

As well as being invisible, Black females are often subjected to stereotypes in the classroom (Annamma et al., 2016; Evans-Winters, 2005; Hing, 2014; M.W. Morris, 2016; Rollock, 2007). According to Annamma et al. (2016), Black girls in the school district studied were referred to the administrator for reasons that were reflective of common stereotypes. For example, behaviors such as being too loud, having a bad attitude, or acting "ghetto" were seen as being defiant, disobedient, or detrimental to the class environment (Annamma et al., 2016). Further, the behaviors that were often referred

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are grounded in historical stereotypes, such as being "mouthy" (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 21) or too loud, generally these behaviors are deemed unladylike (Annamma et al., 2016).

The limited empirical research that has been conducted regarding the Black female experience in the K-12 setting is demonstrative of the unique intersection caused by racism and sexism for this population. Black females are generally impacted by educators who lack cultural competence and thus engage in stereotyping, ignoring, or taking disciplinary action toward the student, as well as not including culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. With that being said, the Black male K-12 academic experience has been thoroughly reviewed, producing several policies and programs. Policymakers and practitioners can use the resulting policies and initiatives as guidelines when creating responsive strategies for Black females.

Emphasis on Black Male Students' Academic Achievement

Practitioners and scholars have placed heavy emphasis on Black male students in K-12 education due to their overrepresentation in special education programs, high dropout rates, and the likelihood of these students becoming imprisoned (Council of the Great City Schools, 2012. Several programs, policies, and procedures have been implemented in response to the needs of Black male students. In fact, much scholarly research and studies have emphasized the needs of young Black males leaving Black female students on the sidelines. In 2010, three studies were conducted, revealing that less than half of Black male students graduated from high school, Black males were more likely to be referred to special education services, and Black males were three times more likely to be suspended when compared to their White peers (2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys, 2010; Council of the Great City Schools, 2012 Schott Foundation, 2016.

Following the release of the three aforementioned studies, several programs and initiatives were created in various school districts across the nation to acknowledge the needs of Black males.

Cincinnati Public Schools initiated the Men Organized, Respectful and Educated (M.O.R.E.) throughout their district in 2011, promoting leadership opportunities and chances for academic growth for Black males in their public schools (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2016). The M.O.R.E. program emphasizes character education for Black and other minority males in an effort to increase academic achievement and the graduation rates of this population. The M.O.R.E. clubs at all schools have enrichment opportunities such as financial literacy, health and wellness, social skills development, and community service (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2016).

As well as this initiative at Cincinnati Public Schools, Antioch Unified Public School District in Antioch, California, created a similar program to increase the academic success of Black males called the African American Male Achievement Initiative in 2013. This initiative has created opportunities for African American males in Antioch's K-12 public schools, including providing these students with scholarships for college, working to decrease the number of referrals to special education, as well as the number of Black males suspended or expelled. This initiative and Cincinnati's district wide program are only two examples of the over thirty-five programs and initiatives that have been implemented in public school districts across the nation to respond to the needs of Black males. Several of these programs, such as Richmond Public Schools' (in Richmond, Virginia) Black Male Initiative, provide Black male students with mentors and positive role models from a minority background to encourage academic success among this

population. In reviewing all of the guidelines, goals, and objectives of the programs and initiatives mentioned, all of them ignore the needs of minority females.

In May 2016, Sherwin, Wedekind, & Reynoso-Palley, 2016 released a report in which they analyzed the "Empowering Males of Color (EMOC)" initiative, which was in practice in Washington, DC. The report notes that EMOC ignores the needs of Black females despite research indicating that "girls of color suffer from many of the same problems as boys of color, including poverty, a highly racially segregated school system, overpolicing, racial bias, and high incidence of family violence and trauma" (Sherwin et al., 2016, p. 1). As well as suffering from the same issues as their male counterparts, Black females sometimes have unique issues that may hinder their academic success, such as family responsibilities, teen pregnancy, and "gender based violence" (Sherwin et al., 2016, p. 1; Smith-Evans & George, 2014).

The abovementioned report exemplifies the importance of policies and programs needed to respond to the educational needs of Black females in the K-12 setting. Using programs and policies that have been created for Black males and extending them for Black females is one step toward solving the problem of limited responsive strategies for this population. Educators who are in a unique position to effect systemic changes, including responsive strategies for Black females, are building administrators, or principals and assistant principals.

The Role of Educational Leaders in Curriculum Implementation and Evaluation

Educational leaders, including curriculum developers, specialists, or program directors, as well as building administrators (i.e., principals and assistant principals), have an impact on curricula decisions in their respective school districts and buildings,

whether these individuals are asked to consider a new curriculum design, or they must

evaluate the implementation of curricula in various classrooms. The educational leader's

role changes based on the power given to them from the superintendent and school board.

Some curriculum directors, building administrators, and teacher leaders can develop new

curricula, while others are limited in this capacity. Regardless, in some capacity the

educational leader will play a role in designing, developing, implementing, evaluating, or

revising culturally responsive pedagogy or curricula (DeMatthews, 2014).

Educational Leaders as Implementers of Curricula

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2013), successful curriculum implementation

occurs because of effective people, programs, and processes. The educational leader must

support the inaction of a revised or new curriculum by developing tools to check for

fidelity of implementation, creating professional development sessions for educators in

which the purposes, goals, and instructional strategies of the curriculum are clearly

denoted, and providing opportunities for shared collaboration and shared decision making

(Binda, 1991; Hockett, 2015; Mojkowski, 2016).

Hockett (2015) conducted a study in which the implementation of a peace

curriculum in a Kenyan Quaker secondary school was examined. The researcher selected

14 schools to review for the study and conducted on site observations of 12 of the

schools, and interviewed all the principals at each school. Hockett (2015) ranked the

schools at levels of low, medium, or high implementation. Low implementation included

those schools that minimally integrated the curriculum through guest speakers,

counseling sessions, or other events; further, medium implementation was demonstrated

by use of the curriculum through counseling sessions or Life Skills courses; however the

school had not made its way through the entire curriculum; and, high implementation was noted by intentional use of the curriculum throughout the entire school, including evidence that teachers had been trained on how to use the curriculum and the curriculum had been integrated into the regular course schedule (Hockett, 2015). The researcher found that 12 of the 14 schools examined in the study ranked at medium to high levels of implementation and that the administrator's leadership was essential to integrating the peace curriculum at these schools (Hockett, 2015).

Hockett (2015) asserted that the success, or failure, of implementation of the peace curriculum in these particular schools seemed to relate to the administrator's approach during the implementation process. Schools that resulted in high levels of implementation seemed to have leaders that demonstrated transformational leadership characteristics (Hockett, 2015). The transformational leader attempts to get his or her team on board with their vision by sharing the goals and aims of the vision and allowing the team to share in decision-making (Fullan, 1991; Hockett, 2015). Hockett (2015) noted that in the schools with medium to high levels of implementation, the leaders demonstrated these traits of transformational leadership and the teachers were more likely to be invested in the curriculum and its implementation.

Binda (1991) conducted a seminal qualitative study in which it was also concluded that the school administrators should engage in transformational leadership practices, motivating the faculty and staff to participate in the change process through shared decision-making. These educational leaders allowed teams of teachers to participate in collegial or collaborative decision making about a revised curriculum (Binda, 1991). Further, the administrators in this study modeled instruction, provided

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professional development and ongoing training for the new and revised curricula, and provided resources when available (Binda, 1991). Providing ongoing professional development is essential for effective implementation as also noted by Hockett (2015). As Hockett (2015) observed the Quaker schools for the implementation of peace curriculum, it was noted that school leaders provided support in the form of training and professional development to ensure teachers were enacting the curriculum effectively.

In Binda's (1991) qualitative study, 14 elementary school principals and ten randomly selected teachers at each of the principal's schools were observed and interviewed to answer the following questions: (1) *What do the principals say they do to implement curriculum?*, and (2) *What do the teachers say the principals do?* Binda (1991) found that curricula should be flexible enough so that when it is enacted in the classroom, teachers have the freedom to interpret the material how they see fit. Additionally, the researcher found that school leaders should engage in participatory planning on new and revised curricula to ensure flexibility before implementation (Binda, 1991).

Educational Leaders Preparation for Curriculum Changes

Educational administrators must be provided with courses, training, and resources to effectively impact shifts in curricula in K-12 schools. Teachers and teacher leaders often take courses on curriculum; however, less typical are graduate courses emphasizing the role of various educational leaders (e.g., educational administrators and curriculum directors) in curriculum. With that being said, one of the many roles of building administrators and curriculum directors is to act as instructional leaders. Thus, the instructional leader must ensure curriculum is implemented to fidelity in the classroom.

According to Hallinger (2005), an instructional leader manages the school's educational program by supervising and evaluating curriculum and instruction, coordinating what kind of curricula is implemented, and evaluating students' progress. Thus, the instructional leader is involved with ensuring students are exposed to appropriate and relevant educational materials.

Summary

Infusing culturally responsive curriculum into the formal curriculum encourages educators to be responsive to the needs of various students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Due to various issues, such as high dropout rates and the likelihood to be incarcerated, Black male students have received much attention from policymakers and practitioners. The programs and initiatives discussed in this chapter are merely a glimpse into the aid provided for Black male students; however, Black female students continue to be ignored, despite growing evidence that these students require educational assistance as they suffer from similar issues as their male counterparts (Annamma et al., 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). As instructional leaders, curriculum directors, school administrators, and teacher leaders must set clear expectations for teaching and learning by influencing the development, implementation, evaluation, and revision of intended learning outcomes or objectives in the written curriculum (Binda, 1991; Hockett, 2015; Mojkowski, 2016).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter 3 provides details regarding the research design and methodology of the study, describing the design, research strategy, plan to gain participants, as well as data collection and analysis. Finally, the delimitations and limitations for the study will also be explained as the researcher seeks to answer the following research questions:

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. In *Southern School District*, how does the formal English language arts (ELA) and social studies curriculum align with and differ from current research on educational strategies and practices that are responsive to the needs of Black female students?

2. What are the perceptions of Black female students who attended various middle and high schools within *Southern School District* regarding ELA and social studies curricula?

Study Design

Much of the research reviewed and included in the literature review for this study is either qualitative research focused on educator's perspectives of the experiences of Black female students, studies revolving around disciplinary problems, or quantitative studies demonstrating the issues faced by Black females in secondary education. With that being said, there are limited qualitative studies in existence regarding the responsiveness of formal curriculum to the needs of Black female students, as well as the perspective of Black female students as to how responsive the formal and enacted curricula is to their needs. Thus, this study sought to examine the perspectives of Black

female students who attended schools within a specific district regarding the formal and enacted curricula. Further, the study sought to discover whether the formal curricula in the school district included strategies and practices that may be responsive to the needs of Black female student according to extant literature. A qualitative content analysis (QCA) was conducted to examine the beliefs and perceptions of Black female students, as well as to review the written curricula in the participant's corresponding school district. Further, a qualitative content analysis approach was chosen to provide an in-depth investigation of textual evidence of formal curricula currently in use and Black female students perceptions of the aforesaid curricula.

Qualitative Research Design

As a design, qualitative research allows an individual to make assumptions and implement theoretical or conceptual frameworks to answer research questions that address "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research allows participants to share their meanings, perspectives, and multiple points of view in a natural setting (Creswell, 2013). Further, the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, constantly making observations in the field and synthesizing and analyzing information gained (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is one of several research methodologies in which a researcher engages in analyzing qualitative data collected in the format of various texts (White & Marsh, 2006). Altheide (1987) described qualitative content analysis as "a reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data

collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation" (p. 68). During the QCA study, the researcher goes through the data collected and identifies concepts and patterns (White & Marsh, 2006). According to Schreier (2012), the goal of conducting a qualitative content analysis is "to systematically describe the meaning of your material" (p. 3). The material, or data, collected for a QCA can include interview transcripts, textbooks, diaries, social media websites, and television programs (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2013; Schreier, 2012). Schreier (2012) noted data collected for a QCA study could be verbal or visual. Thus, for this QCA study, the researcher collected verbal data in the format of semi-structured interviews as well as public documents using a school district's website. These documents were the formal or written English language arts (ELA) curriculum in the form of the state's revisions of the Common Core Standards (CCS), as well as the formal social studies curriculum, which was also revised from the Common Core Standards.

The QCA design was appropriate for this study because according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Schreier (2012,) after the researcher develops the questions that drive the study and gathers selected data, the next step in conducting a QCA is to develop criteria, or a priori codes and themes, based on the study's theoretical framework, as well as existing literature relating to the study's research questions. This is referred to as the coding frame for the study (Schreier, 2012). Considering the researcher's desire to determine how existing curricula responds to the needs of Black female students regarding a specific theoretical framework, a priori codes were necessary. Therefore, the researcher created a coding frame based on extant literature regarding the needs of Black female students, culturally responsive curriculum, and the theoretical framework of the

study, reconceptualization of curriculum. Table 1 demonstrates the initial coding frame

used to analyze and code the collected data.

Table 1

Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding
Framework- Draft 1

Categories	Subcategories	Explanation of Category
Student Ownership/ Engagement	Leadership/Empowerment	curricula that encourages instructional activities in which students are able to take the lead on a given task; any instance where students are given an opportunity to think about their ability to perform a given task, revise said task based on reflection and realization, and participate in reviewing
Collaboration and Interaction	Character/Social Education	curricula that encourages instructional activities allow students to work with their peers to make meaning or draw shared conclusions; any instance where students can engage in activities that allow for teamwork, partnerships, or dialogue with their peers
Critical Pedagogy	Problem-Solving/Conflict Resolution Addressing Negative or Inappropriate Messages/Actions Questioning/Critiquing Status Quo Critical Thinking Including Varied Perspectives/Voices	curricula that encourages instructional activities enabling students to ask questions about the way society functions, participate in meaning making and the curriculum and instruction process; any instance where students can think critically, interact with educational material that includes various cultural perspectives, and effectively solve problems and address negative and inappropriate actions *Any educational materials that includes the voice of the oppressed and can/may lead to equality

Categories	Subcategories	Explanation of Category
Cultural Responsiveness	Student Values and Perspectives Include Students' Cultural Background	curricula that encourages instructional activities that involves students' prior knowledge, cultural background, and interests and values. Any educational materials or resources that respond to the social and cultural aspects of diverse populations

With that being said, the researcher followed the standard procedure for a QCA study, including determining what material should be included in the analysis (i.e., what data should be collected), selecting the units for analysis from collected data, creating coding categories and revising the categories throughout the analysis of data, coding data, and analyzing and interpreting results (Krippendorff, 2013; Schreier, 2012; United States General Accounting Office, 1989). The material included for analysis was formal, or written, social studies curricula for grades 6-12, English language arts curricula for grades 6-12, and the transcripts from semi-structured interviews that were conducted with six participants. The units of analysis from the formal curricula were the objectives (i.e., the standards from the Common Core Standards as interpreted by the southern state), or what students were expected to do during the learning process as written in the documents. In the semi-structured interviews, the units of analysis were the students' dialogue, or words, used throughout the conversations. The researcher created coding categories before collecting data (see the section below on directed content analysis) and revised said categories over three rounds of analysis, coding, and interpretation.

Directed content analysis. In a directed QCA, the researcher uses a theoretical framework or existing research to guide the study and to form the initial codes and

themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The data may be collected primarily through semi-structured or open-ended interviews and the questions used in the interviews are driven by the theoretical framework or existing literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Interviews are then coded according to the a priori coding categories based on the theoretical framework and existing literature that are driving the study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Additionally, material from the interviews that does not fit within the a priori codes will be assigned a new code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This study follows the directed QCA approach, considering existing research and a theoretical framework drive the study and a priori codes were used to analyze the interview transcripts and collected documents.

Interpretive Framework: Social Justice

According to Creswell (2013), interpretive frameworks are used in tandem with philosophical assumptions when researchers conduct a study. An interpretive framework helps situate the researcher's theoretical lens during the study and can be postpositivism, constructivism, or interpretivism. A social justice interpretive framework guided this study. Using the social justice interpretive framework, the voices of the Black female students were included to understand how these students saw themselves in the enacted curricula and to empower these individuals. Further, social justice was included as the researcher provided reciprocity throughout the progression of collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Also, in using the social justice interpretive framework, the researcher's biases were acknowledged, including researcher subjectivity, and the power held by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The aforesaid was done through journaling, memoing, and the inclusion of a peer reviewer and external auditor. Finally, the

participants were given opportunities to participate in the study by reviewing their transcripts, emergent themes, and the study's findings for credibility and trustworthiness.

Participants and Text Selection

Participants were selected for this study through purposeful sampling based on the criteria that they were Black female students who graduated from high school within the past two years. The researcher considered that students who were recent high school graduates would be able to remember their experiences with the formal and enacted curricula. Further criteria for participants were that they had to have attended middle and high school within the southern state where the researcher was reviewing the English language arts and social studies curricula. By way of convenience sampling, the participants all happened to attend the same university. This was not a criterion for the participants as the researcher did attempt to solicit more participants through snowball sampling by asking the participants if they had Black female friends who did not attend the university that may want to participate in the study. No participants were gained through snowball sampling; however, the attempt was made.

The text chosen to review for this study was based on varied factors. First, the curricula reviewed were Grades 6-12 English language arts and social studies curricula. The researcher chose to review these particular documents because the skills included in English language arts curriculum are considered to be foundational skills and strategies for other courses, such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Alber, 2014). Social studies was the other content chosen because the skills included in these courses emphasize historical knowledge that provide students with the tools to recognize their current place in society, as well as skills that encourage students to engage in decision-

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making, critical thinking, and problem solving, which are strategies that students can integrate into their work in other content areas (Dhandhania, 2016; National Council for the Social Studies, 1998).

Confidentiality

The participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews either chose a pseudonym or were given one by the researcher. The audio and transcripts of their interviews were kept on a password protected computer and shared only with the peer reviewer and external auditor for this study. Audio files were deleted from the recording device as soon as they were transcribed. Audio files were uploaded on the password protected computer; however, they will be discarded once the researcher is no longer using the audio to inform future studies. The transcribed interviews will be deleted from the password protected computer once the researcher is no longer using the interviews for future studies. Printed interviews were shredded at the completion of this study.

No personal identification information about the participants was shared with the peer reviewer or the external auditor. Further, no identification of the specific school districts within the state that these students attended was shared with individuals not involved with the study. The school district is also not divulged, as the state was referred to as *southern state*, and the school district was called *Southern School District* throughout the study. Further, the curricula reviewed for the study is also kept confidential, as the researcher does not provide direct quotations from the documents. Instead, key phrases and terms from the social studies and English language arts curriculum documents are used as examples to protect the school district's anonymity. Further information about how the key phrases and terms were chosen will be discussed

in the data analysis section of this chapter. The curriculum documents that were printed

and coded for this study were shredded after analysis was completed and the findings and

discussions were written.

Qualitative Data Collection

To gather and collect data, the researcher gained access to the participants through

current employment at a postsecondary institution within the southern state from which

the secondary curriculum documents were being reviewed. The researcher engaged in

semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) and asked the participants to answer follow-up

questions (Appendix B) for clarification through an online open-ended survey.

Additionally, documents from the school district, such as English language arts and social

studies curricula, were collected and analyzed using an initial coding framework based on

a priori codes. Table 2 illustrates the data collected for each research question. Chapter 4

includes a detailed description of the initial coding framework, analysis of the collected

data using said framework, and an explanation of the finalization of the framework

throughout analysis and coding.

Table 2

Data Collected Based on Research Questions

Research Question	Data Sources	Data Expected to be Gained
In *Southern School District*, how does the formal ELA and social studies curriculum align with and differ from current research on educational strategies and practices that are responsive to the needs of Black female students?	State mandated ELA and social studies curricula Code sheet created based on extant literature regarding culturally responsive curricula, Reconceptualization theory, and Black female students' needs	Instructional strategies that align with and differ from existing research Gaps in existing research that may be in practice in southern state
What are the perceptions of Black female students who attended various middle and high schools within *Southern School District* regarding the ELA and social studies curricula?	Semi-structured interviews Open-ended questions via online survey (follow-up to interviews)	How Black female students saw themselves reflected in the ELA and social studies curriculum through their teachers' lessons. What changes Black female students think should have been made to the ELA and social studies curricula to include their needs.

Gaining Access

The researcher gained access to the participants by completing the institutional review board (IRB) process for the current university where she is employed, denoting that she would solicit participants through convenience sampling. The researcher sent e-mails (see Appendix C) to undergraduate Black female students that she had either previously instructed or was instructing at the time. There was some bias in the sample considering the participants attended a university and therefore may be considered academically successfully. Further discussion on this bias will be included in Chapter 5. Participants were assured that the study would in no way impact or hinder their performances in her course if they were one of her current students. Further, the

researcher had to answer a question during the IRB process regarding conflicts of interest. The researcher did not discuss the study during class time, nor did she hold interviews or solicit participation during class time with any current students. Also, the researcher sought participants that were not associated with her courses by asking other faculty and staff members to forward her call for participants via e-mail. The students were given detailed information in the e-mail about the purpose of the study and the short semi-structured interview.

Students who responded to the solicitation were provided with detailed information about data collection, analysis, risks of participation (e.g., possible feelings of frustration or disappointment as they recall their experiences), as well as benefits (e.g., impacting changes in curriculum) that may come from being involved with the study. Additionally, as a small incentive, participants were given the opportunity to receive a gift card to a restaurant of their choosing for agreeing to participate and fulfilling all steps in the study (see Appendix D for the Informed Consent).

Semi-structured Interviews

In a qualitative content analysis, reviewing and analyzing semi-structured interviews allows researchers to interpret meanings that manifest from the conversations between the researcher and participants (Krippendorff, 2013). The researcher engaged in seven interviews with Black female students who recently graduated from high schools within the southern state. Table 3 denotes the self-reported demographic information of the seven interviewees. The interviews were conducted in various manners to accommodate the students' schedules, two were held face-to-face, one was conducted via e-mail, and the other three were completed over the phone. The face-to-face and phone

interviews lasted about 25 to 30 minutes as the students responded to the semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A) created by the researcher, and engaged in discussions regarding their experiences with secondary curricula. Despite conducting the interviews using various modes of communication, the peer reviewer and external auditor agreed that the trustworthiness of the data collected and findings of this study were not compromised. With that being said, when conducting an interview via e-mail, the researcher was prepared to provide follow-up questions, considering the participant and the researcher could not engage in an open-ended conversation. Additionally, after reading through the interviews and engaging in analysis using the coding framework, the researcher sent each participant specific follow-up questions as well as a link to an open-ended survey (Appendix B).

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Information

Student's Pseudonym	High School Graduation Year	Race/ Ethnicity	Socio-Economic Status	School District Location/ Setting
Audrey	2015	Black/African American	Upper-Middle Class	Suburban
Ayanna	2015	Black/African American	Lower Class	Rural
Bianca	2016	African American	Middle Class	Urban
Jenae	2016	African American	Middle Class	Suburban
Mya	2016	Black/African American	Lower Class	Rural
Nicole	2015	Black/African American	Middle Class	Urban
Victoria	2015	Black, White, and Chinese	Upper Middle Class	Urban and Suburban

Follow-Up Survey

The follow-up survey consisted of seven questions that asked the Black female students to share further insight on their experiences with the enacted and formal curriculum during their time in the secondary setting. The seven participants provided responses to their specific questions (sent via e-mail), and six out of the seven responded to the questions in the open-ended survey. The findings from the survey were analyzed using the coding framework and included in the results in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

According to Krippendorff (2013), researchers who engage in qualitative content analysis find themselves in a hermeneutic cycle, as data analysis requires a repetitive process of reviewing the collected data and interpreting meaning. To interpret and analyze the data, the researcher engaged in human coding. Neuendorf (2017) described human coding as individuals reviewing collected data and coding the text with regards to central themes. The researcher engaged in hand coding, color coding the data according to the categories presented in the initial framework. Further, the a priori codes were used as a guide. Additional codes were added as the researcher and peer reviewer engaged in the analysis process. The data collection and analysis process for this study is delineated below.

Data Analysis

The reconceptualist theory of curriculum framework, as well as extant empirical literature regarding culturally responsive curriculum, was used to create the initial *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* The first draft of the coding framework was used as a pilot for the first interview conducted. Then, based on the findings from the pilot, the coding framework was used for the first round of coding and analysis of the data collected. The second and third rounds of data analysis consisted of changes to the coding framework and findings for this study. Through the analysis process, the researcher used specific triangulation methods to establish reliability and trustworthiness. Additionally, the researcher participated in memoing and journaling to assist in limiting bias.

Data Coding

      After collecting data, the researcher coded the evidence using the first draft of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* The core tenants of the reconceptualization of curriculum theory was used to identify the Black female students' perceptions and beliefs that emerged from the data, as well as to identify existing strategies and techniques in English language arts and social studies curricula within *Southern School District*. Using this code sheet, the data collected (i.e., interviews, and the curricula) was initially coded based on manifested themes in alignment with the coding framework (see Table 1). According to Schreier (2012), manifested themes refer to content within the data that is direct, simple, and clearly related to the categories and subcategories included in the coding framework. During the initial coding process, the researcher looked for words and key phrases within the participants' interviews and curriculum documents that directly related to the research that made up the coding framework. Key phrases that directly connected with the coding framework were chosen from the *Southern School District's* curriculum documents to protect the school district's anonymity.

      After completing this first round of coding, the researcher shared findings with a peer for review and evaluation. Next, the researcher engaged in a third round of coding to find latent, or underlying, interpreted meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), behind the manifested language used in participants' interviews and curriculum documents. Following the third round of coding, the researcher created the final draft of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding*

Framework that was used to present the findings for this study, which will be presented in Chapter 4.

Reliability, Verifiability, and Transferability

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), qualitative researchers bring a different lens to investigation than those engaging in quantitative research, thus validity and trustworthiness procedures should align with the researchers' lens or paradigm. A constructivist or interpretivist lens drove this study, as well as a critical perspective (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Accordingly, the researcher engaged in triangulation of data, thick, rich description of textual evidence, researcher reflexivity, collaboration between the researcher and participants (through the process of member checking), and peer reviewing (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Data triangulation. There are several methods that a qualitative researcher can engage in to establish trustworthiness or reliability in their study. During this study, the triangulation approach as identified by Denzin (1984) was used. There are four protocols for triangulating collected evidence according to Denzin (1984), including data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Data source triangulation, involves the researcher determining if the phenomenon changes based on the time of day, the place or setting, or when people interact differently (Denzin, 1984; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Investigator triangulation occurs when the researcher has other researchers review the evidence or phenomenon and identify their interpretations. Theory triangulation requires that the researcher compare their findings and interpretations with those of the other investigator(s), and when two or more of the researchers describe the phenomenon based on similar themes, the

description of the case is triangulated (Denzin, 1984; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Finally, methodological triangulation occurs when the researcher uses the evidence gained during data collection to corroborate findings. For example, if the researcher makes an interpretation about the phenomenon based on an observation, they would then use themes from an interview to "increase confidence" (Stake, 1995) in the findings. The researcher incorporated theory triangulation and methodological triangulation.

Theory triangulation occurred first, when a fellow doctoral candidate reviewed and evaluated the data collected, using the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework*. The peer reviewer is in his third year of a PhD program and has similar research interests, including social justice, cultural responsiveness, and critical pedagogy. The peer reviewer assessed the researcher's interpretations and provided feedback, regarding his understanding of the data and the coding framework. The peer reviewer's feedback provided verifiability of specific coding themes and subthemes, leading to theory triangulation. These findings will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Methodological triangulation occurred when the researcher used data analysis and coding to corroborate and finalize the a priori codes included in the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework*. The researcher also had an external auditor review the data collection and analysis procedures for transferability. The external auditor has an Ed.D. in Curriculum Leadership and is an Assistant Professor at a university in the Midwest who has research interests in school climate. After reviewing the methodology, data collection, and analysis, the auditor stated that the study provides a "fascinating glimpse of the impact of the predominant culture on

curriculum development and delivery. It really examines the question of POV in the development of curriculum, and speaks to cultural values in both its included content and in excluded content" (personal communication, May 15, 2017).

With that being said, the external auditor did wonder about the various methods of interviews (i.e., the face-to-face, e-mail, and phone interviews conducted with the Black female students), as well as what was described as "leading" questions included in the semi-structured interview questions template. After engaging in conversations with the researcher regarding the accommodations provided for gauging qualitative responses from the various methods of interviewing the participants (e.g., providing the participants with specific follow-up questions based on their interview responses), the external auditor concluded the study seemed to align with qualitative methods. Upon reviewing the semi-structured interview questions as written, the researcher agreed that the question may appear to solicit certain responses; however, during open-ended conversations, as well as the follow-up discussions with the participants, and reviewing the transcripts for latent themes, the researcher strived to include clarifying questions that would allow students to express their opinions and beliefs beyond the scope of the questions created based on theory and research. In addition, much of the responses gathered from the participants aligned with current research on Black female students' experiences (Annamma et al., 2016; M.W. Morris, 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014).

Member checking. Another method of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is member checking. Maxwell (2013) refers to member checking as the most effective way to rule out misinterpreting participants' meaning and perspectives while collecting data. Also, member checking assists with the researcher identifying their biases

and misunderstandings (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Member checking involves the

researcher transcribing interviews and summarizing the themes and findings from the

interviews to send back to the participants. Participants are then asked to share their

insight on the credibility, accuracy, and any thoughts on information that may need to be

changed (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Some formats of member checking also include

providing participants with raw data (e.g., interview transcripts, observation notes, etc.)

and soliciting their feedback on themes that emerge (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

For this study, the researcher provided participants with the opportunity to review

themes and findings that emerged from the data collected by sending them a summary of

their transcripts and the themes and subthemes noted from said transcripts. Further, the

researcher gave participants the opportunity to provide feedback on the accuracy and

credibility of these findings, as well as an option to suggest any changes to best represent

their perceptions of the secondary social studies and English language arts curriculum.

Five out of the seven participants provided feedback on their summarized transcripts and

themes found in the transcripts. The participants who responded did not include

additional findings, nor did they suggest changes to the themes found or object to the

perceptions presented by the researcher.

Memoing, reflexive journaling, and researcher participatory statement.

According to Maxwell (2013), memos are any writing that occurs during the research that

is not field notes, coding of the data collected, or transcription of interviews. Memos are

used to assist the researcher with remembering information gathered during the

fieldwork, as well as a reflection tool for ideas and readings that occur while gathering

data (Maxwell, 2013). To engage in effective memoing and journaling, the researcher

analyzed and reflected on notes and thoughts recorded throughout the data collection

process (Maxwell, 2013). Memoing and journaling will be used to check data that has

been collected throughout the field experience. The researcher also engaged in reflexive

journaling during the interviewing process. After each interview, the researcher listened

to the audio of the interviews and read the transcripts. Then, the researcher wrote

reflexive journals to keep track of theoretical and conceptual thoughts that came up while

engaging in the data collection process. The same process was conducted as the

researcher reviewed the formal English language arts and social studies curriculum. The

reflexive journaling and memoing process assisted the researcher with triangulation as

information was written and reviewed in journals or memos when determining and

interpreting emergent themes.

    Researcher participatory statement. The researcher's first journal, a participatory

statement, explained the background and biases of the researcher that may impact the

study. The researcher is a doctoral candidate, studying curriculum leadership. She has

actively created, revised, and edited curricula to infuse culturally responsive pedagogy.

Further, the researcher has eight years of secondary (i.e., Grades 6-12), teaching

experience in the content areas of social studies and English language arts. As a teacher,

the researcher intentionally made efforts to infuse culturally responsive methods. Most

importantly, the researcher is a Black female who has had her own experiences in the

secondary setting with curricula that is not responsive and educators who are not

culturally competent. She continued to journal throughout the research process to

minimize the impact of her biases on the research findings. Also, the researcher solicited

assistance from a peer reviewer and external auditor to assure credible and trustworthy

practices.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis (QCA) was to examine specific existing secondary curricula (Appendix E) in *Southern School District* for responsiveness regarding the needs of Black female students. Further, the purpose of this QCA was to examine transcripts of interviews conducted with Black female students who attended schools within *Southern School District* to interpret their interactions with the written and enacted secondary curricula. The aforementioned collected data was examined to determine the extent to which existing curricula within the southern state was responsive to the unique needs of Black female students using the theoretical framework of reconceptualization of curriculum. The social studies and English language arts (ELA) curricula were retrieved from the school system's public website. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these subjects were selected based on existing research about the skills and strategies taught in both content areas. Interviews were conducted with Black female students to reflect the social justice interpretative framework and provide the voice of those who are being studied.

The findings presented in this chapter are representative of the directed qualitative content analysis approach presented in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the researcher describes the pilot of one interview and establishing credibility of the coding framework. Also, the researcher presents findings based on analyses of the curricula and interviews that included two rounds: the manifested findings connecting to the themes and subthemes from the final coding framework created by the researcher, and the latent

findings that were discovered by the researcher relating to the themes and subthemes from the final coding framework. The sections correspond with the categories in the coding framework.

Pilot and Coding Framework

For a qualitative content analysis, a pilot study generally consists of using one piece of collected data and analyzing said piece using the coding framework (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2012). As mentioned, the initial coding framework (Table 1) was created using existing literature regarding the needs of Black female students, the reconceptualization of curriculum theory, and research on culturally responsive curriculum. The researcher coded by hand, using the initial coding framework as she went through one interview. Using color pencils, the researcher assigned a specific color to each of the themes or major categories from the coding framework. For example, the category *critical pedagogy* was denoted using a red color pencil. Thus, if the researcher interpreted anything the participant stated as aligning with the category of *critical pedagogy* or any of the subthemes (e.g., critical thinking, conflict resolution/problem-solving, or evaluation) in that category, lines of dialogue in the interview transcript were underlined using a red color pencil. The first interview conducted with the participant Mya was used as the pilot. After reading through Mya's interview once and writing a reflexive journal, the researcher then read through the interview again using the coding framework. Upon reviewing the interview, the researcher noted examples from each category of the coding framework within Mya's interview. Further, new themes began to emerge from Mya's interview transcript. The final coding framework developed as the researcher completed the second round of the coding process. Upon engaging in

discussions with a peer reviewer, and analyzing the collected documents for a third time,

the researcher created the final coding framework (Table 4), resulting in the findings for

this study.

Table 4

Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework- Final Draft

Categories /Subcategories	Explanation of Category
Student Ownership Leadership Empowerment Self-Reflection & Self-Realization Goal-Setting Review	any curricula that refers to instructional activities where students feel empowered take the lead on a given task, or any instance where students are given an opportunity to think about their ability to perform a given task, revise said task based on reflection and realization, and participate in reviewing and goal-setting
Collaborative and Authentic Experiences Character/Social Education Peer Mentorship Collaborative Discussions Presentations/Speaking Practical/Relevant Education	curricula that refers to instructional activities where students can work with their peers to make meaning or draw shared conclusions, as well as any instance where students can engage in activities that allow for teamwork, partnerships, or dialogue with their peers; also, any instructional activities where students can share their thoughts through oral presentations, as well any activities that may encourage practical and relevant experiences.
Critical Pedagogy Problem-Solving/Conflict Resolution Addressing Negative or Inappropriate Messages/Actions Questioning/Critiquing Status Quo Critical Thinking Including Varied Perspectives/Voices Use of Varied Sources/Approaches Interdisciplinary Approaches Evaluation	any educational material that includes the voices of the marginalized and the oppressed, instructional activities that may lead to equality and addressing negative stereotypes; curriculum and instructional activities that encourage critical thinking and problem solving, as well as opportunities for students to participate in the learning process by creating, revising, and/or evaluating curricula
Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Educators Student Values and Perspectives Include Students' Cultural Background Using Students' Prior Knowledge Making Connections Creating a Sense of Belonging	any instructional activity that involves students' prior knowledge, cultural background, interests, and values; written and enacted curricula that is responsive to a diverse population

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Qualitative Content Analysis: Direct Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis (QCA) was conducted to examine the formal, or written, secondary curricula in *Southern School District* to see if it aligned with or differed from literature and theory regarding responsive curriculum for Black female students. Further, the QCA was conducted to examine perceptions of Black female students who attended schools within the southern state regarding the formal and enacted curricula. The research questions guiding the analysis were: In *Southern School District*, how does the formal ELA and social studies curriculum align with and differ from current research on educational strategies and practices that are responsive to the needs of Black female students?, and What are the perceptions of Black female students who attended various middle and high schools within *Southern School District* regarding the ELA and social studies curricula?

To answer these questions the researcher used the coding framework to review the existing curriculum documents for grades 6-12 English language arts and social studies to determine to what extent the curricula included responsive strategies for Black female students. Further, the researcher engaged in semi-structured interviews with seven Black female students who attended middle and high schools within the southern state to understand their perceptions and experiences with the enacted and formal social studies and English language arts curricula.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study was conducted using a directed qualitative content analysis methodology. Thus, a theoretical framework and existing literature drove the analysis as the researcher collected and interpreted the data (i.e., formal curricula and the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews) based on the *Reconceptualization of*

Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework. The final draft of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework* used for this research was created and finalized during the analysis and coding of the semi-structured interviews and curricula gathered to answer the research questions raised for this study. Upon reviewing the collected data using the finalized framework, four categories emerged demonstrating responsiveness to the needs of Black female students: *student ownership*, *collaborative and authentic experiences*, *critical pedagogy*, and *cultural responsiveness and cultural competence*.

Category 1: Student Ownership

The first category of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework*, *student ownership*, was revised to reflect the coding and analysis process. The researcher defines *student ownership* as any curricula that refers to instructional activities where students feel empowered take the lead on a given task, or any instance where students are given an opportunity to think about their ability to perform a given task, revise said task based on reflection and realization, and participate in reviewing and goal-setting.

After engaging in the interviews and reviewing the curricula, subcategories were added and the categories' name was revised to reflect collected data supporting Black female students' ability to take ownership over their learning. For instance, when Bianca was asked to reflect on her assets and strengths as a secondary student, she stated, "The desire to wanna see my people do better…wanting to actually pay attention when there's something uplifting about us, you know, so I can take it and hold on to it." Additionally, when Jenae was asked the same question, she shared that she would "always try to speak

up and talk about my standpoint." Similarly, when asked about her assets and strengths, Mya shared how she took on a leadership role in some of her classes by providing a different perspective from her teachers for her peers. Mya said, "the way I talk, because it's country, and it's Ebonics, when they explain stuff, the way they talk, I can explain it in a different way." Although these forms of leadership are not obvious, the students are taking ownership of their cultural influences and using them as an asset in the classroom.

As well as giving students opportunities to lead and feel empowered, the category of *student ownership* emphasizes reflection, goal-setting, and review. Jenae shared an example of her educators encouraging self-reflection when stating, "my history teacher assigned homework to research our family history and that made me want to learn more about royal black ancestry." Jenae was motivated to dive deeper into an assignment because her teacher allowed her to reflect on herself and her family history. Ayanna also discussed an English assignment where she had to "write a 35-page memoir about myself. It was the hardest thing for me being that I could not fathom how a 17-year-old had that much to write about. Yet, I pulled through and finished." Again, Ayanna was given an assignment that gave her the ownership to engage in reflection, encouraging her to take the lead and "pull through."

Considering the students' experiences with the enacted curricula, it seems they experienced self-reflective activities. Also, they seemed to have created opportunities to demonstrate leadership, such as wanting to see their "people" do better, or translating instructors' language into jargon their fellow students use. Thus, the researcher reviewed the formal social studies and ELA curricula for manifested and latent themes relating to

the category, and subcategories, of *student ownership*. Table 5 demonstrates these

findings.

Table 5

Alignment of English Language Arts and Social Studies Curricula to Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework: Student Ownership

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Student Ownership	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
ELA: Curriculum Document A	**Subcategory:** Self-Reflection & Self-Realization	Reflect Personal Growth Changes in Perspective	**Goal-setting:** Set goals to obtain personal growth and see changes
ELA: Curriculum Document B	**Subcategory:** Self-Reflection & Self-Realization	Write Routinely Reflection Revision	**Review:** Identify claims and evidence in others' writing
ELA: Curriculum Document C	**Subcategories:** Self-Reflection & Self-Realization Leadership	Write Routinely Reflection, Revision Comprehend Texts Independently	**Review:** Identify reasoning from seminal documents
SS: Curriculum Document D	**N/A**	N/A	**Review:** Summarize characteristics of various economic systems (Doc D)
SS: Curriculum Document H			Be able to explain the importance of codifying laws (Doc H)
SS: Curriculum Document I	**Subcategories:** Self-Reflection & Self-Realization Goal-setting	Explain Life Choices Goals	**Empowerment:** Individual rights and protection under the law

Table 5 is demonstrative of the alignment of the formal curricula with the coding framework; however, there were areas in which both content areas were lacking. For instance, the written social studies curriculum does not seem to provide many instances for student leadership and empowerment opportunities. Further, much of the curricula reviewed emphasized self-reflection without providing for goal-setting or empowerment in either content areas. With that being said, the formal curricula did demonstrate instances for review after analyzing the data for latent themes. Examples of latent themes are demonstrated in Table 5.

Category 2: Collaborative and Authentic Experiences

The category of *collaborative and authentic experiences* changed somewhat throughout the coding process. In its initial stages, this category emphasized peer mentorship and collaboration; however, as the researcher engaged in data analysis, the category seemed to also include relevant and practical activities that reiterated curriculum. Thus, the researcher defines *collaborative and authentic experiences* as curricula that refers to instructional activities where students can work with their peers to make meaning or draw shared conclusions, as well as any instance where students can engage in activities that allow for teamwork, partnerships, or dialogue with their peers. Further, the category of *collaborative and authentic experiences* includes instructional activities where students can share their thoughts through oral presentations, as well any activities that may encourage practical and relevant experiences.

Audrey discussed her ability to voice her opinion in her social studies and English language arts courses through essays, as well as "Socratic Seminars…more like debates." Audrey also stated that she would have preferred opportunities to engage in discussions

and collaboration that would involve more conversation instead of debating. Upon reviewing the conversation for latent interpretation, it seemed that Audrey found the discussions somewhat meaningless and a tool for the teacher to solicit information, instead of a platform for students to engage in cooperative conversations. Further, Victoria discussed how she would have preferred her social studies teacher to include group work in the enacted curriculum: "I'm kind of a hands-on learner…like more group work, because all we did was sit and she would just talk…I would be on my phone for five hours in that class. And she would just sit there and talk." Victoria's experience demonstrated her need for cooperative learning to make connections with the content.

Additionally, Bianca shared that she would spend time "grading papers and being a peer helper" in some of her social studies and ELA courses, aiding classmates who struggled with the content. Similarly, Nicole described that she would often "give advice on different ways to teach my peers. I've also tried to motivate my peers." To motivate her peers, Nicole said, "while in high school…always encouraged my peers to…try and pursue their goals. I have helped a lot of my classmates with current classwork and future plans, such as help[ing them] with small businesses, college applications, and scholarship opportunities." Victoria also shared an example of providing mentorship to her peers when discussing how she joined an animal science's club to meet people and pursue her passion. She realized that many of the students did not know how to take care of the animals, so Victoria said she "taught them how to do it."

Upon reviewing the responses from the participants, the researcher noted many of the Black female students shared stories about mentorship and providing peers with assistance. However, the interviewees demonstrated consistency regarding the lack of

meaningful collaboration. Further, many of the participants made no mention of relevant or practical instruction. Again, the researcher reviewed the formal social studies and ELA curricula for manifested and latent themes relating to the category, and subcategories, of *collaborative and authentic experiences*. Table 6 demonstrates the findings.

Table 6

Alignment of English Language Arts and Social Studies Curricula to Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework: Collaborative and Authentic Experiences

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Collaborative and Authentic Experiences	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
ELA: Curriculum Document A	**Subcategory** Collaborative Discussions	Collaborative Discussions Diverse Populations	**Practical/Relevant Education:** Have an understanding of the English language to inform future communication
ELA: Curriculum Document B	**Subcategory** Peer Mentorship	Peer Guidance Develop and Improve Writing	**Practical/Relevant Education:** Have an understanding of the English language to inform future communication
ELA: Curriculum Document C	**Subcategories:** Presentations Collaborative Discussions	Present Information Appropriately Audience Conversations Collaborative Discussions Diverse Populations Idea Building Expression	**Practical/Relevant Education:** Have an understanding of the English language to inform future communication **Character/Social Education:** Adapt speech in appropriate social situations according to audience

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Collaborative and Authentic Experiences	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
SS: Curriculum Document D	**N/A**	N/A	**Practical/Relevant Education:** Be able to use maps, charts, and graphs
SS: Curriculum Document I	**Subcategory:** Practical/Relevant Education Character/Social Education	Election Procedures Voting Process Court Hearings Education, Income, and Career's Impact Civic Participation Petitioning, Volunteering, etc.	

Thus, it was noted that much of the social studies curricula was limited in including strategies that provided for collaboration and interaction; however, the only curriculum document that seemed to include manifested themes of relevant and practical education was from a social studies course. Further, the ELA curriculum documents emphasized discussions, working in groups to create discussions, peer mentorship through writing and revision, and oral presentations of material. The latent themes that arose during the analysis of the curriculum documents denoted the presence of practical and relevant education in all the courses. This conclusion was drawn upon reviewing the objectives (i.e., the units of analysis for this study) included in the curriculum documents and the content that is included in the courses. For example, in *ELA Curriculum Document A*, students need to demonstrate an understanding of the English language. From these manifested words and phrases, it is apparent students must master the English language for some practical purpose beyond writing papers and presenting in the

classroom. As noted in Table 6, the latent meaning or interpretation behind the objective of students' understanding the English language is that they can use this skill to improve overall communication. See Table 6 for further instances of latent meaning found in the curriculum documents.

Category 3: Critical Pedagogy

The category of *critical pedagogy* encompasses the core components of the theoretical framework used for this study. Many of the subcategories reflect the Freire and McLaren's theories, such as critiquing or questioning the status-quo. The researcher defined the *critical pedagogy* category as any educational material that includes the voices of the marginalized and the oppressed, instructional activities that may lead to equality and addressing negative stereotypes. Additionally, *critical pedagogy* should emphasize curriculum and instructional activities that encourage critical thinking and problem solving, as well as opportunities for students to participate in the learning process by creating, revising, and/or evaluating curricula.

When asked about her needs when interacting with her secondary curricula, Ayanna shared details about her experiences with her social studies courses. She felt that most of her courses were repetitive and did not include various perspectives, including the "bad" parts of history; however, Ayanna did say that once she was able to take honors courses that were more focused she felt as if she "actually got to learn more about like Langston Hughes and things like that. I was able to see more about Black history, it wasn't the repetitive history." Similarly, Audrey said that during her time in high school, "We read lots of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. So, my English teachers were very good at making sure what we were reading was diverse." On the other hand, when

reviewing the transcript for latent meaning, it was clear that Audrey felt her social studies courses did not account for varied perspectives. Audrey noted, "I do think that they, my teachers, could have worked a little bit harder to make African American history more than slavery, and make the Latino American history more than Texas." Jenae had a similar perspective when discussing her history and social studies courses. When asked about her needs when engaging with the secondary curricula, Jenae stated:

> Well, definitely learning from a different perspective. I think some needs I would have wanted was to learn, like have a different variety of books if that make sense…or even people we would learn about. We would learn about Martin Luther King, but we never learned about Malcolm X.

There seemed to be a consistent pattern among the participants in that they all mentioned a lack of varied perspectives, or representation from oppressed or marginalized groups in their social studies courses; however, the students noted that they did feel represented in their ELA courses through varied literature choices. For example, Ayanna shared that one of her middle school English teachers provided her with books that included Black female protagonists for variation. Likewise, Mya discussed how her middle school English teachers made efforts to provide the students with books from varied points of views. According to Mya, "I had a teacher and we read *Forged by Fire* by Sharon Draper….We read *Bronx Masquerade*." Therefore, the idea of including varied perspectives into the formal and enacted curricula was prominent throughout the interviews.

As well as including varied perspectives in curricula, *critical pedagogy* emphasizes different approaches to instruction, such as using interdisciplinary methods,

as well as the use of numerous sources during instruction. The participants shared how

their secondary teachers included interdisciplinary and integrated sources, such as

technology into curriculum and instruction. For instance, Victoria shared her love for

animals and animal science throughout her interview. She stressed that her teachers,

especially her English teachers in high school, were aware of her love for animals and

would often let her write papers about animals and her knowledge of various species.

Infusing Victoria's love of animals into the existing curricula demonstrates the

instructors' willingness to provide the student with content that not only would be of

interest to her, but that would challenge her to draw relevant conclusions. Additionally,

Mya discussed how her English teacher infused technology into vocabulary lessons,

stating: "when we made Kahoot!…people would put cartoons with the word that they

had." When analyzing Mya's transcript for latent meaning, it was concluded that the

instructor's decision to use the technology source, Kahoot!, provided students with

opportunities to draw conclusions, gain knowledge, and create their own content.

Another aspect of the *critical pedagogy* category that seemed to appear in the

interview transcripts was the need to address negative or inappropriate messages or

actions through the enacted or written curricula. Many of the participants did not clearly

use language that alluded to this subcategory; however, when analyzing the data for latent

meanings, interpretations relating to these themes emerged. For example, Ayanna shared

that she took several honors classes where she did not learn as much as she wanted;

however, she said that what she gained from the history courses was "those looks you get

when they [the teacher] start talking about Black people." Ayanna then shared stories

about her Advanced Placement (AP) United States History teacher asking a question that

offended her because she was the only Black person in the course. The instructor asked a question that Ayanna perceived to be racist, or stereotypical. The researcher then asked if the instructor might have been trying to educate the other students, or bridge a gap, in other words, was the instructor seeking to address negative stereotypes by asking a stereotypical question? Ayanna said, "she may have…but I felt like, being that I went to a predominantly white school…why would you ask that?"

As well as the above, negative or inappropriate actions also seemed to come up when several of the Black female students shared being disciplined, or witnessing other Black female students being disciplined, based on educators prejudging theses students or misinterpreting their behaviors. As noted in the research, some of the Black female students discussed instances of being overdisciplined due to stereotyping. Victoria shared that she had issues with a certain student and instead of getting to know her and trying to understand what the problem was, Victoria felt her educators assumed she was "just being a ghetto Black person arguing with some white kid." Similarly, Bianca discussed a time in high school when she was trying to stop a friend from fighting and holding her against a wall. After a white teacher noticed and called an administrator, the administrator is told that Bianca was involved in the fight also. Bianca stated: "I ended up getting three days sent home…my momma's still trying to fight that to this day." Jenae also noted issues of overdisciplinary practices, as well as being misunderstood in her secondary setting. First, Jenae said:

> I did notice there was more emphasis on our discipline. So if me or one of my
>
> friends was goofing off or doing something minor, we would get yelled
>
> at…Whereas if a white student stayed after to talk to their friends, then the

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teacher might tell them, you know, "you need to hurry up and go back to class."

But that would be all at the most.

Next, Jenae shared an example of being misunderstood when trying to speak up in class. She stated that she would try to give her opinion, but since she was the only Black female in class, often "there weren't other people to help back me up and I would always come off sounding aggressive." Likewise, Ayanna felt that she often came off aggressive when stating her opinion in class. According to Ayanna, "most of my teachers…said I always had a smart mouth, talking back mostly. I was trying to explain myself." When reading and reviewing these transcripts and analyzing them for latent meaning, the researcher interpreted that educators should include responses to negative stereotyping into the enacted and written curricula. This interpretation emerged as it became apparent that the Black female student participants all experienced stereotypes, such as being deemed aggressive or too passive. For instance, Audrey also shared being misunderstood because one of her teachers perceived that she was not as engaged or active since she was quiet. Audrey said:

> I wasn't feeling well one day, so I kinda started to doze off in the class. I guess he
> wanted to make an example of me and he asked me…one of the amendments or
> whatever, and I got the answer right…that whole idea of just because I'm not
> active in class all the time doesn't necessarily mean that I'm not paying attention.

Audrey's situation exemplifies Rollock's (2007) and Evans-Winter's (2005) studies, describing Black female students who are stereotyped as being silent or invisible in the classroom. There are some educators that may sometimes inappropriately assume that the Black female student is not participating due to her quiet nature (Rollock, 2007). On the

other hand, some educators can misinterpret the Black female student's actions, disciplining them without making efforts to use these instances as teachable moments (M.W. Morris, 2016).

Thus, after engaging in analysis of the interview transcripts, it became evident that many of the Black female students shared experiences of ELA courses where they were exposed to varied perspectives. Further, these students expressed a desire for more variety and points of view in their social studies courses. The participants had some exposure to interdisciplinary practices and varied sources, as well as exposure to some aspects of stereotyping. Therefore, the researcher once again reviewed the formal social studies and ELA curricula for manifested and latent themes relating to the category, and subcategories, of *critical pedagogy*. Table 7 demonstrates these findings.

Table 7

Alignment of English Language Arts and Social Studies Curricula to Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework: Critical Pedagogy

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Critical Pedagogy	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
ELA: Curriculum Document A	**Subcategories:** Including Varied Perspectives Use of Varied Sources	Compare/Contrast Two Author's POV Information from Different Sources Print and Digital	**Critical Thinking:** Drawing conclusions and making inferences
ELA: Curriculum Document B	**Subcategories:** Including Varied Perspectives Use of Varied Sources Evaluate	Compare/Contrast Text, Video and Audio Technology/Internet Publish Multiple Print and Digital Sources Evaluate Claims Arguments Validity	**Question/Critique Status Quo:** Reflect on others' thoughts/ ideas, pose questions that further the conversation and encourage debate; modify views
ELA: Curriculum Document C	**Subcategories:** Interdisciplinary Approaches Using of Varied Sources	Analyze US Documents Historical Significance Themes and Concepts Evaluate Content Diverse Media	**Question/Critique Status Quo:** Clarify and challenge others' thoughts during discussion Create new ideas based on conversations
SS: Curriculum Document D	**Subcategories:** Including Varied Perspectives/ Voices Use of Varied Sources	Primary/Secondary Sources Interpret Various Perspectives Maps, Chart, Geographical Data Technology	**Critical Thinking:** Analyze the impact of disease on society, politics, and the economy

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Critical Pedagogy	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
SS: Curriculum Document E	**Subcategories:** Evaluate Use of Varied Sources	Historical Inquiry Evaluate, Validity, Sources Create Charts, Historical Narratives, Graphs Explain Events	N/A
SS: Curriculum Document F	**Subcategories:** Including Varied Perspectives/Voices Use of Varied Sources	Multiple Perspectives Historical Data, Various Sources	**Interdisciplinary Approaches** Writing about historical evidence
SS: Curriculum Document G	**Subcategories:** Evaluate Including Varied Perspectives/Voices Use of Varied Sources	Historical Questions Multiple Perspectives, Various People Historical Data, Various Sources	**Critical Thinking:** How did various groups impact the settlement and expansion of the US since Reconstruction?
SS: Curriculum Document H	**Subcategories:** Evaluate Including Varied Perspectives/Voices	Evaluate, Achievements, Enduring Compare Conditions: Race, Social Status, Slaves, Ancient Times	**Critical Thinking** Cause/Effect of exploration and global interaction
SS: Curriculum Document I	**Subcategories:** Evaluate Including Varied Perspectives/Voices	Evaluate, Fundamental Principles Maintain Democracy Impact of Policies on Globalization	**Question/Critique the Status Quo:** Are people equally protected under the law? Is there due process of law? Civil rights discussions; roles of citizens to participate in fighting for their rights and involvement in the government **Conflict Resolution** Understand strategies that can be used to resolve issues between consumers, such as filing claims

In reviewing the manifested themes in Table 7, it is evident that the written social studies and ELA curricula seemed to emphasize varied perspectives and voices, evaluation, using various sources, and including interdisciplinary approaches in the enacted curricula. However, when interpreting the curricula for latent meaning, further themes relating to the subcategories within the *critical pedagogy* category were discovered. For instance, critical thinking seemed to emerge in many of the ELA curricula documents, such as in ELA Curriculum Document A where students are expected to engage in activities where they will draw conclusions and make inferences. Table 7 denotes more of these latent findings.

Category 4: Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Educators

The themes included in the *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators* category reflects the extant literature on culturally responsive curriculum practices. Much of the themes included in the category and subcategories are demonstrative of educators who are considerate and responsive to diverse students. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the researcher defined the *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators* category as any instructional activity that involves students' prior knowledge, cultural background, interests, and values. Further, this category encompasses written and enacted curricula that are responsive to a diverse population.

When asked about noticing herself and her culture in the formal or enacted curricula, Audrey remembered "reading an author who was big in the Harlem Renaissance…he was from Jamaica…my teacher at the time mentioned that she kinda selected [the author] for me." Audrey's father is of Jamaican descent and knowing this,

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her teacher took the time to find an author that she felt Audrey might relate to culturally. This small act is something that Audrey still remembers. Similarly, Mya shared that in her 7th grade English course she and her classmates read a book about poetry and "she [her teacher] gave each of us a character, and we read, like in seminar style to relate it to our experiences. And she picked the characters based on our personalities." This reading activity exemplifies an instructor using the written curricula and integrating culturally competence. Mya shared the instructor took the time to get to know her students to connect them with a character that would match their personalities and interests and she also chose a book of poetry, *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes, that most the students in the class would most likely find culturally relatable.

As well as considering cultural backgrounds, many of the participants' educators seemed to be curious about their students' values and interests. Victoria stated that in her animal science class her teacher would inquire, "'So…what would you all like to do?' and then we said we wanted, we were just playing around in class, we said we want to get a chicken coop. And we really got a chicken coop." Victoria's instructor was taking inventory of students' interests and seemed to transfer that interest into an instructional opportunity for the class. Like Victoria's experience, Audrey stated that she had instructors who would often share that there was not enough time to get through all the material, thus they "would ask 'Would you rather cover this or would you rather cover this topic?'" This example of student choice is also representative of considering students' interests and values when planning the enacted curriculum.

Considering students' interests is one way that educators can create a sense of belonging for their Black female students. When asked specifically about their

administrators and how they impacted the participants' academic success, many of the interviewees had varied insights. For instance, Bianca, who experienced being suspended when trying to keep a friend from fighting, felt that her administrator did not care about her, despite saying that he did care. Bianca said: "I mean, 'cause you not caring about [me]…'cause they make it like, this mission statement as, like, we're trying to help everybody, but they're really not." Due to Bianca's experience with her White administrator and this fight, that she was not personally involved in, according to her account, she seemed to feel ostracized and misunderstood in her environment. Throughout her transcript, and upon interpretation for latent meaning, it is evident that Bianca felt as if her administrators and educators judged her unfairly and did not respond to her appropriately. Similarly, Jenae felt that her administrators "could have shown more caring for the, or understanding, for the minority students. Especially the one that were delinquents, for lack of a better word." When reviewing Jenae's transcript for latent interpretation, it was also clear that she felt misunderstood and as if her educators did not make efforts to be culturally competent or responsive.

On the other hand, Mya seemed to have administrators and educators that demonstrated cultural competence and responsiveness. Despite having four principals over four years while in high school, Mya could remember two principals who impacted her school and herself positively:

> he, like, rewarded us if we did good, like, on tests and if attendance was good, and got good grades in our classes…give us like fun days…where we played video games in the gym, or you would watch a movie. And then, another principal, he

wrote on our report cards, like little inspirational messages. Like, everybody in

the school. He wrote on their report cards.

Mya's details about administrators who were attentive and active in their students'

academic affairs are demonstrative of educators who can provide an encouraging

environment for students. Additionally, Mya stated that she had a school counselor who

acted as a "college advisor, she asked us what kind of programs we would like to do to

get more people ready to go to college…one time we went to Wal-Mart and bought a lot

of stuff…she helped us apply to college." Having educators who showed an interest in

her future encouraged Mya to do her best in high school and continue to college. Like

Mya's experiences, Audrey said that she "was one of the lucky ones…my principal from

my freshman to junior year was beyond active. He would come and sit in class…not

really just for teacher review…he'd just walk in and come and join in our conversations."

Audrey emphasized having an active and present administrator showed her that her

educators cared about her academic success, leading her to care that much more about her

own academic performance.

Considering the interview responses from the participants, it was evident that

some of the Black female students' educators worked to infuse their interests and values

in the enacted curricula. Further, there did seem to be an effort to also include some of

the students' cultural background. The responses from the students did seem to show a

divide in educators' cultural competence in terms of creating a sense of belongingness

and making connections by being active and present. Thus, the formal social studies and

English language arts (ELA) curricula was reviewed for written elements relating to the

category and subcategories of *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent*

educators. Findings from the analysis are represented in Table 8.

Table 8

Alignment of English Language Arts and Social Studies Curricula to Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework: Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Educators

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Educators	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
ELA: Curriculum Document C	**Subcategories:** Students' Values and Perspectives	Arguments Support Claims Compose Narratives	
SS: Curriculum Document D	**Subcategories:** Include Students' Cultural Background Making Connections	Culture Unites/ Divides Modern Society Cultural Expressions Impact Society	**Making Connections** How does natural disasters and protecting the environment impact modern societies and regions?
SS: Curriculum Document E	**Subcategories:** Include Students' Cultural Background	Migration/ Immigration Make up of Southern State	**Students' Prior Knowledge:** Sense of democracy and rights
SS: Curriculum Document F	**Subcategories:** Students' Values and Perspectives	Variety of Groups/Individuals Achieved "American Dream" through Reconstruction	
SS: Curriculum Document G	**Subcategories:** Students' Values and Perspectives	Analyze Multiple Perceptions "American Dream" since Reconstruction	**Students' Prior Knowledge:** Knowledge and perception of Reconstruction and the "American Dream"

Curricula	Category in Coding Framework: Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Educators	Manifested Examples from Curricula	Latent Examples from Curricula
SS: Curriculum Document H	**Subcategories:** Making Connections	Investment in Global Exploration International Trade	
SS: Curriculum Document I	**Subcategories:** Making Connections Students' Values and Perceptions	Personal Interests, Desires vs. National Interests Public Interest General Welfare	**Students' Cultural Background** Infuse students' personal background and connect with content regarding citizenship and perceptions about involvement and interests

Upon reviewing the manifested themes in Table 8, it is evident that the ELA formal curricula are lacking culturally responsive themes. Further, the written social studies curricula seemed to highlight making connections and students' values and perceptions. There seems to be a need for more use of students' cultural background in the formal curriculum documents. Additionally, the written curriculum is limited in culturally competent element of creating a sense of belongingness. With that being said, when reviewing the curriculum documents for latent themes, more culturally responsive elements emerged. For instance, it was clear that students' prior knowledge can be enacted when the students interact with the formal curriculum, such as understanding the American Dream after Reconstruction (as denoted in Table 8). More examples of the latent themes from the *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators* can be seen in Table 8.

Summary of Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis (QCA) was conducted to determine (a) how the written social studies and English language arts (ELA) curricula in *Southern School District* aligned with extant research regarding the needs of Black female students and (b) the perceptions of Black female students who attended schools within *Southern School District* regarding the enacted social studies and ELA curricula. The QCA began with coding and analyses of interview transcripts for seven Black female students who attended seven various school districts within *Southern School District*. Next, the formal curricula were coded and analyzed. All documents were analyzed for manifested, or clearly stated, and latent, or interpreted themes based on a coding framework that was created using the study's theoretical framework and existing literature regarding the needs of Black female students and culturally responsive curriculum.

After reviewing the transcripts and curricula, four categories remained in the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework*. However, the categories, as well as their subcategories, changed based on interpretations of the data. The four categories that emerged after three rounds of coding were: *student ownership*, *collaborative and authentic experiences, critical pedagogy, cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators*.

Category 1, *student ownership*, examined curriculum that encouraged students to lead, be empowered to engage in self-reflection, set goals, and review material on their own. The participants shared insight about creating their own opportunities to lead through cultural connections with classmates despite not having actual chances to lead in the classroom. Also, some of the students shared that they participated in self-reflection

through their coursework. The written documents demonstrated limited exposure to activities that could lead to student leadership, empowerment and goal-setting. Thus, it was concluded that the formal social studies and ELA curricula needs to provide more opportunities for goal-setting, student leadership, and self-reflection. Including these elements in the written curriculum can provide educators with the tools to infuse these aspects in the enacted curriculum.

Category 2, *collaborative and authentic experiences,* involved themes such as peer motivation and interaction, group presentations and in-class discussion and debates, oral presentations, as well as relevant and practical educational experiences. The students' interview transcripts demonstrated that students felt the collaborative discussions they were involved with tended to be meaningless. Additionally, cooperative group work did not seem to be included as often as it could have been infused in the enacted curriculum. Furthermore, the Black female student participants did not mention any relevant or practical education practices occurring in their secondary classrooms. On the other hand, there did seem to be several instances of peer mentorship. In the formal curricula, the ELA documents included may instances of collaborative discussions and peer interaction and at least one social studies curriculum document provided for relevant and practical education in several objectives. Therefore, it can be determined from the participants' responses, providing students with opportunities for cooperative learning and relevant instruction may impact the academic progression of Black female students.

Category 3, *critical pedagogy*, included themes like problem-solving, addressing negative stereotypes, questioning the status-quo, critical thinking, including varied perspectives and voices, use of varied sources, interdisciplinary approaches to instruction,

and evaluation. The interviewees seemed to share a consensus that varied perspectives and voices were represented in their ELA curricula but not throughout their secondary social studies curricula. Many of the Black female students noticed a cyclical pattern with the social studies curricula that highlighted white historical individuals and ignored minorities and the oppressed. With that being said, the participants shared examples of how their instructors worked to infuse interdisciplinary approaches to education, such as including science in English. Also, there were examples of the educators including various sources in their instruction. For instance, many of the instructors infused technology in their instruction, as well as media, such as movies. Many of the experiences shared by the interviewees demonstrated a need for responding to negative stereotyping.

When reviewing the formal curriculum for critical pedagogy, it was evident that both documents provided for varied perspectives, interdisciplinary approaches to instruction, and the use of various sources. Further, the formal curriculum also included instructional strategies for evaluation and critical thinking. As mentioned above, there is a need for the formal curriculum to include written instructional strategies for addressing negative stereotypes in the classroom. Additionally, there is room in the written curriculum for instruction that provide students with the tools to question and critique the status quo, as well as problem-solving.

Category 4, *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators*, examined themes such as including students' cultural background and prior knowledge, paying attention to students' values and interests, making connections, and creating a sense of belonging. The Black female students who participated in this study shared several

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experiences that demonstrated their educators were taking stock of their interests and

values and infusing those in the enacted classroom. Additionally, many of the

interviewees provided examples of teachers, especially English language arts teachers,

who included their cultural background when planning instruction. When reviewing the

formal curriculum, there was evidence of culturally responsive strategies included, such

as including students' prior knowledge, and making connections. However, the data

collected also demonstrated that the Black female students did not always have a sense of

belonging in their school buildings. The formal curricula can assist with creating a sense

of belonging by providing culturally responsive strategies for educators to enact in the

classroom.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 shares an overview of the rationale for this study, including existing literature relating to the problem being studied, research questions that drove the study, and the procedure for the content analysis. Additionally, the findings from the qualitative content analysis (QCA) are discussed and connected to relevant literature. The conclusions from the QCA are discussed using the four categories from the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* Implications are included for curriculum leaders, as well as other educational leaders, regarding the significance of this study for those who can revise and evaluate formal and enacted curriculum. Finally, an overall critique of the study is provided.

Rationale and Overview of the Study

Black female students in the K-12 setting are often ignored or viewed as self-sufficient (Crenshaw, 2015; Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008; Grant, 1984; E.W. Morris, 2007). Many Black female students are subjected to exclusionary disciplinary practices based on misperceived behaviors, as they are often deemed overly mature or aggressive (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008; E.W. Morris, 2007; M.W. Morris 2016). The educational plight of Black female students, especially on the secondary level (i.e., students who are attending Grades 6-12), has largely been ignored in empirical research, whereas studies regarding the academic needs of Black males continue to be conducted. This research about the needs of Black male students has led to numerous

policies and programs in many school systems across the nation, including revised and created curriculum (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2016; Schott Foundation, 2016 Sherwin, Wedekind, & Reynoso-Palley, 2016). Thus, this study sought to examine how curriculum documents in a specific school district currently respond to the needs of Black female students, as well as examine the beliefs and perceptions of Black female students who attended schools within the district about the responsiveness of said curriculum. To examine the aforesaid, the research questions that drove this study were a.) In *Southern School District*, how does the formal ELA and social studies curriculum align with and differ from current research on educational strategies and practices that are responsive to the needs of Black female students?, and b.) What are the perceptions of Black female students who attended various middle and high schools within *Southern School District* regarding the ELA and social studies curricula?

To answer the research questions a QCA was conducted. A direct QCA was completed considering a priori codes, based on extant literature and the reconceptualization of curriculum framework, was used for this study. Data was collected, including formal, or written, curriculum documents for Grades 6-12 social studies and English language arts (ELA) from *Southern School District*. Additionally, interviews were conducted with seven Black female students who previously (i.e., the seven participants recently graduated within the last two years) attended schools within the school district. Their interviews were transcribed and reviewed for the study. The researcher engaged in a piloting process with one of the interview transcripts and then participated in three rounds of coding, participating in a hermeneutic process of review and interpretation. During the first round of coding, the researcher looked for manifested

themes, or direct and clearly stated language, that related to the categories and subcategories included in the coding framework. The second round of coding consisted of the researcher and the peer reviewer comparing interpretations of the manifested codes. New themes were added to the coding framework during the second round of coding, following discussions with the peer reviewer. The third round of coding involved a review of latent, or interpretations of the direct and clearly stated language, themes included in the collected data. After the data analysis, findings were discovered according to the four categories in the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.*

Conclusions

The QCA was conducted to discover if the formal secondary curricula in *Southern School District* aligned with or differed from literature and theory regarding responsive curriculum for Black female students. Further, the QCA was conducted to examine perceptions of Black female students who attended schools within the southern state regarding the formal and enacted curricula. The samples used for this study were state mandated standards, as well as interview transcripts from seven participants. The units of analysis were the objectives within the curriculum documents, as well as the transcribed dialogue from the interview documents. The researcher accomplished the purpose of the study by first analyzing the collected data searching for manifested, or clearly stated language relating to themes within the categories and subcategories present in the first draft of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* Next, themes that emerged where added to the coding framework during analysis and the framework was revised. Additionally, the researcher and peer

reviewer discussed latent, or interpreted, themes that emerged within the interview transcripts for a third round of coding. The curriculum documents were also reviewed for latent themes.

Examination of Current Curricula and Perceptions and Experiences of Black Female Students with Enacted Curricula

This study examined existing secondary (i.e., Grades 6-12) social studies and English language arts (ELA) curriculum documents from *Southern School District* using the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* After examining the curriculum documents, this study concluded that while some alignment exists within the social studies and ELA curricula and the theoretical framework (see Tables 5-8), differences also exists that suggests there is a basis for reconceptualizing the written curricula in *Southern School District*. Additionally, upon reviewing the interview transcripts from the seven Black female student participants using the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework,* further evidence was provided for revisions to the enacted as well as the written curriculum in *Southern School District*.

One of the interviewees, Nicole, asserted, "I was not properly educated. My grammar and math skills were, and sometimes I feel that they are, still below the majority of other students. I began teaching myself and 'faking it until I made it.'" Beyond not being prepared, many of the Black female students felt that their experiences were being ignored. Bianca shared "Something that always bothered me was, like, learning about history…it was all slave, slave, slave, and it's like our Black history is deeper than that." Thus, reviewing the manifested and latent themes in the curriculum documents, as well as

the interview transcripts from the Black female students demonstrated a need for reconceptualized curriculum.

Reconceptualization of Current Curricula

As noted above, after reviewing collected data (i.e., social studies and ELA curriculum documents, as well as interview transcripts from seven Black female students), the findings in this study demonstrated a need for infusing aspects from the reconceptualization of curriculum theory to respond to Black female students. According to McLaren (2009), currently schools are a place that simultaneously empower students and sustain the oppression of minorities. Thus, infusing aspects from the reconceptualization theory of curriculum, such as critical pedagogy, may eliminate the oppression and increase empowerment. For instance, the social studies curriculum seemed to lack opportunities for student ownership, including instructional activities that would encourage leadership, empowerment, and self-reflection. Thus, the written curriculum could be reconceptualized to include the kind of instructional activities that Greene (1990) advocates for, such as "personal expression," "reflective self-consciousness" (p. 73). Additional recommendations for reconceptualization will be broken down by category according to the QCA findings.

Category 1: Student ownership. The reconceptualization of curriculum theory encourages educators to emphasize "personal self- knowledge" (p. 47), as well as reflection and self-examination (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). The category of *student ownership* in the coding framework reflects this ideology. When reviewing the written curriculum, it was noted that the social studies curricula did not include many instances for students to engage in self-reflection, goal-setting, and leadership. Similarly, the ELA

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curricula lacked opportunities for students to set goals and take the lead in their curriculum. Additionally, the Black female students who attended schools in *Southern School District* discussed how they had to create opportunities for empowerment and the limited chances they had to set goals, were empowered to take the lead, and reflect on their progress in their social studies and ELA courses. When asked about involvement in creating, revising, and evaluating their schools' curricula, several of the participants discussed choosing the courses they were going to take in high school. For example, Audrey said, "I think the closest thing we got to selecting or controlling what we learned was our registration card." Similarly, Victoria shared she also felt that choosing her courses and attending orientation in high school was her way of having a say in what she learned. While this is a valid argument, choosing courses is a first step in the process of students becoming empowered to impact their learning process.

According to Smith-Evans and George (2014) and M.W. Morris (2016), giving Black female students opportunities to take the lead may encourage these students to engage in self-reflection and encourage goal-setting, thereby impacting the female's willingness to achieve academic success. E.W. Morris (2007) discussed observations of Black female students in a middle school, sharing that the females competed for positive attention from teachers by demonstrating their knowledge through classroom discussions. Further, these Black female students often wanted to take the lead on academic tasks, such as a student who called out answers and asked a teacher why she did not include an important piece of content when reviewing information for a standardized test (E.W. Morris, 2007). This misperception of the student's behavior led the teacher, as well as many other educators, to misread her assertiveness and deemed her behavior as

"prematurely adult" (E.W. Morris, 2007, p. 13). Educators often misinterpret the Black female student's desire to lead as aggressiveness. For example, Ayanna shared a similar story from her history course in high school:

> I would ask about people not mentioned in the white-washed textbook and how we never talked about the black inventors, authors, artist etc. that played a major part in America's history. My teacher would always try to make me look unintelligent by saying "well, what's your source?" or simply "prove it." I would get home and go on Google Scholar for hours, wait for my dad to call, tell him about the situation, then proceed to gather information. The next class I would raise my hand, wait as [the teacher] acted as though she didn't see me raising my hand, and read her the filth. Rather than applauding my knowledge and willingness to learn I was told I was being "disruptive" and confusing the other students.

This misinterpretation encourages educators to view Black female students' instinct to lead as rude or aggressive behavior. Instead of nurturing this attribute, educators sometimes discipline Black female students for being outspoken.

Empowering Black female students to lead discussions, set goals, and engage in reflection about their culture and educational goals can lead these students to become less disenfranchised with curriculum. As noted by E.W. Morris (2007), Smith-Evans and George (2014), and Crenshaw (2015), Black female students strive for positive attention in the classroom and often seek to lead their classmates due to matriarchal roles these students often fill at home. In fact, a survey conducted by the Girl Scouts of America (2017), revealed African American girls want to be leaders more than their White and

Latina counterparts and are the group most likely to consider themselves leaders. If given

chances to transfer this to the classroom through social studies and English language arts

curricula, discipline issues and dropout rates may decrease (Smith-Evans & George,

2014). Additionally, providing Black female students with role models who are

successful Black women leaders through guest speakers, field trips, and mentoring

programs will demonstrate to Black female students that they can set goals, take on

leadership roles, and eventually achieve success like these role models (Smith-Evans &

George, 2014).

   Category 2: Collaborative and authentic experiences. According to Freire

(1970), reconceptualists curricula should include real human issues and practical

experiences, co-created through collaboration with those doing the work. In other words,

effective educational curriculum should be created by students and include more

practical, authentic experiences since students are the ones involved in doing the work

(Freire, 1970). Category 2 of the coding framework, *collaborative and authentic*

experiences, reflects Freire's ideas of reconceptualized curriculum. The ELA curriculum

documents demonstrated opportunities for collaboration and peer mentorship, and upon

reviewing the documents for latent themes, it was clear that practical and relevant

education was infused throughout. The social studies documents, on the other hand, were

lacking in involving many subcategories and themes relating to collaboration and peer

interaction.

   Likewise, the Black female students shared that they were not afforded many

chances to engage in cooperative learning or educational activities that were relevant to

their social or cultural experiences. For instance, Mya shared that in her "social studies

class, we just sat there and, like, took notes, 'cause she would be on her phone the whole time. So, we would take notes and do worksheets that ended up being pointless." Mya did not feel a connection to the content because her teacher did not try to show the relevance. Also, the social studies teacher did not try to engage the students in collaborative activities to encourage discussion. Victoria also shared that she felt that one of her social studies teachers in high school could have given her and her classmates "more hands on, maybe like more group work, because all we did was sit and she would just talk…I feel like she should have done more group work." Victoria's experience demonstrates her desire to have more interaction with her peers. This could have given her the chance to connect with the content more as she gained insight from her classmates.

According to Gay (2010), collaborative tasks can be effective with African American students, as well as other marginalized minority students (e.g., Latina/os, Asian Americans, and Native American students), as these populations emphasize human interaction, connection, and solving problems with a group. With that being said, after engaging in data analysis, the researcher and peer reviewer concluded the findings regarding collaborative and authentic experiences produced the weakest support from the collected data. Thus, the enacted and written curricula in *Southern School District* should be reconceptualized to include collaboration and authentic experiences for Black female students. According to D. W. Johnson and Johnson (2009), Kagan (2010), and Slavin (1991), collaborative work encourages the academic success of all students. However, it becomes important for teachers to consider cultural differences when planning collaborative activities as students' cultural backgrounds impact the way they communicate, as well as their understanding of fellow classmates (Gay, 2010).

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Additionally, grouping students together to work on tasks such as completing a graffiti wall or group investigation, leads to an awareness of equity and justice and an appreciation of minority rights as well as a sense of responsibility for general welfare (Azziz, 2009). Thus, as mentioned before, Black female students tend to be leaders and often take on this role due to their household obligations (Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Knowing that Black female students prefer to be leaders, educators can provide these students with opportunities to assist peers in collaborative tasks. This seemed to be the case with many of the participants for this study and may be an indication of their academic success.

Dewey (1938), another pragmatic theorist like the reconceptualists, believed curriculum should be experiential, preparing students for real life situations. The written curriculum reviewed for this study provided some examples of practical and relevant instructional strategies, such as the manifested theme in Social Studies Curriculum Document I (see Table 6), and the latent themes in the English language arts curricula. On the other hand, the Black female students interviewed for this study did not discuss many instances where they were involved with authentic or practical educational experiences through the enacted curriculum. Research has shown (Baratelli, West-Olatunji, Pringle, Adams, & Shure, 2007; Craig, 2017) that Black female students positively respond to instruction that infuses real life situations, as well as curriculum that allows them to discuss their real-world experiences. Thus, including experiential and relevant educational strategies into the written and enacted curricula can provide Black female students with more opportunities for academic success.

Category 3: Critical pedagogy. McLaren (2009) asserted that "there are many sides to a problem, and often these sides are linked to certain class, race, and gender interests" (p. 62). Infusing critical pedagogy encourages the educator to wonder how knowledge is constructed and why some forms of knowledge are more enforced in schools than others (McLaren, 2009). Critical educators seek to provide students with emancipatory knowledge, or education that bridges a gap between technical and traditional knowledge, and practical knowledge (McLaren, 2009). Category 3 of the coding framework, *critical pedagogy*, reflects many of the McLaren's ideas. The formal curriculum included some manifested examples of prevalent critical pedagogy, such as including varied voices and perspectives in the instructional strategies (see Table 7). However, there were minimal to no instances of problem-solving, conflict resolution, or addressing negative stereotypes.

Similarly, the Black female students interviewed for this study discussed instances where they felt that they were not given chances to address negative stereotypes or how they did not have opportunities to hear from varied perspectives in some of their social studies courses. For instance, Bianca shared: "I feel as though they kept feeding us the same stuff…never varied at all, it was always Black people were slaves, White people in England were kings and queens." Likewise, Jenae discussed how she wanted to learn about "different controversial revolutions…definitely the Black Panthers…about the good things that weren't militant, the good things they did for the community." Both Bianca and Jenae discussed that they wanted to hear variations and different perspectives about their cultural background.

Thus, the apparent gaps in the written and enacted curriculum demonstrate a need for reconceptualized curriculum in secondary social studies and ELA courses. According to Gay (2010), Black female students, as well as other minority students, are more likely to achieve academic success and be more invested in their education, when exposed to materials that includes diverse voices and perspectives. Providing students with materials, such as books written by Black and other diverse authors, can assist students with seeing themselves in the content and beginning to question why they are not always exposed to said materials in the curriculum (Gay, 2010). Additionally, critical educators believe students should be able to question the current state of educational practice, as well as provided chances to address stereotypes or prejudices that arise in the formal or enacted curriculum (McLaren, 2009). According to Cohn-Vargas (2015), when educators recognize stereotypes in the classroom they should address it in the moment. Whether the stereotype emerges from students' conversations or instructional material, such as textbooks, literature, or other curriculum documents (e.g., current event articles, worksheets, or movies), the teacher must bring awareness to the stereotype and explain to students why populations may take offense (Cohn-Vargas, 2015). Also, educators can use scenarios, appropriate articles and literature to address the stereotype (Cohn-Vargas, 2015).

Category 4: Cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators. Pinar (2008) described the shift of reconceptualized curriculum to include multicultural education. According to Pinar (2008), multicultural curriculum theory emphasizes "discourses on class, gender, and sexuality…studies of ethnicity and more particularly race" (p. 495). In reconceptualizing multicultural education, components of cultural

responsiveness can be included in formal and enacted curriculum. According to Banks (1974), the cultural and linguistic differences of minorities in schools should be respected and integrated into the curriculum to positively impact the academic achievement of these students. Gay (2010) asserted, "ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of the teachers and students are included in the implantation" (p. 22). The fourth, and final category of the coding framework, *cultural responsiveness and culturally competent educators*, includes ideas researched by Gay (2010) and Banks (1974), as well as several other scholars, such as Ladson-Billings (1995) regarding culturally responsive curriculum. The formal curricula demonstrated some manifested examples of cultural responsiveness in that there were instances where educators could use students' prior knowledge, gauge their interests, and connect the content to students' backgrounds; however, the instances were limited and integrating the content would require educators to be culturally competent.

Likewise, upon reviewing the interview transcripts, it was clear that there were not many instances when the Black female students were involved with culturally responsive enacted curricula. Despite some of the participants sharing experiences with English language arts instructors that made efforts to connect reading material to their cultural background, many more stories were shared about educators who did not make efforts to connect social studies, and sometimes ELA, content with students' cultural upbringing or their interests. For example, Mya (2017) discussed:

I wish we would've done more free writes...because if we have a set topic, 9 times out of 10, it's not a topic people want to talk about. It's not gonna be to the highest of our abilities because it's not something we're interested in.

Mya seemed to demonstrate a lack of interest in writing topic discouraged the students from engaging in the assignment; however, if the teachers would have taken the time to get to know students' interests, or even allow them to demonstrate their interests through free-writing, the students may have been more inclined to participate in the assignment. Similarly, Audrey said all she "ever really learned, or was showed or taught…was slavery and Martin Luther King." Thus, Audrey found it difficult to make connections to her social studies material because she did not see her distinct cultural background represented in the course.

According to Cai (2002) and Ramirez and Dowd (1997), including "high quality" (Gay, 2010, p. 141) literature can assist students with making connections to their own experiences, provide role models, as well as provide educators with the tools to instruct about current attitudes towards race and culture and how those attitudes can be changed. Nicole shared that she feels having more content and books that included her heritage, her background, and role models for her to aspire to be like would have made her more interested in her coursework. As mentioned, integrating culturally responsive curriculum begins with culturally competent educators. Thus, educators must first acknowledge their biases and privileges (Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko, & Stuczynski, 2011) through self-reflective activities, such as completing a self-assessment regarding their prejudices. Additionally, educators can become culturally competent by building relationships with students and students' families (Gay, 2010; Saifer et al., 2011). Once educators have worked toward cultural competence, they can begin infusing culturally responsive methods in the enacted curriculum.

Additional Finding

When the researcher and peer reviewer engaged in analyzing the collected data, an additional finding was discovered that did not fit within the categories or subcategories of the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding Framework.* Black female students in this study seemed to share a sense of not belonging, or separateness, from their fellow classmates, creating feelings of marginalization.

The seven Black female student participants in this study seemed to share a sense of not belonging, or separateness in their secondary environments. Throughout their interviews, they provided examples of feeling as if they were not included in curriculum conversations. For instance, Bianca said: "I feel that they [educators] didn't really take the Native Americans and Blacks into consideration when they…you know, at a sensitivity level." Additionally, when asked about what issues she may have suffered from when engaging with secondary curricula, Bianca stated: "Just not feeling like I fit." Similarly, Victoria discussed attending two different schools during her time in 6th through 8th grade. She discussed while attending one school, which is populated largely by Black students, she "felt like I belonged there…it was just like, that was my type of place…and then when I went to that White school it was just…it was kind of weird." Thus, Bianca and Victoria provided examples of feeling out of place or separate from their fellow classmates and the curriculum. Similarly, in a follow-up survey, Mya shared that she "felt like I wasn't as knowledgeable [as my fellow classmates] on certain topics because [my teachers] wouldn't usually call on me like they would do White students, especially in my Civics and Economics class." Again, this perceived marginalization

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seemed to contribute to the Black female students' sense of separateness from their White classmates.

Implications for Practice

This study examined existing curricula within a specific school district for responsiveness to the needs of Black female students. Further, this study examined the perceptions of Black female students who attended schools within the state regarding the curriculum. Culturally responsive educational praxis has been researched, implemented, and evaluated in various school systems (Gay, 2010; Saifer et al., 2011). For instance, *Southern School District* has added a specific cultural strand to some of the formal social studies curriculum documents, emphasizing culture and diverse backgrounds. Additionally, a school system within *Southern School District* has created a diversity education department in their central office. The department has worked to provide tools and strategies that integrate multicultural education across all content areas, as well as infused specific culturally responsive standards in the states' social studies courses. With that being said, limited studies and policies exist regarding the specific needs of Black female students in the secondary setting. Despite the attention received by their male counterparts, Black female students have been largely ignored in empirical studies. Some qualitative studies have been conducted regarding disciplinary experiences and teachers' perceptions of Black female students in the K-12 setting (Annamma et al., 2016; E.W. Morris, 2007); however, limited research has been conducted regarding the responsiveness of secondary curriculum to Black female students' educational needs.

Furthermore, limited research exists including the perception and voice of Black female students about their experiences with curriculum. While understanding

disciplinary problems, as well as educators' perceptions of Black female students is essential, studies that include analysis about responsiveness of curriculum is critical to assisting this population achieve academic success (M.W. Morris, 2016). Additionally, educators are often unprepared to integrate culturally responsive instructional strategies into the enacted curriculum (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008; M.W. Morris, 2016). Thus, the findings and use of a reconceptualization of curriculum theoretical framework in this study provides implications for secondary practitioners, as well as curriculum and instructional leaders. Moreover, future research recommendations are offered.

Secondary Practitioners

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008) includes a standard focused on preparing educators to work with diverse populations. NCATE encourages educators to "contextualize teaching and draw effectively on representations from the student's own experiences and cultures" (p. 34). Current teachers in secondary classrooms must be prepared to educate students from diverse populations as these students currently make up over 46% of the school-aged population (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Despite diverse children making up the majority of most classrooms, educators continue to be predominately White, sometimes creating a cultural disconnect for many students (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Coffey, 2010). The findings of the study demonstrate that despite best efforts, school districts' may not be providing culturally responsive instructional strategies in the formal curriculum. Therefore, secondary educators need to be trained in cultural competence and cultural responsiveness. As mentioned above, cultural competence training consists of two elements. The first step of cultural competence involves self-reflection as educators

review their biases and privileges. Self-reflection can be completed by teachers writing autobiographies, as well as their teaching philosophies (Cooper, He, & Levin, 2011). They can also engage in journaling, keeping track of negative issues with minority students, and finally, they can complete self-assessments regarding multicultural competence and prejudices (Saifer et al., 2011). As well as engaging in self-reflective practices, educators can also participate in simulations and scenarios through professional development to gain cultural competence (Gay, 2010; Saifer et al., 2011).

Educators also must try to build relationships with students and students' families. To build relationships with students, teachers should develop an understanding of students' cultural and family backgrounds, as well as students' learning, communication, and relationship styles (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Cartledge and Lo (2006) various manners in which educators can authentically gather background information from their students. Teachers can ask students to bring in family photographs, find ways to relate personal family stories to classroom assignments and discussions, invite family and community members into the classroom to give presentations, and the teacher can participate in community outreach events (Cartledge & Lo, 2006). Building authentic relationships with students and family members, and connecting those experiences with curriculum, has proven to increase diverse students' academic achievement (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2010; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014).

After gaining cultural competence, this study provided evidence that Black female students expect their educators to integrate culturally responsive strategies in the enacted curriculum. According to reconceptualist theory, current formal curricula are prescriptive

and objective, not accounting for the diverse needs and interests of various student groups (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Providing educators with curriculum that is subjective, is not restrictive, and that includes suggestions instead of rules and guidelines, may encourage educators to infuse culturally responsive strategies. The findings of this study contributed to the need for more culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. As noted by Bianca, Jenae, Nicole, Mya, and Ayanna, their cultures were not always positively represented in their courses. More specifically, in their social studies courses, the Black female students often noticed stereotypes such as slavery and they wanted to see more of themselves and their culture in the curriculum. If provided with a choice, the Black female students shared that they would want to see varied perspectives and voices in the formal social and English language arts curriculum. For instance, Jenae stated: "I feel as, when Black culture was represented in English and language arts, it was the same way, if that makes sense. So they would give us Phyllis Wheatley to read…but no Afeni Shakur, you know?" Jenae, personally, feels more of a connection with the style and approach of poets like Shakur and Angelou, thus, her educators could have taken the time to get to know Jenae and her interests and tried to infuse more of these materials in the enacted curriculum.

As well as the need for training in culturally responsive education, this study also alludes to the need for practitioners to have on-going professional development regarding formal curriculum that is reconceptualized. The reconceptualized curriculum should include concepts such as critical pedagogy, empowerment, and cooperative learning. If the formal curriculum is reconceptualized to include the themes represented in the *Reconceptualization of Curriculum in Response to Black Female Students Coding*

Framework, there is no guarantee practitioners will have the skills to transfer these concepts into the enacted curriculum. For instance, considering *Southern School District's* inclusion of cultural standards in many of the social studies curriculum documents, there was some alignment between the curricula and the manifested and latent themes from the category of critical pedagogy from the coding framework; however, the Black female students who attended schools within *Southern School District* did not acknowledge many instances where they were able to engage in critical thinking or problem solving, address negative stereotypes, question the status quo, or be exposed to a variety of perspectives and voices. According to Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2015), when students participate in activities such as role-play, they are likely to achieve a greater understanding of other individuals' points of view and develop empathy to diverse opinions. Thus, encouraging a Black female student to understand her values and conflict resolution skills may lead to the student becoming successful in her coursework as she encounters situations where she is required to think critically or solve problems (Joyce et al., 2015).

Curriculum Leadership

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2013), reconceptualized curricula should be centered around the learner, relevant to students' experiences, and humanistic, emphasizing communication and personal knowledge. The Black female students in this study seemed to respond to educators who enacted curriculum mirroring these concepts. For example, Victoria discussed her English teacher who allowed her to write about animals since she realized animals and animal sciences was relevant to Victoria's interests and experiences. Similarly, Mya shared positive stories of educators who

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centered lessons around students' personalities and needs in the English classroom. These examples demonstrate the impact reconceptualized curriculum can have on Black female students.

To reconstruct, or reconceptualize curriculum, schools must have effective curriculum leaders. According to Wiles (2009), the job of developing curriculum falls under the role of the school leader, "whether this role is carried out by a principal, an assistant principal for curriculum, a team leader, a department head, or by leading classroom teachers, the curriculum defines all other roles in the school" (p. 2). Thus, curriculum leaders in school districts, as well as instructional leaders (i.e., administrators and teacher leaders) on the building level, and even policymakers in departments of education, should make efforts to evaluate, and revise current curricula, reconceptualizing these documents so that they are responsive to the needs of Black female students.

Curriculum evaluation. Evaluation, according to Ornstein and Hunkins (2013), is "a process whereby people gather data to make decisions" (p. 246). Evaluators of curriculum must decide how they are going to review the formal curriculum documents, meaning will they review the written documents, the enacted curriculum in teachers' classrooms, or all of the above? The goal of evaluation is to determine what aspects of the developed curriculum "have worth and merit" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013, p. 242), and thus, which elements of the formal curriculum may need to be revised. There are various approaches that can be taken to evaluate existing curriculum. For instance, Talmage (1985) suggested five types of questions that curriculum leaders can ask when evaluating curricula, including questions revolving around intrinsic, instrumental,

comparative, idealization, and decision value. Intrinsic value questions wonder about how appropriate and connected to the purpose of education the material, whereas instrumental questions what audience the curriculum is intended for, and comparative questions asks if a new curriculum is better than previously used curriculum. Idealization questions ask how the curriculum can be improved, and finally decision questions wonder about the impact of the four previous questions on evaluating curriculum, meaning if the previous questions have been acknowledged, decisions about the curriculum should be quality (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Including an evaluation method, such as Talmage's (1985) questions, or a humanistic evaluation approach that would involve qualitative collection data (e.g., observations, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, etc.), can provide leaders with the tools to integrate changes in the curriculum.

In response to evaluating enacted curricula, educational leaders, such as curriculum directors, administrators, and teacher leaders, are expected to provide professional development to teachers (Hallinger, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Professional development should be ongoing and differentiated to meet the needs of educators (Fullan, 2014). Thus, if any problems or concerns are observed during the evaluation process, the educational leader is expected to provide classroom teachers with the tools needed to effectively enact the curricula (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). For instance, if the social studies curriculum includes the subcategory of character/social education from critical pedagogy, but it is clear that none of the social studies teachers in a school building are integrating this aspect of critical pedagogy, the administrator should

provide professional development on instructional strategies related to character/social education.

Curriculum revision. Often, revision to curriculum occur based on societal and cultural shifts in an educational community (J. A. Johnson, 2001). Additionally, new standardized assessments, as well as mandates from local, state, and sometimes federal, policymakers can also impact revisions to curriculum (National Research Council, 2012). With that being said, involvement of all stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, administrators, as well as community and family members) is important to curriculum revision (Jones & Eick, 2006). When revising curricula, an evaluation must be conducted first. The evaluation of existing curriculum involves an analysis of current content, goals, aims, and objectives (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013; Zimmerman & Jorgensen, 1998). After evaluating existing curricula, educational leaders should describe new aims, goals, and objectives and identify content and pedagogical approaches that will respond to the newly developed curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013). Additionally, the leaders will want to recognize available resources and any hindrances that may impact implementation of the revised formal curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013; Zimmerman & Jorgesen, 1998).

Considering the identified needs of Black female students, educational leaders may want to create aims that are culturally responsive to the intersectionalities Black females endure (M.W. Morris, 2016; Rollock, 2007; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Additionally, the goals and objectives of the revised curriculum can include instructional strategies that emphasize themes relevant to critical pedagogy, such as access to a variety of perspectives in social studies courses, and opportunities to address stereotypes. Likewise, culturally relevant content should be included. As mentioned, Black female

students respond positively to educational materials that are reflective of their lived experiences (Gay, 2010; M.W. Morris, 2016). Finally, as well as infusing critical pedagogy, other pedagogical approaches can be taken to reconceptualize the curriculum and respond to Black female students, such as including cooperative learning and providing leadership opportunities for these students. As noted, some Black female students thrive when they can take on the role of leader (Girl Scouts of America, 2017; M.W. Morris, 2016). Additionally, most minorities prefer to work in groups to solve problems and engage in dialogue (Gay, 2010).

Future Research

This study examined existing curricula and the perspective of Black female students to gauge alignment and differences in *Southern School District* with extant literature and the reconceptualization of curriculum theoretical framework. While the findings of this study infused the reconceptualization of curriculum theory, additional research can be conducted to validate the coding framework and a need for reconceptualized curriculum. Future studies may use the coding framework to analyze interviews with Black female students currently attending K-12 schools in different school districts and divisions. Also, considering the sample population for this study included students who were attending a university, a future study could examine the perceptions of Black female students who attended *Southern School District* (or another school district) and did not choose to further their education by attending a postsecondary institution. The experiences and data gained from those participants could then be compared to the experiences of those Black female students who decided to further academic career. Additionally, much of the data gained from the Black female students'

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interview responses, as well as the research on culturally responsive curriculum, alluded to the needs of other disenfranchised and marginalized students. Thus, future studies can be conducted with the framework and other diverse populations, such as Latina/o, Native American, Asian American, or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) students, to determine the responsiveness of curricula for these populations.

Likewise, where this study examined existing curriculum and perceptions of Black female students in one school district, future comparative studies can be done using quantitative and qualitative methodologies between different school districts' formal curricula and their Black female students' beliefs regarding the enacted curricula. This could involve a construct regarding Black female students' perceptions of leadership and empowerment, as well as interviews relating to how the Black female students see themselves reflected in curriculum and instruction.

Similar to the aforementioned research suggestions, quantitative and qualitative studies can be conducted with educators regarding their thoughts on the responsiveness of formal and enacted curriculum with Black female students, as well as other minority populations. Further, the researcher can engage in more in-depth qualitative studies with Black female students regarding their experiences with curriculum. For instance, a narrative qualitative study with one to two participants, or perhaps a phenomenological study with eight to ten participants, can be conducted without a priori codes to examine what themes emerge as the Black female students share their experiences and perceptions about curriculum and instruction in their secondary settings. As well as examining the Black female students' overall experiences and perceptions with curriculum and instruction, future research can be conducted on parental support and engagement as a

resource for the Black female student. While research supports the role of parental involvement in the education of Black male students (Gafford-Muhammad & Dixson, 2008; Joe & Davis, 2009), recent studies have emerged surrounding the familial role of the Black female student and her educational achievement (Crenshaw, 2015; M.W. Morris, 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Therefore, more studies regarding the impact of parental support and parental engagement on the Black female student are necessary.

Finally, the findings of this study demonstrated that some educators are not always enacting culturally responsive and critical pedagogy methodologies, despite some of these themes manifesting in the curriculum documents. Thus, future research can assess educators' knowledge of critical pedagogy and cultural responsiveness, as well as cultural competence. Also, research can be conducted to examine educational leaders' readiness in evaluating and revising existing curricula.

Informed Critique: Limitations and Delimitations

Considering this study included human subjects and focused on a small sample for content analysis, delimitations did occur. Additionally, limitations also happened in this research because of the study's research methodology. An informed critique of the study is included in the following section.

Research Methodology

As outlined in Chapter 3, the QCA methodology encourages researchers to gather materials and make meaning from said collected data. The limitation with this methodology is that findings and interpretations may not be generalizable or transferable to other school districts or populations. Issues to generalizability occur because of the

specific population being studied, the participants identified for the study, and the units of analysis from the written curriculum. First, the population emphasized (i.e., Black female students in general), excludes all other students; however, when reviewing extant literature many of the issues incurred by Black female students seems to align with those suffered by Black males, Native American, and Latina/o youths (Annamma et al., 2016, Gay, 2010). Thus, when reviewing the data, findings, and implications from this study, educators may find some transferability to other diverse populations.

Also, while the entire formal curriculum documents were reviewed, the objectives were used as the units of analysis in accordance with QCA methodology. Omitting other aspects of the curriculum documents in the analysis process may impact the overall interpretation of the data. On the other hand, reviewing the objectives only provided the researcher with a clearer idea of students' expectations, as well as what the instructor should have enacted. This allowed for further interpretations when considering the interview responses from the Black female students.

Sampling

The sample interviewed, Black female students who recently graduated from high school within the past two years, is representative of a delimitation of the study as this may limit the generalizability or transferability of the findings. However, many of the participants shared similar stories and experiences, despite attending seven different schools within the district (in different settings), and having different socio-economic statuses. A further delimitation of this study is the sample of the formal curriculum the researcher compared to the coding framework. Specifically, social studies and English language arts (ELA) curricula were reviewed, leaving out math, science, and other

content areas in secondary schools. With that being said, the inclusion of social studies and ELA curriculum documents served as a base for all content areas. As mentioned in Chapter 3, ELA was chosen because the skills taught in these courses (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) serve as a foundation for all other courses (Alber, 2014). Social studies content was chosen because the skills gained in these courses provide students with a sense of history to help them ascertain their current place in society, as well as assist students in effectively engaging in problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision making (Dhandhania, 2016; National Council for the Social Studies, 1998). Thus, it can be gathered that if certain themes are apparent in ELA and social studies curricula, similar results may be obtained when reviewing other curriculum documents.

Additionally, the researcher reviewed curricula solely from *Southern School District*, not including curriculum documents from other states and school districts. Reviewing the public curricula from *Southern School District* without comparing these documents to other forms of data, such as teachers' lesson plans, scope and sequence documents, or specific pacing guides, may not provide a representative overview of the content and curriculum used in the school district. However, including the voices of Black female students who attended schools within the school district assists in demonstrating an overview of the how the formal curriculum was enacted by educators.

A further limitation from the sample was related to the modes of communication used during the interviews with the Black female students. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the participants were interviewed in various manners, face-to-face, via telephone, Skype, and e-mail. The different modes of communication used could have provided problems with data collection, considering the researcher was not involved in an open-ended

conversation with the participant who responded to the interview questions via e-mail. However, including specific follow-up questions for each participant, as well as an open-ended survey provided extensive details that may have been left out of the e-mail responses or the telephone interviews.

Instrumentation

As mentioned, during this study the researcher and peer reviewer engaged in human coding. Both individuals coded by hand using the coding framework. The researcher and peer reviewer engaged in a pilot and three rounds of coding total. The hermeneutic process of coding led to the findings and the final coding framework for this study. The process of coding, validating existing themes, as well as adding themes as they emerge can limit the generalizability of this study. With that being said, the coding framework created and revised during this study can serve as a framework for other researchers.

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

Black female students are beginning to be discussed in some existing studies; however, this population is still largely ignored in comparison to their male counterparts (M.W. Morris, 2016; Rollock, 2007). Black female students are suffering from similar issues as Black male students, such as high dropout rates, disciplinary issues that are increasing their likeliness to be incarcerated, and limited access to high quality education (Crenshaw, 2015; M.W. Morris, 2016; Smith-Evans & George, 2014); however, the suffering of Black female students is continuously overlooked in empirical research. When there are studies concerning Black female students, they often emphasize discipline, behavior, or teacher's perceptions (M.W. Morris, 2016); thus, research

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regarding responsive curriculum and instruction and including the voices of Black female students must be included in the narrative. With demographics continuing to shift and diverse populations becoming the majority population in K-12 classrooms, educators must be equipped to respond to the needs of specific populations. The results of this study provide insight for those involved with curriculum leadership, including curriculum directors, school administrators, and teacher leaders. The findings from this research demonstrated a need for reconceptualized curriculum to respond to the unique needs of Black female students, including instructional activities that involve leadership opportunities, chances for cooperative learning, critical pedagogy emphasizing diverse voices and perspectives, and culturally competent educators who can facilitate a sense of belonging. This study introduced a coding framework that can be used to train curriculum and educational leaders, as well as new and practicing teachers.

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do you define curriculum?

2. What populations did you feel are discussed and addressed in planning the written/ formal curriculum in your school?

3. What issues did you suffer from while engaging with secondary curricula?

4. What assets or strengths do you think you brought into the classroom?

5. While in the secondary setting, what were some of your needs when engaging with curricula?

6. What do you think was the best approach to providing you with appropriate curricula to highlight your strengths and respond to your needs?

7. How do you think your administrators could have impacted your academic success?

8. How do you remember being involved in the curriculum process at your school (creation, revision, evaluation)?

9. How did you notice yourself and your culture represented in the ELA curriculum?

10. How did you notice yourself and your culture represented in the social studies curriculum?

11. What changes do you think could have been made to include your experiences and strengths in the ELA curriculum?

12. What changes do you think could have been made to include your experiences and strengths in the social studies curriculum?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions Alignment to Research Materials

Questions	Role of Administrator in Formal (Written) Curricula	Reconceptualist Theory	Black Female Students' Needs	Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction
How do you define curriculum?	X			
What populations did you feel were discussed and	X	X		X

addressed in planning the written/ formal curriculum in your school?				
What do you think would have been the best approach to ensuring the needs of various students/varied perspectives were identified in your school's formal curricula?	X	X		X
What issues do you think Black female students suffer from the most currently in the secondary setting?			X	X
What do you think are Black female students assets or strengths that they bring into the classroom?			X	X
What is the best approach to providing Black female students with appropriate curricula to highlight their strengths and respond to their needs?	X	X	X	X
How do you think administrators could best impact the academic success of Black female students?	X		X	X

How do you remember being involved in the curriculum process at your school (creation, revision, evaluation)?		X		X
How did you notice yourself and your culture represented in the ELA curriculum?			X	X
How did you notice yourself and your culture represented in the social studies curriculum?			X	X
What changes do you think could have been made to include the Black female student in the ELA curriculum?		X	X	X
What changes do you think could have been made to include the Black female student in the social studies curriculum?				

Appendix B: Follow-up Open Ended Survey Questions

Black Female Perspectives: Follow-Up to Interviews

Pseudonym: _____

Q1 Describe a time when any of your teachers in your English language arts or social studies courses encouraged you to think about your background or your goals.

Q2 Discuss any moments that you can remember when engaging with content in your ELA or social studies courses encouraged you to question societal norms or engage in critiquing.

Q3 Discuss a time (or times) when your ELA or social studies content encouraged or required you to work with peers and/or engage in resolving issues. How did this relate to the curriculum?

Q4 Describe your exposure to advanced or honors courses. Were you often in these courses? Did you always know about them? How would you describe your school administrator's (principal) involvement in making sure you had exposure to advanced curriculum?

Q5 Describe a time where you felt negative messages or ideas were being shared about Black females (or Black/African American people in general) in your secondary courses. How did your teachers respond? How was curriculum used to respond to negative messages?

Q6 How do you think your middle and high school courses prepared you for your postsecondary (college) education? What impact did your secondary (middle and high school) educators have on your decision to attend college?

Q7 When thinking about your classmates and fellow students, how did you see yourself in comparison to them? Consider how your educators treated you and the kinds of attention you received when responding to this question.

Appendix C: Solicitation to Participate

Greetings!

I have recently been approved to conduct research at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ and I would like to invite you to participate in a qualitative research study regarding how current ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ **schools' curricula in middle and high school responds to the unique needs of Black female students**. Participation would include engaging in a semi-structured interview, focusing on how you saw yourself in social studies and English language arts curriculum during your time as a secondary student. Further, I want to discuss your ideas of curriculum revision to best meet your needs as a Black female student. The interview will be conducted during a time that you deem **appropriate**. We can also do the interview **over the phone, Skype, or via e-mail** (you can type your responses). The interview should **last approximately 20-35 minutes**.

Further, I will engage in reviewing artifacts that relate to your school's enacted curricula, which I will do on my own time.

To be eligible, participants need to be at least 18 years old (no older than 18 or 19 years old) and a Black female who attended middle and/or high school at a ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ school.

If you are not able to participate in this study, I would appreciate if you could share this request with any of your eligible peers! Interested participants may reach me via email: mshockaday@ncat.edu or mshockaday@email.wm.edu.

If you are interested in participating, please reply back and I will send you the demographic questionnaire and the informed consent.

I intend to begin collecting data (conducting the interviews) before the end of March.

Thank you,

Marquita S. Hockaday

Study Title: Examining Formal and Enacted Secondary Curricula for Culturally
Responsive Strategies Regarding the Needs of Black Female Students: A Qualitative
Content Analysis

Principal Investigator: Marquita S. Hockaday

Purpose of the Research
This study seeks to identify and interpret formal and enacted curricula using written
documents and semi-structured interviews. The research seeks to examine culturally
responsive strategies in regard to the needs of Black female students using qualitative
content analysis. The research further seeks to understand the perspectives of Black
female students, when reflecting back on their time in the 6-12 secondary setting,
regarding their needs and the enacted curricula. Finally, the study hopes to identify
specific strategies and practices that may be implemented into the formal curriculum in
response to the unique needs of Black female students in the secondary setting.

Procedures
As a Black female student who attended a secondary school (middle or high school)
within this state, and a participant in this study, you will be asked to engage in one semi-
structured interview that will be audio recorded with Ms. Hockaday pertaining to your
perceptions of your school's enacted curriculum and its impact on the achievement of
yourself as a Black female student. The interviews will take place at ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ in a room reserved by Ms. Hockaday. The audio recording of the
interview will be destroyed (deleted from the computer and audio recording device after
transcription of the interview). Ms. Hockaday may also ask you to participate in follow-
up activities based on your interview responses (e.g. open ended responses and answering
clarifying questions based on what you say in the interview—all of which will be
conducted via e-mail or using an online survey system). Also, Ms. Hockaday will review
your state's written curricula (current curriculum documents).

Risks
The risks of the study may be possible feelings of frustration or disappointment after
discussing your experiences in secondary education.

Benefits
This study can provide insight about current curriculum practices within various school
districts in the state. Not only can the study illuminate ideas about curricula and Black
female students, but educators may note how the curriculum is currently being used is (or
is not) responsive to various students. Further, the findings of this study may inform new
techniques and strategies that can be integrated into the school division's curriculum and
instruction practices in the future to respond to not only disenfranchised populations but
all students.

Duration

Direct participation (one interview) in this study will take approximately 1-2 hours (total). Any follow-up activities, such as responding to an open-ended response questions and clarifying questions based on your interview, will take no longer than 30 minutes to an hour.

Compensation

You will receive a $25.00 gift card to a restaurant of your choosing upon completion of the interview and all follow-up activities (open-ended questions or clarifying questions based on the interview).

Confidentiality

All information collected in this study will be kept completely confidential to the extent permitted by law. Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. You will either choose or be assigned a pseudonym that you will be referred to throuhgout this study. The key linking your pseudonym to your name will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office, and no one else will have access to it. The code key will be destroyed (shredded and deleted from my computer) upon completion of my research. The data you give me will be used for the abovementioned study that I am conducting and may be used as the basis for articles or presentations in the future. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in audio recordings, publications, or presentations. The audio recording of the interview will be deleted (from the recording device and the computer) following transcription.

Participation/Withdrawal

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may also skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study. If you choose to withdraw, your compensation will be a $10 gift card to Starbucks.

Contact

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Marquita S. Hockaday at mshockaday@ncat.edu.

If you have any study-related concerns or any questions about your rights as a research study participant, you may contact the ███████████████████████ ████████████████████████████████████.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information and have received answers to all my questions. I am at least 18 years old and voluntarily consent to take part in this research study and to have this interview audio recorded.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

_____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

_____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date:

_____

Appendix E: Chart of Curricula for Analysis

Curriculum Documents for Analysis

Curricula	Content Included
ELA: Curriculum Document A	Basic literacy skills
ELA: Curriculum Document B	Intermediate literacy skills
ELA: Curriculum Document C	Advanced literacy skills
SS: Curriculum Document D	World geography and historical foundations
SS: Curriculum Document E	Civics and economics foundations
SS: Curriculum Document F	American government and historical foundations part I
SS: Curriculum Document G	American government and historical foundations part II
SS: Curriculum Document H	World relationships and geography
SS: Curriculum Document I	Civics, economics, foundational government

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Curriculum Vita

Marquita S. Hockaday

mshockaday@email.wm.edu

Education

2017	**The College of William & Mary**, *Williamsburg, VA* Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Education Policy, Planning and Leadership, Specialization: Curriculum Leadership Dissertation Topic: Examining Formal and Enacted Secondary Curricula for Culturally Responsive Strategies Regarding the Needs of Black Female Students: A Qualitative Content Analysis *Completed coursework and passed comprehensive exams*
2013	**University of Phoenix,** *Phoenix, AZ* Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.) in Curriculum and Instruction: Reading
2012	**Fairleigh Dickinson University**, *Madison, NJ* Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A) in Creative Writing Thesis Topic: Sympathy and the Psychopathic Character
2011	**American Public University**, *Charles Town, WV* Graduate Certificate in European History
2002	**Old Dominion University**, *Norfolk, VA* Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in History Secondary Education