THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN-CENTERED PEDAGOGY ON THE SELF AND GROUP IDENTIT

ITY OF ADOLESCENT BLACK FEMALES

A Thesis

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by

Malika Melissa Murray

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THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN-CENTERED PEDAGOGY ON THE SELF AND GROUP IDENTITY OF ADOLESCENT BLACK FEMALES

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Department of Multicultural Education
Abstract

of

THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN-CENTERED PEDAGOGY ON THE SELF AND GROUP
IDENTITY OF ADOLESCENT BLACK FEMALES

by

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Statement of Problem

The educational attainment levels, health status, and socio-economic conditions of Black children reflect that adolescent Black girls ages 11-14 are in jeopardy of developing a number of deficiencies that prevent them from actualizing their fullest potentials. Adolescent Black girls can gain a sense of self-identity, group-identity, and agency through learning environments where an African Centered Pedagogy (ACP) is implemented. ACP serves as a critical intervention to nurture the minds, bodies, and spirits of adolescent Black girls, while counteracting the onslaught of dangerous social factors.

Sources of Data

The responses of twenty-eight middle school students and parents who are members of an ACP after-school program were examined. Qualitative and Quantitative data was collected through questionnaire and survey in order to assess the impact of ACP on the girls’ self and group identity.
Conclusions Reached

A significant number of participants demonstrated that exposure to African-centered pedagogy had impacted their concepts of self and group identity positively. The ACP program was also found to have had a positive impact on the girls’ parents and community as well.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Lisa William-White

__________________________
Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the countless Brothers and Sisters who have given their lives to the struggle for human rights. May you be one with the Most High in spirit forever.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give thanks and praises above all to the Most High Jah for giving me the health and strength to pursue this endeavor. My faith and commitment to H.I.M. is unwavering.

Infinite thanks is due to my mother, Nitza Mihalus, for your never-ending support and love. I would not be who I am today without your belief in me throughout my life. I can only one day hope to become a woman of your caliber and spirit.

My children Nile, Satta, and Abi- you have shared me with this study, and with the struggle as a whole, for countless expanses of time. I thank you for understanding your mother’s position as a freedom fighter, and pray you know that I strive to make the world a better place not only for others, but for you first and foremost. I dreamt of you before you came back into this world, and you are my dream for the future now.

The love of my life and partner in struggle Lakim Allah- you exist as both my counterpart and reflection. Thank you for constantly reaffirming the necessity for our path and helping me see new avenues for change and growth. I am proud to fight by your side.

My extended family and children Sundullah, Ausaru, and N’sheema- thank you for entering my life and balancing our lives. I could not have asked for more wonderful young people to surround me through the years.
Synthia Smith, I thank you for your vision and determination to bring the Black youth of today a positive source of support, culture, and spirit. Our work together fulfills my soul and inspires me that change is possible.

The girls of GoI, and to the Black youth of our community and beyond- my love and hope for you is infinite. Thank you for making me laugh and cry, joyful and vexed, and for teaching me as much about myself as I can only pray I have taught you about yourselves. The world is yours.

My past, current, and future students- you enrich my life immeasurably. I pray for your continual success and happiness.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment, against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow (Robinson, 2000).

The multifaceted, historical system of domination experienced by African people is described by some African scholars as the “maafa”, a Kiswahili word that means “disaster” (Ani, 1994). Today, the term collectively refers to the Pan-African discourse of the 500 hundred years of suffering of people of African heritage through slavery, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, rape, oppression, invasions and exploitation; the effects of which impacts all areas of African life; religion, heritage, tradition, culture, agency, self-determination, marriage, identity, rites of passage, and ethics (Shahadah, 2007). Although the overt horrors of slavery have dissipated over time, the existing realities for Black people living in neo-colonial societies prove to be a direct effect of the maafa. Human society is a cumulative process in which the past is never totally obliterated (Rawick, 1972). John Henrik Clarke (1967) states, “The events which transpired five thousand years ago, five years ago or five minutes ago, have determined what will happen five minutes from now; five years from now, or five thousand years from now. All history is a current event.”
The aftermath of centuries of worldly oppression and injustice has produced a disproportion of countless Black people, throughout the African Diaspora, who do not get the chance to actualize their fullest potential. The vast divisions in wealth, health, power, education, and overall quality of life between Black and White people that were instituted by the economic and social system of slavery hundreds of years ago continue to disadvantage and harm Black children today. Impoverished life circumstances produce children who have a higher chance of becoming academically, mentally, emotionally, and sometimes physically unstable.

The levels of Black poverty are but one area where disparities have remained particularly pronounced since the late 1950’s when the U.S. Census began to officially measure and record levels of poverty. The method of poverty measurement currently in use was adopted as the “official” U.S. statistical measure of poverty in 1960 (Gabe, 2011). Poverty among Blacks was 55.1 percent compared to 18.1 percent of Whites in 1959; 32.3 percent to 9.5 percent in 1969, 30.7 percent to 10 percent in 1989, and 27.6 percent compared to 12.6 percent in 2011 (U.S. Census, 1959-2011). The poverty rates of Blacks have consistently represented approximately 3 times the poverty rates of Whites every decade except recently, when the 2012 poverty rate for Blacks dropped to 2.15 times that of Whites.

In 2011, however, the poverty rate for Black children was 38.6 percent, which is more than 3 times the 12.4 percent rate for White children (U.S. Census, 2010). Though this translates to approximately 4 million Black children and 4 million White children, considering that the 2010 U.S. population is only 12.2 percent Black and 64.7 percent
White, these statistics are overwhelmingly grim. Black children today are more likely to live in poverty than children of any other race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Contributing to the high rate of overall Black children living in poverty is the large share of Black children who live in single female-headed families (67% percent); among children living in single female-headed families in 2011, more than half of Black children (54.2 percent) were poor (U.S. Census, 2011). Children in single-mother families were more likely to have learning disabilities (10%) and ADHD (10%) than children in two-parent families (6% and 8%) (Cohen, 2011). Fifty-seven percent of children and youth with mental health problems come from households living at or below the federal poverty level (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) found that children in poor families were four times as likely to be in fair or poor health (4%) as children in families that were not poor (1%) (CDC, NCHS, 2011).

Furthermore, a 2010 CDC United States Health Report found that a Black child has a 30% greater probability of dying by his/her fourteenth birthday than does a White child. In any country throughout the world where access to health care, nutrition, and safety is scarce for children, this figure would represent a travesty. In America, where every child is supposed to be afforded the basic foundations of living, this statistic is unacceptable.

Robinson (2000) wrote that “we have been largely over-whelmed by a majority culture that wronged us dramatically, emptied our memories, undermined our self-esteem, implanted us with palatable voices, and stripped us along the way of the sheerest
corona of self-definition (p. 28). Unless the very structure, ideology, and spirit of the systems that educate them are changed, Black children will continue to suffer the injustices of biased, racist institutions and society.

The complexity of these injustices demand much more than a surface fix of the “educational gap”. Many efforts to solve the achievement gap center around strategies to improve student test scores, however educational experts deem this an ineffective attempt that rarely solves the true problem. Closing the gaps in the aggregate performance on standardized achievement tests does not constitute a strategy for addressing Black underachievement (Murrell, 2002, p.17). Special analyses by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2009 and 2011 showed that black and Hispanic students trailed their white peers by an average of more than 20 test-score points on the NAEP math and reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades, a difference of about two grade levels. These gaps persisted even though the score differentials between black and white students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in 4th grade math and reading and 8th grade math (NCES, 2009, 2011).

While 82.7 percent of Asian students and 78.4 percent of White students in the class of 2008 graduated on time, only 57.6 percent of Hispanic, 57 percent of black and 53.9 percent of American Indian students graduated on time (Education Week, 2011). In California, black students are six times more likely than white students to attend one of the bottom third of schools in the state (EdTrust West, 2010).

The answer to elevating African American achievement can never simply be a matter of being responsive to what is; there must be a critical reconfiguring of what
should be in the educational experience of African American children (Murrell, 2002, p.17). Although there is a difference in the scores of white students vs. students of color, the over-saturation of the term “achievement gap” and the consistent analysis of Black students through a deficit perspective hampers the ability to recognize the gains that are taking place or new possibilities for the future. It can be argued that the popular characterization of America’s educational challenge as one of “closing a gap” may actually serve to perpetuate, rather than eliminate, the achievement gap by further camouflaging the historically rooted inequality embedded in the practices, and politics of American education (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2006; Murrell, 2002).

The solutions to eliminating the inequities require intense exploration of the factors that have enabled them both historically and presently. If the past has taught nothing else, it should have shown us that Africans cannot depend upon others, no matter how sympathetic, to sustain an effort that will change the basic conditions of life for the masses of Africans. In the final analysis, the real measure of progress is not the condition of the few but the condition of the many (Hilliard, 1998). Hence, the solution to the problems lies in the hands of Black people throughout the diaspora who are the ones responsible for enacting true tangible change.

“I think that we have lost a fundamental belief in the power of our own human spirits and imaginations to project adequate images of what is possible for us. We have lost hope, and have therefore lost control over our own futures. Our slave ancestors never made this deadly mistake. We need to re-learn the first fundamental lesson they learned” (McPherson, 2000, p. 53).
The fundamental lesson passed on by the African ancestors who endured over five hundred years of slavery was to not lose hope. Paolo Friere (1998) wrote, “Hope is not just a question of grit or courage. It’s an ontological dimension of our human condition” (p. 58). He describes hope as a human necessity that must be founded in practice - in action. “Without hope, we are hopeless and cannot begin the struggle to change. To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle one of its mainstays” (Friere, 1998, p.8). It is ironic that in 2012, with a plethora of opportunity for education, resources, and information, with amazing modern technology, and with an abundance of comforts, conveniences, and excessive lifestyles, that many Black people look pessimistically on the chance for success and progress. Notwithstanding often dauntless efforts by ministers, parents, and community leaders to resist hopelessness, the sense of crisis - characterized by some as a slide toward nihilism- is palpable; a downward spiral continues for many youth, and despair abounds (West, 1993).

Nihilism on the part of Black adults is completely destructive for the Black youth who rely on them for inspiration and motivation. Scores of Black American children grow up with a deluge of educational, physical, social, and psychological obstacles that hamper their ability to actualize their fullest potentials. The ultimate result is detrimental behavior and self-destruction for countless young lives. Molefi Asante (1988) writes that Blacks not knowing about cultures that have bought them thus far causes, “…their images, symbols, lifestyles, and manners [to be] contradictory and thereby destructive to personal and collective growth and development” (p. 1). Kwame Nkrumah (1964)
utilized brilliant metaphor in his reference to this dangerous lure of post-colonial influence when he wrote, “The cajolement, the wheedlings, the seductions and the Trojan horses of neocolonialism must be stoutly resisted, for neocolonialism is a latter-day harpy, a monster which entices its victims with sweet music” (p. 78).

Our culture in general (and that includes schools, the media, and our social institutions) has helped educate students to acquire a veritable passion for ignorance (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres, 2009). This glorification of ignorance permeates every sphere of Black culture— from music, to movies, to food, to economy, to education. American society perpetuates that Black children maintain shallow levels of understanding about politics, economics, history, and culture. The personal self-concept of African American youth is likely to be high, while his or her understanding of the way in which Black people (and the physical characteristics of Black people) are valued in the society may be reflective of low self-esteem (Cross, 1985 Spencer, 1988). This contradiction leads Black youth to revel in the earthly elements of life that they feel they can control and have power over. To “go stoopid” (to be careless and carefree), to “pimp” (to exploit others for personal gain), to have money/expensive material possessions, to lack emotion and self-control, to get drunk and/or high, and to have physical and sexual domination stand as predominant themes of urban culture pushed by modern media. The effects of these common characteristics are viciously detrimental.

What has happened to hope? Why are so many Black children in particular, now in a position where they are more dangerous to themselves than any conceived “oppressor” or enemy? Why is the quality of living for Black children so low that our
young generation, the hope of our future and of the world, is at risk of such demise? Most importantly, how can we counteract this crisis? Hilliard (1998) summarized the crisis facing Black people when he wrote: “We cannot advance because we have: No unified spiritual base that respects and compliments our different religions. No global view of ourselves as one people. No geopolitical view of our conditions as a people. No collective aim. No structures for socializing the masses of our children. No structure communicating these things to our masses. No mainstream programs are designed to afford an educational experience which empowers members of the Black community (via children) to “control the psychic and physical spaces that [Blacks] call their own” (Akoto, 1992, p. 3). One useful yet contentious solution to the problems Black children are facing has been to do as the Africans did before chattel slavery, namely, to educate Black children with respect to the African cultural ethos from whence they came (Akoto & Akoto, 1999). This translates into the proposal for African-centered pedagogy for Black children.

Asante (2003) is recognized as the major proponent of Afrocentricity—the notion of it being a Black self-respecting approach to data and human phenomena that is “distinct from a Eurocentric ideology that allows African agency, that is, a sense of self-actualizing based upon the best interests of African people.” Ancient African socialization processes show us that communities can function and be productive when everyone, young and old, has a sense of purpose and value that contributes to the community's well-being (Hilliard, 1998). African-Centered Education (ACE) is an evolving liberatory project with a philosophy and practice informed by the 500-year
history of unrelenting struggle waged by Africans in the Americas to first maintain and now to recover and to reconnect with the best of our African intellectual and cultural heritage (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, & Turenne, 2010). Some of the particulars of African culture and knowledge production that would otherwise educate the populous remain hidden, unless a pro-active community of scholars rescue it, and give it new meaning and significance (Zulu, 2001).

Murrell (2002) posits that Black children need a “figured world of African American culture and intellectual life that invites the participation, development, and achievement of African American children” (Murrell 2002, xxxv). An emancipatory African-centered model of education is defined here as one that addresses social oppression and situates community problems within historical context acknowledges students as agents for social change, affirms African cultural resources for healing and social transformation (Payne, 2000). Afrocentric (Africentric/ African centered) education is the only culturally centered comprehensive approach to addressing problems of mis-education, but there are complications: often African centered efforts are given short shrift in school systems, ignored in educational research, and most interestingly those asked to discuss or lead Afrocentric efforts are often opponents of the theories (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). ACP embraces the traditional wisdom that "children are the reward of life" and it is, therefore, an expression of our unconditional love for them. In order to best serve Afrikan children our methods must reflect the best understandings that we have of how they develop and learn biologically, spiritually and
African-centered pedagogy is one distinct solution for the uplifting of Black children in America.

Statement of the Problem

The educational attainment levels, health status, and socio-economic conditions of Black children reflect that adolescent Black girls ages 11-14 are in jeopardy of developing a number of deficiencies that prevent them from actualizing their fullest potentials. Unjust social factors such as poverty, inadequate schooling, media, and racism have extremely detrimental effects on young Black girls who, as a result, represent a disproportionate number of negative statistics. In the context of Afrocentric literature, a “sense of agency” is understood as a people’s ability, empowerment, and entitlement to control and mandate the arenas of life around them (Akoto, 1992; Asante, 1988). Adolescent Black girls can gain a sense of agency through transformational learning environments where an African Centered Pedagogy (ACP) can nurture their minds, bodies, and spirits, while counteracting the onslaught of dangerous social factors.

An examination of American history shows how closely tied restricted access to quality education is to the social control of African populations in this hemisphere, particularly African Americans (Murrell, 2002). The withholding of “quality” education from Black people subjugates them to the ongoing inequities that ultimately steer the course of their futures. In the decade following the Civil War, more than 90 percent of African Americans lived in former slave states, which meant that more than 95 percent of them were illiterate in 1865 (Anderson, 1988). The contradiction between the drive for
universal literacy for the common man and the denial of literacy for African Americans sharply defined the legacy of literacy for freedom and freedom for literacy among African Americans (Murrell, 2002, p.25).

The emergence of dozens of private and public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) during the mid-nineteenth century proves the bravery and tenacity of the Black desire for education. The very first Black College, named the African Institute, (today known as Cheyney University) was established in Pennsylvania on February 25, 1837, predating the Civil War and making it the oldest institution of higher learning in the nation for Black students. Tuskegee University was founded in 1881; Florida A&M University (FAMU) was founded on October 3, 1887; MORE Murrell (2002) writes “The post-bellum rates of illiteracy among southern Blacks declined more rapidly than among Whites-a remarkable phenomenon given the severe retrenchment of the gains made during reconstruction and the systematic disenfranchisement of Blacks during the last two decades of the nineteenth century” (p.28). In the midst of this Black potential and promise, various strategies were enacted to counteract Black educational progress including: intentional disproportioned school funding; local and state legislation excluding Blacks from politics; and exclusion from public high schools.

started to narrow, only to come to the startling and ironic conclusion that progress generally halted for those born around the mid-1960s, a time when landmark legislative victories heralded an end to racial discrimination.

While a major intention of the Civil Rights movement was to equalize the educational opportunities for Black students, the progress written into legislation proved harder to translate into actuality. The effects of school integration on the African American community were both immediate and devastating: literally scores of mostly Black schools were closed; tens of thousands of Black school personnel were displaced from 1954 to 1965, and by 1966, fewer than 2 percent of Black teachers worked in desegregated schools (Fultz, 2004).

Typical American schools and curriculum are not designed to provide an education that seeks to change the system. Moreover, governmental efforts to devote money, time, training, and spirit towards learning environments that promote the evolution of Black students are at best minimal. As a result, Black children continue to be devalued as negative cultural capital; the students and schools who represent the lowest potential for becoming viable assets to the capitalist agenda receive the least financial and political support. With continuing budget gashes, there will be more cuts to curriculum, programs, and teachers who will be able to promote positive transformation for students of color.

While much time and energy has been exerted over the past fifty years in efforts to hold the United States Government or America as a whole responsible for both past and present atrocities, a motivated portion of the African American population have
chosen to channel their energies in a more substantial direction. African-centrists consider blame, no matter where it is placed, to be a losing strategy that erodes the sense of nationhood required to develop Black consciousness; in its place are the inspiration and energy required to cultivate a positive and productive culturally based identity for “New World Africans” (Kunjufu 2004; Raton 2006).

From an Afrocentric perspective, the way to reconnect with the spirit that enabled Black people to persist over the centuries lies in the study of Black history and culture. Hilliard (2002) and Akoto (1992) call for an “African education” for Black children, which they deem is possible through a process of “Sankofa”, which literally means that people of African descent should mentally and/or physically “return to the source” and retrieve their African culture; hence, they call for a “re-Africanized” education for children of African descent (Shockley & Fredericke, 2008).

Persons working within African centered independent schools realize that, with family and community loving care and training, all African children- from the physically aggressive young boy; snotty-nosed, nappy-headed, raggedly dressed young girl; to the impudent, threatening-looking teenager- have a spark of the divine within them and thus represent the possibility of perfectibility (Carol Lee, 1992).

All African children have a “spark of the divine” within them (Lee, 1992). “Africans have a certain emotive sensitivity, an affective rapport with the forces and forms of the universe, a direct and immediate contact with ‘the Other’ (Ba, 1973). This contact with a higher source instills in them the talents and gifts of art, reason, endurance, and above all humanism. Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey shared in the sentiment that
Black people possess an infinite possibility when he stated “God and Nature first made us what we are, and then out of our own created genius we make ourselves what we want to be. Follow always that great law. Let the sky and God be our limit and Eternity our measurement” (Martin, 1983). This spiritual connection and the ability to hope have been the saving grace that has made survival amidst unthinkable opposition possible for millions of Africans for hundreds of years.

Black children in America critically require access to African centered learning environments which promote transformational and emancipatory education in order to counteract and transcend the mental, physical, and spiritual oppositions that plague them. An abundance of optimism is inherent within the philosophies of African centered pedagogy (ACP), which promotes that “every child can not only learn, but can learn everything; that maximum learning takes place when knowledge, knowing, and the knower are culturally connected; and that the value of individual achievement becomes internalized when it is related to one’s ability to contribute to the well-being and welfare of one’s self, family, and community” (Ginwright, 2004).

Lasting Oppression

A national and global negligence for Black life and health is eminently apparent. Governments and social systems cannot deny the data which places Black people at a higher rate for poverty, disease, and death. Perhaps the most threatening statistic pertaining to Black children is the death rate, which remains appalling throughout the world. According to estimates developed by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality estimation, Africa was the only continent whose countries reported a
probability of more than 100 deaths per 1,000 children under five from 2007-2011, with Sierra Leone topping the list at 185 (Level & Trends in Child Mortality Report, 2011). Although the under-five mortality rate for the United States is much lower, at 8 deaths per 1,000 children, Black children in America are in dire jeopardy as well.

To further convolute this crisis, researchers estimate that “at some point before they reach 17 years of age, 4 percent of black teens, and more than 7 percent of black teen females, will attempt suicide” (CDC Health, United States report, 2010). A report from the U.S. Surgeon General found that from 1980-1995, the suicide rate among African Americans ages 10 to 14 increased 233%, as compared to 120% of Non-Hispanic Whites. As if the threat of society and its maladies are not enough to bring about the demise of Black children, too many are now taking matters into their own hands and attempting to end their lives first. This is further evidence of the need for critical intervention.

The social and economic conditions of the Black nation affect Black children’s physical and mental health in a multitude of ways. They are particularly in jeopardy of various forms of abuse. For example, of the 702,000 cases of substantiated child abuse in 2009 (the latest year for which federal data are available) 44 percent involved white children and 22.3 percent involved black children (Federal Health Statistics, 2009). Considering that Black people make up approximately 12.4 percent of the country's population and White people represent approximately 74.8 percent, the numbers of Black children being abused are highly disproportionate (US Census, 2010). There are many factors contributing to the abuse of children, including the stress, mental disease, and
drug abuse prevalent in families living in high poverty. Unfortunately, the kinds of abuse suffered by Black children are among the most severe.

In 2000, the National Center for Health Statistics found that children in poor families were five times as likely to be in fair or poor health as children in families that were not poor (Cohen, 2010). Thirteen percent of all Black children under age 18 were not covered by health insurance in 2000 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000). The inability to be checked, diagnosed, and treated leads to many avoidable health issues. An impoverished lifestyle can be a death sentence for some Black children, in particular Black girls, who are at high-risk of growing up to develop one of the many health problems that Black women face. According to a national study conducted for the Black Women’s Health Imperative, a daunting 60 percent of African American women have symptoms of depression. “Sixty percent of African American women suffer from depression, but few seek professional help because of the communal stigma and because there are few providers specializing in African American issues” (Curphey, 2003). The refusal or inability to seek counseling and therapy contributes to the snowball effect of depression; when mothers are mentally unstable or unhealthy, Black children inevitably suffer from the backlash.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the short term and long term impact of African Centered Pedagogy on the cultural, academic, emotional, social, and physical conditions of Black adolescent females and their parents at a middle school in Sacramento, California. The participants are all members of an African Centered after-
school program who will take part in interviews and surveys through an action research study. The research will be conducted in a mixed-method format that analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data.

Definition of Terms

African Centered Education: African Centered Education (ACE) is the means by which Africans pass down from one generation to the other the core elements of African culture -including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate that culture. Its aim is to build commitment and competency within present and future generations to support the process of African Rebirth and Nation building. (ACE Foundation)

African Centered Pedagogy (ACP): A model of education that integrates the historical, cultural, political, and developmental considerations of the African American experience into a theory for the educational achievement of African American children (Murrell, 2012).

Afrocentricity: A paradigm based on the idea that African people should re-assert a sense of agency in order to achieve sanity. It asserts the central role of the African subject within the context of African history, thereby removing Europe from the center of the African reality. In this way, Afrocentricity becomes a revolutionary idea because it studies ideas, concepts, events, personalities, and political and economic processes from a standpoint of black people as subjects and not as objects, basing all knowledge on the authentic interrogation of location. (Asante, 2009)
Emancipatory Education: Education that serves to help students transcend and overcome oppression.

African Indigenous Pedagogy- A form of education based on African indigenous knowledge. It is also a cultural-political process that involves understanding education as: a means to an end; social responsibility; spiral and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined (Zulu, 2006).

De-culturization: A process by which an individual is deprived of his or her culture and then conditioned to other cultural values (Boateng, 1990, p.73).

Emancipatory education: A pedagogy that seeks to invoke the liberatory potential of education for children and society. African-centered emancipatory education affirms identity and agency, helps restore a sense of history, and provides opportunities for social action (Potts, 2003).

Pan Africanism: A movement founded to secure equal rights, self-government, independence, and unity for African peoples throughout the world. Inspired by Marcus Garvey, it encouraged self-awareness on the part of Africans by encouraging the study of their history and culture, a rejection of colonialism and white supremacy, and the unification of African people throughout the Diaspora (Campbell, Oxford Dictionary of Politics).
Limitations

This study focuses on the experiences of Black adolescent females who are members of a culturally based after-school program. The relatively small, homogenous participant sample may affect the results of the data by not representing a wider range of reactions to the experience. The group will only meet for two hours once a week, and this presents an extremely compacted period to be exposed to the vast field of African Centered Education; this condenses the amount of information that they can study and may not allow for an in-depth exploration of certain topics. This study is also limited by the fact that the effects of African Centered Pedagogy may not be fully realized or actualized in a short term time frame- in this case the participants having been exposed to the ACP curriculum for less than three years, and being particularly young (ages 11-14).

Importance of the Study

Few works have investigated the impact of African-centered pedagogy on the self-identity and group-identity of adolescent Black females. Considering the educational conditions under which Black children now exist, perhaps much can be gained from such an investigation (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). This study represents a critical contribution to the data pertaining to the impact of African Centered Pedagogy on young Black children and its potential as an intervention against educational, social, cultural, emotional, and physical deficiencies in their lives. The current lack of both qualitative and quantitative data on the long term and short term effects of ACP proves an imperative need to conduct such research. The more data that is collected based on ACP, the more likely it will be accepted as an exceptional model to be used in the formation of
new programs and schools, or integrated into existing school systems in America.

African education policy makers need to consider at least four suggestions. First, they should investigate a theory of Africa education that moves beyond problematic analysis to a constructive critique of internal and external forces that impede progressive social change. Second, there should be a research methodology that will continuously include a study of how indigenous knowledge, education and learning techniques can inform modern social, economic and political reality. Third, the proposed new curriculum (or theoretical formation) should be instituted in Africa to maximize human resource potential to advance national and international development, and last, African policy makers should decide to create and sustain an independent think tank to address common educational and social issues throughout the continent (Zulu, 1999).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will consist of a review of the literature that is pertinent to the theory, model, and practice of African-centered Pedagogy. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology that the researcher will employ to determine the participant’s reactions and responses to the curriculum presented in their program. Chapter 4 will present the findings of this study. Chapter 5 will provide conclusions and recommendations for change and future research.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is based on a review of the literature relevant to the foundation, theory, and application of African Centered Pedagogy (ACP). The research will include elements of Indigenous African Pedagogy (IAP) found historically and presently in Africa, and it will evolve into the emergence of ACP in America and in the Western Hemisphere. This chapter will identify and expand key differences between African-centered and European-centered education and ideology to determine ways in which the American school system may negatively impact Black students. Chapter two will also focus on a conglomeration of the driving themes, characteristics, and goals of ACP, and how this pedagogy can impact the self-identity and group-identity of adolescent African American females.

A study of various African-centered theories, educators, schools, and philosophy finds that in most cases, IAP and ACP promotes: Knowledge of African History; Spiritual Evolution, Knowledge of Self (Identity); Pan Africanism; Deconstruction of Falsehood and Myth; Self-reliance; Mental and Physical Liberation; Nation and Community Building; Social Change; Critical Thinking/Problem Solving; Positive Womanhood/Manhood Concepts; and Human Rights. Authentic ACP possesses the following characteristics: it is historically and culturally accurate and relevant; spiritually affirming; transformative; emancipatory; healing; counter-hegemonic; reconstructive; holistic; humanitarian; and taught by committed educators. An examination of certain elements of European-centered education and Western ideology will prove why it has
been contradictory to the fundamentals of ACP, and detrimental to the education and livelihood of Black people in America as a whole. An exploration of the current statistics pertaining to Black Americans, and specifically females, will be integrated in an effort to determine how and why the tenets of ACP can apply to counteract the negative conditions that affect adolescent Black girls.

The premise of ACP stems from its predecessor, IAP. Indigenous African Pedagogy is a movement that is currently engaging African scholars and activists who recognize the critical need for Africans on the continent to control their own systems and forms of education. Semali (1999) outlines the distinctions between indigenous African knowledge and other forms of knowledge to report that: (1) indigenous African knowledge (IAK) does not derive its origins or standing from the individual, but from the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of community; (2) IAK is about what local people know and do and what local communities have known and done for generations; (3) the ability to use community knowledge produced from local history form important literacy skills critical to survival in an African context; and (4) what local people know about their environment must be included in the planning and implementation process of education (p. 316-317). The facets of IAP are critical in that they represent the forms of knowledge and knowledge acquisition existing in Africa prior to the European exploration, colonialism, and genocide that disrupted the course of African and world history. That these traditional forms of education still exist is a testament of their validity and fortitude.

Opata (1998) further explicates that IAP is based on the foundations of
“…mutual respect for the opinions of others, lessons of deference to elders, lessons about the importance of dialogue, lessons about conflict negotiation, the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, and the spirit to face the future with an open mind” (p. 117). For example, in examining indigenous African education and knowledge closely, we see that it involves understanding education as: a means to an end; social responsibility; spiral and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined (Zulu, 2001). These principles are embedded in the foundations of ACP as it is practiced in the Western hemisphere; the themes of community, environment, family, and communication are still heavily emphasized. Many educators and scholars believe that a return to these fundamentals will help improve the self-identity and success of Black children throughout the world today.

Dei (1994) suggests that the examination of Afro-Centricity is instinctively an alternative way of knowing the world, an investigation and understanding of phenomena from a perspective grounded in African-centered values…that calls for the validation of African experiences and histories, as well as a critique of the continued exclusion and marginalization of African knowledge systems, educational texts, mainstream academic knowledge, and scholarship (p. 3-5). Afrocentric theorists and educators believe that African cultural practice must be viewed from an indigenous, African perspective because western implementations have moved such cultures toward becoming more
palatable to European tastes and preferences (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). The behavioral patterns of many modern Black girls exemplify this phenomenon; the practice of hair straightening and weaves, plastic surgery to achieve European ideals of beauty, consumerism and materialistic tendencies, selfish and independent attitudes, and nihilistic outlooks on life are evident of the European influence on their lives and mentalities.

True education offers students knowledge of how to administer within their own communities and how to solve the problems therein as well (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). Zulu (1999) writes, that in reference to ACP, anything short of that will be a throwback to the days of colonial manipulation when education was an instrument of imperialist domination and economic exploration, revealing itself as a key culprit in contemporary African economic and political instability that acquit responsibility for inequality, social stratification, and intellectual cultural servitude. African-Centered Education (ACE) is an evolving liberatory project with a philosophy and practice informed by the 500-year history of unrelenting struggle waged by Africans in the Americas to first maintain and now to recover and to reconnect with the best of our African intellectual and cultural heritage (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, and Turrene, 2010). This signifies the necessity for African-centered education in contrast to Eurocentric schooling for Black children.

Shujaa (1994) explains the difference between education and schooling when he writes: “The schooling process is designed to provide an ample supply of people who are loyal to the nation-state and who have learned the skills needed to perform the work that is necessary to maintain the dominance of the European-American elite in its social
order” (p. 10). Shuuja points out that the outcome for Black people who have participated in an American schooling system is a group of people who are more likely trained to serve the interests of the European American elite than the needs of the Black community.

The negligence of the Black community is indeed one of the most pressing issues existing in America today. It results in the absence of Black businesses, quality schools, safe neighborhoods, and centralized environments from which community planning and organization can stem. It is improbable that the education that Blacks receive in public institutions will ever reform itself to the point that Blacks receive the tools that are necessary for them to have agency over their lives (King, 1992; Shujaa, 1994; Woodson, 1933). According to Michael Porter (1997), America's educational system promotes a "system-maintaining curriculum, which virtually guarantees the oppressed remain oppressed and the oppressors remain oppressors" (Marks, 2006). This viewpoint of Western schooling supports why the outcomes for Black children are so grim and indicates the necessity of ACP as a more fitting process of education for them. In order to enrich and re-direct the education of adolescent Black females, there must be a concrete understanding of the processes that have served and that still serve to mis-educate them.

The drive and struggle to gain control of knowledge and literacy has been inherent within the Black experience since the arrival of Africans in America in the seventeenth century. The blatant fear of Black intelligence and education throughout the centuries ignited scores of oppositional legislation, strategies, and punishments within American institutions in order to maintain control over the masses of African slaves. For
example, the South Carolina Act of 1740 was the result of white fear after the Stono Rebellion in 1739 when “Jemmy” (or Cato), a literate slave, organized 80 slaves to overthrow their plantations, resulting in the death of approximately 20 white people and the burning of 7 plantations. This was the first American law to explicitly address the prohibition of Black education, stating “Whereas, the having slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attended with great inconveniences.” (Goodell, 1853). Thus set the precedence of both covert and overt opposition against Black education that would transform and evolve, yet never fully disappear from American culture.

The Virginia Revised Code of 1819 further extended the sentiment: “That all meetings or assemblages of slaves, or free negroes or mulattoes mixing and associating with such slaves at any meeting-house or houses in the night; or at any SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS for teaching them READING OR WRITING, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered an UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY” (Goodell, 1853). As racial tensions heightened beyond breaking point during the Civil War, new legislation and action was always ready to combat Black progress.

John Henrik Clarke (1967) stated “Powerful people cannot afford to educate the people that they oppress, because once you are truly educated, you will not ask for power. You will take it”. The oppression of Black people in the Western hemisphere was largely governed by the slave masters’ ability to control their slaves’ literacy and knowledge. It was never in the best interest of slave masters to educate African people; a Black man or woman who could read and think was a threat to the very structure of society. In a
speech titled “Blessings of Liberty and Education” given in 1893 to the people of Manassas, Virginia, Frederick Douglass proclaimed that “To found an educational institution for any people is worthy of note; but to found a school in which to instruct, improve and develop all that is noblest and best in the souls of a deeply wronged and long neglected people, is especially note-worthy”. Douglass continued to promote that while ignorance is a form of prolonged slavery, “Education, on the other hand, means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light only by which men can be free. To deny education to any people is one of the greatest crimes against human nature. It is to deny them the means of freedom and the rightful pursuit of happiness, and to defeat the very end of their being” (Douglass, 1893).

Despite tremendous opposition, Blacks coveted and treasured any opportunity for education, and went to great measures to create places to learn. Early Black schools became the heartbeat and the hope of the community and the Black nation as a whole. During the Reconstruction era, free Black people were defying society, and often their own mortality, by organizing schools and classes. By early 1866, hundreds of day and evening schools, Sabbath schools, “native” schools, and plantation schools were in operation. The Freedmen’s Bureau school inspector estimated ‘the whole number of pupils’ in the former slave states at more than 90,000. As early as 1867, African Americans composed about one third of the teachers to be found in the fledgling freedmen’s schools, and their proportion grew over the course of Reconstruction (Hahn, 2003).
In 1879, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a white abolitionist and novelist, reflected the Black desire for education when she wrote, “They rushed not to the grog shop but to the schoolroom. They cried for the spelling-book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life” (Payne, 2000). The urgency for education during the mid-nineteenth century and in the post-Civil War South cannot be understated. For the freed slaves, who faced innumerable odds and who traveled unthinkable distances just to attend classes or lessons, education was a gateway to a new life, a new existence, and a new reality.

Like Tuskegee University, many early Black Southern institutions were often founded by former slaves who raised precious funds in the quest for education. Tuskegee was borne from the inspiration of Lewis Adams, a mechanic and former slave, and George W. Campbell, a banker and former slave owner, with a meager $2000.00. Alabama State University (ASU) was founded in 1867 by nine freed slaves known as the “Marion Nine” with only $500. Fayetteville State University (FSU) was founded in 1867 with only $136 by seven Black men concerned about the education of black children in Fayetteville, NC. In the decades immediately following the Civil War, dozens of Black universities were established to provide a new life for emancipated Black people.

When white missionaries and politicians from the North set out to build dozens of “Black schools” in the South during the Reconstruction period, they were not simply concerned about the welfare of ex-slaves with no skills and no means to support themselves. The missionaries were not benevolent do-gooders who sought to lift the African out of poverty and ignorance. Rather, they were concerned about the impact that a population of physically and mentally free Negroes could have in a white supremacist
patriarchy. Eurocentric and patriarchal schools could ensure the continuation of white male domination, even if the Negroes were free. (Lynn, 2006)

As Black schools were developing, however, there was a furious opposition waiting to bring them down. In the early months of the year 1871, 26 schools in Mississippi were burned down by the Ku Klux Klan, whose ideologies were gaining strength, power, and numbers. In the turmoil of post-Civil War period, Black schools were constantly in jeopardy of hostile contention and danger. Southern Whites were convinced that the teachers of the freed men and women were using their classrooms for political motives in an effort to spread anti-South propaganda and to instill Black hatred against White people. The violent reaction to Black schooling remained apparent throughout the South; a Tennessee legislative committee investigating the Ku Klux Klan in 1868 reported that “There is an eternal hatred existing among all men that voted the Republican ticket, or who belong to the Loyal League, or [are] engaged in teaching schools, and giving instruction to the humbler class of their fellow men” (Hahn, 2003). This searing hatred has singed and hampered Black advancement, in many ways and forms, ever since. The inequities that existed for Black students as far as school environment, curriculum, and higher-education opportunity crippled and hampered chances for them to truly achieve “the American Dream”.

The pioneering school-building efforts of Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) during the 1920s and Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975), founder of the Nation of Islam, who during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s established dozens of independent, private African-Islamic schools for the children of his followers and supporters (Clegg, 1997; Lincoln, 1961;
Essien-Udom, 1962). By the mid 1900’s, however, a majority of Blacks were schooled in American public schools and thus socialized in the thought and mentality of European culture (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Woodson, 1990). Legislative efforts to equitize inferior education for Black people in America climaxed in the mid-twentieth century during the Civil Rights Movement, only to disseminate into vague concepts of progress and isolated examples of student success. Many Americans hoped that the “progress” represented by desegregation would result in a more equitable education for Black students, however decades later this progress is heatedly debated. While many African Americans supported school desegregation efforts, they may have underestimated the strength and intractability of European American resistance to sharing educational resources with African Americans as well as their determination to maintain their positions of privilege in this society (Allen & Jewel, 1995).

The effects of desegregation led to the dismantling of the educational centralization and potential power of Black teachers and to widespread assimilationist schooling for Black students. During the period from 1970 to 1990, the percentage of African Americans in teaching declined from 12% & to 8 % (Pollard, 2000). In the 1960’s and 1970’s, however, Black Americans throughout the United States began to voice their concerns about the poor educational opportunities by supporting a movement that holistically transformed and rebuilt the spirits and minds of young children (Durden, 2007). This movement was known as the African Centered School Movement—nostalgic of the Black independent schools of the 1700’s. During this movement Black Americans demanded control of public schools or created independent institutions
outside of public structures (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987).

Politically as much by Kwame Ture’s (Stokely Carmichael) clarion call for Black Power in 1966 as by the assassinations of El-Hajj Malik Omowale El-Shabazz (Malcolm X) in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, student activists established what were known in the African American community as freedom or liberation schools, in part inspired by SNCC school building efforts in rural Mississippi initiated earlier in the decade, and later by groups such as the Black Panthers (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, and Turrene, 2010). In 1972, The Council for Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) was formed as the umbrella organization for African centered advocates and African centered schools (Durden, 2007). The cry for academic excellence and culturally relevant pedagogical practices was deeply rooted in a worldview that was in opposition to the Eurocentric ideology that is the basis for most schools in the United States (Grills, 2004).

By the beginnings of the 1990’s it was estimated that over 350 African-centered private schools served over 50,000 African American students in the United States (Jackson, 1994). The establishment of modern African-centered schools is testament to the legacy of the Black commitment to education and progression. Contrary to conception that Black people prefer to rely on White people to solve their problems, the ACP movement stands as a model of agency and praxis that inspires Black children and gives them hope for their own possibilities as human beings. ACP provides the antithesis for the deficit perspective that has stigmatized Black children for decades.

The current “educational gap” exists today as the result of decades of academic planning and, as some would consider, conspiracy. At the heart of the matter lies the
inherent contradiction between European and African forms of education. The differences in the methodology, curriculum, and motives of education from the European perspective and the African perspective have been present since the cultures came into contact. Asa Hilliard and other African-centered scholars have investigated the differences between the European centered style of teaching and the African American style of learning (Kenyatta, 1998, p. 9), finding two sets of tendencies. The two systems of teaching and learning contradict and, accordingly, Kenyatta argued that this contradiction leads to academic labeling (i.e. learning disabled, hyperactive, attention deficit disorders) when African American children are measured against Eurocentric models. In such an educational climate, we worry whether African American children can be educated without endangering their self-esteem, which Howe found unjust (Marks and Tonso, 2006).

Murrell (2002) writes that the single most prominent distinction between contemporary educational practice and African-centered pedagogy is the undeniable trend of public education in its handling of academic difficulty of African American children is to make pedagogical problems clinical ones (i.e., special needs)(p.35). The disproportionate number of Black students who have been placed in Special Education classes suggests this phenomenon. In 2007, Black students aged 6-21 represented 17% of the students in public elementary and secondary American schools, however they represented 12.15 % of the students served under the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (iDEA) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 2007). White students represented approximately 56% of elementary
and secondary students in American schools, yet they comprised only 8.47% of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2007). Wilson (1992) showed that much of what is perceived as a learning disability in Black students is a reflection of the conflict between the African oral tradition and European literary conventions and standards. The predisposition of European education to affect the self-esteem and self-identity Black children negatively calls for immediate intervention and change.

Marks and Tonso (2006) determine that the facets of European-centered teaching often contravene African-centered teaching (figure 1). An understanding of the differences between the two pedagogies is critical in order to identity the key methodologies that should be implemented in order to best address the educational, psychological, and emotional needs of Black children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>European-centered teaching</th>
<th>African-centered teaching</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Rules</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
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<td>Standardization</td>
<td>Variation</td>
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<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>Memory of Specific Facts</td>
<td>Memory of Essence</td>
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<td>Regularity</td>
<td>Novelty</td>
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<td>Rigid Order</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normality</td>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences Equal Defects</td>
<td>Sameness Equals Oppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>Approximate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Experience</td>
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<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Humanistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Thing&quot; Focused</td>
<td>&quot;People&quot; Focused</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
<td>Evolving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign-Oriented</td>
<td>Meaning-Oriented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
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(Figure 1)
An analysis of the characteristics of European and African-centered teaching suggests that the major tenets of European-centered teaching include rigid adherence to rules, conformity, control, and standardization (figure 1). This is evident in the preponderance of standardized testing utilized as a basis of assessment in American classrooms, as well as the reliance on classroom regulation and control that is expected as norm. In traditional African education, there was no clearly defined mode of transmission and no standardized method of testing the learners for the purpose of graduation and certification, as is the case in the present–day educational institutions (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). The modern process is “mechanical” in the sense that constant “products” are the goal; American educational institutions are likened to assembly line factories with an outcome of students as cultural capital ultimately designed to benefit the American economy. Mass oppression for mass production is part of the Western psyche (Mosley, 2000).

Eurocentric education embraces individualism, competitiveness, and objectivism (Hale, 2001; Hilliard, 1998; King, 1991). African-centered teaching offers a much greater degree of flexibility and creativity that is less concerned with the production of individuals manufactured to serve the economy. Murrell (2002) writes that in contrast to African American cultural models, the Western (European) mindset is to view educational activity as centered in the manipulation and mastery of symbol systems, while in the African cultural system the disposition is to view symbols as the means of communication, and educational activity as the creation of meaning and discovery of truth (p. 35).
For the African, it is the responsibility of the entire community to respect nature and work together for the common good, not the individual’s gain. From this perspective, education is seen as a tool for community development, not personal enrichment (Traore, 2007). A major theme to be extracted from African-centered teaching is the development of people who experience communal learning through processes of exploration and human evolution.

The major components of the African worldview or reality are ontology, axiology, cosmology, epistemology, and praxis' (Grills, 2004). Unlike the Eurocentric reality, heavy emphasis is placed on using emotional intelligence as a vehicle through life (Durden, 2007). In the context of an African centered school culture, educators emphasize the role of spirit and affective senses in decision making and problem solving, and in resolving personal, communal, societal, and intellectual conflicts (King, 2005; Lee, 2005). An analysis of the stark differences between the two forms of teaching may help educators identify elements of Western educational practice that actually counteract the learning styles and needs of Black students. An integration of African-centered teaching styles, in converse, may offer new methodology that not only benefits the needs of Black students, but the Black community as a whole. In order for true freedom to exist and be sustained, people of African descent must free themselves from a Eurocentric perspective and construct their identity based in African philosophical thought (Traore, 2007).

The beginning of the 21st century ushered in a period in which Eurocentric low performing schools were targeted for comprehensive reforms that focused on
accountability through high stakes testing designed to raise achievement (The Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center, 2005; Darling-Hammonds, 2004; Datnow, Borman, Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003; Lee, 2002). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227) that was signed into law on March 31, 1994, asserts the modern intent of American education. The Act proposed that by the year 2000, America’s goals for its students would include: increasing the graduation rate to 90%, competency in subject matter, preparation for citizenship and productive employment, and competitiveness in the global economy. The implicit “gold standard” for the high-performing urban school has now become (under the No Child Left Behind Act, 2002) the accomplishment of having brought about improvement in its school-wide achievement test scores. This is a virulent, but hidden form of social injustice (Murrell, 2006).

Shockley (2008) asks, “What does it mean for a Black child to perform well within a school system and on standardized tests that are historically and inherently designed to prove and maintain white supremacy?” (p. 8). Proponents of this argument suggested that Black students should not be tracked towards a White benchmark for success; instead they should be immersed in an educational environment that supports their holistic development, which inevitably tracks them towards excellence in character, spirit, and intellect (Giddings, 2001; Hilliard, 1992; 1998; Hoover, 1992; Karenga, 1995). American education goals are contradictory to African fundamentals; spiritual enlightenment and/or humanitarian objectives are far from the list of American priority. Hilliard (1998) asserts that the purpose of African Centered education was not to speed
through a four year program to get a job and "get paid", but rather to become a better person and to learn how to live in harmony with nature, utilizing whatever skills one possesses.

An analysis of the doctrine of Western education proves that its goals are completely estranged from spiritual evolution. Moreover, American educational systems also fail to help Black students develop critical thinking skills in reference to the history and present day problems that exist in their communities. As Murrell (2002) writes, “The incompleteness of American education is in two critical respects that are contradistinctive to African pedagogy: (1) deep thought as both the process and aim of education for liberation, self-agency, and self-determination; and (2) community participation in deep thought that furthers and develops those ends (p. 34). This is an integral reason why many Black children in American schools are failing to reach their fullest potentials, and furthermore, why Black students are failing to address critical issues that affect their communities. Attending most public schools, saturated with the symbolic capital of Whiteness—institutionalized both in the formal and hidden curriculum, inconsistent cultural messages, expectations, and communication styles between home and school—produces in black students a kind of psychic dissonance that interferes with learning and psychological well-being (Mandara, 2006).

The foundations of European-centered teaching styles are the European or “Western” ideologies that are blatantly contradictory to the ideologies of African peoples. Figure 2 displays the differences between Western and African ideologies that perpetuate elements of philosophy, society, religion, politics, economics, and family structure. The
data suggests that the Western way of viewing the world is through a logic and fact-based lens that promotes science, rugged individualism, competition, and finality. On the other hand, African ideology promotes a worldview that is heavily focused on spiritual evolution, community, equality, and the belief that human life is part of an eternal cycle.

Traore (2007) writes, “In contrast with the European view that the material and the spiritual can be separated, the African sees no distinction between these realms. One cannot exist without the other and should not be viewed in isolation. The colonial view that the world had to be conquered, dominated, controlled is antithetical to the African worldview. An analysis of these two ideologies further explains the methodologies of the respective forms of teaching (p.27). In summary, the goals of European-centered ideology vs. African-centered ideology is to produce individuals who are highly “mechanic” vs. highly “spiritual”. This contrast may serve as a major reason why Black children continue to suffer in the hands of the American school system; they are not being educated and nurtured in alignment with their true nature and spirit. While the goal of the “American dream” streamlines Black students into time and money-driven processes of education, AIP and ACP focuses on the inner evolution of the person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Ideal</th>
<th>African Ideal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason- Fact based thought</td>
<td>Mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualism-Manifest Destiny</td>
<td>Communalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>Reincarnation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrance into Heaven</td>
<td>Seek one-ness with the Divine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greco/Roman culture</td>
<td>African culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monotheism</td>
<td>Polytheism</td>
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Traore (2007) suggests that there are four elements to Afrocentric theory which clearly distinguish this approach from the Eurocentric perspective, and which, when properly implemented, could have a dramatic influence on the general climate of learning for children of African descent. These four elements are: 1) the distinction between rugged individualism and the Afrocentric respect for community; 2) the distinction between the “all men are created equal” ethos, and the Afrocentric emphasis on respect for one’s elders in the community; 3) the valorization of “progress” in all things scientific and economic, as an inherited right of some redoubt, and the Afrocentric emphasis on the interconnections and interdependencies between all humans; and 4) the pragmatic, commonsense view of the cosmos as expressed in “humanism” as opposed to the Afrocentric’s reverence for the spiritual (p.65)

The African Purpose of Education

With few exceptions, if any, traditional educational practices in pre-colonial African societies were predominantly utilitarian (Ocitti, 1971). These foundations or principles have been rightly identified by as preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism, and wholisticism (Ocitti, 1971). The principle of preparationism means that male and female children developed a sense of obligation towards the community and grew to appreciate its history, language, customs and values.
Ocitti (1971). This is perhaps one of the greatest attributes of indigenous education, as opposed to Western education, which tends to alienate young Africans from their cultural heritage (Kelly, 1991). Functionalism educates boys and girls into societal roles and occupations that serve the community as a whole. The gap which today exists between study and the world of work was absent in pre-colonial society. Indeed, there was no unemployment in African traditional societies; African youth flowed smoothly from their education and training into adult community roles (Ocitti, 1971). Communalism means that all members of the society own things in common and must apply the communal spirit to life and work. Perennialism signifies that the things taught in African society have everlasting pertinence; they have been taught for centuries and will need to be taught eternally to benefit the people and their land. Wholisticism, or multiple learning, prepares young people to acquire a variety of skills which make them productive in many ways, enabling them embark on a variety of occupations without difficulty (Ocitti, 1971).

In pre-colonial Africa, where every event (like the birth of a child, death, sickness, flood or drought) was accorded spiritual significance, education tended to focus on religious teaching or instruction. Religion played a key role in the life of children and adults alike: it provided a rallying point for the community and backed up socially accepted values and norms such as honesty, generosity, diligence and hospitality (Castle, 1966; Ocitti, 1971). According to Adeyinka (1993), from an African centered perspective the purpose of education is to enable: 1) The individual to fix himself/herself up in the society into which s/he has been born to live; 2) Him/Her to explore the world and find his own place in it; 3) Him/Her to cultivate good habits and develop the right
attitude to life and work; 4) Him/Her to develop as a good citizen; 5) Him/Her to develop his/her potentialities to the full so that s/he could acquire knowledge and training in a profession and so earn a good living. While these goals do not necessarily stray far from traditional European educational goals, the difference is in the expected application of these goals and the way that they are reached.

Castle (1966) argues, ‘Whether the child’s habitat was dominated by mountain, plain, river or tropical forest, he had to learn to combat its dangers and to use its fertility’ (p. 40). Children were taught to respect elders, to appreciate their social obligations and responsibilities and, above all, to subordinate their individual interests to those of the wider community (Ocitti, 1971; Snelson, 1974; Tiberondwa, 978; Mwanakatwe, 1968). Under the premise of ACP, these qualities are to be applied towards the good of the environment from which the students stem, in a manner that upholds the identity, culture, economic stability, and spirit of the Black community in particular.

In examining indigenous African education and knowledge closely, we see that it involves understanding education as: a means to an end; social responsibility; spiral and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; epic; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined (Zulu, 2001). Adeyinka (2000) defined education as ‘the process of transmitting the culture of a society from one generation to the other, the process by which the adult members of a society bring up the younger ones (p. 19–20). Adeyinka describes
education as a three-way process in that it entails a generation’s inheritance of culture from their elders, their adaptation of that culture to suit their current situation, and finally the passing of the modified culture to the next generation.

African scholars note that education and knowledge can be recognized as two distinct phenomena that reciprocate with and rely upon each other. Education in a definitional context can generally be thought of as the transmission of values and the accumulated knowledge of a society. Thus, it is essentially a societal instrument for the expansion of human culture. In contrast, knowledge is a state of knowing or understanding gained or retained through experience or study (Zulu, 2001).

To be “educated” or to possess “knowledge” can imply varying contexts. While education connotes a systematic societal action, knowledge signifies an organic awareness or consciousness of vital information. It is quite possible to be educated and still lack knowledge. It is also possible to possess knowledge without having been formally “educated”. A person could live all his/her life without receiving purposeful education, particularly where aims and intentions are not clear from the start and efforts are limited to the acquisition of book knowledge alone (Crittenden, 1974, pp. 46–51). However, critical knowledge can exist as a result of the process of critical education; the process of critical education depends on critical knowledge. The quality and form of knowledge obtained by individuals who are educated in schools are tremendously impacted by the philosophy and curriculum of not only the school, but by the community and the nation as well. In order to authentically educate or be educated, one must obtain the proper knowledge.
African Values: Moral Training

The transmission of values and the state of knowing or understanding gained or retained through experience or study in Africa began in ancient Egypt about 3000 BC years ago, at the beginning of the history of civilization (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1997:2). Caruthers (1990), in his lecture entitled "The African-Centered Curriculum and the White Supremacy Control of African American Education" promoted that Ancient Africa must be presented in terms of race specificity (e.g., the current sociopolitical constructions of race dictate that the Ancient Egyptians were Black people). This is a critical component of IAP and ACP; the prominent Egyptian pharaohs, teachers, and priests who developed these educational systems must be conceived as Black Africans, not as racially ambiguous red-hued and tan people as hieroglyphics portray. This credits the Black African population with Egyptian and other advancements achieved throughout the continent, and can evaluate Black Africans with a historical significance that cannot be argued or debated.

The widespread erasure or ignorance of historical Black contributions to the world leaves a gap in the picture of the world. Black children need to see their ancestors as major contributors to the world and be assured that African history did not start with slavery. This gives Black children a vantage point that their ancestors indeed played a critical role in the development of mankind. Reclaiming historical memory means reading about and emulating ancestral figures who taught about spiritual growth, developed sciences and mathematics, and who engineered movements for transforming oppressive societies (Potts, 2003).
The earliest forms of formal education were developed by the Egyptian elites in society to instruct the studies of the humanities, science, medicine, mathematics, architecture, and engineering. It was at Waset (Thebes or Luxor) where the oldest records of a university headquarters existed. Speculation places the age of this headquarters as far back as 3,000 B.C. (Hilliard, 1996). Enveloped in mystery, this location became the center for some of the most important teaching in history, where biblical prophets and leaders studied, and where European philosophers gained the knowledge that they would later claim as their own. Waset was the first University of history and it made knowledge a secret, so that all who desired to become priests and teachers had to obtain their training from the Mystery System, either locally at a branch lodge or by travelling to Egypt (James, 1954).

James notes that both Moses and Jesus Christ had gained their divinity and knowledge in Africa. He insisted: We know that Moses became an Egyptian Priest, a Hierogrammat, and that Christ after attending the lodge at Mt. Cannel went to Egypt for final initiation, which took place in the Great Pyramid of Cheops. Other religious leaders obtained their preparation from lodges most convenient to them. This explains why all religions, seemingly different, have a common nucleus of similarity; belief in a God; belief in immortality and a code of ethics (James, 1954).

Written at least 2,000 years before the Ten Commandments of Moses, the 42 Principles of Ma’at are one of Africa’s, and the worlds’, oldest sources of moral and spiritual instruction (Zulu, 2001). Originally written in the ancestral language called Medu Neter, the tenets of Ma’at were the foundations of natural and social order and
unity. The Ma’at includes the Ancient Egyptian divine virtues of truth, justice, righteousness, order, mutuality, harmony, and balance. According to George James (1952), the following of the 10 virtues were sought by the Neophyte [a new initiate or student] in Ancient Kemet: 1) control of thoughts; 2) control of actions; 3) devotion of purpose; 4) faith in the ability of [your] [teacher] to teach [you] the truth; 5) faith in [yourself] to assimilate the truth; 6) faith in [themselves] to wield the truth; 7) freedom from resentment under the experience of persecution; 8) freedom from resentment under the experience of wrong; 9) the ability to distinguish between right and wrong; and 10) the ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal. In the final analysis the ancient Kemites sought Ma’at, or to be more correct, they sought to become one with Ma’at, the cosmic order.

The African principles of ethical character development can also be defined as: the divine image of humans, the perfectibility of humans, the teachability of humans, the free will of humans, and moral social practice in human development (Payne, p. 214). Accordingly, modern African-centered schools and programs rely heavily on Ma’at and incorporate its principles into their philosophy and curriculum. The importance of unity in the traditional community, in conjunction with other expected norms of the society in the past such as honesty, loyalty, bravery, mental and physical wellness, proper hygienic behaviour, exemplary leadership, responsibility and accountability suggest that all these goals had existed before the advent of Western education.

Hilliard (1998) stresses that to reawaken the African mind, we must ensure that the goal of our educational and socialization processes is to understand and live up to the
principle of Ma’at. The prerequisite for arriving at Ma’at is the Kemetic concept of “SBA”, which emerged in the old and Middle Kingdoms of Egypt and symbolizes wisdom and study. In that text from the tomb of an Intef Per Aa (Pharaoh), SBA is precisely deep thought (Hilliard, 1998). The term “deep thought” can also be considered critical consciousness. Hilliard (1998) continues to inform that schooling, education and "socialization" are inadequate if we do not study African deep thought.

Within African deep thought, the concepts of schooling, education and socialization were integrated into the larger process of human transformation - the process of becoming more like the divine (Carruthers, 1995). Carruthers concludes that without African deep thought, the “WHMY MSW” or "reawakening" would be impossible. According to this philosophy, meditation or deep thought and critical reflection is a mandatory prerequisite to learning. By critical self-reflection, we do not mean a singular focus on the self, but a stepping back to understand one’s own assumptions, biases, and values, and a shifting of one’s gaze from self to others and conditions of injustice in the world. This process, coupled with the resultant action, is at the core of the idea of critical consciousness (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009). In contrast, Western educational doctrine prohibits students from partaking in esoteric or religious practices and denies Black children of this critical step recognized by IAP.

ACP seeks to prepare Black students beyond academics; the most important element of human development is developing into a more spiritually evolved person. Both IAP and ACP insist that spiritual transformation is a critical element of a person’s development. Perhaps the most important African educational philosophy is governed by
the divine law that human beings are spirits who possess the potential to ascend earthly limitations and seek the likeness of the divine. Spirituality and faith (“Imani”) are acknowledged as having sustained people of African descent through the centuries of social oppression, providing hope through seemingly hopeless circumstances (Potts, 2003). ACP acknowledges Afrikan spirituality as an essential aspect of our uniqueness as a people and makes it an instrument of our liberation (Richards, 1989; Clarke, 1991; Anwisye, 1993; Ani, 1994). African religions don't have a dogma consisting of strict religious laws to follow; their entire philosophy is directed to nurturing a proper relationship with the divine and how the divine relates to the earth, life, and community. Their rituals revolve around establishing and maintaining a relationship with the spiritual forces in nature and with the gods (Shouler, 2011).

The moral mandate of Afrikan humanity was “to become” and in becoming the pursuit of such divine law and moral mandate was reflective of one's pursuit of godliness. Since one is created in the likeness of the divine, the aim for one's life is to become Godlike or strive towards perfectibility (Fukiau & Lukondo, 2000; King, 2004). Education was key to this process-to become and in becoming a more perfect being. For our Afrikan ancestors education and schooling was ultimately about a person being transformed from a lesser material being to a greater spiritual being (Karenga, 1986). It is the moral obligation of children to therefore use these gifts and knowledge to uplift the community and family and strive towards being excellent or Godlike (Nobles, 1990). The goal is to elevate awareness while either in or contemplating any of these states of mind such that one can transmute negative or wasteful aspects of their energy into
conduct and mindsets that serve as virtuous examples for oneself and the greater community (Karade, 1994).

The process of transformation is constantly at play in both AIP and ACP.

“African indigenous pedagogy is the vision of the teacher as a self-less healer intent on inspiring, transforming, and propelling students to a higher spiritual level” (Hilliard, 1998, p. 78). “[ACP] seeks the truthful reconstitution of Afrikan [sic] history and culture and transformation of the Afrikan man and woman and their world (Akoto, 1994, 320). In order to participate in transformative process, however, we need to understand what we are, and also to define what it is we desire to transform into. The formulation of a healthy concept of identity is critical.

African Self-identity

Afrocentric educationists view “identity” vastly different – as a concept that is connected to a larger struggle for African people’s survival and independence, which is rooted in their conception of African cultural adoption (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011, p. 59). “How can we be collectively successful if we have no idea or, worse, the wrong idea of who we were and therefore, are?” (Robinson, 2000, p.16). According to Akbar (1998) “The first function of education is to provide identity” (p. 2). When children, especially cultural or ethnic minority students, begin to explore questions of identity in early adolescence, a culturally- coherent framework will require that they are provided with identity-affirming experiences, positive expressions of racial identity, and information about their cultural group—which is precisely one of the core aims of African-centered schools (Asante, 1998, p. 13). For every individual, his or her own cultural identity is a
function of that of his or her people (Diop, 1990, p. 211).

Identity construction works in tandem with character development and fosters a deep respect for oneself, the society, and the broader world. [It instills] a sense of service and communal responsibility first and foremost to the African-American community (Kifano, 1999). No people can live successfully, fruitfully, triumphantly without strong memory of their past, without reading the future within the context of some reassuring past, without implanting reminders of that past in the present (Robinson, 2000 p. 6). Freire (1987) states that educators need to use their students' cultural universe as a point of departure, enabling students to recognize themselves as possessing a specific and important cultural identity (p.127).

Afrocentric educators believe that the identity crisis began for African Americans as soon as the first ship left the African shore (Shockely and Cleveland, 2011). As Afrikan identity is embedded in the continuity of Afrikan cultural history, it represents a distinct reality continually evolving from the experiences of all Afrikan people wherever they are and have been on the planet across time and generations (Akoto, 1992, p. 116). What many African Americans, including high achievers, suffer from is the pervasive negative image of African peoples of whom they are descendants (Carruthers, 1995). As victims of oppression, mis-education, and de-culturalization, many Black people possess an inaccurate representation of Blacks throughout history. De-culturization has been defined as “a process by which the individual is deprived of his or her culture and then conditioned to other cultural values” (Boateng,1990, p.73). De-culturization does not require the complete absence of group or cultural identity, but
rather refers to the practice of denying access to, or refusal to acknowledge, an individual’s culture or the role that it may play in an individual’s well-being (Merry & New, 2008). With the common history of struggle denied, and the past rewritten, the rulers of society find the present much easier to manipulate (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres, 2009).

Phinney (2003) suggests that a person cannot hope to participate fully in an American society in which identity and self, particularly those of minority citizens, are under constant scrutiny, if not the subject of active discrimination, without having integrated a positive cultural/ethnic identity with a coherent sense of belonging in the broader world with “others.” A healthy Black identity development (Hall et al. 1972; Jackson 1976; Sherif and Sherif 1970; William Cross; Tatum 1997) requires that one come to terms with one’s own identity status and content before attempting integration with a broader social identity. By recognizing subjectivity and the limits of identity, we disrupt that objectification that is so necessary in a culture of domination (hooks, p.139). An equitable education system would nurture students’ own cultural identities and promote the use of their school success in the service of their communities (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

In an ecological study of ninth grade classroom environments, Sheets (1999) found that programs using cultural knowledge and promoting ethnic identity had higher levels of academic success. Research indicates that lessons, units, and teaching materials that include content about different racial and ethnic groups can help students to develop more positive intergroup attitudes if certain conditions exist in the teaching situation
(Banks, 1995). Similar research describes positive relationships between racial identity and educational success among children of African descent (e.g. Ford, 1997). “When children, but perhaps especially cultural or ethnic minority students, begin to explore questions of identity in early adolescence, a culturally coherent framework will require that they are provided with identity-affirming experiences, positive expressions of racial identity, and information about their cultural group—which is precisely one of the core aims of African-centered schools” (Asante, 1998, p. 13). Identity politics emerges out of the struggles of oppressed or exploited groups to have a standpoint on which to critique dominant structures, a position that gives purpose and meaning to struggle (hooks, p.89). Exposure to such experiences may help counteract the negative impacts of Western racism and media and help young Black girls form stronger self-esteem and confidence as they grow.

Belgrave, Van Oss Marin, and Chambers (2000) found higher ethnic identity to be associated with less risky sexual attitudes among female African American adolescents. This could be a critical intervention in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy as well as the unnecessary contraction of dangerous sexually transmitted diseases. Robert Fullilove (2011), professor at Columbia University Health and chairman of the HIV/AIDS committee at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said that “Black women and teens contract sexually transmitted diseases at far higher rates than women of other races, partly because fewer African American men are available.”

This reality particularly hurts women in Sacramento; data from the CA State Department of Public Health revealed that in 2008 “About one out of 25 females and one
out of 80 males ages 15 to 19 years old in Sacramento County had a reported case of chlamydia or gonorrhea last year” (CA State Department of Public Health, 2008). For Blacks, these statistics are devastating. STD Data Summaries found that in 2010 “Blacks have highest rates of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis in Sacramento in 2010” (California Local Health Jurisdiction, 2011). That same study showed that of the reported STD’s in Sacramento County, Black people represented 41.3 percent of the people with chlamydia, 62.9 percent of the people with gonorrhea, and 60 percent of the people with syphilis. Across the board, the STD rates among African Americans continue to be strikingly high, especially in comparison to the other racial groups. It follows that ACP can be an important intervention that can steer young Black girls away from making poor sexual choices, and ultimately away from life threatening diseases.

Positive correlations also exist between racial identity and drug attitudes among African American children (Townsend & Belgrave, 2000). Researchers at UC Berkeley reported that marketers’ messages are increasingly reinforced by hip-hop culture. An analysis of rap lyrics showed 64 percent of the most popular songs released from 2002 to 2005 referenced alcohol (Huber, 2012). David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, states that “Alcohol consumption is linked to three leading causes of death among young African Americans – homicide, suicide and accidental injury” (Huber, 2012).

Although data shows that in 2012 underage drinking as a whole in America has decreased, many Black teens are disproportionately exposed to media and advertising that promotes alcohol and specifically targets the Black population. According to a 2012
report by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth and the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, “Young African Americans ages 12 to 20 see far more alcohol ads on television and in magazines than youths in general”. It is disconcerting to recognize the ironic contrasts and parallels between the past and modern state of the Black experience that still exist today. The modern dilemma follows a historical trend; slave masters intentionally provided Africans with alcohol on the weekends in order to keep them stagnant. Drunk slaves were busy dancing, laughing, and making merry; they were not organizing rebellion and escape. Negative correlation with this behavior can be drawn in recognition of the complacency and apathy that plagues the Black community today. Marcus Garvey recognized the dangers of the persuasions of society when he warned, “If the Negro is not careful he will drink in all the poison of modern civilization and die from the effects of it” (Marvin, 2000, p.81). Considering the numerous negative influences that effect the Black population in America, this prophecy seems fulfilled.

Additional data shows that African American youths watched 53 percent more television than youths in general in 2010 (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2012). A 1997 study shows that rap music videos contain the highest percentage of depictions of alcohol use of any music genre appearing on MTV, BET, CMT and VH-1 (Du Rant, 1997). The negative representations of the youth that dominate media today include songs, images, TV shows, and movies filled with references to alcohol, money, gluttony, sodomy, lust, drugs, material possessions, and wealth. Black children are seduced by the lure of materialism, a bombardment of commercials and advertising that feeds the American addiction to excessive material possessions.
According to The State of the African-American Consumer Report (2011), with a buying power of nearly 1 trillion annually, if Blacks were a country, they would be the 16th largest country in the world. In 2010, the African-Americans Revealed study reported that black buying power was at about $913 billion with a projected increase to $1.2 trillion by 2013 (The State of the African-American Consumer, 2011). Boyce Watkins (2011), a professor of business at Syracuse, stated that “Unfortunately, when African-Americans make money, we spend it. We don't use it to invest or produce. When we get our tax refund, we go straight to the store” (African-Americans Revealed, 2010). The mismanagement of money has devastating effects on the Black household, community, and nation as a whole. Consumerism often overpowers the importance of intellect, compassion, and generosity.

Considering the economic state and poverty levels of Black people in America, the temptation to spend money truly is truly detrimental. In her book, “Talking Dollars and Making Sense: A Wealth Building Guide for African-Americans,” Brooke Stephens writes: “John Wray, an economic development specialist in Washington, D.C., did a study that traced the flow of dollars through comparative ethnic communities. Wray found that in the Asian community a dollar circulates among the community’s banks, brokers, shopkeepers, and business professionals for up to 28 days before it is spent with outsiders. In the Jewish community, the circulation period was 19 days; in the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) community, 17 days; but in the African-American community - 6 hours!” (Muhammad, 2007). The fact that there are so few opportunities in the Black community for Black people to invest their money is a tremendous crisis.
Black children critically need to learn how to create business opportunities that will boost the economy of the community to make it a thriving and viable environment.

Group Identity

Afrocentric educators and scholars believe that wherever Blacks happen to be in the world, they constitute a nation or a nation that is within a nation, and that concept is called Black nationalism (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). Nation building, the foremost critical imperative for Blacks, includes a process of re-Africanization (Akoto, 1992). It represents the process of re-connecting Black people with who they are culturally, which also defines for them their personal and communal purposes from an early age. Akoto (1992) defines nation building as: “The conscious and focused application of our people’s collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that we identify as ours. It involves the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate our history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation. Nation building is the deliberate, keenly directed, focused, and energetic projection of the national culture, and the collective identity” (p. 3).

For many Black youth, the concept of belonging to a nation connotes patriotic ties to America as a whole, rather than belonging to a Black nation. The absence of this group identity further contributes to the lack of both national and community responsibility and pride on the behalf of Black children.

Black persons are unavoidably incorporated into the collective; personal development is subsumed to community goals and purposes (Asante 2001; Dei 1995;
Traore’ 2003) and responsibility to—and solidarity with—others of African descent is paramount. Communal life has precedence over individuals because the view of many African cultures is "that one's understanding of self evolves out of personal experience ina human community" (Tedla, 1995, p. 31). Our contention is that the most important lessons for educators today come from a thorough investigation of how others, positioned similarly, participated in collectives that ultimately led to massive social transformations (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2008). Black nationalism requires that Blacks develop a sense of agency toward fixing the problems within their own communities. Black children must be the catalysts for helping to instill a sense of agency in the Black community because Afro-centrists believe that the generations before have only been taught how to consume and be dependent on outside entities (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011).

Re-Africanization

An analysis of the conditions afflicting Black children today points to a dire need for intervention and change. The most prominent and promising vehicle for the restoration of health, vitality, culture, economy, and education in the Black community is a return to indigenous African principles of life and education. Re-Africanization is literally the process of studying, observing, and eventually fully practicing an African culture (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). The three broad overlapping stages of re-Africanization (including rediscovery/historical recovery, redefinition/cultural reaffirmation, and revitalization/national liberation) constitute the phases that people who are committed to re-Africanization go through (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011).
According to Molefi Asante (1988), Blacks not knowing about cultures that have bought them thus far causes, “…their images, symbols, lifestyles, and manners [to be] contradictory and thereby destructive to personal and collective growth and development” (p. 1). Madhubuti (1973) explains that “Our survival lies in our ability to operate out of an African frame of reference based upon a proven value system that incorporates a sense of African love and responsibility” (p. 14). An emphasis on pre-colonial African fundamentals of life may restore the modern Black life experience to a healthier, happier, and more successful system of living. One of the most impactful ways that we can instill re-Africanization for Black children is through the implementation of African-centered education and ACP.

ACP as a solution

ACP strives to rebuild the cultural, spiritual, communal, and economic state of the Black community and its people. One prominent method of community building is the incorporation of the Nguzo Saba, which means “Seven Principles” in Swahili. Conceived by Maulana Karenga (1995), the Nguzo Saba is a system of seven principles that support the Black community. These principles include: (a) Umoja or unity, (b) Kujichagulia or self-determination, (c) Ujima or collective work and responsibility, (d) Ujamma or cooperative economics, (e) Kuumba or creativity, (f) Nia or purpose, and (g) Imani or faith (Kifano, 1996, p. 214). Although these principles were originally implemented as part of the Kwanzaa tradition, many African-centered schools and programs now integrate these concepts into year-round lessons and activities to help students ground themselves in the importance of community work.
African-centered education is designed to teach African children to engage in the indispensable process of building institutions (e.g., schools, businesses, banks, political parties, etc.) that support their communities (Williams, 1974; Wilson, 1998, Caruthers, 2000). In addition, Ani (1994b) and Collins (2000) stress the need of African-centered education to address both intra-group and inter-group patriarchy and sexism. Positive concepts of African womanhood and manhood should be taught through African-centered education (Akbar, 1991; Ani, 1994b, Collins, 2000). The study of asymmetrical power relations (that manifest through racism, sexism, classism, religious dogmatism, and all other forms of oppression) must be a part of any Africentric pedagogy and curriculum (Roberts, 2003).

Carruthers (1995) identifies key reasons in support of African-centered pedagogy and curriculum: to establish cultural equality; to create an apparatus for the restoration, maintenance and development for Black culture; and to provide leadership in educational reform. He states that the African-centered education project and its predecessor, the Black Studies movement, have developed the open ended critique of western education which is a necessary aspect of the reform of education (Carruthers, 1995). There is much that public schools have to do to expand the multicultural content of curriculum; increasingly diverse public schools have much to learn from the African-centered school movement (Lee, 2007). Teachers, administrators, researchers and other education stakeholders should advocate for Afrocentric education because currently no other plan exists that is designed to offer Black children a useful education that teaches them to take agency over their own lives and communities. Afrocentric education is the only type of
education that attempts to prepare Black children to address their reality (Shockley and Cleveland, 2001).

Critical thinking

ACP impacts the ability to apply critical thinking. Shockley and Cleveland (2011) found that in the 14 years spent around African American students in other settings “we have not seen the level of analysis and discussion that is simply commonplace at the National Afrocentric School (NAS), and particularly the level of intellectual wherewithal that is present in teacher Baba Akil’s classes. All at once, as demonstrated above, Baba Akil incorporates critical thinking, cultural relevancy, Afrocentrism, critical questioning, reasoning, discussion, analysis, call and response, technology, and has students intensely engaged in the topic”. Within an ACP model, Black students do not learn to read and write; they read and write in order to learn. Liberatory education provides them with the heuristic tools and skills to critique ideas and expands one’s horizons and challenges the cultural hegemony of the traditional canons (Gordon, 1995, p.65).

African-centered pedagogy is therefore a problem-solving pedagogy. Its proponents claim that children who internalize its philosophy undergo a transformation leading to enlightenment concerning their authentic self, empowerment concerning the options laid out before them, and self-determination concerning the choices they make (Merry & New, 2008). Dei (1994) suggests that ACP entails a political education that equips teachers and students with the cultural capital necessary to eradicate “the structural conditions that marginalize the existence of certain segments of the school
population” (p.17). One of the most significant healthy outcomes of African-centered emancipatory education may be the student as social change agent (Potts, 2003). Instilling in Black children the ability to critique the world and its wrongs can nourish the development of counter-hegemonic theory and the progression of anti-oppressive action.

Beyond the Achievement Gap

Murrell (2002) suggests that the answer to elevating African American achievement can never simply be a matter of being responsive to what is; there must be a critical reconfiguring of what should be in the educational experience of African American children (p.17). In order to feel successful, Ladson-Billings (1995) believes, “students must be able to experience academic success” (p. 160). She maintains that students must also be able to develop and sustain cultural competency, or “know-how”, and emphasizes that “students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Ladson-Billings (1995) contends that students can be transformed into academically successful, high-achieving students who maintain cultural integrity and engage the world and others critically (p.162). A critical goal of culturally relevant classrooms is guiding students towards a deep understanding of the emancipatory relationship between knowledge and human activity and to help students become independent of the social barriers that may hinder the development of an authentic self (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Elizabeth Whittaker, executive director of Nsoroma Institute, said African-centered schools equip “children with the skills needed to challenge the status quo,” which she describes as “the antithesis of the public school system” (Walker, 2013).
In the era of No Child Left Behind, there is some evidence to suggest that a number of African-centered schools are raising not only Black self-awareness and determination but also Black academic achievement to impressive levels (Binder 2000; Kifano 1996; Pollard and Ajirotutu 2000; Span 2002; Teicher 2006). Researchers have indicated that some students and schools which have been the most challenged have adopted Afrocentric education ideas and methodologies to completely transform and become the most competitive institutions within school districts (Ratteray, 1990; Hilliard, 1991). In Michigan, Wisconsin, and Missouri Afrocentric education methods were used to raise students’ standardized test scores and overall achievement ability. Schools such as Sankofa Shule in Lansing, MI, Malcolm X Academy in Detroit, MI, and Chick Elementary Charter School in Kansas City, MO, (all Afro-centric institutions) have all successfully moved from the bottom tier states to the top tier (Hilliard, 2003; Delpit, 2006).

As presented earlier, students who attend African centered schools are not only equipped with the tools to compete intellectually but also with cultural pride and honorable character (Lee, 1992; Teicher, 2006). In light of the expressed need for culturally responsive and comprehensive reform, the evolution and example of independent, African-centered, community-based schools such as NCDC are highly relevant to the larger issues of public education in the United States (Lee, 2007). Rather than simply complain and react, the independent African-centered school movement has taken a proactive stance, defining within a community context the possibilities and gifts that Black children offer the world, and creating institutions to manifest its ideals (Lee,
Proponents of ACP claim that it is the only solution to genuinely address the complexity of issues affecting Black youth in America today.

Blaming the Victim

When confronted with the various obstacles that Black children face such as poverty, academic and/or behavioral issues, society has a tendency to “blame the victim”. In most school-based prevention programs, the only targets of change are the individual behaviors, attitudes, and interpersonal skills of children (Potts, 2003). The focus on change at the individual level neglects the sociopolitical factors that shape people’s lives. “The Black child,” veteran educator and civil rights activist Septima Clark echoed, “is different from other children because he has problems that are the product of a social order not of his making or his forebears” (Brown-Nagin, 1999, p.89). Interventions that depoliticize social problems, define them as problems, and prescribe only individual changes on the part of the oppressed serve to protect and maintain the status quo (Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997). Lacking such an agenda, attending only to the “risk behaviors” of the oppressed without addressing racism and oppression, community psychology is at risk of being part of what Cornell West calls a “neo-hegemonic” culture, a culture that “postures as an oppositional force, but, in substance, is a manifestation of people’s allegiance and loyalty to the status quo” (West, 1982, p. 120). How can we engage in serious debate about social change when we blame the victims of some of the most egregious crimes committed against humanity anywhere in the world? (Lynn, 2006). ACP exposes the catalysts of the social factors that lead to the conditions underlying Black children’s realities, and seeks to address and correct them.
Emancipatory models of education locate problems such as substance abuse and violence within the context of the larger history of abuse and violence perpetrated against people of African descent (Potts, 2003). An emancipatory African-centered model of education is defined here as one that (1) explicitly addresses social oppression, situating community problems (and targets of primary prevention) within historical context, (2) acknowledges students as agents for social change, and 3) affirms African cultural resources for healing and social transformation (Potts, 2003). By removing the weight of the “blame” from children who are innocent victims of much larger dysfunctions, ACP enables children to create a context and framework that explains the reasons why Black people are faced with such circumstances and further encourages them to seek solutions to those problems. Moreover, ACP refuses to operate from the perspective that the problems rooted in the Black community stem and end with a necessity for White support and approval and rejects the notion that Black success requires White help. African-centrists are invested in re-scripting educational opportunity in a different way, one that is not mired in a victim-focused curriculum (Merry & New, 2008).

Black Learning Styles

The behavior of Black children within the typical American classroom is often labeled as deviant, resulting in disproportionate numbers of Black children who are reprimanded, suspended, or expelled. The National Center for Education (2007) estimates that one African-American student is suspended every seven seconds of the school day. In addition, Black students are three times as likely to be suspended for an offense as compared to their non-black peers (National Center for Education Statistics,
ACP supports that there are a number of cultural factors that contribute to the energy levels of Black children. Black children are exposed to a high degree of stimuli from the creative arts and recognized as being visual, audible, and fashion oriented' (Hale, 2001).

According to Ellison, Boykin, Towns, and Stokes (2000), the average Black home environment is highly stimulated as well as being intense and dynamic. As a result of being exposed to such a stimulated and active environment, Black children have an increased behavioral vibrancy and affinity for stimulus intensity and change (Hale, 2001). This stimulus is often characterized as movement, expressiveness, dance, and rhythm. Black children are generally more kinesthetic and have higher levels of motor activity than White children, and they thrive in environments that use multimedia and multimodal teaching strategies (Hale, 2001). The average classroom, however, does not readily adapt or allow for movement, stimulation, and flexibility. Mainstream curriculum and classroom management methodologies often do not support the needs of Black children.

According to Boykin (1983) there are nine dimensions that are expressed by Blacks in learning situations: 1) Spirituality- a belief that powers greater than man exist and are at work; 2) Harmony- man and his environment are interpedently connected; this applies to integrating the parts of one’s life into a harmonious whole; 3) Movement- a rhythmic orientation to life that may be manifested in music and dance as well as in behavior and approach; 4) Verve- the psychological aspect of the movement dimension, involves a preference to be simultaneously attuned to several stimuli rather than a singular, routinized, or bland orientation; energetic, intense; 5) Affect- emotional
expressiveness and sensitivity to emotional cues; integration of feelings with cognitive elements; 6) Communalism- interdependence of people; social orientation; 7) Expressive individualism- focus on a person’s unique style or flavor in an activity; spontaneity; manifested in a unique tilt of a hat, a walk, a jazz musician’s rendition; 8) Orality- importance of information learned and transmitted orally; call and response pattern; 9) Social time perspective- time is viewed in terms of the event rather than the clock; for example, and event begins when everyone arrives. The ability for teachers to integrate these concepts into curriculum and classroom practice is critical to the success of Black students.

A growing ethnographic research literature has identified instances of cultural incompatibility between dominant mainstream culture and the cultural set represented by urban African American children (Murrell, 2002, p.115). Scholars and advocates of African centered schools suggested that school experiences for children should be congruent with their level of expression, activity, and learning styles ( Fukiau & Lukondo, 2000; Hilliard, 1992). This presents the need for Black children to have access to educational opportunities and programs which provide ACP.

Separate Schools for Black Children

Because of the psychological and physical violence endemic to the experience of Black children in public schools and because of the historic persistence of systematically misrecognizing Black people in American society, achieved partly through the erasure of African American cultural history in schools, a strong case can indeed be made for voluntary separate schooling (Merry & New, 2008). Research indicates that African
American adolescents who believe that society holds negative views about their racial group are more likely to experience racial discrimination (Brittian, 2012). Seen by some as counter-productive to the intentions of desegregation, the move to create separate schools brings much debate. Black educators who promote the cultural and social evolution of Black children believe that African-centered schools are the main vehicle to develop young Black leaders who know their history, understand present-day social systems and politics, and strive to achieve social justice for the future. To protect and maintain this Afro-centric reality, institutional autonomy serves as the means for allowing this voice to emerge in the education of Black children (King & Wilson, 1994).

Independent status for African-centered schools allows for resources and vitality to come from the community which inevitably ensures the development of liberatory pedagogy and African centered perspectives (Lee, 1994, 2005).

bell hooks (1994) supports the notion of Black educators for Black students and calls this quality the “passion of experience” (p. 90). In reference to the practicality of White teachers for Black students she asks,” What moral questions are raised when they speak for or about a reality that they do not know experientially, especially if they are speaking about an oppressed group?” (hooks, 1994, p.89). hooks (1994) herself stated that while she has indeed learned from white professors or teachers, that she would have learned differently had the same content been delivered from a person of color. She voices that “This complexity of experience can rarely be voiced and named from a distance” (p. 91). Consequently, White teachers and staff struggle to maintain a notion of Black identity and culture that may not correspond well with the notions of identity and
culture that children and their parents confront on a daily basis (Merry & New, 2008).

Proponents of ACP see this as logical and necessary to the healing of the Black community, however opponents of African-centered schools see them as segregationist or racist. Parents may also be reluctant to enroll their children because they believe that these schools represent ethnic separatism and an anti-American approach to teaching that undermines the goals of a democratic and multicultural society (King & Wilson, 1994). While some mainstream canon writers have expressed their unhappiness about people of African descent taking such matters into their own hands, Afrocentricity is actually no different than what Catholics, Jews, Asians and Latino’s do – they participate in the larger society while teaching their children to pledge first allegiance to their own group (Hilliard, 1997).

In reference to the growth of ACP on the college campus, hooks (1994) writes, “When Western civilization and canon formation are challenged and rigorously interrogated…that’s what’s threatening to conservative academics-the possibility that such critiques will dismantle the bourgeois idea of a “professor” (p.140). The “threat” that ACP will alter or affect the concept of Western public elementary/secondary school methodology and curriculum, hence lessening the power of its educators, continues to halter its acceptance and study in modern academics.

One misassumption is that ACP will promote Black radicalism and create curriculum based on propaganda that demonizes white people. Defenders of ACP repudiate the suggestion that African-centered schools are just another kind of ethnocentrism that valorizes its own accomplishments at the expense of others (Merry &
New, 2008). Rather, the purview of ACP is inclusive; it accepts the best of what mainstream culture has to offer (Asante 1991; Dei 1994). In other words, if ACP is true to its own objectives in fostering higher- and lower-order thinking skills, there will be no indoctrination (Merry & New, 2008). The organizing principles must not harden into dogma but must remain fluid and multifaceted, rather like the “multiple subjectivities” of Black people (Merry & New, 2008).

ACP educators are wise to avoid the hypocrisy that would be evident if African-centered schools were to transform Black students into ethno-centric, hate-filled individuals. On the contrary, it is multicultural/ pluralistic in its emphasis on respecting other non-hegemonic ways of viewing the world. Indeed, the fact that African-centered educators often write about pluralizing the curriculum reflects the non-oppressive and counter-hegemonic nature of Afri-centric education (Roberts, 2003). This is what Friere considers the restoration of humanization of mankind. ACP sets an example for restoring a humanistic and respectful way of learning and growing.

The question of why African centered schooling is not being implemented in American schools is not a question of its impact on student achievement, but rather the threat it poses on maintaining systematic hegemony (Hilliard, 1998, 2000; Karenga, 1995; King, 2004). An African-centered school experience could educate students about their history and potential and liberate them from the White hegemony in education (Asante, 1991).

Research by Bowman and Howard (1985) found that racial socialization was associated with greater academic achievement among African American children. Racial
socialization involves transactions with care providers through which ethnic pride and an awareness of racism in society are conveyed to the child (Bowman & Howard, 1985). Teachers of ACP view education differently than mainstream teachers. These educators do not separate “education” from the larger community responsibility of passing information and knowledge on from one generation to the next.

Also, these educators do not see themselves as being the “savior” in children’s lives (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). This is critical; ACP educators know the importance of instilling agency in the students and their families. The teachers’ responsibility is to supplement and complement the African lifestyle of families within the community (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). This provides for continuous opportunity to bridge school-family relationships and enacts the proverb of the “entire village raising the child”. ACP schools do not view the Black family through a deficit lens; rather they seek ways to strengthen the power of the family and exist as a scaffold for support and resource. Hence, Afrocentric schools are always in the process of finding ways to engage entire families by hosting conferences and other community-based events (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011).

There is often inconclusive evidence as to the success of African-centered education. The problems lie in the difficulty of quantifying the results of such pedagogy, and the fact that there is often pessimism on behalf of mainstream American educators concerning ACP. Shockley & Cleveland (2011) write “When proposals are put forth to advance for Afrocentric education, those advocating for it are often met with hostility and/or unreasonable demands and questions. For example, when Afrocentric
educationists (scholars, teachers, etc.) put their proposals forward, they may be asked to prove that it works. The request seems reasonable, and there is evidence that “it works”; however, being asked to prove that an education which is centered on the learners it is supposed to be reaching works, is at best an awkward request, and at worst it is evidence of blatant hegemony” (p. 72-73).

While Afrocentric education is often negatively labeled and/or ignored, the employment of it represents one of the only responsible displays of Black behavior in existence today because it beseeches Blacks to prepare their children to take ownership and control over their own communities (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). Teachers, administrators, researchers and other education stakeholders should advocate for Afrocentric education because currently no other plan exists that is designed to offer Black children a useful education that teaches them to take agency over their own lives and communities (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). Black achievement is linked to conditions of schooling that reduce racial vulnerability, and it imparts a world view that idealizes a positive, self-sufficient future for one’s people without denying the self-worth and right to self-determination of others (Lee, 1994, p. 297; Murrell, 2002, p. 46).

ACP in after-school programs

Theorists have argued that the particular historical, political, and social relationship of Blacks with American society necessitates a buffer or mediating venue for their successful navigation of the societal barriers (Brookins & Robinson, 1995; Delaney, 1995; Warfield-Coppock, 1992). Initiation into the culture of the society and the development of good character and socially acceptable behavior are more than what the
school alone can give (Somers, 2008). The aims and objectives, goals and means of reaching them are usually stated in the school’s curriculum or subject syllabuses, but the aims and intentions of community-wide education are implicit in the societal expectations of individual members. That is why the wider community has to complement the efforts of the school (Somers, 2008). The creation and implementation of after-school programs based in ACP is one community-based effort that can help provide cultural and moral education for Black students. The third most notable change in adolescence is the greater impact of social influences on adolescents. Without contextual supports, adolescents may develop negative identities or come to think negatively about being African American (Brittian, 2012).

Although there are presently hundreds of year-round African-centered schools located throughout the country in addition to dozens of week-end programs and summer “Freedom Schools” programs, they simply do not cater to the vast numbers of Black children that could benefit from them. The process of starting a charter school is difficult, costly, and time-consuming. Coupled with the fact that there are often not enough Black teachers to fill up the teaching staff and faculty, it makes the possibility of having Black schools in every Black community unrealistic. In addition, the maintenance of African-centered schools is not without its problems. Lack of adequate funding, centralizing leadership in a “star” individual or elite group, inadequate in-service training for staff, and narrow ideological foci with little grounding in or support from the communities being served are all issues that can lead to the demise of Independent Black schools (Lee, 2007). One solution to the inability to create complete schools dedicated to
African-centered pedagogy is the development of after-school programs dedicated to ACP.

Participation in ACP after-school programs produces both academic and socio-emotional results for Black students. Research has shown that low-income African American students who partake in these programs have a higher rate of success where reading and math are concerned (Woodland, 2008). While the test scores of these students are impressive, what makes this experience for Black students a distinguished one is that they learn to see themselves as leaders, contributors to the community, and extensions to the divine. They are not defined by the labels of being an all-Black school with 80% on free or reduced lunch, but rather defined by the excellent legacy of their ancestors (Teicher, 2006). Additionally, Woodland (2008) states that active participation in after-school programs has been positively associated with “better conduct in school, better peer relations, greater emotional adjustment, decreases in teen pregnancy, decreases in juvenile arrests, and decreases in drug activity” (p. 541). Choosing to join a prosocial community-based organization may provide the young person with a more adaptive identity, in that such engagement may present opportunities for youth to constructively address issues of injustice (Ginwright, 2007).

ACP for adolescent Black females

African American youth in the United States are not only expected to undergo typical developmental experiences that are the hallmark of adolescence, such as physical growth and development (Susman & Dorn, 2009) and developing a desire to assert their independence (McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009); they are also coping with
a world in which they may be normatively expected to experience racial prejudice (Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003). In addition, for a young person of color, living in a high-stress environment (e.g., an urban neighborhood) may be a threat to psychological, emotional, and physical health (Brittian, 2011).

Stevenson (1997) posited that misrepresentation of Black culture and the overrepresentation of European American images on television may lead African American youth to feel “missed.” Indeed, discrimination and prejudice may prompt youth of color to develop negative identities, which may, consequently, lead to deviant behaviors and poor psychological functioning (Cooper, McLoyd, Wood, & Hardaway, 2008; G. Davis & Stevenson, 2006; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008). However, positive attitudes about one’s racial group are associated with better psychological functioning (Sellers, 2006). Developing positive attitudes about the self is an adaptive coping process that leads to better mental health (Brittian, 2011). Through experiences with discrimination, youth may develop problematic internalizing and externalizing behaviors (D. M. Hall, Cassidy, & Stevenson, 2008; Stevenson, 1997), or they may choose participation in community based programs (Ginwright, 2007). To buffer these ills, rite-of-passage programs have been developed and implemented in community programs, non-profit agencies, after-school programs, and religious affiliated programs throughout the nation (Goggins, 1996; Warfield-Coppock, 1992).

In an effort to increase the life chances of their children, their community, and the nation, many in the Black community have embraced rite-of-passage programs as a means to improve the future of their children and community (Piert, 2007). The “rites of
passage”, or “Afrikan school” is one of the most significant institutions in Afrikan cultures for educating the youth and preparing them to be the custodians of Afrikan livelihood (Ma’at, 2007). It was in the “Afrikan school” that children received instructions to prepare them to be functional in their communities. These schools also had a spiritual basis to develop the character and help seek the ultimate meaning of existence (Ma’at, 2007). The rites-of-passage program is employed by school and community members primarily, to assist young people in transitioning into adulthood. Stakeholders incorporate this program as a method to inculcate social, cultural, and political values that will ensure the positive development of Black young adults within the Black community as well as the American society (Warfield-Coppock, 1992).

Researchers affirm that many of these rite-of-passage programs are culturally specific and focus on improved self-concept, self-sufficiency, and the development of ethnic identity (Gavazzi, Alford, & McKenry, 1996; Goggins 1996; Warfield-Coppock, 1992). Rite-of-passage programs have cropped up across the nation in various formats, and Nzinga Warfield Coppock (1992) delineated six formats: community based, agency or organizationally based, school based, church based, therapeutic, and family based rite-of-passage programs. Warfield-Coppock's (1992) study of 20 rite-of-passage programs found that most programs were "community-based, and most originated due to the belief that young Blacks need more knowledge of their people and their culture to succeed in a racist, sexist, capitalist, and oppressive society" (p. 480).

The findings support the literature that the rite-of-passage program assists in defining the young person's self concept as a member of the community, specifically the
Black community (Goggins, 1997; Hill, 1997). They also suggest that the rite-of-passage program offered at the school provided its youth with positive outcomes that enhanced their life chances and strengthened the school community (Goggins, 1997). The rite program assisted students in establishing their self-concepts in relation to the community and in helping them to understand through the investment in the community that they had a responsibility to the collective group that superseded their interests in their individuality (Piert, 2007). African-centered programs that focus specifically on enhancing the self-identity of Black students seek to support young people as they enter the world beyond high school.

Piert (2007) asserts that participants in a rites-of-passage program study who shared their experiences of the program and its impact upon their lives agreed that: it nurtured a healthy association with their peers which created a strong sense of community and interdependence; it was a time of empowerment; the community's expectations of them and their place within the community were clearly articulated and became part of the internal guide for their life choices; and the active involvement of the elders and leaders of the community as well as the parents reinforced the belief that the young people's actions, choices, and lives were central to the continuation of African people and the world.

Goggins (1996) affirms that "African centered rite-of-passage aids in the development of an authentic self within a cultural context which is consistent with [Black] African American heritage" (p. 59), which he asserts is necessary for academic empowerment and school success. This experience helped to ground them in their
cultural identity, receive values, norms, traditions, and cultural knowledge of their community. Further, it helped to identify, define and clarify roles, expectations, and space that they occupied within that community (Piert, 2007). Tedla (1995) affirms that through the rituals and ceremonies, "the community transforms one, over the period of one's life, from a state of being a non-person to being a person with all the privileges and responsibilities that personhood entails" (p. 33).

African-centered programs have been found to specifically improve the educational experience for Black adolescent females. Ball (2009) focused on effective schools, particularly for African American females, and underscored the development of a positive and caring environment, developing a trusting relationship with a teacher, being accepted, and getting personal attention. The idea of social support from a larger network (namely, parents and peers) correlated positively to African American students’ grade point averages, and also shattered previous stereotypes that peer groups have a negative influence on student performance (Somers, 2008). According to Adelabu (2007), there is a positive correlation with future time perspective, school membership, and academic achievement among African American adolescent females. Research also suggests that African American high school students’ racial identity is positively related to their academic achievement (Chavous, 2003).

“Identity formation during adolescence requires that youth understand themselves as members of a society within particular ethnic, cultural, religious, or political traditions—each of which is associated with potential and unique protective factors” (Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003, p. 184). A positive identity has the greatest impact
in societies where discrimination and negative stereotypes exist for one or more groups (e.g., racial, religious, and/or gender discrimination; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, 1997). Gaining a positive sense of self is extremely important in the healthy emotional, physical, spiritual, and social development of adolescent Black girls.

Sellers (1998) suggests that African Americans’ racial identity is composed of four components: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. The layers of identity make it hard to chart growth based on the concept of identity alone; there are many factors that interplay in the development of one’s sense of self. A study by French (2006) revealed that African American adolescents’ group esteem starts relatively low in early adolescence and increases during middle adolescence, as they begin to reevaluate what it actually means to be African American and reject negative stereotypes about their ethnic group. Phinney (1997) indicates that ethnic identity is associated with African American adolescents’ self-esteem, in that adolescents with higher ethnic identity reported higher opinions of themselves. Thus, it follows that programs based in African-centered pedagogy and include a rites of passage component can serve to help improve the self-identity and group identity of adolescent Black girls.

In order to accurately chart adolescents’ concepts of identity, a study based on identity development should take place over an extended period of time. Theory suggests that identity is marked by sameness and continuous in an individual’s thinking about him or herself (Phinney & Ong, 2007), and thus should be examined over time. Studies that examine the presence of identity from a single time point are addressing an “instance” of identity and not the development of identity. Therefore, identity development is better
examined and understood within a longitudinal study (Brittian, 2011).

Few present studies have begun to explore how these aspects of racial and ethnic identity may be important for African American adolescents’ identity development (e.g., S. P. Hall & Carter, 2006). Future studies should examine the phenomenology of the group African American adolescents self-identify with and then determine what function that facet of identity serves for them (Brittian, 2011). Additional studies should also continue to consider adolescent identity development from within an integrative framework as well: one that considers the intricate, relational nature of biological, psychological, social, and historical influences on African American adolescents’ identity (Brittian, 2011).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

“People tend to adhere to the methodology that is most consonant with their socialized worldview” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Accordingly, the researcher in this study primarily utilized a qualitative design, as it encompassed an in-depth inquiry into the cultural, familial, socio-economic, and socio-emotional factors of the participants in order to identify the factors which both promote and oppress their growth and development. The use of qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to conduct fieldwork through an exploration of the multi-layered experiences of the participants’ lives from within the environments of their school and community. “Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning - how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world” (Merriam, 1988). The most valuable element of this thesis is the collection and analysis of data that stemmed from the personal statements of the participants and their parents; their individual and collective responses paint a vivid picture that represents a snapshot of life as an adolescent Black female participating in an ACP program in 2012.

As director of the after-school program for four years prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher had established trust and consistency with the participants, which provides one with an access that benefits tremendously from their ability to be genuine and comfortable in their natural setting. The nature of qualitative study is especially interested in the subjects’ comfort levels and honesty during interviews and
observations; research that is conducted without such concern can produce data that is skewed or inaccurate based on the subjects’ mistrust or wariness of the researcher. Great measures were taken to ensure the validity of responses provided. The fact that the researcher had been personally involved with her participants for years and that she possessed insight as to specific details about their lives and families initiated an empathetic disposition that sought to help them make sense of their realities.

It is critical that researchers conducting qualitative study understand the frameworks through which participants’ behavior stem. Racial, social, familial, educational, spiritual, and emotional backgrounds all interact and impact not only a subject’s experiences, but her or his ability to express and make sense of them. Therefore, an exploration of all of these components is essential to obtain the meaning derived from them. The qualitative mode of research assumes that the variables involved are complex and interwoven. This assumption allows researchers to explore the intricacies of human lives, and provides that there is no “box” that human experience can fit neatly into. The perspectives of the participants are of the utmost importance in the case of this study; an authentic compilation of emic information is critical in the development of a culturally-based study. Furthermore, in qualitative research, the goal is to gain an understanding of the lives of the participants specifically and individually; the results are not acquired with the intention of generalizing them to the population as a whole.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the factors that impact the lives of adolescent Black girls ages 11-14 and to determine the immediate and long term
effects of a African-centered pedagogy on their self and group identity. While there is a growing amount of research that supports evidence of the benefit of African-centered methodology, there is less information that specifically details the meanings that young Black girls derive from their life experiences, and how these experiences affect them as they grow.

All participants and school names have been changed to pseudonyms to maintain anonymity for the purpose of the study. This chapter includes information about the setting of the study, the participants of the study, the methodologies and design of the study, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Setting of the Study

The school site where the study took place is a high school campus in an urban neighborhood of Valleyland, CA. Not only is the school one of the most well-known campuses, but it is also one of the oldest high schools in the area. The Valleyland Middle School (VMS) is located within a wing of the high school campus. VMS was established in 2006 as an extension of a K-6 charter school (founded in 2003) in an effort to bring quality educational program to students in the Hopetown neighborhood. Historically an urban area, Hopetown demographics are predominantly Black and Latino, and the area is notoriously plagued with high levels of poverty, crime, and drug abuse. Although the location of the school is within this urban environment, many students commute from outlying areas because of its reputation for high test scores and positive student outcomes. In fact, VMS has a waitlist of over 150 students who hope to find a spot in the program before the school year begins.
VMS is chartered through Valley Unified School District (VUSD), and has consistently produced high levels of academic growth and success and outcome despite the relatively negative statistics of the neighborhood. For example, VUSD accountability reports for 2011 showed that 77 percent of all VMS students were proficient or advanced in English Language Arts in 2011; 86 percent scored proficient or advanced in Math. VUSD elementary students as a whole, however, scored 49 percent proficiency in both English and math in 2011, proving that VMS stands as an example of excellence in the community. In addition, VMS students are far exceeding math expectations with 11 percent of its 8th graders taking geometry or higher (Algebra II). The VMS Academic Performance Index (API) for the year 2011 had high results; while California state average API score for Black students in 2011 was 696 (out of a total possible 1000), the API for Black students at VMS was 911. Out of the 370 students who were tested, 82 percent, or 304 of them, were Black. The California Charter School Association (CCSA) found that “charter public schools serving African American students were more than three times as likely as traditional public schools to consistently outperform their predicted performance in a single year, and over time” (CCSA, 2011). Accordingly, the school proudly boasts that there is no achievement gap; at VMS they have consistently met all of their growth targets. As a result, VMS was awarded as the Charter School of the Year in 2011 by the California Charter School Association.

VMS currently has an extremely rigorous curriculum and expectations of its students. The racial demographic is approximately 80 percent Black, 8 percent Latino, 8 percent dual raced, 3 percent White, and 3 percent “other”. The middle school feeds
most of its students into the campus’ high school, which also shares a positive reputation for academic excellence and rigorous course of study. For example, VMS’s first class of graduating seniors will be moving on to their first year of college in 2012-13. 100 percent of VMS students who matriculated to the conjoined high school were accepted to a 4-year college in 2012.

Researcher’s Positionality

In an effort to further enrich the growth and culture of VMS students, the researcher joined with five women in 2009 to form a non-profit organization named “Girls of Imani” or “GoI” (Imani mean “Faith” in Swahili). GoI was developed as an African-centered after-school program to serve adolescent Black girls ages 11-14 that sought to educate, inspire, and empower them to reach and fulfill their highest potentials. In 2009, GoI originally served twelve 6th grade girls; in 2012 there were over 46 girls from 6th-8th grade enrolled in the program. GoI has evolved and grown tremendously over the past four years, and the community support that they now receive proves them to be a viable entity that is cherished and valued by parents, families, teachers, and most importantly by the girls who they serve.

As the researcher, I have been a director with GoI since its inception; for the past four years I have watched the girls struggle and grow through the joys and pains of their adolescence, and I can attest that the program has changes the lives of both the participants and their families as well. As the organization continues growing, I recognize the need for research-based study of ACP in an effort to help replicate the program and instill it on a larger scale. Accordingly, the Girls of Imani members and
their families will be the subjects of my thesis.

GoI provides a variety of African-centered curriculum, methodologies, and activities within an after school environment. The three-year program is based on three critical questions: “Who Am I?”, “I Who I Say I Am?”, and “Am I All That I Can Be?” As the girls progress from 6th to 8th grade, these inquiries serve as the themes for each year. Through an exploration of African and African American history/cultural lessons, and participation in various community service projects, leadership conferences, performing arts productions, and critical pedagogy/social justice exercises, Black girls gain self-identity, group identity, and the motivation to become intelligent, critically thinking, empowered young women who will become healthy and strong leaders for future generations.

ACP aims to manifest visions of hope and inspiration into positive growth for students, and mobilizes them with the knowledge, skills, and power necessary to actualize beneficial changes for themselves and their communities. Girls of Imani strives to promote and implement ACP through history lessons and theories generated from leaders and figures within the African diaspora; comprehension of examples Black successes and resistance; explorations of self-identity, national identity, and global identity; opportunities to practice critical praxis and critical pedagogy within communities; the process of dialogue, identification, action, and reflection; the opportunity to write and tell personal stories and histories; spirit-affirming practices and traditions such as meditation and positive affirmation; rites of passage initiation processes; events and programs that promote community support for the youth;
opportunities to perform and develop talents and skills; and life planning activities.

Methods and Procedures

Through a mixed-methods approach that incorporated predominantly qualitative research and a smaller amount of quantitative data, I explored how an African-centered learning environment impacted the emotional, physical, spiritual, and educational growth of Black girls in middle school. The participants in the research of my study were a group of twenty-eight female Black students at VMS. I chose this group not only because they are members of GoI, but because they represent the segment of Black youth that are particularly at-risk for many detrimental factors as they become teens.

My qualitative research began with an initial assessment of their understandings of African and African American history as it relates to pre-colonial African, slavery, colonialism, and oppression. Through written assessments from sixth grade girls who are new to the program, I aimed to develop a baseline understanding of the extent and quality of historical and cultural knowledge that they possess, as well as an understanding of their writing and comprehension skills. I also administered surveys and questionnaires to the girls, their parents/families, and their directors to identify areas of growth and concern as the study proceeds.

My quantitative research evolved through an analysis of middle school history curriculum. I evaluated and quantified the amount of information based on African-centered content as well as global experiences with oppression. I identified the extent to which the content is ethnocentric, inaccurate, and/or insufficient.

I assessed the girls at different stages of their exposure to Girls of Imani; the sixth
graders have only been in the program for seven months; the seventh graders have been in the program for two years; and the eighth graders have been in the program for three years. I aimed to determine the impact of African-centered curriculum and a rites of passage through questionnaire and survey. The results that I expected to see in the girls included: an improvement in African historical knowledge retention; a heightened sense of personal and group identity and cultural awareness; a motivation to create and pursue critical praxis and social action; and an increased Pan African global awareness.

Population and Sample

This study used a sample size of twenty-eight student participants (grades 6-9) and twenty-four parents who were given packets containing surveys and questionnaires to take home. Upon choosing to participate, the students and parents completed their surveys and questionnaires at home; this ensured anonymity and freedom to express themselves candidly. The study also included the responses of two of the GoI Directors. All participants had consented to the study and thoroughly understood the intent and goals of the study prior to its beginning.

Design of the Study/Data Collection

This study was conducted through the use of survey and questionnaire. The researcher completed the Human Subjects form and submittal process to gain Sacramento State approval prior to conducting research with the participants. Upon approval, the researcher distributed the surveys and packets in envelopes for the girls to take home with them. Upon agreement to participate, the girls completed: a pre/post African knowledge questionnaire; a Likert-scale survey; and a GoI Questionnaire. The parents as well as the
directors completed a GoI Questionnaire. The questions that were developed for the researcher’s interviews explored the participants’ experiences with topics such as: African/Black history; ethnicity; self-identity; self-esteem; social and peer pressure; home, school, and family dynamics; health; and spirituality.

This study is a mixed-design model based on a primarily qualitative methodology that includes written statements from girls, parents, and program directors. A base-line assessment was administered to six 6th graders to identify the extent of the girls’ knowledge of basic African and African American history within their first year of the GoI program. A post-survey was administered to five 8th graders who have been in the program for three years to compare the extent to which the program educated them of critical Black issues and history.

A smaller segment of the study is quantitative, consisting of a five-point Likert scale parent survey that identified their levels of self and group identity. The 41 items included in the survey regard identity, ethnicity, family, culture, health, education, and spirit.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

“I have learned a multiple of things. I have learned to love who I am. I have learned to love my African American heritage. I love myself more than I ever thought I could. I am the kind of person who is Black power all day. I now have a pride that I never had before.” – 8th grade response

This chapter will present the findings from this study. Data will be presented in five sections: 1) a summary of California Content Standards (kindergarten to grade 8) to examine the African/Black history presence in California curriculum; 2) data from the girls’ Likert scale survey; 3) a comparison of pre- and post-survey results based on African knowledge data between sixth and eighth graders; 4) an analysis of the sixth-ninth grade girls’ questionnaire responses; 6) an analysis of the parent questionnaire responses; and 7) an inclusion of the director questionnaire responses. Each section will be examined in relationship to African-centered pedagogy.

Afrocentric educators and scholars believe that children of African descent must be taught their African cultural heritage for the purpose of re-Africanization (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). Alridge (1999) highlights that on a curricular level, African-centered education would teach students about the cultural and historical accomplishments of African countries and use African and Black American culture and history as frames of reference. This provides learning experiences that foster positive self-images for African American students (p. 188). The GoI girls are taught to live the Nguzo Nane year-round, which holds them to extend and seek to fulfill the principles far
beyond the time of the Kwanzaa holiday. GoI’s monthly and annual events include community service/volunteering opportunities in community businesses and organizations (Ujima-collective work and responsibility); fundraising events to help us sponsor GoI events and charity work (Ujamaa-cooperative economics); Father-Daughter and Mother-Daughter Brunches (Umoja-unity and Heshema-respect); Father-Daughter Bowling(Umoja-unity); Mother-Daughter Spa Party(Umoja-unity); Kwanzaa presentation (Umoja-unity and Imani-faith); Black History Performance (Kuumba-creativity); Talent Show (Kuumba-creativity); Rites of Passage Ceremony (Niapurpose); Summer Performing Arts Program (Kuumba-creativity); and our pen-pal program with Ghana (umoja-unity). These activities are designed specifically to boost cultural awareness, community involvement, family bonding and communication. They give the girls, their parents, and the families as a whole the chance to come have fun, and learn together.

The participants of this study were twenty-eight 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders from the GoI program at Valley Middle School (VMS) and Valley High School (VHS).
California Content Standards Analysis

An analysis of the California Content Standards finds that students typically do not receive salient instruction of African/African American content until the 7th grade, when they are supposed to study West African empires, and the 8th grade, when they are expected to focus on the Civil War period. Prior to the 6th grade, teachers are not required by the standards to specifically address any African content whatsoever (save the location of Africa in Geography) and a brief section on slavery in 5th grade. In 6th grade they are introduced to Egypt and Kush.

A review of the kindergarten-grade 3 standards identifies the inclusion of Black “heroes” (ex. Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King Jr.). This represents what Banks (2004) would refer to as the “Contributions Approach” of multicultural content. According to Banks (2004), this is the lowest form of cultural integration in which: the content is surface, minimal, and lacking in-depth exploration; there is an inclusion of posters, books, and art—but no in-depth exploration; the content focuses on ethnic heroes, holidays, celebrations, and “exotic others”; most mainstream American curriculum falls in this category. In an effort to incorporate culturally inclusive material, many teachers rely on surface-level additions to their curriculum that do not authentically educate children about the content. Moreover, instructional efforts to make learning more meaningful for diverse students typically consists of fragmented multicultural content due to the lack of multicultural training in teacher preparation programs (William-White, 2013).
The following standards represent the only presence of African/Black history content in the California Content Standards grades 5-8. Prior to grade 5 there is no introduction or in-depth analysis of African or African-American history that is required to serve as a background for understanding the content.

Table 1: California Content Standards Grade 5 - United States History and Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4/6.</td>
<td>Describe the introduction of slavery into America, the responses of slave families to their condition, the ongoing struggle between proponents and opponents of slavery, and the gradual institutionalization of slavery in the South.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4/7.</td>
<td>Understand how the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence changed the way people viewed slavery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: California Content Standards Grade 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: California Content Standards Grade 7 - Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 7 - World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in grade seven study the social, cultural, and technological changes that occurred in Europe, Africa, and Asia in the years A.D. 500–1789.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: California Content Standards Grade 7 - West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the sub-Saharan civilizations of Ghana and Mali in Medieval Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Study the Niger River and the relationship of vegetation zones of forest, savannah, and desert to trade in gold, salt, food, and slaves; and the growth of the Ghana and Mali empires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Analyze the importance of family, labor specialization, and regional commerce in the development of states and cities in West Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Describe the role of the trans-Saharan caravan trade in the changing religious and cultural characteristics of West Africa and the influence of Islamic beliefs, ethics, and law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Trace the growth of the Arabic language in government, trade, and Islamic scholarship in West Africa.

5. Describe the importance of written and oral traditions in the transmission of African history and culture.

In addition to the West African unit, the 7th grade Content Standards for the entire year also include:

Table 5: California Content Standards Grade 7

| 7.1 | Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire. |
| 7.2 | Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages. |
| 7.3 | Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of China in the Middle Ages. |
| 7.5 | Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Japan. |
| 7.6 | Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Medieval Europe. |
| 7.7 | Students compare and contrast the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Meso-American and Andean civilizations. |
| 7.8 | Students analyze the origins, accomplishments, and geographic diffusion of the Renaissance. |
| 7.9 | Students analyze the historical developments of the Reformation. |
| 7.10 | Students analyze the historical developments of the Scientific Revolution and its lasting effect on religious, political, and cultural institutions. |
| 7.11 | Students analyze political and economic change in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (the Age of Exploration, the Enlightenment, and the Age of Reason). |
The disturbing reality is that most Black elementary school children in public California schools have to wait until seventh grade, or when they are approximately 12-13 years old, to learn about Africa. Furthermore, the fact that the West Africa unit is sandwiched among this lengthy and complex list of standards leads one to deduce that African history cannot possibly be explored in depth. In fact, given the sheer amount of material to be covered in seventh grade, it would seem that none of the important seventh grade content can be taught sufficiently. From a critical ACP lens, the placement of West African Empires in seventh grade content standards does the teaching of rich African history a disservice and injustice. Moreover, it cannot be ensured that the educators responsible for delivering this sensitive curriculum are culturally competent and knowledgeable enough to teach in effectively. William-White (2013) asserts that while teachers should be trained as and perceived as competent curriculum developers who base their pedagogical decisions on students’ diverse learning needs, this proves illusive. Not all teachers are trained or qualified to develop curricula with intended learning outcomes; many are not exposed to curriculum theory or assessment. (p.223)

Seventh grade is the only time that African civilization is included in the whole California Content Standards for History curriculum from kindergarten to twelfth grade. This is blatant evidence of the need for ACP programs in the education of Black children. It is improbable that the education that Blacks receive in public institutions will ever reform itself to the point that Blacks receive the tools that are necessary for them to have agency over their lives (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011).
In 8th grade, students are taught about history pertaining to slavery, particularly centering around nineteenth-century events.

Table 6: California Content Standards Grade 8

| 8.2 | Evaluate the major debates that occurred during the development of the Constitution and their ultimate resolutions in such areas as shared power among institutions, divided state-federal power, slavery, the rights of individuals and states (later addressed by the addition of the Bill of Rights), and the status of American Indian nations under the commerce clause |
| 8.6 | Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast |
| 8.7 | Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the South from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced. |
| 2. | Trace the origins and development of slavery; its effects on black Americans and on the region’s political, social, religious, economic, and cultural development; and identify the strategies that were tried to both overturn and preserve it (e.g., through the writings and historical documents on Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey). |
| 4. | Compare the lives of and opportunities for free blacks in the North with those of free blacks in the South. |
| 8.9 | Students analyze the early and steady attempts to abolish slavery and to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. |
| 1. | Describe the leaders of the movement (e.g., John Quincy Adams and his proposed constitutional amendment, John Brown and the armed resistance, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Weld, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass). |
| 2. | Discuss the abolition of slavery in early state constitutions. |
| 3. | Describe the significance of the Northwest Ordinance in education and in the banning of slavery in new states north of the Ohio River. |
| 4. | Discuss the importance of the slavery issue as raised by the annexation of Texas and California’s admission to the union as a free state under the Compromise of 1850. |
6. Describe the lives of free blacks and the laws that limited their freedom and economic opportunities.

| 8.10 | Students analyze the multiple causes, key events, and complex consequences of the Civil War. |
| 5.  | Study the views and lives of leaders (e.g., Ulysses S. Grant, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee) and soldiers on both sides of the war, including those of black soldiers and regiments. |
| 8.11 | Students analyze the character and lasting consequences of Reconstruction. |
| 2.  | Identify the push-pull factors in the movement of former slaves to the cities in the North and to the West and their differing experiences in those regions (e.g., the experiences of Buffalo Soldiers). |

California, and the nation as a whole for that matter, is currently transitioning its curriculum from the State Content Standards to the “Common Core Standards”, a move that is supposed to ensure a nationally consistent and more substantial learning experience for it students. This transition, however, does little to ensure that the content will be more sensitive to the country’s ethnically diverse student population. That the U.S. Department of Education recently endorsed Common Core State Standards, reifying Eurocentric literary traditions and historical events as “official knowledge” that an educated citizenry must master, further subjugates Black culture and identity (William-White, 2013).
## Girl’s Likert Survey

Table 7: Girl’s Survey (28 girls; 12/6th grade, 6/7th grade, 7/8th grade, 3/9th graders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (Number/percentage)</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a sense of who I am</td>
<td>13/46%</td>
<td>9/32%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My identity is important to me</td>
<td>19/69%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI teaches me about my identity</td>
<td>15/54%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a confident person</td>
<td>14/50%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school teaches me about Black history</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>10/36%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI teaches me about Black history</td>
<td>15/54%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/Media affects how I feel about myself</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>10/36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe in God</td>
<td>21/75%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI helps prepare me for my future</td>
<td>13/46%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live with both of my parents.</td>
<td>16/57%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI has improved my self-confidence.</td>
<td>12/43%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI teaches me about my community.</td>
<td>15/54%</td>
<td>10/36%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have a great purpose in life.</td>
<td>15/54%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be Black.</td>
<td>20/71%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black history is important to me.</td>
<td>16/57%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black people can help each other.</td>
<td>16/57%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black people have the power to change.</td>
<td>14/50%</td>
<td>6/21%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia is good for young girls.</td>
<td>16/57%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who drink or smoke.</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>8/29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who use drugs.</td>
<td>4/14%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>4/14%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>7/25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who have sex.</td>
<td>4/14%</td>
<td>5/18%</td>
<td>4/14%</td>
<td>2/7%</td>
<td>8/29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
African Knowledge Survey

The African knowledge pre-survey was included as part of a packet that was sent home for the participants to complete anonymously. It was given to 6th graders who were newcomers to the GoI program as of September, 2012. At the point that the survey was administered, the girls had been in the GoI program for approximately 7 months. As the researcher, my intentions were to gain an understanding of the base-level foundation of knowledge about African and African American people/history. The African knowledge post-survey was given to 8th graders to determine their levels of knowledge about African and African American history/people as well. My expectation was that there would be a recognizable difference in the responses between the 6th graders, who are in the earlier stages of exposure to ACP, and 8th graders, who have been a part of GoI for 3 years at this point. Eleven girls responded (six 6th graders and five 8th graders).

Table 8: African-centered Knowledge Pre/Post Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African-centered Knowledge Pre/Post Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is African history important? Why/ Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you know about Africa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you know about African history? How did you learn it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What do you know about African-Americans and/or African American history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you want to know about African/African American history?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Is African history important? Why/ Why not?

As Asante admonishes, “know your history and you will always be wise” (Asante, 1988, p.51). “The Pan Africanist principle is the belief that Africa is the home of all people of African descent and all Black people should work for the total liberation and unification of Africa and Africans around the world…and schools for African American children should be based upon this principle” (Lomotey, 1978). Responses show that most of the participants (78%) believe that African history is important in their lives. Student comments include “Yes because it’s my culture” (grade 6); “Yes we need to learn where we came from” (grade 6); and “It shows us that we can also change the world and make it better” (grade 8). The 8th grader’s response indicated a more complex application of Black history by expressing what it show us; in that she possesses the hope that change is possible.

2. What do you know about Africa?

One can only be free in the Afrocentric context when one is knowledgeable about who one is, and from whence one has come. It is certain that mainstream media, today, is not the best history teacher of an Afrocentric perspective, nor, indeed, are many of our schools (Harris, 1998, p. 15-25). I asked the participants what they know about Africa in an effort to allow them the opportunity to draw from their own banks of knowledge in addition to the information we present. The surface-level of knowledge and understanding about Africa was particularly expected for the 6th graders. Considering the lack of inclusion of African study in the California Content Standards for students from kindergarten to grade 6, it is not surprising that their answers are shallow and/or
inaccurate. Hence the sixth grader student responses, “Africa is a small country” and “Not much at all”. Ginwright (2004) writes that “Afrocentric scholars argue that cultural omissions in schooling and curricula consequently erode students’ cultural and self-esteem and contribute to poor academic performance” (p. 3). ACP serves to supply Black students with the information pertinent to African history and culture that is missing from their traditional schools. The curriculum is designed to enable students to see themselves and their ancestors as leading contributors to the history and culture of the world (Hale-Benson, 1982; Kenyatta, 1998; Marks & Tonso, 2006; Murrell, 2002).

The sixth grade GoI curriculum covers general information such as: knowledge of the African continent (countries, geography); life in pre-colonial Africa; introduction to African languages; Kemetic history; and projects about African queens. We delve much deeper into African empires and circumstances that initiated slavery and colonialism in seventh and eighth grades in an effort to provide the girls with a well-rounded understanding of African history that extends beyond the glorification and exaggeration of “kings and queens”. The inordinate amount of energy devoted to the study, praising, and admiration of African kings and pharaohs displays a serious sense of inadequacy and disdain for the common woman and man (Kalamu ya Salaam, 2011). GoI insists that our members gain a solid grasp of the totality of the African experience and not just a storybook or romanticized version of the truth.

GoI includes the pre-survey as part of the sixth grade curriculum in an effort to incorporate the girls’ prior knowledge and help them make connections with the heart of the subject matter for the program. This is the first stage of the concept of re-
Africanization; the three broad overlapping stages of reAfricanization (including rediscovery/historical recovery, redefinition/cultural reaffirmation, and revitalization/national liberation) constitute the phases that people who are committed to reAfricanization go through (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). GoI seeks to “fill in the blanks” of information about African, African-American, and Pan-African history and culture not provided in the girls’ history courses.

Eighth grade student responses included: “that there are 52 countries and thousands of languages spoken in Africa. I learned it in GoI.” and “it was advanced when the rest of the world was still struggling.” This answer suggests that this girl is aware that there was a time when African civilization was socially, physically, spiritually, economically, and educationally prosperous; the common misconception is that Africa is a backwards, third-world nation. Once aware of this critical fact, the next step is to understand what happened to that prosperity.

Although many of the girls do not have a complex understanding of African history at this point, a great deal of the information that they do know was provided for them through lessons in GoI. Seven of the sixth grade girls’ responses show that whatever they know about Africa, they learned in GoI. Being that their middle school is predominantly Black, and that the majority of these girls have been in a predominantly Black school for most of their lives, it is troubling that they do not have a wider base of knowledge about either Africans in America or in Africa. This speaks again to the lack of curriculum about Africa and African history, as well as the lack of Black educators in general who are invested in and capable of teaching ACP. The eighth grade girls’
comments included: “that we were Kings and Queens before we were enslaved. We had empires in many places in Africa. I learned it in GoI and school.”; “that the slave trade was much worse than we thought and that many more people died than they tell us. I learned it at the Apex museum in Atlanta.”; and “they don’t tell us the real truth about it.” These answers exemplify traits of critical thinking; they are stating an awareness of the falsification of Black history. The participant who explained that she learned at the Apex museum speaks to the dire need for Black students to be exposed to African/Black learning environments.

4. What do you know about African-Americans and/or African American history?

When asked what they know about African-American and African-American history, a level of misunderstanding was represented as shown by the sixth grade responses: “that war is going on” and “they came to America I think”. There appears to be confusion between African American events and African events. In addition, the tendency to refer to African Americans as “they” demonstrates a lack of group identity; many of the sixth graders, and some eighth graders as well, have not yet developed an attachment or association with Black people as a whole (we, instead of “them”). The response “they didn’t teach us” corresponds with the data generated from the Girls’ survey; 43% of the girls respond that they “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” that their school teaches them about Black history.

The eighth grade response: “Some whites still treat Blacks unfair because of the effects of slavery.” suggests that the participant acknowledges the connection between modern racism and slavery; a crucial connection that must be established. Furthermore,
the eighth grade response: “That we have come a long way. Our leaders were willing to risk their life for us.” displays a recognition of the Black struggle, and that the price of leadership can indeed be dangerous.

5. What do you want to know about African/African American history?

Giving the girls the opportunity to create questions further connects them with the subject matter and drives our curriculum; we attempt to create certain lessons as we identify what the girls want to know. All students, not just those from marginalized groups, seem more eager to enter energetically into classroom discussion when they perceive it as pertaining directly to them (when non-white students talk in class only when they feel connected via experience it is not aberrant behavior (hooks, 1994, p.87). Allowing students to participate in their curriculum development may foster more ownership and participation. With Africa as the “common theme” among people of African descent, African/African American culture must be used as a guide to restore African humanity (Akoto, 1992; Akoto & Akoto, 1999; Anwisye, 2006; Hilliard, 1991; King, 2005; Lomotey, 1978; Madhubuti, 1973).

In response to the question: “What do you want to know about African/African American history?” responses ranged from “As much as possible.” to “Nothing.”. There are great variations in the responses of the participants; some girls respond that they do not want to know anything about Africa. We cannot force them to take an interest in African culture, but we can show them the ways that their roots are nurturing (Traore, 2007). This is an important realization; although our intent is to instill a sense of pride and love in Black culture, we cannot ensure that every girl will accept and uphold the
sentiment. We also have to consider the fact that not every Black girl cares as much about her Black identity as we would want her to; there are a variety of factors that comprise identity and at any time another factor could take precedence over ethnicity or race. Still, there are girls who want to know “As much as possible”. The variation in the responses exemplifies the diversity of our adolescent Black population. In addition, the sixth grade response “How we can help them”, the use of *them*, instead of *us*, points that there are some girls who have not yet gained the concept of group identity, as if “they” (African Americans) are a group separate from their own.

As a GoI director, I wanted to know what ethnicity the participants desired to be referred as. It is often assumed or mistaken that the preference is African-American, when many people who are African-descendant are of African-Caribbean descent or otherwise, in which case another title may be preferred. The data demonstrates that the majority of the girls (82%) consider themselves both Black and African American interchangeably.

I expected to see a greater understanding and level of critical thought when comparing the eighth grade responses to the sixth grade responses. To a certain extent, this was true. The eighth graders have a deeper inquiry and knowledge base of the Black experience. However, the fact that the girls completed the surveys at home, independent of specific guidance, may be the reason that the shortness of their answers do not seem to fully represent the complexity of dialogue and understanding that we share when speaking about these issues as a group.
Girl’s Questionnaire

Table 9: Girl’s Questionnaire Responses (14/6th graders, 7/7th graders, and 7/8th graders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl’s Questionnaire Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you enjoy most about being in GoI?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you think your self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control has improved by being part of GoI? If yes, how so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you feel your relationship with your mother, father, or family has improved after participating in Sisters of Nia this year? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Has GoI improved your academic performance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Has GoI affected your sense of community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Has GoI affected your sense of personal identity?</td>
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1. What do you enjoy most about being in GoI?

Being with and bonding with peers, learning about African culture, and performing were the things that the sixth grade girls enjoyed most. Many of the girls had no experience on stage before they came to GoI, and within the first year they are expected to sing in Swahili, Zhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, and Congolese dialects and to perform as a choir. They are also expected to do various poetry and informational recitations throughout the year at GoI events. The experience on stage has impacted many girls; numerous responses expressed that performing has had a great influence on their self-confidence.

One seventh grade participant responds: “The number one thing I have learned from GoI is to not be afraid to show my real self and that I can really shine it when I do. With whatever situation! (Music, singing, school, etc.) The second most important thing I have learned is that we as sisters are all equal no matter how different or the same we
are!

The seventh and eighth grade answers are more complex, more sophisticated, and reflect a more substantial extraction from the program. They replied that they are learning how to be better people in general. Their responses specifically referred to leadership; their responsibilities as seventh and eighth graders call for greater levels of leadership, responsibility, and decision making. One important component of African traditional education was character formation, which relates to the issue of ‘ethics’ or ‘morality’ in modern education (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). That they are expressing growth in their morality and responsibility towards the Black community is critical. The seventh and eighth graders also made additional reference to their appreciation of the performing arts component of GoI.

Perhaps one of the most salient responses of all was that of the eighth grader who writes: “I have learned a multiple of things. I have learned to love who I am. I have learned to love my African American heritage. I love myself more than I ever thought I could. I am the kind of person who is Black power all day. I now have a pride that I never had before.” This exuberant pride is the epitome of the self-identity and the self-confidence that we aim to instill in our girls. Moreover, the eighth grade girls, in particular, express that what they had enjoyed most about GoI are the concepts of “family” and “teamwork”, more than the girls in other grades. This is pertinent; by the time the girls have spent 3 years together, they have learned how to interact as a unit, as a team, and this experience bonds them deeply.
2. Do you think your self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control has improved by being part of GoI?

Nearly one quarter of the girls across grades express responses such as: “I was always confident in the first place” and “maybe a little but I’m still me”. The tendency for adolescents to exhibit an independent nature is to be expected. The sixth grade comment: “I’m still the same me.” suggests that the girls are not yet aware of how the physical, mental, and cultural changes that they are experiencing will or can affect them.

Conversely, another sixth grade response states: “yes, because at first I was nervous to start because I had stage fright. Then I realized it was more than just singing and it teaches you more. Now when I go on stage I know I’m singing for my ancestors so I’m not that nervous.” This implies that there is evidence of positive growth in confidence; moreover the mention of an acknowledgement of Black ancestor presence touches upon a spiritual awakening. This sentiment is further supported by the seventh grade comment: “I carry myself in a more respectable manner. I will not be that girl that my elders look at and talk about in disgust. I will make my ancestors proud. I am more responsible, more respectable, more proud, and I think about people in a good way no matter what they have done to me.” That Black children acknowledge the importance of ancestry, and understand the continued existence of spiritual connection, are of utmost priorities as fundamental components of ACP.

One sixth grader response brings up an important concern for us when she writes: “It made me more proud because I thought my race was a bad impression on Black young women or young girls like myself.” In the present day, African American children are
still found to be aware of positive images associated with being “White” and the negative stereotypes associated with being “Black” (Davis, 2005). That GoI is helping young Black girls to break the negative image of Black women is vital.

French (2006) reveals that African American adolescents’ group esteem starts relatively low in early adolescence and increases during middle adolescence, as they begin to reevaluate what it actually means to be African American and reject negative stereotypes about their ethnic group. The seventh and eighth graders respond that GoI has affected their self-confidence and self-control by teaching them how to be more respectful to themselves and others, how to “be a lady”, how to control their tempers, how to resolve conflicts with others, how to work with others, and how to be more positive in general. In addition, work by Phinney (1997) indicates that ethnic identity is associated with African American adolescents’ self-esteem, in that adolescents with higher ethnic identity reported higher opinions of themselves.

3. Do you feel your relationship with your mother, father, or family has improved after participating in Sisters of Nia this year? Why or why not?

There was an overwhelming response that GoI activities benefitted the girls’ relationships with their parents positively. The majority of the girls (68%) report that they have learned more about their parents and families; that they communicate with mom and dad more; and that they have bonded with their fathers in particular through the Father-Daughter events. An eighth grade participant responds: “We talk more now, and I am not as afraid to open up to my dad about my feelings.” Furthermore, numerous girls respond that their families have always been strong, as shown in the sixth grade
comments: ‘We are still the same loving family that we have always been.’; and “Yes, because I see that they’re proud of me. I already knew that but now I know that when I go on stage they’ll have my back no matter what”. Moreover, a high number of girls (64%) live with both parents, in contradiction to the common notion that Black men are missing from the home. The potential for GoI to support and strengthen the Black family is invaluable.

4. Has GoI improved your academic performance?

Many GoI girls are used to achieving high grades and high expectations. Such is the nature of the school that they attend; as previously mentioned VMS middle school consistently receives accolades for high test scores and levels of academics. While the girls’ responses do not reflect a direct correlation between GoI and an improvement in academic performance, there are a number of reasons why this may be the case. In contrast to the “achievement gap” data, many of the girls of GoI are and have been academically proficient prior to their exposure to the program. This may, in part, explain why a number of them did not actually see an improvement; they simply already had high grades. As recorded in the section of parent data, it is clear that the parent opinion is that GoI exists as an extension of support and high expectation that further influences the girls to do their best. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2001) proposes effective and culturally relevant pedagogy as education that (1) looks beyond explanations of cultural deficit; (2) seeks to improve student achievement while maintaining identity; and (3) challenges inequitable school and societal structures (p. 18). GoI seeks to support our girls’ work ethics by instilling high expectations within them in all areas of life.
5. Has GoI affected your sense of community?

Black children must be the catalysts for helping to instill a sense of agency in the Black community because Afrocentrists believe that the generations before have only been taught how to consume and be dependent on outside entities (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). Madhubuti (1973) explains “Our survival lies in our ability to operate out of an African frame of reference based upon a proven value system that incorporates a sense of African love and responsibility” (p. 14). GoI is intent upon nurturing the love that the girls express towards their people and their community. Sixth graders write: “Oh yes, I’ve looked at my environment a whole different way. I never knew VMS had so much talent!” ; and “My love for my Black community has grown!” A seventh grade response states: “Yes because I try to follow the Nguzo Nane (eight principles).” The eighth graders further extend not only appreciation, but admiration for the Black community: “After my trip to Atlanta, I realized how many more Black communities there are out there and that they can be really strong with a lot of history.” ; and “When I see how many people come to our talent show and other performances I see how many Black people there are in Sacramento.”

An African-centered education reinforces community ties and promotes the vision of individuals and communities as producers rather than simply consumers (Lee, 1992). In African traditional education, all members of the society owned things in common and applied the communal spirit to life and work (Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). The eighth graders, who have been in GoI for the past 3 years, have been involved in many more opportunities for community service. They have been exposed to the Nguzo Nane
throughout their entire GoI experience, which at this point we hope is embedded in their characters. Although some of their answers are quite concise, the short, brief answers suggest that some of the participants sped through the questions without expanding on them the way that they are expected to express themselves in front of their directors at GoI. The fact that they completed these surveys and questionnaires at home independently also may have led to confusion as to the meaning of the questions, in addition to their tendency to not expand on their answers.

6. Has GoI affected your sense of personal identity?

In reference to the impact that GoI has had on their self-identity, 60% of the girls respond that they are more proud, more respectful, more aware of themselves and others, happier, and more expressive. Approximately half of the girls said that GoI is teaching them about their self-identity. The other half did not see that GoI had impacted their identity; they felt as if they are “still the same me”, that they had always been strong, and that they had already had high self-esteem. For example, one seventh grade comment expresses: “No not really I actually always known who I was and I knew what I liked and what I didn’t like.” It should be expected that some adolescents are increasing in their commitment to their overall sense of self, while some may be decreasing, and some may follow a mixed pattern as they try on “different hats” and different personas in adolescence (Brittian, 2012). Nevertheless, we heavily impress upon the girls the need to develop a sense of “Who am I?”.

Two more seventh grade responses include: “GoI has affected my sense of personal identity because it showed my true colors. Also, in what I can become in my
future. It affected who I should hang out with and who are truly my friends to hang out with. I really enjoy how it positively affected my life’s journey.” and “Honestly, I think it has affected me because it made me take a step back and take a second to think about who I am and what I am doing.” The fact that they can identify that they are more aware of themselves and their surroundings represents progress. It suggests that they are indeed developing a sense of critical thinking. Afrocentric pedagogy encourages critical inquiry. Students are taught to understand that to learn how to think for themselves is just as important as what they learn (Grant, 2008).

Theory suggests that young people who have established a positive sense of identity are more likely to become productive citizens in later life (Sherrod & Laukhardt, 2008). The majority of the seventh grade responses say that GoI has affected their sense of identity. This represents a growth in knowledge of self, in contrast with the sixth graders, who expressed that GoI did not impact their identity. The repetition of the phrase “Who I Am” is constant throughout their responses, providing insight that they are thinking about this concept and how it applies to them. It’s interesting to note that one participant had replied it not only has helped her with her own sense of identity, but also to be aware of the characters of her peers, which is critical in making smart choices about who to be friends with.

The eighth grader responses once again exemplify the range of mind-states that the girls share at this stage in reference to knowledge of self. On one hand, the comment: “Yes. I do not identify myself by anything else. I am African-American, Black, proud, smart, intelligent, passionate, caring, and much more. I have never thought myself to be
this way. It is amazing how a program can change you.” implies that one girl has experienced a truly positive self-identity transformation. On the other hand, two other eighth graders write: “No, because I know who I am and I know how I can act. I don’t need something/someone to tell me who I am or what I am.”; and “I don’t think it has because I don’t feel that I really know who I am because there are so many things that I haven’t experienced or have knowledge of yet.”

Positive attitudes about one’s racial group are associated with better psychological functioning (Sellers, 2006). Other girls expressed that GoI has helped them realize how hard they have to work for what they want and made them stronger. Answers include: “GoI has helped me figure out who I am and who I want to be”; “has helped me be less shy”; and “has helped me learn my history and rights”. A few of the eighth graders respond that they already know themselves, and one even replied that she does not know herself yet and is still figuring things out, which reflects great insight as well. The myriad biological, cognitive, and social changes that occur during adolescence lead a person to engage in self-evaluation and social redefinition (Brittian, 2012).

The fact that one participant made mention of her rights is thought provoking; we strive to help the girls develop an awareness of social justice in order to identify if and/or when they may face discrimination or inequity. Knowledge of self is inclusive of information pertaining to one’s personal identity, their group identity (Pan-Africanist), cultural identity and recognition, appropriate and proper values, a national plan/agenda for betterment, and the building of institutions to perpetuate “self” (Shockley, 2007). Wilson (1999) writes it is only when that knowledge is removed, erased, degraded,
stolen, taken and distorted that we lose our identity. It is then that an identity is placed upon us by another people and by external forces. Therefore, a lack of self-knowledge is a lack of self-awareness (p. 48). The African himself expresses the thought in saying knowing thyself is better than he who speaks of thee. Not to know is bad; but not to wish to know is worse” (Stewart, 1997, p.15).
Parent’s Questionnaire

As the researcher, and also as a director of GoI, I developed the Parent Questionnaire to measure parent/family reactions to their daughters’ and their personal experiences in the program. The following sixth-ninth grade parent responses are based on parent observations of their daughter’s and their own personal experiences in GoI’s 3-year program. I collected twenty-four Parent Questionnaire responses: 12/6th grade Parents; 6/7th grade Parents; 6/8th grade Parents; and 2/9th grade (alumni) Parents.

Table 10: Parent Questionnaire

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<tr>
<td>1. How has GoI impacted your daughter’s life?</td>
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<td>2. How has GoI impacted your life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of personal identity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of culture, ethnicity, or race?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Has GoI affected your daughter’s academic performance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Has GoI affected your daughter’s relationships with family? With friends? With teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Has GoI affected your daughter’s self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?</td>
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1. How has GoI impacted your daughter’s life?

One sixth grade parent responds: “My daughter has learned more about African history and has been exposed to more culture through this program in one year that all of her prior years of school. I believe my daughter has learned to me more respectful and how to have a presence in front of a crowd.” This response correlates with the girl’s survey results, which show that 43% “Strongly Disagreed” or “Disagreed” that they had
learned about Black/African American history in school. According to California Content Standards, seventh grade is the only time during which the curriculum includes African history. Aside from this standard, the inclusion of Africa in the California State Standards is minimal. GoI bases the majority of our curriculum on African and African American history; we understand that there is a lack of cultural, educational programs for Black girls, and we aim to fill this need.

There were a few responses that express how our members who are of mixed heritage have benefitted from the program. For example a sixth-grade parent writes, “GoI has given my daughter a better insight and understanding about her African identity and self-worth. She has accepted her own cultural identity as an African American child. She is of mixed-race, but has come to grow a strong identity with the African side of her culture.”. GoI has several members of mixed-ethnicity and also one non-Black member. This is critical; we find it imperative that children of mixed-ethnicity learn to embrace their African culture. As the number of mixed-ethnicity children in America continues to grow, it is crucial that they have firm understanding of their Blackness to pass on to their children. Society will most likely continue to view those children as Black, and they have to have the knowledge to back themselves up if and when necessary. Moreover, the fact that we have non-Black participants who are flourishing in GoI attests that ACP is indeed good for everyone; ACP promotes humanistic, holistic philosophy and activity that helps unite people across race and ethnicity.

Adolescence is a time when many young people prefer to communicate with friends before parents. Strong relationships between child and parent are critical during
the adolescent years, when the advice and association with peer groups may overpower the bonds between parent and child. Evidence of improved parent-child communication is shown through the response: “My daughter is much more open. She talks to her parents more.” Furthermore, it is extremely important that young girls understand their feelings, and have avenues to communicate with family and friends in order to feel support and love. Another parent comments: “It has made her become much more confident and much more in tune with her own feelings.”

Peer groups during adolescence are extremely important and a priority in the lives of middle school girls. One parent expresses that GoI has given her daughter an empowering peer group. GoI creates weekly opportunities through group exercises that allow the girls to each explain how life is going for them. This group dialogue opens up channels of communication, and allows the girls to relate to and give advice to each other.

Several parents remark about the GoI performing arts component as being one of the most meaningful aspects of the entire program, as in the response of a seventh grade parent who writes: “My daughter has a much stronger sense of self and self-confidence. She has a strong appreciation for her culture and her history. She has also been given the opportunity to perform on many occasions, which she loves to do. I feel like this program has nurtured her natural gifts and talents.” Response to the GoI performing arts program has been overwhelmingly positive. Through our yearly performances GoI girls are exposed to acting, poetry, choir, and dance. They perform as well as attend African-centered theatre and Dance events throughout the community. Parents have remarked
that their daughter’s self-confidence has risen “tremendously” since she has started performing.

Our performances are educational as well. In 2012, the GoI Summer Performing Arts Camp enrolled 48 girls who put on a presentation based on the myth of the Dogon people of Mali and their ability to study astronomy. We offered voice, acting, dance and set design as classes. In choir, the girls learn how to sing various African songs that expose them to the richness of African languages (eg. Swahili, Xhosa, Congolese dialect). We have been invited to perform in churches, nursing homes, local elementary schools, and at conferences. The GoI choir performed at the Sacramento Children’s Receiving home in front of the Tuskegee Airmen, who were there to give a presentation, and the children residing at the home, which was a fulfilling and powerful moment for the girls. The GoI Annual Talent show is consistently attended by hundreds of students, families, and community members who come to support the local talent in Sacramento. Many of the girls point to performing as a highlight of their experience with GoI.

Many of the parent responses reflected that they believe GoI has helped their daughters to gain a better understanding of her African ethnic and cultural identity. It is worthy to note that while the younger (sixth grade) girls had a tendency to respond on their own questionnaires that GoI had not affected their sense of self, the adults in their lives almost unanimously report that is has indeed. This may point to the girls’ inability to fully understand the importance or existence of self-identity at this stage of their life. According to Erikson, the adolescent stage is characterized by the conflict "identity versus role confusion." Stating that identity is a way of integrating many aspects of the
self, Erikson suggested that when an adolescent achieved an identity, he or she would know how to successfully navigate the demands of different social contexts (Brittian, 2012). One seventh grader parent comments: “(To the directors) Thank you for being the other mother to my girls. This program has helped my girls grow into confident young women. Thanks for talking to them about subjects that are hard for me to talk about. I don’t know what I would do without you. I feel I can reach out to someone who can relate to us. Thank you so much!” Extended kinship, or the ability to provide a network of community guidance and care for young people, is an example of a key African fundamental. GoI strives to provide this extended network for our girls, parents, and families.

One ninth grade parent writes, “She is much more outgoing and less of an introvert. She has participated in a number of performances which have allowed her talents to shine. This has had a direct, positive impact on her life and self-confidence.” GoI has an alumni group of ninth graders who had participated for all three years of their middle school experience. We have kept in contact with these girls through “alumni” sleep-overs where we re-connect and dialogue about their new experiences in high school. The GoI bonds have proceeded to transcend the boundaries of middle school. As their director for all three years, many of the girls continue to text and call me about new events in their lives, and when we see each other our family bond is ever present. The GoI ninth graders entered high school as student leaders, a cheerleader, athletes, and even the Valley View High School Homecoming Princess. They have also entered into high school academically strong and qualified to join Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
2. How has GoI impacted your life?

Research suggests that parents’ racial socialization can buffer the negative impact of race related stressors on youths’ negative affect (Simons, 2006). Through positive influences, such as parents’ socialization, African American youth may develop not only a positive identity, when exposed to a negative event, such as racial profiling (Gabbidon, 2003), but also an identity that leads to positive behaviors. Two sixth and seventh grade parent responses include: “I have always been in support of programs geared at helping young people understand their heritage and culture. My child’s participation and her joy for the program has been a huge influence in our family and how we have come to interact with and discuss what it means to be a Black child.” and “I feel a relief that my girls are learning positive things about life. This program is very important to us. Without it I would be struggling with teen girl issues that I would not know what to do about. I have met other mothers who I can talk to. GoI is an important piece in my life and my 2 daughter’s lives.” Numerous parents responded that GoI has sparked dialogue about culture and race within families. One eighth grade parent comments: “It has been a very inspiring experience. It’s been uplifting for the entire family.” We fully endorse family communication and involvement as a mandatory element of Black family life and culture.

It was also written that GoI provides additional support for their families. One parent even reported that the family bonding event had helped to “repair relationships” through events like Mother/Father-daughter events. There is clearly a lack of support for the Black family in society. A explanation of the processes that occurs between supports,
such as parents’ socialization or social support from one’s religious community, and the youth’s positive outcome is often ignored (Brittian, 2012). GoI seeks to provide a bridge of support and communication through affordable, relationship building activities in the community.

Several responses wrote that GoI events have taught parents about history, and about being Black, pointing to the importance of and need for family education and adult education as well. For example, a sixth parent comments: “It has educated me on Black history and also being a Black woman. Although I am mixed, most don’t notice and see only color. But even Black women need to understand the culture and history of our ancestors.” Many parents themselves have never been exposed to any form of ACP throughout their own lives, and they need to know this information as critically as their children do. In addition, GoI instills motivation, inspiration, and confidence for parents as well as for our girls, strengthening the family as well as the child as seen in the response of a seventh grade parent who writes: “I am much more confident as well, as I have begun speaking in front of audiences more, which is something that is usually very scary for me.”

3. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of personal identity?

Parent responses include: “Yes, she is more confident in herself. She is picking friends that have similar interests, and she has excelled academically.”; “It taught her to have pride in herself and that she is a leader.”; and “She has learned more about her heritage in GoI than anywhere else.” Many youth development programs have integrated identity development into their curriculum (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008) and may play a
critical role in assisting urban youth in developing a positive overall sense of self. A positive identity has the greatest impact in societies where discrimination and negative stereotypes exist for one or more groups (e.g., racial, religious, and/or gender discrimination) (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, 1997). The majority of parent responses agree that GoI has positively affected their daughter’s personal identity. One sixth grade parent expresses that her daughter feels that we focus more on Africa then identity, however there have been numerous younger GoI members who do not yet grasp the concept of self-identity as an evolving process that is based heavily on knowledge of African history and culture. Parents also report that their daughters are more confident, more comfortable with themselves, and are making wiser choices in choosing friends. The responses also identify that GoI has instilled pride, leadership, and knowledge.

A seventh grade parent suggests a crucial point in the comment: “It has counteracted some of the negative images they see on TV and videos about Black women.” Stevenson (1997) posited that misrepresentation of Black culture and the overrepresentation of European American images on television may lead African American youth to feel “missed.” Continued reinforcement of negative stereotypes in society and negative interactions with law enforcement brings about feelings of being “dissed” (or disrespected) (Brittian, 2012). The need to present positive concepts of Black women to young Black girls at a time when media disproportionately represents the Black women negatively is dire. As shown by the Girl’s Survey data, 47% of the girls “Strongly Disagree or Disagree” that media affects how they feel about themselves, in contrast to the 14% who respond that they “Strongly Agree or Agree” that it does.
An eighth grade parent concludes: “My child has a higher expectation of herself. Her grades have improved tremendously, her self-worth continues to rise, her focus is to do and be all she can be socially and economically.” Identity research can be used in youth development programs, schools, parents’ education, and clinical settings. While the family and peer context may serve as the main socialization agent for adolescents’ identity development, many youth participate in youth development programs, such as 4-H clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Such programs have the capacity for shaping youths’ beliefs and values and in turn fostering identity formation (Kroger, 2007).

4. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of community?

Most of the parents believe that GoI has positively affected their knowledge of and involvement in the Black community. Responses include: “Yes, I think she has become more interested in the community, what she can do for her community, and what role she plays in her community.”; “My daughter recognizes that it is not just about her or her family, but also the family at large which is her community, and the responsibility she has as a member of that community and especially regarding seniors.”; and “She feels it is her responsibility to make a difference in her community.”

Teachers must emphasize the commitment to serving the African American community and accentuate the importance of social development as well (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, and Turrene, 2010). African-centered students and parents are catalysts for helping to instill a sense of agency in the Black community (Anderson, 2001).
5. Has GoI affected your daughter’s sense of culture, ethnicity, or race?

African-centered curriculum is based on philosophical assumptions about the essentiality and effectiveness of culture as a foundation and instrument of instruction in the educational enterprise (Akoto, 1992; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994; Marks, 2006). GoI strives to inject relevant and meaningful cultural experiences in an effort to return Black children and their families back to African philosophies, traditions, and ways of life.

The majority of the parents responses show that they feel their daughter’s sense of culture and ethnicity have been affected positively. For example, two sixth grade parents respond: “Yes, I believe she knows more of a back ground of her ancestr[y] and the accomplishments her culture has made to society. She is more secure in her skin and her body as a young woman in general.” and “Her sense of culture has grown and has opened up as more of an interest and importance to her. I think she finds her own and other’s ethnicity more important and meaningful in a positive way rather than negative.” The potential for ACP to teach humanity and racial equality is evident in this case. Although our priority is the uplifting of Africans throughout the diaspora and our philosophy is African-centered, this pedagogy’s power extends to mankind as a whole, and indeed may serve to correct many of the wrongs and inequities of society.

More parent comments include: “The performances are largely Black-centered and rich in history which exposes my daughter to new knowledge that is highly empowering.” and “The trip to Atlanta enforced in her the power of the Black community
nationwide. She was exposed to a part of the country with a very strong Black history and pride that is lacking in Sacramento.”

An eighth grader parent comments “Yes, although I know some of my background, I don’t know in depth and GoI has taught her more then I was able to.” The unique aspects of African-centered education seek to empower the students, teachers, staff, and parents (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, and Turrene, 2010). The responses indicate that GoI has succeeded in empowering the participants and their families as well. This empowerment nurtures the confidence and motivation for the many endeavors that the will girls experience throughout their lives.

GoI sponsors a trip to Atlanta for out eighth graders as part of their rites-of-passage process. We take the entire eighth grade group of girls on an annual visit to the HBCU (Historically Black College and University) campuses of Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark; the Apex African history museum; and the Martin Luther King Museum and home tour. The participants’ responses show that this experience has profound effects on their lives.

6. Has GoI affected your daughter’s academic performance?

Sixth grade parent responses include: “It pushes her to work harder so she can participate in GoI activities. She also sees the importance of her education for her future.” and “My daughter is a gifted student. I am sure her grades (academics) are good partially due to the encouragement and educating our girls about issue relating to African-centered studies has added to her overall knowledge in and outside of the classroom.”
The responses of seventh grade parents mirror similar sentiments: “She has always been strong academically but GoI definitely reinforces our standards for academic performance, as well as the expectation of continuing on to college.” and “A huge impact to make her want to work hard. In order to be a part of the program she needs to do well in school.” Eighth grade parent comments include: “Yes she has strived to make sure that her grades are at a higher level especially after going on the Black college tour in Atlanta.” and “Her academic performance has not changed much she does well already.”

According to parents, approximately half of the GoI girls are already performing at advanced levels. As mentioned previously, their VMS middle school maintains extremely high standards for its students and has consistently defied the statistics that place Black children at low levels of academic performance in comparison with white students. It was not surprising to see that parents had affirmed that high grades would not be an exception to the rule, but the standard. A few parents did indeed respond that GoI had helped their daughter’s grades, and multiple parents responded that they did not know whether the program had impacted their daughter academically.

7. Has GoI affected your daughter’s relationships with family? With friends? With teachers?

The majority of GoI parents believe that their relationships have improved through the family activities that they participate in together. A sixth grade parent writes: “My daughter’s relationships have definitely improved as well as her grumpiness and shyness. She is more connected with her parents, especially dad as a result of the Father-Daughter Brunch.” A seventh grader parent additionally includes: “Fundraisers, as well
as performances, Kwanzaa celebrations, and activities allow her to invite family and extend GoI’s philosophy and value with them. It fosters inclusiveness.”

GoI identifies that Father-Daughter relationships have a tremendous impact on the girls and their attitudes, behavior, and happiness. One eighth grader parent responds: “The family bonding activities have helped my daughter get closer to her father and talk about their relationship.” Relationships and communication with mothers and fathers has presented itself as a high (if not the highest) source of emotional stressors of GoI girls for the past four years. Year after year, I witness numerous tearful and heartfelt exchanges during our events and activities as families break through barriers of communication. African-centered educators are in touch with Black people’s need for these experiences in the Black community. They are spiritual and heartfelt memories that lift us up as individuals, families, and as a community as we share them. Another eighth grade parent includes: “It has created avenues of dialogue to discuss growing up, being Black, issues of racism, and ideas for the future.”

GoI community events exemplify the commitment and potential of the Black community. The attendance at our Father-Daughter Brunch has not only consistently brought together approximately 50 fathers and daughters per year, but also uncles, grandfathers, and stepfathers have supported GoI events. This demonstrates that many of these young girls do indeed have a Black male, or male figure in general, to support them in their lives.
8. Has GoI affected your daughter’s self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?

Studies have indicated that ethnic identity is associated with greater self-esteem among many ethnic groups in the United States as well as with higher academic achievement and effective coping with discrimination for ethnic minority group members (Juang & Syed, 2008; Phinney, 2003; Quintana, 2007). Sixth grade parent comments support this theory: “From what I have noticed, my child’s self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-control have improved tremendously since she has been in attendance. She has more work to do in these areas but definite improvement has already taken place.” and “My daughter is more self-confident but also she pays more close attention to herself. The majority of seventh and eighth grader parents see a boost in their daughter’s confidence as well as self-conscience: “My daughter is more confident. Her esteem was already high so GoI simply bolsters and supports it” and “Yes, she is more aware of her own actions and how they can effect what happens to her.” The second most notable change in adolescence is an increase in cognitive abilities, which allows a person to go beyond thinking in terms of self-definitions to creating a more complex network of thoughts (i.e., schemas) about the self and society (Brittian, 2012).

The responses of the eighth grade parents specifically reflect the impact that being on stage has had on their daughter’s self-confidence: “My child is now excited about performing on stage. She has participated in many performances with speaking, which she would have never done before.” and “My daughter is now more confident to speak in front of others and to take leadership roles.” Dantley stated that “Leaders in urban schools especially should engage in serious deliberation with students, teachers, parents,
and other community members focused on issues of epistemology and power, self-identity and curriculum, and pedagogical practices that work to transform curricula, liberate critical thinking, and co-construct knowledge” (p. 653).

Lomotey (1992) claims that, “the African-centered approach (broadly defined to include an Africentric curricular focus as well as genuine love, concern, and respect between students, teacher, and parents [Asante,1980]) can help improve African American students’ self-esteem” (pp. 455-456). The fact that parents recognize an improvement in their daughter’s self-esteem through the activities of GoI encourages us that they will carry this confidence throughout life.
Director’s Questionnaire

The directorship of GoI has undergone many changes throughout the past four years. Each grade level has its own director, who is expected to remain with their age group for all three years of the program. In the past two years, however, two directors have left. This has caused disruptions in the girls’ consistency and, to a certain extent, trust in the adults who work with them. It is extremely hard to retain directors in our program. GoI is a volunteer-based non-profit organization; directors do not receive pay for our time and work. The fact that at this point we cannot afford to pay a salary or stipend may affect the retention of our volunteers. In addition, it is hard to find people who have the time and devotion required to stay with their girls for three years.

Recruitment and retention of African centered teachers and leaders is a challenge faced by African-centered education (Hopson, Hotep, Schneider, and Turrene, 2010). Teaching holds cultural meaning as it is tied to notions of service, agency, and advocacy grounded in the history of the African American experience in America. While GoI is enthusiastic about the hiring of young, energetic Black women to serve as directors, we also have to accept that their lives are constantly changing and they may not be able to volunteer on long-term basis.

Another barrier to finding committed, quality directors is the lack of Black educators who are founded in African-centered pedagogy and who can exhibit the right character as a role model for the girls. Part of enabling students to see themselves in the curriculum is allowing them to observe at work those educators and other professionals who share their cultural background. This has long been shown to have a positive effect
on children’s self-concept and their sense of their own capacity to be successful (Lomotey, 1992, p.461).

We have a crisis of epic proportions in U.S. education, which mandates the intentional recruitment and preparation of radical Black pedagogues who bring a conscious understanding of the historic, social, economic, and political issues impacting Black students’ educational access and mobility (William-White, 2013). Deep knowledge is critical in cases such as this one, where participants could be misinterpreted because of their perspectives, which are vastly different from mainstream perspectives. As was true in the case of this work, prolonged field engagement placed researchers in the advantaged position of “knowing from doing and participating” not just knowing from observing and interviewing (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). Nurturing teachers, strong administrative leadership, and strong bonds between parents, school, and community strengthen the instruction provided in African-centered schools (Matthews & Williams, 2007). For those people who undertake this calling—as caregivers, models, and mentors—there is a profound desire to uplift the race for greater personal, cultural, academic, and economic mobility (William-White, 2013).

The following are the responses of 2 dedicated GoI directors.

Table 11: Director’s Questionnaire

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<td>1. How has GoI impacted the girl’s lives?</td>
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<td>2. How has GoI impacted your life?</td>
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<td>3. Has GoI affected the girl’s sense of personal identity?</td>
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<td>4. Has GoI affected the girl’s academic performance?</td>
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<td>5. Has GoI affected the girl’s self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?</td>
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1. How has GoI impacted the girl’s lives?

The two directors who responded write: “Many of them have evolved into leaders, especially our 9th graders. They are now involved with many leadership roles at their schools. They are also exposed to and taught so much about their history -things they never knew about- which creates a sense of culture, pride, and power, and build self-esteem.” and “GoI has impacted the girls in a number of ways. The most evident is the growth in self-confidence of the girls through their experience on stage. They are also heavily affected by the ability to communicate with and learn about each other in group sessions; this has helped them form a peer group that reflects their experiences and offers each other advice and support. GoI is also the main source of African/Black culture in their lives.”

2. How has GoI impacted your life?

“It has definitely made me stronger. I have had to deal with many situations I never could have imagined about, but found the strength to address them appropriately and professionally. I have also been place in the public eye much more than ever before, which is a challenge for me, but I’ve learned to handle it gracefully.”

“GoI has given me an outlet to give back my time, energy, and spirit to my community. It has helped me fulfill my promise to my people upon graduation with my B.A. that I would serve the Black community and always strive to make a change for our
children. It has ensured in me the strength and potential for Black people to unite in the Sacramento region; when I see the families and community come out to support us it feels amazing”

3. Has GoI affected the girl’s sense of personal identity?

“They all seem to have a stronger sense of self as they progress through each year of the program. We incorporate many activities at each level to assist with personal identity development.”

“I have noticed that every girl is an individual, and therefore is coming into her own identity at her own time and pace. While most of the girls have expressed that GoI has changed them for the better, we have also dealt with girls who have continued to resist our help. I would like to think that GoI has instilled a sense of culture, identity, and pride in every girl, regardless of whether or not she wants to make Black power a platform in her life.”

African American adolescents may be initiating the search for an identity at different time points within adolescence, and the rate of change for developing various aspects of their identity may vary by individual (Brittian, 2012). Research by French (2006) demonstrates that differences exist among groups of early, middle, and late adolescents in ethnic identity development. Thus, it should be expected that older adolescents’ identities are more developed and fully formed than early adolescents (Brittian, 2012).
4. Has GoI affected the girl’s academic performance?

“The majority of our girls maintain above a 3.0 GPA. We encourage strong academics and working hard to achieve academic success.”

“GoI girls are held up the highest expectations of academic excellence in their school, and their grades and test scores prove that they are successful students. GoI supports them by promoting healthy habits.”

Research suggests that African American high school students’ racial identity is positively related to their academic achievement (Chavous, 2003). Although it was reiterated time and time again that many of the GoI girls are accustomed to achieving high grades, their responses also suggest that GoI further supports their self-confidence in academics.

5. Has GoI affected the girl’s relationships with family? With friends? With teachers?

“Many of the girls and their parents have stated that they are closer after participating in our Mother/Father-Daughter events. They communicate more and spend more quality time together.”

“So many of the most powerful events we have are the ones that involve parents and families. I have seen girls so proud to see both mommy and daddy supporting them; this is invaluable for their lives. We love to give the community opportunities to share and strengthen family bonds. I have also seen girls learn how to work with each other more; they are not necessarily best friends within their groups. They have to form mechanisms to solve problems and coexist with each other, which is a critical life skill.”

6. Has GoI affected the girl’s self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?
“I would say yes to all 3—it is very evident that all three levels have improved for the majority of the girls. Many of them have participated in performances such as our Talent Show and Summer Performing Arts Camp which definitely boosted their confidence. I can see in our group meetings that some girls who usually have self-control challenges are thinking first and trying to apply self-control.”

“Self-confidence is definitely the biggest area that I witness growth in the girls. I have seen shy, introverted, quiet girls who enter our program in sixth grade grow into young ladies who are the first to volunteer to recite on stage, or act, dance, and sing. Through the years, their levels of self-control have also improved. Certain negative behaviors present in sixth grade lessen or disappear by eighth.”

Many studies have demonstrated the link between supports and African American adolescents’ mental health and behavioral outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, academic achievement) (Brittian, 2012). Through their lessons about history and experiences in our activities, I have seen girls develop the ability to see a bigger picture about their place and Black people in general’s place in the world. GoI is intent upon providing young Black girls with an abundance of opportunity to feel good about themselves. We also want them to nurture good feelings about Black people in their families, communities, the nation, and the world as well. As Lomotey (1994) asserts, “to look at the world through an African-centered set of lenses . . . provides (African American students) with vision that is more focused, has a wider periphery, and more depth” (p. 205).
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter covers the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations in reference to the findings and literature from the study. The purpose of this study was to identify the impact of African-centered pedagogy on the self and group identity of adolescent Black females. This study reflects the experiences of twenty-six Black female students (ages 11-15) who are members or alumni of an African-centered after school program, twenty-six of their parents, and two of the directors of their program. As the researcher, I was particularly interested in the differences of self-identity and group-identity concepts between the sixth graders, who are new to the program, and the eighth graders, who have been a part of the program for three years. I was also intrigued to discover which aspects of the program, if any, resonated with the girls significantly. My intentions for this study were to contribute to research regarding African-centered pedagogy and its impact on Black children.

Conclusions

The findings from this study identify the aspects of an after school ACP program that most affect the girls, their families, and the community as a whole. The majority of the girls who participated in the research have responded that GoI has helped them: develop emerging concepts of self-identity; appreciate African history and culture; nurture self-confidence and self-respect; connect with their inner “spirit”; instill the concept of nation-building and group identity; build strong peer relationships; bond and communicate better with parents and family; develop critical thinking skills; and foster
responsibility for Black people and the Black community. Although the participants reflect varying stages of identity development and maturity, the overall response has indicated that GoI, as a vehicle for African-centered education, is a positive entity in their lives.

The majority of the participants in this study confirmed the research that suggests ACP programs help improve the self-identity of adolescent Black females. Most of the girls (78%) believe that GoI has helped them gain deeper understandings of themselves. In addition, the majority of the participants (82%) feel as if GoI has helped them form stronger bonds with their peers and family. Many of the girls have also developed a deeper understanding of and respect for the Black community and Black nation as a whole.

There were several participants, however, who did not feel as if GoI affected their sense of self identity at this point. This may be in part due to the fact that identity development does not move on a linear plane; it dips, plateaus, and climbs at different stages. Furthermore, certain responses indicate that a number of the girls do not yet see themselves as a part of the Black nation as a whole. This was demonstrated by referring to the Black people as “them” instead of “us”. The lack of recognition of group identity may also be in part due to the independent nature of adolescents; they often feel the need to identify themselves as individuals and they may not yet realize the benefit of group association.

The research that indicate ACP programs as having a direct and positive impact on the academic achievement of Black students was left unverified by this study. The
majority of the girls and parents had responded that they were already accustomed to high grades and academic excellence. While they did not directly identify GoI as being the reason why their grades were high, both the participants and their parents expressed that it does serve as an additional support and confidence booster that further encourages the girls’ success.

Parents and extended families have also endorsed GoI as having a profound impact on not only the girls, but the families as a whole. Aside from observing the girls develop healthy and critical skills for life, the support that the families have for GoI is one of the most inspiring aspects of the program. Our parent involvement is a testament to the strength and potential for the Black community and nation. That this program can congregate hundreds of family and community members with the common interest of supporting Black youth is an inspiration and motivation for many more future prospects.

Limitations

Studies have proven that the inclusion of ACP through school or through community programs has positive effects on the academics, self-esteem, and self-identity of young Black children, however the extent of these effects is often difficult to measure. There is much more research to be conducted on adolescent Black females and the factors that impact their identity development.

Identity development has to be assessed from a differentiated perspective. It is nuanced by nature; the various aspects that make up an individual’s identity at times conflict and compliment, overlap and intersect. We must also keep in mind the diversity of Black youth as we seek to understand their process of gaining knowledge of self.
They do not all grow, mature, and change at regular intervals, nor are they exposed to the same life experiences. The positive and/or negative events that Black children go through, and how they react to those events, greatly influence their sense of identity. Factors such as biological traits, media, religion, socioeconomics, culture, gender, and racism shape the growth of young people in different ways. It will be important to conduct research the relationships between identity and these factors.

The short duration of this study enabled the researcher to capture a “snapshot” of the girls at a temporary stage of their identity formation. As they process of identity development is ongoing, who they will grow to be next month, next year, or ten years from now is not clear. This limitation affects the ability of this study to conclusively determine the full extent of the impact of ACP on adolescent Black females.

Recommendations

There are eleven recommendations that are presented as a result of the findings. These recommendations are suggestions of ways to further strengthen the potential and possibilities inherent within ACP programs for the education and support of Black adolescents as they develop into young adults.

1) ACP training should be available and mandatory as professional development training for all Black and non-Black educators as well. It should exist as a requirement in all credentialing and teacher preparation programs.

2) Black college students need to enter all areas of the education profession. The fact that Black teachers represent less than 8% of the American teaching population calls for critical intervention.
3) Educators need to develop African-centered schools. Black administrators and educators need to form cadres to discuss and plan for the establishment of independent Black schools.

4) If African centered schools are not available or practical for development in a certain area, ACP after school programs, Saturday schools, or summer programs are viable alternatives for the enrichment and the education of Black youth. Black educators and/or community members should devote time and energy into forming non-profit organizations or community groups that can provide after-school ACP programs for Black children.

5) ACP programs should include an element of parent/family education. The potential for an ACP program to educate not only the child, but the family as well, is a realistic possibility that is inspiring and critical to the health, happiness, and security of the family unit.

6) ACP programs should integrate the performing arts into their activities and events. The experience of performance builds self-confidence and nurtures the natural talents of adolescent Black children.

7) ACP programs should incorporate a rites-of-passage process to guide adolescent Black youth through the stages of becoming a young adult.

8) Adolescent Black females need continued support and feedback throughout their teenage years. ACP programs should exist as scaffolding systems in the lives of Black girls as they enter and progress through high school.
9) Research on the impact of African centered education on the self and group identity of adolescent Black females should be conducted over a long period of time; short-term studies are insufficient in determining the total or lasting effects on identity.

10) Black educators should create forums for dialogue in their communities in order to confront critical issues, build a network and support system, and develop African-centered curriculum.

11) Black educators should develop a list of Black/African Content Standards for Black children to exist as the foundation of Black knowledge required for all Black children. The existing California Content Standards marginalize the history of African and Black history; Black children need exposure to the information that ACP deems critical.

African-centered pedagogy is not a modern concept. The principles and practice of educating young generations have been ingrained in African society for thousands of years. Accordingly today, the practice of Black people educating Black children is nothing new. In fact, it should follow that Black people should be the ones educating Black children. A careful analysis of the differences between Western ideology and African ideology presents a pertinent issue; European-centered forms of education do not address the cultural and spiritual needs of Black children. African-centered pedagogy, however, presents us with a solid framework through which Black children can receive the vital elements that support healthy self and group identity development. It is critical that Black educators develop ACP programs to ensure the proper transmission of African-centered ideology and knowledge to the Black nation.
APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Minor Agreement to Participate in Research

This is an invitation to participate in a research study from Malika (Melissa) Murray. As a master’s student in the Bilingual and Multicultural Education Department of Sacramento State University, I am currently conducting research on the impact of African-centered educational programs on the self and group identity concepts of middle school girls. I have been a director with Girls of Imani since its inception in 2009, and I hope that an in-depth research and data analysis of the curriculum and methodologies of our program will identify the effects of our curriculum and program on our participants. I hope that this study will benefit not only the girls and families involved in Girls of Imani today, but girls around the country for generations to come as well.

You are being asked to complete one questionnaire about your experiences as a member of Girls of Imani. You are also being asked to complete one survey pertaining to your feelings about your sense of identity and self-esteem. The questionnaire and survey will be completed in your own home, and may require up to 30 minutes of your time.

Some of the items in the survey and questionnaire may seem personal, but you don’t have to answer any question if you don’t want to. If you do feel bad after answering these questions, you can talk to the counselor at your school about your feelings. Both the survey and the questionnaire will be completed anonymously (without using your name), so your identification will be protected.
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study at any time without penalty. However, after I receive your anonymous survey I won’t be able to remove it because your name is not on it.

The results from the questionnaire, survey, and your participation in this research, will be kept private and no one will see what you write except me. To keep your answers private be sure to put your survey/questionnaire in the enclosed white envelope and seal it before putting it back in the manila envelope with this form. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Your parents have already been asked whether it is OK with them for you to participate in this study, but if you decide not to participate, no one will be upset with you and it won’t affect your participation in the Sisters of Nia at all.

I appreciate your assistance. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, Malika Murray, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by e-mail at mbm85@saclink.csus.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa William-White, at lywwhite@csus.edu.

Please write or sign your name and today’s date on the lines below if you are willing to be in the research, and be sure to put this back in the manila envelope it came in. I must receive this signed form to be able to include your answers in my study.

_________________________  ____________________
Signature of Participant   Date
Parent Consent to Participate in Research

This is an invitation to participate in a research study from Malika (Melissa) Murray. As a master’s student in the Bilingual and Multicultural Education Department of Sacramento State University, I am currently conducting research on the impact of African-centered educational programs on the self and group identity concepts of middle school girls. I have been a director with Girls of Imani since its inception in 2009, and I hope that an in-depth research and data analysis of the curriculum and methodologies of our program will identify the effects of our curriculum and program on our participants. I hope that this study will benefit not only the girls and families involved in Girls of Imani today, but girls around the country for generations to come as well.

The study will investigate factors related to the self-identity and self-esteem of adolescent Black girls participating in an African-centered program in Sacramento. You will be asked to complete one questionnaire about your experiences as a director of Sisters of Nia. You will also be asked to complete one survey pertaining to your feelings about your sense of identity and self-esteem. The questionnaire and survey may require up to an hour of your time.

Some of the items in the survey and questionnaire may seem personal. If any of the questions should cause you to have negative feelings, you may contact “The Effort”, a local free counseling organization, at (916) 737-5555 in the case that counseling services are needed.
Both the survey and the questionnaire will be completed anonymously, so your identification will be protected. To that end, please be sure to place the signed consent in the manila envelope you received from the program, but be sure to seal your filled out questionnaires in the enclosed white envelope marked “parent” to keep them anonymous.

Completing the questionnaire and survey may help you to gain additional insight into factors that affect your self-identity and self-esteem, however you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will be beneficial for programs designed to help improve the self-identity and self-esteem of adolescent Black females.

Should you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete the questionnaire and survey in the privacy of your own home. To preserve the confidentiality of that information, you will then seal your documents in an unmarked white enveloped and return them to me. You will not include your name on either the questionnaire or the survey and your responses will be anonymous. Your documents will be stored in a secure location and will not be handled by anyone but me.

You are also being asked for participation for your daughter to complete questionnaires and surveys about content taught in the program, the program effectiveness and identity/self-esteem. The questions are similar to those you are being asked to complete and you can review the survey forms enclosed before giving them to your child if you consent for them to participate. To protect the child’s privacy they are asked, as you are,
to seal their completed survey in the white envelope so you will not have access to their completed answers.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, Malika Murray, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by e-mail at mbm85@saclink.csus.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa William-White, at lywwhite@csus.edu.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

__________________________  ______________________
Signature of Participant                                                                Date

Please also sign below if you consent to your daughter’s participation. Your daughter will also be asked separately to give her permission to participate if you consent.

________________________________
Signature of Parent for Child Participation
Director’s Consent to Participate in Research

This is an invitation to participate in a research study from Malika (Melissa) Murray. As a master’s student in the Bilingual and Multicultural Education Department of Sacramento State University, I am currently conducting research on the impact of African-centered educational programs on the self and group identity concepts of middle school girls. I have been a director with Girls of Imani since its inception in 2009, and I hope that an in-depth research and data analysis of the curriculum and methodologies of our program will identify the effects of our curriculum and program on our participants. I hope that this study will benefit not only the girls and families involved in Girls of Imani today, but girls around the country for generations to come as well.

The study will investigate factors related to the self-identity and self-esteem of adolescent Black girls participating in an African-centered program in Sacramento. You will be asked to complete one questionnaire about your experiences as a director of Girls of Imani. You will also be asked to complete one survey pertaining to your feelings about your sense of identity and self-esteem. The questionnaire and survey may require up to an hour of your time.

Some of the items in the survey and questionnaire may seem personal, but you don’t have to answer any question if you don’t want to. Both the survey and the questionnaire will be completed anonymously, so your identification will be protected.

Completing the questionnaire and survey may help you to gain additional insight into factors that affect your self-identity and self-esteem, however you may not personally
benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will be beneficial for programs designed to help improve the self-identity and self-esteem of adolescent Black females.

Should you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and survey in the privacy of your own home. To preserve the confidentiality of that information, you will then seal your documents in an unmarked white enveloped and return them to me. You will not include your name on either the questionnaire or the survey and your responses will be anonymous. Your documents will be stored in a secure location and will not be handled by anyone but me.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you elect not to participate there are no negative consequences to you. Since surveys are being reviewed anonymously once data are collected I cannot remove your survey from the study.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, Malika Murray, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by e-mail at mbm85@saclink.csus.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa William-White, at lywwhite@csus.edu.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research.

__________________________                                                   ____________________
Signature of Participant            Date
APPENDIX B

AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE PRE/POST SURVEY
AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

Grade Level (please circle) 6  8

1) What do you know about Africa?

2) What do you know about African history? How did you learn it?

3) Is African history important? Why/Why not?

4) What do you want to know about African history?

5) What do you know about African-Americans?

6) What do you know about African-American history? How did you learn it?

7) Is African-American history important? Why/Why not?

8) What do you want to know about African-American history?

9) What do you consider yourself (African-American, Black, other)?
APPENDIX C

GIRL, PARENT, AND DIRECTOR QUESTIONNAIRES
Girls of Imani Girl’s Questionnaire
Grade level (please circle)  6  7  8  9

Thank you for choosing to be part of Girls of Imani! We have enjoyed working with you! Please take a few moments to complete this evaluation. Your responses will help us with planning for next year.

What did you enjoy most about being in Girls of Imani?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Do you think your self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control has improved after being part of Girls of Imani? If yes, how so?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Do you feel your relationship with your mother, father, or family has improved after participating in Girls of Imani this year? Why or why not?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Has Girls of Imani affected your sense of personal identity? Explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Has Girls of Imani affected your sense of community? Explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Has Girls of Imani affected your sense of ethnicity or race? Explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Has Girls of Imani affected your sense of culture? Explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Has Girls of Imani affected your academic performance? Explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Has Girls of Imani affected your sense of social responsibility? Explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Girls of Imani Parent Questionnaire
Daughter’s Grade Level (please circle) 6 7 8 9

Thank you for allowing your daughter to be part of Girls of Imani! We have enjoyed working with each of the girls! Please take a few moments to complete this evaluation.

1) Has Girls of Imani impacted your daughter’s life? If so, in what ways?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2) Has Girls of Imani impacted your life?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s sense of personal identity? Explain.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s sense of culture? Explain.

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
5) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s sense of community?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s sense of ethnicity/race?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s academic performance?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s relationships with family? With friends? With teachers?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

9) Has Girls of Imani affected your daughter’s self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Girls of Imani Director’s Questionnaire

1) Has Girls of Imani impacted the girls’ lives? If so, in what ways?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2) Has Girls of Imani impacted your life?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ sense of personal identity? Explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ sense of culture? Explain.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ sense of community?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
6) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ sense of ethnicity/race?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ academic performance?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ relationships with family? With friends? With teachers?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

9) Has Girls of Imani affected the girls’ self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-control?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D

GIRL’S SELF AND GROUP IDENTITY SURVEY
## Girl’s Self and Group Identity Survey

(please do not write your name)

**Grade (please circle)** 6 7 8 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a sense of who I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the person who I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia helps me feel proud of myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself Black.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself African-American.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My identity is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia teaches me about my identity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be Black.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black history is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black culture is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black people can help each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black people have the power to change.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black people care about each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe in God.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel powerful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a confident person.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have self-control.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have goals for my future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia helps me prepare for my future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school teaches me about Black history.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family teaches me about Black history.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia teaches me about Black history.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school teachers believe in me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/Media affects how I feel about myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who drink or smoke.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who use drugs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people my age who have sex.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live with both of my parents.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I care about myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel beautiful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel smart.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have a great purpose in life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my strengths.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my weaknesses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my talents.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia teaches me about myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia has improved my self-confidence.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia teaches me about my community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia helps me to be the best I can be.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Nia is good for young girls.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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National Center for Education Statistics.


