An Exploration of Black Church Leaders' Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness among African-American Students

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AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK CHURCH LEADERS’ INTENTIONS TO DEVELOP CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

by

Taheesha Rashimema Quarells

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Business and Economic Development
and the School of Leadership
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by:

Dr. Dale L. Lunsford, Committee Chair
Dr. Heather M. Annulis
Dr. H. Quincy Brown
Dr. John Kmiec

December 2021
ABSTRACT

African-American students experience human capital opportunity and achievement gaps. Researchers have called for culturally relevant strategies to help close the gaps. The historic Black Church, a part of many African-American students’ culture and community, is a historic and current source of social capital for positive human capital development outcomes. Critical consciousness develops positive human capital outcomes, such as academic achievement, in African-American and other minority students. Much of the literature on critical consciousness is quantitative in nature and therefore does not include the intentions or the willingness of organizations to develop critical consciousness. Therefore, there is a need to understand the intentions of historic Black Churches towards developing critical consciousness among African-American students from the perceptions of Black Church leaders.

This study explored the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. This study employed a qualitative interpretive phenomenological investigative approach to explore southern Black Church leaders’ intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness. The researcher found that southern Black Church leaders taught critical consciousness concepts and that they had strong intentions of continuing to teach the competency. The study concluded that local Black Churches should be viewed as a culturally relevant source of critical consciousness development for African-American students. In order to fully implement and align critical consciousness teachings within youth programming for African-American students, Black Church leaders need access to training and tools such as curriculum in alignment with biblical principles. Furthermore,
critical consciousness should be taught in a manner that is transformative for both the student and the teacher while not engendering hatred or hopelessness. The researcher discusses the implications for future research based on the study’s findings.
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DEDICATION

To my mother, Sylvia Powell, forever the jewel of my heart. May you rest in peace.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT................................................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ...................................................................................................................... iv

DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... xiii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .......................................................................................................... xiv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................................................... xv

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 1

Background .......................................................................................................................................... 4

The Current State of Inequity .............................................................................................................. 4

Critical Consciousness ....................................................................................................................... 6

There is Hope: The Black Church ...................................................................................................... 8

Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................................. 11

Purpose Statement ............................................................................................................................. 13

Research Objectives ......................................................................................................................... 13

Conceptual Framework ...................................................................................................................... 14

Significance of the Study ................................................................................................................... 18

Delimitations ....................................................................................................................................... 20

Assumptions ......................................................................................................................................... 21

Limitations .......................................................................................................................................... 21
Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................... 22

Summary .......................................................................................................................... 23

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................ 26

The History of Race and Unequal Education in America .............................................. 27

Mid-Nineteenth-Century: Slavery and Anti-literacy Laws ............................................. 27

Late Nineteenth-Century: Reconstruction .................................................................... 30

Mid-Twentieth-Century: Post Brown v. Board of Education ......................................... 33

Early Twenty-First-Century: Today ............................................................................... 35

The New Jim Crow ........................................................................................................... 36

Segregation between Schools ...................................................................................... 37

Segregation within Schools .......................................................................................... 38

Modern African-American Student Outcomes .......................................................... 41

Critical Consciousness .................................................................................................. 42

The Black Church and Education ................................................................................ 46

Theories Supporting the Study ...................................................................................... 49

Human Capital Theory .................................................................................................. 49

Critical Race Theory ...................................................................................................... 51

Prophetic Activism ......................................................................................................... 53

Theory of Planned Behavior .......................................................................................... 54

Behavioral Attitudes ...................................................................................................... 57
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective Norms</th>
<th>57</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived behavioral control</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Theory of Planned Behavior</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter Summary**

**CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY**

- Research Objectives | 63
- Research Design | 63
- Instrumentation | 64
- Role of the Researcher | 68
- Population and Sample | 69
- Sampling Procedures | 70
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) | 71
- Data Collection Procedures | 71
- Data Analysis | 74
- Trustworthiness | 77
- Informal Setting | 78
- Journaling | 78
- Member Checking | 79
- Triangulation | 79

**Chapter Summary**

viii
CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Participant Demographics........................................................................................................... 81

Themes........................................................................................................................................ 87

Themes Associated with Behavioral Attitudes .................................................................................. 88

Theme 1. Black Church Leaders Feel Formally and Informally Trained to Teach
Elements of Critical Consciousness.................................................................................................. 89

Theme 2. Black Church Leaders Believe the Bible has Lessons on Injustice and
Oppression ......................................................................................................................................... 91

Theme 3. Black Church Leaders Believe Their Teachings Include Elements of
Critical Consciousness...................................................................................................................... 92

Theme 4. Critical Consciousness Fosters Positive Identity Development ................................. 96

Theme 5. Critical Consciousness Fosters the Drive for Personal and Community
Development ...................................................................................................................................... 98

Theme 6. Critical Consciousness Should Be Taught with Caution ............................................. 100

Themes Associated with Subjective Norms ................................................................................. 102

Theme 7. Supporters Want to See Positive Gains in the African-American
Community ......................................................................................................................................... 103

Theme 8. Opposition is Due to Misunderstanding and Fear ...................................................... 105

Themes Associated with Behavioral Control ............................................................................... 107
Theme 9. Critical Consciousness Training and Training Aids Would Make it Easier to Teach ................................................................. 107

Theme 10. Community Concerns and Current Events Facilitate Teaching Critical Consciousness ................................................................. 109

Theme 11. There is a Lack of Societal Acknowledgement and Repentance ........ 110

Theme 12. Prioritizing Political Affiliations above Biblical Principals is Harmfully Divisive ................................................................. 110

Themes Associated with Adoption Intentions ...................................................... 111

Theme 13. Black Church Pastors Intend to Continue to Teach Critical Consciousness ................................................................. 111

Theme 14. Black Churches Foster Critical Consciousness through Youth Programming, Community Engagement, and Mentorship .................... 112

Research Objectives and Theme Correlation ...................................................... 115

Summary ............................................................................................................. 116

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION ............................................................................. 117

Summary of the Study ......................................................................................... 117

Summary of the Results ....................................................................................... 120

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations ................................................ 121

Finding 1: Black Church leaders teach and have strong intentions towards continuing to teach African-American students critical consciousness .......... 121
Finding 2: Black Church leaders desire access to more training and tools to support learning about and teaching critical consciousness aligned with biblical principles.

Finding 3: Black Church leaders believe that critical consciousness should be taught carefully without engendering hatred or hopelessness.

Recommendations for Future Research

Implications of Limitations

Discussion

Summary

APPENDIX A– Instrument: One-on-One Interview Questions

APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter

APPENDIX C – One-on-One Interview Protocol

APPENDIX D – Invitation Email to Participants

APPENDIX E – Informed Consent Form
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Mapping of Research Objectives to Interview Questions ........................................... 67
Table 2 Data Collection Plan ........................................................................................................... 74
Table 3 Data Analysis Plan ............................................................................................................. 75
Table 4 Frequency Distribution for Age .......................................................................................... 82
Table 5 Frequency Distribution for Gender ..................................................................................... 82
Table 6 Frequency Distribution for Educational Attainment ....................................................... 82
Table 7 Frequency Distribution for Denominational Affiliation .................................................. 83
Table 8 Frequency Distribution for Position Held in Church ....................................................... 83
Table 9 Descriptive Statistics for Years of Experience ................................................................. 83
Table 10 Interview Participant Demographics ............................................................................... 84
Table 11 Research Objectives and Theme Correlation ................................................................. 115
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework ................................................................. 18

Figure 2. Thematic Map................................................................................. 120
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBCI</td>
<td>National Black Church Initiative</td>
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<td>USM</td>
<td>The University of Southern Mississippi</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Many believe that the American education system exists within a post-racial reality where the influences from racist sentiments no longer exist that disadvantage minority students (Bobo, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2016; Fluker, 2018; Higginbotham, 2015; Umana-Taylor, 2016). Pointing to reforms in civil rights legislation, such as the 1954 passage of Brown v. The Board of Education and the consecutive election of America’s first Black president in 2008 and 2012, many educators take a colorblind approach to K-12 education in an attempt to ensure equity for all students (Hatchfeld et al., 2015; Kunjufu, 2005; Plaut et al., 2018; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012; Tatum, 2017; Walpole, 2007). However, continued inequality in education creates the need for a continued focus on balancing the scales of racial equity in education to address and equalize opportunities for minority students (Walpole, 2007; Watson, 2018). Carnevale et al. (2019) notes the grim statistical reality the majority of African-American students face. African-American students are more likely to suffer from poverty, risk exposure to low-quality public education, and are within schools and communities that have re-segregated themselves (Carnavale et al., 2019; Turner, 2017). Furthermore, predominantly White, middle-class, female teachers teach African-American students and are less likely to engage them academically or refer them for rigorous college preparatory courses (Department of Education, 2016; Turner, 2017). The preceding realities accumulate and result in barriers to accessing higher education or entry-level workforce programs that lead to high wage careers (Carnevale et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; Plaut et al., 2018; Shillingford & Finnell, 2017; Tatum, 2017). The stark disparities between Black and White or rich and poor pointed out by researchers for the past 30 years (Carnevale et al., 2019; Kozol,
continue to plague African-American students as they strive to achieve some semblance of the American dream through education attainment (Carnevale et al., 2019; Kozol, 1991). Observations such as student achievement gaps in math and reading, lack of adequate learning materials, and overcrowded schools in disrepair are just some of the reasons why scholars and education advocates push to address issues surrounding the inequities in culturally responsive ways that integrate elements of students’ backgrounds into pedagogy (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Pitre, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001).

Despite the calls from scholars to use culturally responsive approaches to gain positive results, taxpayers pay for high failure rates with no end in sight (Hill & Tyson, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), America spends more than $668 billion or $13,119 per public school student each year on public elementary and secondary schooling. The multi-billion-dollar annual investments in public education that continually rise, balanced with the unfavorable outcomes for African-American students equates to continuing to pay more for failures (Plaut et al., 2018). The situation creates a strategic imperative for education reformers to institute interventions that provide better fiscal accountability for public expenditures (Plaut et al., 2018). History and current research offer race-specific education models and interventions that are effective in improving outcomes for African-American students (Kunjufu, 2005). Although there are several culturally relevant interventions, the current study focuses on critical consciousness.

Critical consciousness describes a person’s ability to recognize and analyze oppressive forces that shape society and to take action against the forces (Freire, 1970).
Freire (1970) states that the primary goal of education should be to engage students from oppressed groups in learning how to decode and challenge their social condition. A growing body of research points to critical consciousness as a tool through which adolescents of color can resist the negative effects of systemic oppression and challenge its root cause (Seider & Graves, 2020). Researchers have found connections between high levels of critical consciousness among minority youth and their ability to demonstrate resilience, mental health, self-esteem, academic achievement, high professional aspirations, and civic and political engagement (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Godfrey et al., 2019; Nicolas et al., 2008; O’Leary & Romero, 2011; Seider et al., 2020; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1999).

The current chapter introduces challenges that African-American students face and the possible role of the Black Church in addressing the challenges. The term Black Church is shorthand for the sociological and theological pluralism of Black Christian churches in America (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The discussion will begin with a brief overview of the situation that African-American students face as they complete primary and secondary schooling, pursue postsecondary educational opportunities, and subsequently engage in the American workforce system. The discussion will reflect the challenges that the students face because of social repercussions that occur within schools as lingering legacies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Next, the researcher will introduce the concept of critical consciousness as one possible solution for helping African-American students to overcome inequities in public education. The chapter continues by describing the role that the Black Church has historically and can continue
to serve as a source of social capital to improve African-American human capital outcomes. Next, the researcher includes a discussion of the problem and purpose the research aims to address, followed by a conceptual framework, which explains the epistemological underpinnings and objectives of the research. The chapter continues by highlighting the significance of the study and its potential influence on the practice, theory, and social change regarding the educational uplift among African-American students. The researcher also presents delimitations, assumptions, and limitations related to the research. Operational definitions aid the reader in conceptualizing the essential components of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and an overview of the organization of subsequent chapters.

Background

The following section serves as a backdrop for the problem the study aims to address. It includes a discussion on the current state of African-American student achievement and the resulting workforce problems. The researcher introduces the concept of critical consciousness as an approach in addressing African-American student achievement concerns. The section concludes with a discussion of the Black Church, its historic role, and the possibility of it serving as a vehicle to promote critical consciousness among African-American students.

The Current State of Inequity

Recent data from the Department of Education, demonstrates that although more African-American students are increasingly persisting and graduating high school and improving achievement scores in certain academic subjects, they still lag behind Whites in every category (McFarland et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2019). African-American
students are more likely to live in poverty at a rate of 34% compared to only 11% of White students (McFarland et al., 2018). Poverty has linkages to lower student achievement levels (McFarland et al., 2018). According to Carnevale et al. (2019), the statistic alone demonstrates that most disadvantaged students are left behind within public schools and in society at large, making upward economic mobility beyond their reach. Furthermore, elementary and middle school African-American students lag behind Whites in National Assessment of Educational Progress reading, mathematics, and science scores (McFarland et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2019). National African-American high school student adjusted cohort graduation rates are only 76% compared to 88% for Whites (McFarland et al., 2018). However, depending on the specific location, African-American student graduation rates dip as low as 57% and 61% in states such as Nevada and New Mexico respectively (McFarland et al., 2018). High school completion achievement gaps are widest in areas such as the District of Columbia, 68% for African-Americans and 91% for Whites, and Wisconsin 64% for African-Americans and 93% for Whites (McFarland et al., 2018). African-American students are also disparate recipients of college preparatory resources, such as college admissions counseling and placement assistance, (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Choy, 2001; Kunjufu, 2005; Roderick et al., 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). African-American students experience limited systematic structures, such as placement into college prep or career-specific curriculum that ensure college and career readiness (Reid & Moore, 2008; Venzia et al., 2003; Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Subsequently, they enroll in college at much lower rates compared to White students (McFarland et al., 2018; Rooney et al., 2006; Swail, 2003). African-American students tend to be overrepresented in special education programs, referred to the penal
system instead of counseling like Whites for the same offenses, and are more likely to be tried as an adult, rather than as a juvenile (Alexander, 2011; Moore, 2017).

Because of the academic situation, the entry-level workforce credential for many high-growth, high-wage jobs, a Bachelor’s degree, remains elusive for the majority of African-American students (Carnevale et al., 2019). The situation creates a strategic imperative for individuals involved in developing the future American workforce pipeline to address issues of equitable educational attainment among a vulnerable population (Carnevale et al., 2019). The achievement gaps deny African-American students quality education opportunities that translate into lifelong lags in employment and earning outcomes (Alexander, 2011; Carnevale et al., 2011; Moore, 2017). Race must become salient for individuals interested in ensuring that all students have access to the support that students need to develop healthy academic, behavioral, and social habits supportive of making educational gains that lead to college attendance and future employment (Moore, 2017).

Critical Consciousness

Paulo Freire (1973 stated, “The more accurately men grasp true causality, the more critical their understanding of reality will be” (p. 44). Freire’s quote explains the importance of understanding the root causes of social problems. Freire’s theory of critical consciousness asserts that marginalized and oppressed people groups must learn to analyze the root-cause of their social conditions, which will inspire them to act in such a way to create change (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). Critical consciousness consists of three constructs: critical reflection, political agency, and social action. Critical reflection (or social analysis) is the ability to analyze and reject social inequities (Freire, 1970;
Watts et al., 2011). Political agency is the belief that one has the capacity to bring about social or political change (Beaumont, 2010). Political agency is a part of critical consciousness and can change an individual’s critical reflection into a commitment to oppose oppression through social action (Seider & Graves, 2020). Finally, social action refers to participating in events or activities that confront sources of oppression and the unequal conditions in which they perpetuate (Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011). Seider et al. (2016, 2017a, 2017b; Seider & Graves, 2020) extend the critical consciousness framework by describing the concept as the ability to analyze, navigate, and challenge the oppressive social forces shaping one’s life and community.

Researchers studied critical consciousness in a variety of contexts with students. Researchers demonstrate that employing critical consciousness expands young people’s commitment to challenging pervasive injustice (Ginwright, 2010; Watts et al., 2011). Critical consciousness increases academic achievement and engagement (Cabrera et al., 2014; Carter, 2008; Dee & Penner, 2016; O’Connor, 1997) and improves enrollment in higher education (Rogers & Terriquez, 2013). Diemer and Blustein (2006) report that urban youth with higher levels of critical consciousness have greater clarity in their vocational identity, demonstrate higher commitment to their future careers, and view work as a larger part of their future lives. Furthermore, Cadenas et al., (2018) find that college students with higher levels of critical consciousness have higher intentions to persist through college. Researchers suggest that critical consciousness may have the potential to replace feelings of isolation and blame for one’s challenges with engagement in social justice (Diemer et al., 2014; Ginwright, 2010). Critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through
excelling in academics (Carter, 2008). Given the positive effects critical consciousness has on student outcomes, evidence suggests that raising critical conscious beliefs among African-American students can improve academic achievement (Seider et al., 2010). However, according to Flores et al. (2019), the field needs additional research to understand how critical consciousness beliefs can be promoted among youth. Recently, Seider and Graves (2020) explain how critical consciousness develops among Black and Latinx youth within the school context. The literature does not address how critical consciousness can develop in other contexts within African-American student’s ecosphere, such as their local Black Church.

**There is Hope: The Black Church**

A historic and re-emerging culturally responsive solution for closing African-American student equity gaps is the involvement of the historically Black Church. The term Black Church is shorthand for the sociological and theological pluralism of Black Christian churches in America (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). For the present study, Black Churches are “those independent, historic, and totally Black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 1). The Black Church has had a longstanding positive impact in the lives of African-Americans (Caldwell et al., 1992). From its inception as an “invisible institution” during slavery to beyond the Civil Rights era, the Black Church has provided religious, educational, political, physical, and social support for its membership and the surrounding community (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Scholars have written on the importance and positive impact the Black Church has had in the lives of African-Americans (Billingsley, 1999; Caldwell et al., 1992; Harvey et al., 2016; Johnson, 1999;
Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2001, 2003; Pinn, 2017; Sinha, 2007). Collectively, historians hold the social institution as a foundation for community and religious life among African-Americans (Nickens & Fallen, 2008). Black Churches serve as both places of religious worship and a sources of community development. Black Churches influence the upward mobility of low-income families (Billingsley, 1999), provide social support such as religious and secular education, political action, entrepreneurship resources (McCubbin et al., 1998), and personal development programs (Dart, 2001). According to foundational research by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), alongside the African-American family, the Black Church is a historic institution within the American Black community. The Black Church continues to execute its religious, social justice, and social service role within African-American communities despite the country’s 250 years of slavery, 150 years of Jim Crow segregation laws, policies, and practices, and the residuals of racism and discrimination that remain entrenched within modern American culture (Shevon et al., 2016).

Going beyond religious worship, the Black Church has historically leveraged its theology through political engagement, serving as a refuge to the community, and providing social services (Sinha, 2007). From the abolition of slavery and the participation of Black Republican Reconstruction-era politicians to the leadership of the civil rights and modern social justice reform movements, the Black Church conducts political engagement and advocates for the welfare of African-Americans (Barnes, 2004). Furthermore, the Black Church offers African-Americans a communal shelter, a context for racial identity, and a place of restoration amidst the historic and modern oppression experienced as a marginalized minority group within the United States. (Haight, 2002;
Within the Black Church, formal and informal social service programs afford African-Americans the opportunity to receive medical care, religious and secular education, character and personal development, job-related training, mentoring, and tutoring (Dart, 2001; Neighbors et al., 1983). The Black Church congregational investments in human and social capital over the years work in staunch opposition to other institutional and governmental structures that either ignore or discriminate against African-Americans (Sinha, 2007).

Not only have Black Church human and social capital investments translate to improved outcomes for African-Americans in the past, but the types of investments continue today. Barber (2015) argues that the Black Church has the ability to fight racism and provide for the members of the community in areas that the public sphere either will not or cannot achieve. The Black Church was active through Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and into the current “Black Live Matter” movement as explored by Rickford (2016). The Black Church will continue to be a strong supporting establishment in the African-American community regardless of concerns from external influences (Barber, 2015). Hankerson et al. (2018) find that the relationship that members of the community had with Black Churches, made it an ideal place to encourage healthy behaviors and foster strong relationships with other services available. With the goal of encouraging community members to seek mental health services when necessary, Hankerson et al. (2018) rely on the relationship to increase accessibility and improve the overall health of the community.

Numerous Black Churches, whether individually or as a part of larger faith-based organizations and denominational affiliations, serve their communities in direct ways
through education initiatives. For example, with more than 34,000 member churches from 15 denominations and 15.7 million African-American congregants, the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) remains engaged in improving student outcomes in numerous ways (NBCI, 2019). Current NBCI activities include focusing on the prevention of African American male student dropouts by providing engaging education opportunities through the National Academy Foundation and addressing the cycle of low education attainment, poverty, and crime through holistic pre-Kindergarten to postsecondary education by employing proven training models. NBCI established the Childhood Advocacy and Development Institute to support the communication delays and autism screenings for infants initiatives (NBCI, 2019). Based on the success of other initiatives that fostered connections with the Black Church to facilitate positive outcomes, the study explored the possibility of developing critical consciousness within the Black Church for the benefit of African-American students.

**Statement of the Problem**

African-American students experience human capital opportunity and achievement gaps (Pitre, 2014). Researchers have called for culturally relevant strategies to help close the gaps (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Johnson, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Pitre, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001). The historic Black Church, a part of many African-American students’ culture and community, is a historic and current source of social capital for positive human capital development outcomes (Billingsley, 1999; Harvey et al., 2016; Johnson, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2001, 2003; Pinn, 2017; Sinha, 2007). Critical consciousness develops positive human capital outcomes, such as academic achievement, in African-
American and other minority students (Cabera et al., 2014; Cadenas et al., 2018; Carter, 2008; Dee & Penner, 2016; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Ginwright, 2010; O’Connor, 1997; Rogers & Terriquez, 2013; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). The literature suggests a need exists to understand how critical consciousness develops (Flores et al., 2019). Fulgham (2013) calls for churches’ direct involvement in initiatives that can improve academic achievement of low income and minority students. Chism (2013) demonstrate the presence of critical consciousness in the motivation of a Black Church denomination’s struggle to address racial injustice.

Ideally, researchers, education reformers, and policymakers would enlist religious organizations, like the historically Black Church, to engage in culturally relevant solutions to improve African-American student academic achievement (Fulgham, 2013). Historic Black Churches may have the ability to close the achievement gap for African-American students if they are willing to help develop critical consciousness. Literature on historically Black Churches and research on critical consciousness is unclear about how and if the churches develop critical consciousness (Chism, 2013). Past studies use Black Church leaders’ perceptions to understand congregational intentions, attitudes, activities, and social capital (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Much of the literature on critical consciousness does not include the intentions or the willingness of organizations to develop critical consciousness (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). Consequently, a need exists to understand the intentions of historic Black Churches towards developing critical consciousness among African-American students from the perceptions of Black Church leaders. Without understanding Black Church leaders’ intentions towards developing critical consciousness, researchers, education reformers, and policymakers will remain
unable to leverage Black Churches to employ culturally relevant strategies to close African-American student opportunity and achievement gaps.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. More specifically, exploring Black Church leaders’ perceptions of their intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness. Because critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics (Carter, 2008), Black Churches that intend to teach the competency will be an example of a culturally relevant strategy to close African-American student opportunity and achievement gaps.

Research Objectives

The study used the theory of planned behavior to explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they have towards teaching African-American youth critical consciousness. A well-known social psychological theory, the theory of planned behavior assumes that in a particular context what a person does (a behavior) is a result of his or her intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) postulates that intentions reflect motivational influences: behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. He explains behavioral attitudes as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question,” subjective norms as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior,” and perceived behavioral control as “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior ... assumed to
reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). For the present study, the behavior of interest is the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness by Black Church leaders.

To set the parameters of the study, guide the design, and support methodology (Creswell, 2013), the following section introduces the research objectives. The subsequent list of research objectives enabled the researcher to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

*RO1* Describe the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, denominational affiliation, the position held within the church, and years of experience in the current position.

*RO2* Explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

*RO3* Explore Black Church leaders’ subjective norms towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

*RO4* Explore Black Church leaders’ perceived behavioral control towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

*RO5* Explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

**Conceptual Framework**

The section presents the conceptual framework used to guide the selection of the study’s methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and inform its structure (Merriam, 1998). The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates how human capital theory, critical race
theory, prophetic activism, and the theory of planned behavior are analytical tools to
explore this study’s research objectives. The following section briefly highlights the basic
tenants the theories espouse and describes how they relate to the current study. Chapter 2
includes additional theoretical considerations related to the research.

Human capital theory posits that there is value in the knowledge, skills, and
abilities that people possess (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1981). Furthermore, the type of
capital can be enhanced through education and training (Schultz, 1981). Critical
consciousness can be considered as a human capital competency, the skill and ability to
analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice (Seider & Graves, 2020) As Sieder and
Graves (2020) demonstrated, there are several ways to foster the development of critical
consciousness through education and training. The study used human capital as a lens to
explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to foster the development of critical
consciousness in African-American students.

The exploration of race and education in America has gained traction in the last
few decades. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) posit that the scholarly pursuit of the
saliency of race in American education remains largely unexplored (Tate, 1997). The
introduction of the critical race theory (CRT) emerged from the legal literature as a
theoretical lens to challenge universal practices of developing norms for people of color
based largely on the standards of White authoritative notions (John, 1992). The norms
typically characterize people of color as inferior that resulting in negative legal and
educational outcomes (John, 1992). CRT acknowledges race as one of the foremost
influences in the treatment of people groups in American culture (Blauner, 2001). Padilla
and Lindolm (1995), Lightfoot (1980), and Tate (1995) note how paradigms of assumed
inferiority based on race negatively affect African-Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) describe CRT as consisting of several components, including counter-storytelling. The researchers describe counter-storytelling as going against assumed inferiority by hearing from the perspective of the oppressed people groups through narratives. Witherspoon and Mitchell (2009) use CRT and its intersection with religion to explore themes of helping students overcome barriers related to racial oppression through the narratives of African-American leaders. For the study, the researcher used CRT as a lens to explore the narratives of Black Church leaders’ intentions to foster the development of critical consciousness among African-American students.

Prophetic activism is throughout the literature as researchers explore the role of the Black Church serving as an advocate for African-Americans in a variety of spheres. Prophetic activism describes the activities that Black Churches execute, beyond their membership, to improve economic, social, political, and education outcomes for African-American communities (Barnes, 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2003). Prophetic activism refers to the “very extroverted forms of religious presences, forms that somehow benefit not only the congregation members but people who do not belong to the church” (McRoberts, 2003, p. 100). Through prophetic activism, churches conduct activities within the community that seek to transform the conditions of the people often marginalized by society (Everett, 2020). Examples include drives to register voters, educational programs for youth, adult literacy programs, helping victims of disaster, and feeding the homeless. Prophetic Black Churches are involved in activities that lead to economic and political empowerment and the sustainment of
cultural and racial/ethnic identity (Barnes, 2004; Morris, 1984; Nelsen et al., 1971).

Numerous scholars posit that continuous prophetic activism of Black Churches fought against slavery, segregation, and continuous forms of racial oppression (Baldwin, 2003; Franklin, 2007; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; West, 1982). In particular, Jordan and Wilson (2017) demonstrated how collaborative partnerships between Black Churches and public schools improved African-American student success. Jordan et al. (2012) used prophetic activism to describe actions taken by Black Churches to support the academic needs of African-American students. The present study uses prophetic activism as a lens to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards supporting the development of critical consciousness for the benefit of African-American students.

The theory of planned behavior assumes that in a particular context, what a person does (a behavior) is a result of his or her intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) postulates that intentions reflect motivational influences: behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. He explains behavioral attitudes as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question,” subjective norms as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior,” and perceived behavioral control as “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior ... assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). According to Ajzen (2002), behavioral beliefs result in either a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior; normative beliefs produce perceived social pressure (or subjective norm); and control beliefs produce perceived behavioral control. Together, behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control form behavioral intention (Ajzen,
In the study, the behavior of interest was the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness by Black Church leaders. The study used the theory of planned behavior to explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they have towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Significance of the Study

As researchers have suggested, promoting critical consciousness may have protective factors that can motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics (Carter, 2008). According to Gallup (2001), three fourths
of African-Americans believe that churches should be involved in social change. Brown and Brown (2003) suggest that church attendance leads African-Americans in religious congregations to political activism in places where people have opportunities to increase civic skills and connect to communication networks that foster political activism. Since civic skills and activism relate to critical consciousness constructs, the study sought to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness using Sieder and Graves (2020) definition.

Vocational psychology research suggests that future researchers address the gap in the literature on designing culturally relevant interventions for African-American students (Flores et al., 2019). More specifically, researchers call for expanding the themes of critical consciousness and understanding how it may develop among African-American students (Flores et al., 2019). Data collected from the study can provide vocational psychologists with insights into designing interventions that develop the critical consciousness embedded within African-American students’ social institutions, such as their local historically Black Church.

As explained by Barber (2015), the Black Church remains a source of social capital by serving in the public sphere to meet the needs of underserved minorities and the provision of effective race-specific strategies in an era of color-blind policies that perpetuate “opportunity gaps” (Pitre 2014, p. 212). Fulgham’s (2013) clarion call for churches to become involved with improving minority and low-income student achievement proposed church youth programming as a possible solution. The study explored the intentions of churches with youth programming to foster the development of critical consciousness for African-American students, which has positive impacts on
student achievement. Church leaders within the African-American community can use data collected from the study to understand the way similar churches view enhancing youth programming by including elements of critical consciousness to support African-American student achievement.

Delimitations

In the following section, the researcher will highlight delimitations. Delimitations are the factors within a study that the researcher controls (Roberts, 2010). The inclusion of delimitations notify the reader of the study’s limited scope (Roberts, 2010). The study will solicit the perceptions of church leadership at historically Black Churches. The researcher is aware that the perceptions of lay members and volunteers within the church would also yield relevant information on how the church may be involved in developing critical consciousness through youth programming. However, the researcher chose to focus the study on the perceptions of church leadership.

Another delimitation is that, because the current study is only able to examine leadership perceptions at a small number of historic Black Churches within the United States, there may not be enough information in order to provide generalized data that applies to Black Churches on a larger scale. However, since the methods will be replicable, it is possible for future researchers to explore a similar topic to build upon what the research presents and add data to the current results. Due to the time constraint, the number of churches examined must be limited, or else the data might become overwhelming and difficult to categorize.
Assumptions

Roberts (2010) describes assumptions as realities that some may take for granted but for the purposes of the study, are understood as operational. The study used a qualitative research design with the following assumptions: (a) participants’ responses to interview questions will be true and honest when discussing their intentions towards developing critical consciousness among African-American students; (b) the nature of the study and the terminology used during the interview will be understood by all participants; and (c) participant responses will be freely provided without pressure or coercion from the researcher or other entities.

Limitations

Inherent to qualitative research, researcher bias poses limitations on the study. While Given (2016) notes that the qualitative researcher should authentically describe information within a study, she also contends that researcher bias may still be present. LeVasseur (2003) suggests that instead of trying to remove researcher bias, the researcher should seek to suspend understanding in a reflective manner that elicits curiosity and allows the researcher to decide how and in what ways personal understandings will influence the study. Furthermore, Given (2016) posits that researcher bias in qualitative research can be beneficial when the researcher is aware and embraces his or her own bias. The researcher acknowledged that she is an African-American, reared in and currently attends a historically Black Church. The researcher’s father was a Black Church leader and the researcher is married to a Black Church leader. The researcher acknowledged her own bias that she believes Black Churches should be involved in teaching critical
consciousness to African-American youth. Therefore, the researcher used journaling and reflection as validation strategies to ensure the study remained objective.

Although the researcher was exploring the intentions of Black Church leaders to teach critical consciousness, it did not include an examination on the existence of critical consciousness from the student’s perspective. The study also does not address to what extent or how effective are the teachings of Black Churches concerning critical consciousness.

Another limitation of the study is that it only involved leaders within historically Black Churches in the southern United States with primarily with teaching/preaching roles. The study did not explore the phenomena in other regions of the country. Therefore the research is unable to address the question of whether findings may be different among churches located in other regions of the country.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the study, the researcher used several terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader, have multiple definitions, or are ambiguous, requiring further clarification. The researcher uses the following definitions:


2. *African-American Students* for the study are native-born Americans of African descent (Cross, 1991) who are between the ages of 5-18.

3. *Behavioral Attitudes* are the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991).
4. *Black Church* are “those independent, historic, and totally Black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 1).

5. *Critical Consciousness* is the ability to analyze, navigate, and challenge the oppressive social forces shaping one’s life and community (Seider et al., 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Seider & Graves, 2020).

6. *Critical Race Theory* is a theoretical construct that views social problems associated with societal inequities through the lens of race and power struggles that may be present within social institutions in order to bring about change (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

7. *Perceived Behavioral Control* is the perception of how easy or difficult a behavior may seem (Ajzen, 1991).

8. *Prophetic Activism* describes the activities that Black Churches execute, beyond their membership, to improve economic, social, political, and education outcomes for African-American communities (Barnes, 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2013).

9. *Subjective Norms* refers to the perception of social pressure from others on whether or not to perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991).


**Summary**

The chapter introduced the study by laying the foundation of the research problem, purpose, theoretical underpinnings providing an overview of how African-
American students face and must overcome multiple individual and social barriers as they complete schooling, pursue postsecondary education opportunities, and subsequently engage in the American workforce system. It also discussed the impact of the lasting legacy of inequity in terms of its impedance on historical and present education and workforce outcomes for African-American students. A factor mentioned in restoring equity, is the development in critical consciousness among African-American students. The chapter progressed by describing the role the historic Black Church can play in positively impacting African-American student education attainment outcomes by promoting critical consciousness. The author presented a conceptual framework for how the study will explore Black Church leaders’ intentions of adopting the teaching of critical consciousness to African-American students. Next, researcher portrayed the significance of the study and its potential influence on the practice, theory, and social change regarding the educational and economic uplift within the African-American community. The text presented the delimitations, assumptions, and limitations related to the research. The researcher included operational definitions to assist the reader in understanding the essential components of the study.

The remaining organization of the study includes a review of literature, an overview of associated research methods, corresponding data collection and analysis, and general conclusions based on the study’s findings. Chapter 2 will present a review of the extant literature that expounds on the conceptual framework for the study. Throughout Chapter 3, the researcher describes the study’s design and provides information about the execution of the research in terms of its participants, constructs and variables, corresponding data collection instruments, methods of data analysis, and efforts to
achieve reliability and validity of results. Chapter 4 will present a discussion of the data collection and analysis in terms of the qualitative data collected. In the fifth and final chapter, the research will present an analysis of the findings, implications for theory, policy, and practice, and provide recommendations for areas of future research.
CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the study was to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. More specifically, the study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate Black Church leaders’ perceptions of their intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness. Because critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics (Carter, 2008), Black Churches that intend to teach it will be an example of a culturally relevant strategy to close African-American student opportunity and achievement gaps.

Like many social problems, the achievement, equity, and opportunity gaps African-American students face developed within a historical, political, and social context (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Losenski, 2017). The chapter reviews literature relevant to the study to provide the aforementioned context. According to Creswell (2005), the literature review provides the required credibility to justify a study. The review of literature for the study will provide the socio-historical and political context for the linkages between race and education in America. Next, the text reviews critical consciousness with special attention to its impact on improving minority student outcomes. The review includes literature on the Black Church, its historic role in supporting the African-American community, and the ways in which it continues to support African-American student success. Literature on the theories to support the conceptual framework for the study is included for human capital theory, critical race theory, prophetic activism, and the theory of planned behavior.
The History of Race and Unequal Education in America

In 2006, Ladson-Billings made the pronouncement that when it comes to racialized education disparity in America, “We do not have an achievement gap; we have an education debt” (p. 5). By illustrating the history of circumstances and decisions that have led to the nation’s growing economic debt, Ladson-Billings (2006) demonstrated how the problems associated with racialized and socioeconomic disparities in education also have historical roots. Losenski (2017) contends that there is little progress in educational equity because education leaders and policy makers continue to apply non-historical solutions to a problem that is the result of historical accumulations of inequity among students of color, especially African-American students. The following section reviews many of the historical circumstances that have led to the racialized education disparities African-American students continue to experience. The next section will discuss the history of African-American education in America using Guiterrez and Stone’s (2000) historical epochs: mid-nineteenth-century slavery statues, late nineteenth-century Reconstruction, the mid-twentieth-century post Brown v. Board of Education era, and end with the early twenty-first century.

Mid-Nineteenth-Century: Slavery and Anti-literacy Laws

It is no secret that an integral part of the foundation of America centered on the enslavement of Africans and Americans of African descent. Slave trades brought Africans to America for the sole purpose of free labor used to develop the local and the national economy and the prosperity of Whites (Anderson, 1994). For two-thirds of the United States Presidents and Supreme Court justices prior to 1861, the institution of slavery was the primary mode of production and source of income for the nation (Katz,
The dominant structure of slavery permeated every area of life from "philosophical abstractions claiming the racial and intellectual superiority of Whites; through legal controls, work scheduling, and residence patterns" (Gundaker, 2007, p.1592). Gundaker (2007) further asserts that the total institution of slavery inserted itself "down to micro level policing of interactions between Whites and Blacks, including comportment, eye contact, speech, reproduction, clothing, and diet" (p. 1592). Slavery’s control over education was no different.

For much of slavery, legislatures made teaching slaves to read and write a crime in fear of educated slaves becoming defiant of the slave system (Anderson, 1988; Barrows, 1836). There were numerous slavery statues, some of which were anti-literacy laws (Finkelman, 1989). For example, Code of Mississippi, Article 3, Section 2, in 1823 prohibited slaves, free African-Americans, and people with mixed African ancestry from gathering in any public or private place for the purposes of learning to read or write, at any time of day or night under penalty of corporal punishment of up to thirty-nine lashes (Hutchinson, 1848). The legislature of North Carolina in 1830 passed an act that prevented anyone from teaching slaves to read or write because literacy tended to excite dissatisfaction and encourage insurrection and rebellion among the slaves (Finelman, 1989). In 1847, a Missouri law forbade any schools for instruction for all who were of African descent, including people of mixed ancestry (Missouri General Assembly, 1847). The Missouri law included banning any public or private assembly of people of African descent and mixed African ancestry, whether slave or free, unless governed by law enforcement to prevent seditious speech. The laws not only prohibited education, but also banned collaborative spaces (Losenski, 2017). The laws directly correlated literacy with
sowing discord among the slaves and free African Americans that, without enforced suppression, would ultimately lead to their fight for freedom (Williams, 2005). The laws and practices reflected the ethos of the times, which considered African-Americans as inferior and unworthy of education (Slater, 1994).

Despite the penalties associated with literacy, African-Americans were educated through various overt and covert means. Initially, out of piety, slaves were educated for having access to the Christian Bible (Cornelius, 1991; Woodson, 2013). However, the attitude changed as the liberatory themes from the Bible began to echo through spirituals, sermons, and abolitionist tracts (Gundaker, 2007). Practices changed from direct literacy to assigning planter preachers to teach the enslaved edited versions of selected Bible passages that supported the institution of slavery (Gundaker, 2007). However, there were missionaries who taught slaves to read despite the penalty of law for the purpose of religious instruction (Woodson, 2013). Many Quakers purchased slaves for the purpose of educating and liberating them (Woodson, 2018). Also, there were many slaves and free African-Americans who taught themselves and others to read (Williams, 2005). In some instances, enslavers focused so much on their own well-beings that they tended to take an out-of-sight-out-of-mind approach towards slaves that created space for some education (Abrahams et al., 1983). As an example, there were regions of coastal South Carolina where absentee plantation ownership and delegated management were so commonplace that slaves were allowed to obtain a degree of literacy to govern affairs such as keeping accounts, ordering supplies, and communicating with the owners by letter (Starobin, 1974).
Late Nineteenth-Century: Reconstruction

The end of the Civil War brought emancipation to the enslaved and ushered in a new era of Reconstruction from the late 1860s to the early 1870s (Tyack & Lowe, 1986). The Reconstruction Era transformed the lives of African-Americans, raised expectations and aspirations for education, and laid the foundations of free public schooling for all children (Foner, 1982; Kluger, 1977; Tyack & Lowe, 1986). With newfound freedom, African-Americans organized among themselves to create schools and churches to gain educational opportunity that formed the basis of citizenship (Anderson, 1981, 1988). Although African-Americans were the primary architects of the early schools, poverty and large-scale illiteracy limited their effectiveness (Tyack & Lowe, 1986). To overcome the limitation, African-Americans who organized themselves within their local communities received support from the Freedmen’s Bureau, military officials, northern philanthropists, and religious groups who helped fund the building, administration, and staffing of schools (McFreely, 1994; Morris, 1981). However, Whites in the South grew increasingly hostile towards the concept of education and responded in many communities by burning schools, ostracizing and beating teachers, and intimidating African-American families who attended school (Anderson, 1981, 1988; Du Bois, 2014).

The violence instituted by southern Whites, coupled with the inconsistent resources from the Freedmen’s Bureau and benevolent societies created the necessity of a more permanent infrastructure to support the education African-Americans (Tyack & Lowe, 1986). In addition to the introduction of schooling, African-Americans made other gains during the Reconstruction Era. For the first time in history, voters elected African-American congressional representatives (Tyack & Lowe, 1986). Together with
White Radical Republican lawmakers, African-American congressmen, such as Senator Charles Sumner, pushed for universal education that included all students, regardless of race to ensure full participation in citizenship (Donald, 2016; Foner, 1982; Tyack & Lowe, 1986). The lawmakers ensured that state constitutions, especially Confederate states seeking readmission to the United States., included provisions for public schooling regardless of race with enforcement guaranteed through strong military presence throughout the South (Wiecek, 1972). The constitutions between 1860-1870 included requirements for state-funded free school systems, provisions for school governance and funding sources, prescribed minimum school terms, and included clauses on compulsory attendance for all students (Hough, 1875). However, the foundation for inequity began as states created the public schools, but did so in a segregated manner to separate the races (Losenski, 2017; Tyack & Lowe, 1986).

Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877, when President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered the withdrawal of military troops from the South (Mittal & Weingast, 2014). The rights enjoyed by African-Americans in the South, such as voting, access to public schooling, and holding political offices, existed because of the presence of the military who quelled the opposition of White southerners (Mittal & Weingast, 2014). Once the troops left, southern Whites regained control of state and local governments and White supremacy dominated the creation and implementation of laws (Losenski, 2017; Tyack & Lowe, 1986). State constitutions and local laws changed to require segregation, altered governance and finance of public schools, and began the practice of defunding African-American schools (Bond, 1934; Tyack & Lowe, 1986; Woodward, 1981). A myriad of corrupt laws and practices culminated in drastic resource inequities between
Black and White schools, rendering the schools both separate and unequal (Woodward, 1981). For instance, a 1916 report showed that in the preceding year, White schools received $22.22 per capita, while African-American schools received $1.78 per capita (Jones, 1917).

The period after Reconstruction saw the reemergence of White supremacists that resorted to violence to achieve their goals when they were unable to accomplish segregation politically (Zelbo, 2019). White mobs burned hundreds of African-American schoolhouses and Black churches used for education (Scribner, 2020). Armed mobs overthrew seats of local and state governments through violent and bloody insurrections (Zelbo, 2019). Newspapers ran continuous propaganda campaigns to war against the idea of integrated schools (Harlan, 1962). Lawmakers and educators ensured that the emphasis of education for African-Americans was on vocational training to guarantee economic productivity, while planning to socialize Blacks into subordinate societal roles (Anderson, 1988). The 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision resulted in constitutionally established separate but equal accommodations for Whites and African-Americans, and further justified the practice of school segregation (Foley, 2005; Jones-Wilson, 1990). Due to the *Plessy* decision, African-Americans and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attempted to use the courts to force school districts to provide the same educational facilities, teacher salaries, and per student expenditures for African-American students as they did for Whites (Foley, 2005). Under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP, African-Americans began challenging the separate and unequal education African-American children experienced (Foley, 2005). However, the practice of legally and forcefully
maintaining separate and unequal schools based on race would continue well into and beyond the mid-twentieth century. The Plessy decision reigned until the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision in 1954 overturned it (Jones-Wilson, 1990).

**Mid-Twentieth-Century: Post Brown v. Board of Education**

Jones-Wilson (1990) notes that Brown legally outlawed racial segregation in public schools; however, it did not change the hearts, attitudes, and practices of the people in power. According to Wilson (1995), Brown only determined “that segregated public schools were unconstitutional. It provided no guidelines to be observed by officials responsible for bringing schools then segregated into compliance with the decision” (p. 203). A decade after Brown, “no more than two percent of Black children in the South attended schools with Whites” (Dunn & West, 2009, p.77). Twenty-five years after Brown, most African-American students still attended public schools that were segregated and inferior (Jencks, 1972). Implementing Brown was difficult because of demographic patterns, White flight to suburban areas, the lack of legal enforcement, and the inability of the courts to influence the reform of social practices (Bell, 1980). It was also ignored by the President, criticized by much of Congress, and was met with resistance when a few officials sought to enforce it (Wasby et al., 1977). Nearly 39 years after the Brown decision, in 1991 over 400 school districts throughout the nation were under court-ordered desegregation plans (Marable, 1992).

The rule of court-ordered desegregation plans were short lived due to the maintenance of local autonomy of public school districts, the strict legal standards for claiming discrimination within schools, and changes in school funding models (Ballenger, 2014; Bell, 1980). The national practice of local control over the operation of
schools fosters community concern and quality in the educational process (Bell, 1980; Fiss, 1979). However, as one commentator noted, “It is implausible to assume that school boards guilty of substantial violations in the past will take the interests of Black school children to heart” (Fiss, 1979). Local school boards continued their school segregation practices (Fiss, 1979). Furthermore, the courts seemed to part tradition with the premises of *Brown* by making it more difficult to confront segregation and discrimination (Fiss, 1974). For example, the decision from *Dayton Board of Education v. Brinkman* required plaintiffs to prove that the complained-of segregation was the result of discriminatory actions intentionally and invidiously conducted or authorized by school officials (Powell, 1976). In addition, even when the plaintiff meets the difficult standard of proof, *Austin Independent School District v. United States* stated that courts must carefully limit the relief granted to the harm actually proved (Bell, 1980). One of the most notable gateways the courts made for continued segregation came through the *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* decision that concluded that education was not a fundamental right and that inequitable school funding among districts is not a violation of the constitution (Dayton & Dupre, 2004). The case effectively began the institutionalization of the practice of funding schools disproportionately based on local tax revenue instead of spending equitable amounts per student within a district (Dayton & Dupre, 2004). The resurrected the practice used after the Reconstruction Era of unequally funding schools based on race and class.

For the remainder of the twentieth century, school segregation continued in new forms. Since de jure segregation (segregation by law) became unconstitutional, overtime, de facto segregation (segregation as a matter of fact) became standard practice in most
school districts across America (Ballenger, 2014). Varying circumstances such as mobilization, clustering, wealth, and the emergence of a proliferation of private school choices, de facto segregation dominated school segregation practices (Green, 1999). The circumstances led to the re-segregation of schools, as evident in cases such as Green v. New Kent County where districts had created freedom of choice plans to avoid complying with desegregation orders (Ballenger, 2014). The decision in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg to uphold busing programs to expedite integration clearly implied that desegregation was simply a temporary remedy; it was by no means a permanent regulation (Dunn & West, 2009). The decision set forth unclear deadlines for the enforcement of desegregation plans and today, “there is no doubt that court-ordered desegregation is in its twilight phase” while re-segregation becomes common practice in the modern-day school system (Dunn & West, 2009, p. 86).

Early Twenty-First-Century: Today

In the twenty-first century, public schools are more segregated than at any point in the last 40 years, and it is largely due to problems with the New Jim Crow, segregation between schools, and segregation within schools (Ballenger, 2014; Dayton & Dupre, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Ostrander, 2015). Combined, the problems have created a myriad of barriers that must improve in order to resolve racialized gaps in academic opportunity and achievement. Some such as Horsford (2019) call for critical policy analysis to deconstruct failing policy agendas and to create new policy knowledge. The following section discusses the policies and practices that perpetuate the problems: the New Jim Crow, segregation between schools, and segregation within schools.
The New Jim Crow. Alexander (2010) popularized the term the New Jim Crow in her book discussing the mass incarceration of African-Americans as the new form of sociopolitical control over Blacks. The New Jim Crow refers to the modern American system of racial castes within the post-Civil Rights Era that claims to be colorblind (Horsford, 2019). In her book, Alexander (2010) paints a parallel picture between the segregationist regime of the Jim Crow Era that enforced White racial dominance in America from 1877 to 1965 and the social control known as mass incarceration in the modern post-Civil Rights Era (Horsford, 2019; Reed, 2004; Woodward, 1955). In both instances, African-Americans experience being controlled, constrained, and unable to access or enjoy equal rights and protections as Whites (Alexander, 2010; Horsford, 2019). Instead of using explicitly racist overtones, the New Jim crow uses colorblind and “race neutral language to criminalize Blackness and deny the rights of citizenship in ways that put the vast majority of Blacks back in their place” (Horsford, 2019, p. 259). For example, Horsford (2019) points out that race neutral terms such as criminal serve as a proxy for blackness making it acceptable to deny rights to find employment, secure housing, or vote. Collins (1998) explains that under the new system, public spaces and institutions previously dominated by Whites lost their value because of African-American entry. Once spaces within the public sphere lose their value due to White departure, upon African-American entry, they become hyper-regulated, heavily monitored, and monetized (Collins, 1998; White, 2016). For example, Collins (1998) explains that once African-Americans gained entry into public schools through desegregation, public schools were no longer valued and Whites pursued private or other schooling choices.
Horsford (2019) argues that the reconfigured public sphere has implications for the schooling of African-Americans while he pointed to an education policy landscape that is radically different from 20 years ago. Schools and districts with historically African-American populations have fallen victim to market-based reforms that led to the closing of African-American schools, the firing or displacement of African-American teachers and administrators, and dissolved African-American institutions, networks, and educational associations (Henry & Dixson, 2016; Horsford 2011; Lipman, 2015; White, 2016; Walker, 2018). The corporate reform movement’s widespread implementation of charter schools and reform advocacy organizations have attacked urban school systems by minimizing the influence of the New Jim Crow social order’s reproduction of both racial and economic inequality (Horsford, 2019; Scott & Holmes, 2016). For example, market-based school choice options have created highly segregated, underperforming schools within predominantly African-American urban school districts like New Orleans, Chicago, and New York. (Sanders et al., 2018). Predominant features of schooling within the New Jim Crow include the maintenance of alternative schools that criminalize African-American students and serve as pipelines to prisons; disproportionately closing schools in African-American communities which displaces students; and the commodification of students through charter schools that are unable to deliver on their promises of equity and academic achievement (Horsford, 2019; Horsford & Powell, 2016; Lipman, 2015; Picowar & Mayorga, 215; White, 2015).

*Segregation between Schools.* Segregation is still present between schools attended predominantly by African-American students or predominantly by White students. For example, “most of the 32 New York City community school districts have
predominantly Black and Latino student populations,” while White students attend
predominantly White specialized and private schools (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 270).
Furthermore, one reason for the occurrence is the disparate funding of schools (Dayton &
School District v. Rodriguez Supreme Court decision was arguably more impactful than the Brown
decision because it “concluded that education was not a fundamental right and that
disparities in school funding among school districts do not violate the federal
constitution” (p. 2352). The ruling created a gateway for school districts to determine
funding decisions that were disparate for minority children. Most districts fund schools
based on the local property taxes, which results in affluent schools with largely White
student populations receiving more funding than minority schools (Ballenger, 2014). The
practice provides minority schools with access to fewer resources and lowers the quality
of education provided to the students. As a result, low-income schools attended by
minorities have novice teachers, inadequate access to educational and student support
resources, and have health hazards (Ballenger, 2014).

Segregation within Schools. Segregation not only occurs between schools, but it
occurs within schools. Racial bias in school discipline and tracking place African-
American students at greater risks for not progressing and achieving academically
(Francis & Darity, 2021; Marrus 2015). The practices segregate and isolate students from
their White peers by taking Black students out of the classroom or out of the school.

The school-to-prison pipeline became a reality because of school districts’
widespread implementation of zero-tolerance policies (Marrus, 2015). The school-to-
prison pipeline describes the “relationship between school disciplinary actions and
increased risk of juvenile justice contact” (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 546). Zero-tolerance school discipline policies carry consequences and disproportionately penalize African-American students, as they are three times more likely than White students to be suspended or expelled (Duncan et al., 2014). As school desegregation mandates and zero-tolerance policies arose, the number of suspensions for students doubled from early 1970 to 2006 and the gap between racial groups became stark (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). During that time, White suspension rates rose from 3% to 4.8% while the rate for African-Americans rose from 6% to 15% (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Since referral decisions are subjective, often, Whites receive suspensions for only grievous infractions, such as possessing drugs or weapons, while African-American students are suspended for minor offenses such as disrespect, offensive language, cutting class, tardiness, and truancy (Losen & Skiba, 2010). While some scholars claim that higher African-American suspension rates are due to more misbehavior at school, researchers found that African-American students did not misbehave more than their White peers (Skiba & Williams, 2014). Being suspended or expelled from school contributes to missed days of learning, diminished educational opportunities, engagement, and achievement, and often results in referrals to the juvenile justice system (Marrus, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014). Strong linkages exist between school exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion and becoming involved in the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011; Krezmien et al., 2006; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). The relationship is stronger for African-American students (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). African-American students disproportionately appear in the juvenile justice system at every point, “initial referral,
intake, charging, pre-trial detention, transfer decisions, dispositional decisions, and post-adjudication confinement in youth or adult facilities” (Marrus, 2015, p. 37).

In addition to receiving disproportionate discipline in school, African-American students end up in separate classrooms within the same school. Racialized tracking, a practice born shortly after Brown and corresponding desegregation orders, keeps school classrooms segregated (Francis & Darity, 2021). One form is seen through policies that created the magnet school concept where middle-class White students are encouraged to attend enriched education programs inside inner-city and/or predominately African-American schools to give the appearance of integration (Francis & Darity, 2021). Within the magnet schools, White students are placed on tracks that situate them within advanced or enriched courses, while minorities are mostly placed in standard or remedial classes (West, 1994). Another example is the fact that African-American students disproportionately under enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in every state in the United States (Office for Civil Rights, 2018). According to Francis and Darity (2021), racial segregation manifests itself as White and Asian students enrolling in AP courses while African-American and Hispanic students receive placement in standard or remedial courses. Advanced courses expose students to highly trained teachers, the higher likelihood of attending a four-year college or university, and access to social networks that support academic achievement (Darity & Jolla, 2009; Oakes, 2005; Smith et al., 2017). The practice of tracking students of color in lower education tracks fails to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity (Oluwole & Green, 2020). Lower track students essentially have their futures in school and subsequently in society defined. The preceding realities accumulate and result in barriers to accessing higher education or
entry-level workforce programs that lead to high-wage careers (Carnevale et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; Plaut et al., 2018; Shillingford & Finnell, 2017; Tatum, 2017).

**Modern African-American Student Outcomes**

Carnevale et al. (2019) noted the grim statistical reality the majority of African-American students face. African-American students are more likely to suffer from poverty, risk exposure to low-quality public education, and are within schools and communities that have re-segregated themselves (Carnavale et al., 2019; Turner, 2017). Furthermore, predominantly White, middle-class, female teachers teach African-American students and are less likely to engage the students academically or refer them for rigorous college preparatory courses (Department of Education, 2016; Turner, 2017). The preceding realities accumulate and result in barriers to accessing higher education or entry-level workforce programs that lead to high wage careers (Carnevale et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; Plaut et al., 2018; Shillingford & Finnell, 2017; Tatum, 2017). The stark disparities between Black and White or rich and poor that were pointed out by researchers for the past 30 years (Carnevale et al., 2019; Kozol, 1991) continue to plague African-American students as they strive to achieve some semblance of the American dream through education attainment (Kozol, 1991; Carnevale et al., 2019). Observations such as student achievement gaps in math and reading, lack of adequate learning materials, and overcrowded schools in disrepair are just some of the reasons why scholars and education advocates have been pushing to address issues surrounding the inequities in culturally responsive ways that integrate elements of students’ backgrounds into pedagogy (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Johnson, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Pitre, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001).
The previous section demonstrated the structural nature of racialized social, political, and policy barriers that hindered African-American student achievement from slavery to today. From the historical review, it is clear to see why Losenski (2017) argued that educational determination, apart from the desire for full participation in civic life, should be the focus of conversations regarding African-American students. The next section highlights how critical consciousness engenders educational self-determination among African-American students.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness describes a person’s ability to recognize and analyze oppressive forces that shape society and to take action against the forces (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) stated that the primary goal of education should be to engage students from oppressed groups in learning how to decode and challenge their social condition. Freire’s theory of critical consciousness asserts that marginalized and oppressed people groups must learn to analyze the root-cause of their social conditions, which will inspire them to act in such a way to create change (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011).

Critical consciousness consists of three overlapping, reciprocal constructs: critical reflection, political agency, and social action. Critical reflection (or social analysis) is the ability to analyze and reject social inequities (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). It goes beyond basic knowledge to include the ability to analyze the root causes of oppression as it exists within structural and institutional forces (Seider et al., 2020). As marginalized groups develop critical reflection, “dominant narratives that hide or perpetuate oppression lose credibility” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 849) and people can “challenge accepted explanations for social phenomena” (Montero, 2009, p. 78). Adolescents’
growing cognitive abilities as they move from early to later adolescents enables them to recognize and understand instances of systemic racism, which represents a form of critical reflection (Hughes & Bigler, 2011; Quintana, 2008; Seider et al., 2019).

Political agency is the belief that one has the capacity to bring about social or political change (Beaumont, 2010). Political agency is a part of critical consciousness as it can change an individual’s critical reflection into a commitment to oppose oppression through social action (Seider & Graves, 2020). Political agency is a strong predictor of political participation, political interest, and attention to current events (Abrams & de Moura, 2002; Beaumont, 2010; Levy, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2004; Seider & Graves, 2020). Seider and Graves (2020) suggested that in order for minority youth to attain high levels of political agency, their families, schools, churches, and other formative influences should work together to intentionally build the competency.

Finally, social action refers to participating in events or activities that confront sources of oppression and the unequal conditions in which they perpetuate (Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011). Such activity intends to challenge and change the structures and oppressive forces and can be in the form of individual or collective action (Seider et al., 2020). Seider and Graves (2020) framed social action as the ability to navigate and circumvent obstacles within predominantly White settings and institutions (for example predominantly White colleges and universities). In their study, minority adolescents developed academic and navigational skills to help them overcome obstacles associated with being prepared to enter, succeed, and subsequently graduate from college.

Seider et al. (2016, 2017a, 2017b) extend the framework for critical consciousness by describing it as the ability to analyze, navigate, and challenge the oppressive social
forces shaping one’s life and community. Related to critical reflection, they describe the ability to analyze oppressive social forces as possessing the ability to recognize the causes and consequences of equality. Instead of using the term political agency, Seider et al. (2016, 2017a, 2017b) reference navigating oppressive social forces as recognizing and circumventing obstacles within one’s path. Similar to social action, challenging oppressive social forces is engaging in social action needed to change systems of oppression (Seider et al., 2020; Seider et al., 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

A growing body of research points to critical consciousness as a tool through which adolescents of color can resist the negative effects of systemic oppression and challenge its root cause (Seider & Graves, 2020). Researchers have found connections between high levels of critical consciousness among minority youth and their ability to demonstrate resilience, mental health, self-esteem, academic achievement, high professional aspirations, and civic and political engagement (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Godfrey et al., 2019; Nicolas et al., 2008; O’Leary & Romero, 2011; Seider et al., 2020; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1999).

Researchers studied critical consciousness in a variety of contexts with students. Researchers have demonstrated that employing critical consciousness expands young people’s commitment to challenging pervasive injustice (Ginwright, 2010; Watts et al., 2011). Critical consciousness increases academic achievement and engagement (Cabrera et al., 2014; Carter, 2008; Dee & Penner, 2016; O’Connor, 1997) and improves enrollment in higher education (Rogers & Terriquez, 2013). Diemer and Blustein (2006) showed that urban youth with higher levels of critical consciousness had greater clarity in
their vocational identity, demonstrated higher commitment to their future careers, and viewed work as a larger part of their future lives. Furthermore, Cadenas et al. (2018) found that college students with higher levels of critical consciousness had higher intentions to persist through college. Researchers suggest that critical consciousness may have the potential to replace feelings of isolation and blame for one’s challenges with engagement in social justice (Diemer et al., 2014; Ginwright, 2010). Critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics (Carter, 2008). Previous researchers denote that critical consciousness is an “antidote to oppression” and a type of “psychological armor” against racially oppressive forces (Phan, 2010; Watts et al., 1999). Given the positive effects critical consciousness has on student outcomes, evidence suggests that raising critical conscious beliefs among African-American students can improve academic achievement (Seider et al., 2020; Seider et al., 2020). However, according to Flores et al. (2019), the field needs more research to understand how critical consciousness beliefs develop among youth. Researchers suggest that critical consciousness can be developed through any space or medium that significantly influences one’s social development such as family, community, schools, and media (Carlson et al., 2006; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Hernandez et al., 2012; Morrell, 2002). Extant research on developing critical consciousness has mainly focused on adolescent development through schools or community based organizations (Seider et al., 2020). Recently, Seider and Graves (2020) explained how critical consciousness develops among Black and Latinx youth within the school context. The literature does not address
how critical consciousness develops in other contexts within African-American students’
ecosphere, such as their local Black Church.

The Black Church and Education

According to Watts et al. (1999), healthy development for African-American
students includes growth in the personal, cultural, sociopolitical, and spiritual domains.
One source of spiritual enrichment is the Black Church. A historic and re-emerging
culturally responsive solution for closing African-American student equity gaps is the
involvement of the historically Black Church. The Black Church has had a longstanding
positive impact in the lives of African-Americans (Caldwell et al., 1992). From its
inception as an “invisible institution” during slavery to well beyond the Civil Rights era,
the Black Church has provided religious, educational, political, physical, and social
support for its membership and the surrounding community (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).
For several decades, scholars have written on the importance and impact the Black
Church has had in the lives of African-Americans (Billingsley, 1999; Caldwell et al.,
1992; Drake & Cayton, 1940; Dubois, 1953 (1996), 1903 (2003); Frazier, 1964; Harvey
et al., 2016; Johnson, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Mays & Nicholson, 1933;
McRoberts, 2001, 2003; Morris, 1984; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975; Pinn, 2017; Sinha,
2007). Collectively, historians hold the social institution as a foundation for community
and religious life among African-Americans (Nickens & Fallen, 2008). Serving as both a
place of religious worship and a source of community development, Black Churches
influence the upward mobility of low-income families (Billingsley, 1999), provide social
support such as religious and secular education, political action, entrepreneurship
resources (McCubbin et al., 1998), and personal development programs (Dart, 2001).
According to foundational research by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), alongside the African-American family, the Black Church is a major historic institution within the American Black community. The Black Church continues to execute its religious, social justice, and social service role within African-American communities despite the country’s 250 years of slavery, 150 years of Jim Crow segregation laws, policies, and practices, and the residuals of racism and discrimination that remain entrenched within every aspect of modern American culture (Shevon et al., 2016).

Going beyond religious worship, the Black Church has historically leveraged its theology through political engagement, serving as a refuge to the community, and providing social services (Sinha, 2007). From the abolition of slavery and the participation of Black Republican Reconstruction-era politicians to the leadership of the civil rights and modern social justice reform movements, the Black Church is at the center of political engagement and advocates for the welfare of African-Americans (Barnes, 2004). Furthermore, the Black Church offers African-Americans a communal shelter, a context for racial identity, and a place of restoration amidst the historic and modern oppression experienced as a marginalized minority group within the United States (Haight, 2002; Sinha, 2007;). Within the Black Church, formal and informal social service programs have afforded African-Americans the opportunity to receive medical care, religious and secular education, character and personal development, job-related training, mentoring, and tutoring (Dart, 2001; Neighbors et al., 1983). The Black Church congregational investments in human and social capital over the years have worked in staunch opposition to other institutional and governmental structures that have either ignored or discriminated against African-Americans (Sinha, 2007).
Not only have Black Church human and social capital investments translated to improved outcomes for African-Americans in the past, but the investments continue today. Barber (2015) argues that the Black Church has the ability to fight racism and provide for the members of the community in areas that the public sphere either will not or cannot achieve. The Black Church was active through Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and into the current “Black Lives Matter” movement (Rickford, 2016) and continue to offer support in the African-American community regardless of concerns from external influences (Barber, 2015). Hankerson et al. (2018) find that the relationship that members of the community had with Black Churches made it an ideal place to encourage healthy behaviors and foster strong relationships with other services available. With the goal of encouraging the community members to seek mental health services when necessary, Hankerson et al. (2018) rely on the relationship to increase accessibility and improve the overall health of the community.

Numerous Black Churches, whether individually or as a part of larger faith-based organizations and denominational affiliations, serve their communities in direct ways through education initiatives. As early as 1933, Mays and Nicholson find that Black Churches participated in community education outreach. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) conclude that Black Churches provided a variety of educational support for African-American students, including supporting historically Black colleges through regular donations. Howell (2012) finds Black Churches provide social supports that positively influence the experiences of African-American students. Buckley (2017) finds that a Black Church youth mentoring program provided relatable advocates for African-American students while providing motivation for future aspirations to attend college.
With more than 34,000 member churches from 15 denominations and 15.7 million African-American congregants, the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) engages in improving student outcomes in numerous ways (NBCI, 2019). Current NBCI activities include focusing on the prevention of African-American male student drop out by providing engaging education opportunities through the National Academy Foundation and addressing the cycle of low education attainment, poverty, and crime through holistic pre-Kindergarten to postsecondary education by employing proven training models. NBCI established the Childhood Advocacy and Development Institute to support communication delays and autism screenings for infants initiative (NBCI, 2019). Based on the success of other initiatives that fostered connections with the Black Church to facilitate positive outcomes, the study explored the possibility of critical consciousness promotion within the Black Church for the benefit of African-American students.

Theories Supporting the Study

The following section explains the conceptual framework used to guide the selection of the study’s methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and inform its structure (Merriam, 1998). The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates how human capital theory, critical race theory, prophetic activism, and the theory of planned behavior are analytical tools to explore the study’s research objectives. The following section explains the tenants the theories espouse and describes how they relate to the current study.

*Human Capital Theory*

Human capital theory posits that there is value in the knowledge, skills, and abilities that people possess (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1981). There are two foundational elements of the theory. First, human capital can be enhanced through education and
training (Schultz, 1981). Education relates to wage differentials or income distribution (Schultz, 1981). Early research in human capital focused on how earnings links to educational experience (Gillies, 2015). Research demonstrates that individuals received financial returns in terms of higher wages or higher lifetime earnings for investments in education (Schultz, 1981). Therefore, education is an investment. The second element of human capital departed from earlier notions of classical economics that viewed the workforce in quantitative terms. Human capital theory views the workforce in qualitative terms whereas education and training enhances the quality of the workforce (Gillies, 2015). Thus, broadening the concept of individual economic returns to the generic economic benefits that firms and societies accrue from a well-educated, well-trained workforce. Early research focused on using human capital theory to account for economic growth for firms and countries that invested in educational opportunities for their workforce (Gilles, 2015). More recently, the definition of human capital expanded from knowledge, skills, and abilities to include attributes, attitudes, and competencies (Gilles, 2015).

Competencies are the ability or capacity to act appropriately in a given situation (OECD, 2013). Dubois (1998) defines competencies as the demonstrable characteristics, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and thought patterns that result in successful performance. One can consider critical consciousness as a human capital competency because it is the demonstrable skill and ability to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice (Seider & Graves, 2020). Evidence suggests that raising critical consciousness among African-American students through education and training can improve academic achievement (Seider et al., 2020; Seider et al., 2020). As Sieder and Graves (2020) demonstrate there
are several ways to foster the development of critical consciousness through education and training. The study used human capital’s concept of competencies as a foundation for the exploration of the intentions of Black Church leaders to foster the development of critical consciousness in African-American students.

*Critical Race Theory*

Critical race theory (CRT) posits that racism is not an individual issue, but is systemic in nature requiring solutions that address the system or structural levels of the problem (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Delanty, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) describes CRT as consisting of the following: (a) counter-storytelling; (b) the permanence of racism; (c) whiteness as property; (d) interest convergence; and (e) the critique of liberalism. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explain CRT tenets as follows:

- Racism is ordinary and difficult to address because people rarely acknowledge it.
- Gains in civil rights are a result of interest convergence, where Whites gain something in exchange for helping minorities.
- Race is a social construct “not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (p. 9).
- Differential racialization occurs because the dominant society “racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market” (p. 10).
- Considering intersectionality is important because “everyone has potentially overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances” (p. 11).
The voice-of-color thesis purports that “because of the different histories and experiences with oppression, Black, American Indian, Asian, and Latino writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their White counterparts matters that Whites are unlikely to know” (p. 11).

CRT emerged from the legal literature as a theoretical lens to challenge universal practices of developing norms for people of color based largely on the standards of White authoritative notions (John, 1992). The norms typically characterized people of color as inferior that resulted in negative legal and educational outcomes (John, 1992). CRT acknowledges race as one of the foremost influences in the treatment of people groups in American culture (Blauner, 2001). Padilla and Lindolm (1995), Lightfoot (1980), and Tate (1995) note how paradigms of assumed inferiority based on race negatively affected African-Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) describe CRT as consisting of several components, one of which being counter-storytelling. They describe counter-storytelling as going against assumed inferiority by hearing from the perspective of the oppressed people groups through narratives. The line of reasoning follows Delgado and Stefancic’s (2017) conception of the voices of color thesis. Witherspoon and Mitchell (2009) uses CRT and its intersection with religion to explore themes of helping students overcome barriers related to racial oppression through the narratives of African-American leaders. For the study, the researcher used CRT as a lens to explore the narratives of Black Church leaders’ intentions to foster the development of critical consciousness among African-American students.
Prophetic Activism

Prophetic activism is throughout the literature as researchers explore the role of the Black Church serving as an advocate for African-Americans in a variety of spheres. Prophetic activism describes the activities that Black Churches execute, beyond their membership, to improve economic, social, political, and education outcomes for African-American communities (Barnes, 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2003). Prophetic activism refers to the “very extroverted forms of religious presences - forms that somehow benefit not only the congregation members but people who do not belong to the church” (McRoberts, 2003, p. 100). The researcher notes that not all Black Churches engage in prophetic activism. In proposing a dialectical model of the Black Church, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) saw churches in a constant series of six types of dialectical tensions. The six pairs of polar opposites include:

- The dialectic between the Priestly (involved in activities focused on worship and the spiritual lives of members) and Prophetic (involved in political and wider community activities) function.
- The dialectic between the Other worldly (primarily concerned with heaven, life after death, and eternal life) versus This-worldly (reflects involvement with the activities of this world such as politics) orientation.
- The dialectic between Universalism (focuses on the church’s universal Christian message) versus Particularism (focuses on the specifics of racism demonstrated by White Christianity and society).
- The dialectic between the Communal (involved with all aspects of the lives of its members) versus the Privatistic (focusing only on religious needs) orientation.
• The dialectic between Charismatic (with an emphasis on special church gifts and speaking abilities) and Bureaucratic (emphasizing administrative tasks and structures) orientation.

• The dialectic between Resistance (affirming Black heritage) versus Accommodation (assimilating in the larger community) functions.

The dialects exist on a continuum and can shift either way over time. According to Lincoln and Mamiya’s (1990) model, Black Churches involved in prophetic activism tend to be oriented toward Prophetic functions, This-worldly activities, Communal, and Resistant orientations. Black Churches engaged in prophetic activism are involved in activities that lead to economic and political empowerment and the sustainment of cultural and racial or ethnic identity (Barnes, 2004; Morris, 1984; Nelsen et al., 1971). Numerous scholars posit that continuous prophetic activism of Black Churches fought against slavery, segregation, and continuous forms of racial oppression (Baldwin, 2003; Franklin, 2007; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; West, 1982). In particular, Jordan and Wilson (2017) demonstrated how collaborative partnerships between Black Churches and public schools improved African-American student success. Jordan et al. (2012) used prophetic activism to describe actions taken by Black Churches to support the academic needs of African-American students. For the present study, prophetic activism was a lens to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards supporting the development of critical consciousness for the benefit of African-American students’ academic success.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior assumes that in a particular context, what a person does (a behavior) forms based on intention (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) postulates that
intentions reflect motivational influences: behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Ajzen (199) explains behavioral attitudes as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question,” subjective norms as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior,” and perceived behavioral control as “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior ... assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (p. 188). According to Ajzen (2002), behavioral beliefs result in either a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior; normative beliefs produce perceived social pressure (or subjective norm); and control beliefs produce perceived behavioral control. Together, behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control form behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2002). Behavioral intention influences the actual control over the behavior. Thus, intention is an antecedent of a behavior (Ajzen, 2002). In a meta-analysis consisting of 185 theory of planned behavior related studies, Armitage and Conner (2001) concluded that the theory accounted for 27 to 39% of the variance of behavioral intention.

Researchers applied the theory of planned behavior for decades in a variety of fields to predict behavior. Early work used the theory to predict a myriad of health-related behavioral intentions (Godin & Kok, 1996). The theory has application in the business and technology sectors (Braun & Turner, 2014; Fraser et al., 2010; Fraser et al., 2011; Hernandez et al., 2012; Hunsinger & Smith, 2005). Davis et al., (2006) applies the theory in an educational setting by predicting the intentions of African-American students to complete schooling. Stone, Jawahar, and Kismore (2010) use the theory to predict academic misconduct intentions of students. Aliverini and Lucidi (2011) examine the
relationship between social context, self-efficacy, motivation, and academic achievement on intentions of high school students to drop out of school. In all of the examples, various factors predict intentions using the theory of planned behavior through quantitative means. Much of the literature applies the theory of planned behavior quantitatively (Renzi & Klobas, 2008). However, there are some researchers that have used qualitative methods because of the nature of available data, such as interviews, or the limited availability of cases. Renzi and Klobas (2008) use the theory of planned behavior through interviews to explain the difference in university teaching. Sadaf et al. (2012) use qualitative means to explore the factors that predict the intentions of teachers using technology.

The theory of planned behavior posits that behavioral intention is an indication of “how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). With signifying how ready a person is to perform a behavior, behavioral intention predicts the likeliness of actually following through with the behavior. Therefore, if a person has an intention to engage in a particular behavior, they are more likely to engage in it if it is within their control to do so. As previously stated, the three predictors of behavioral intention are behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the study, the behavior of interest is the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness by Black Church leaders. The study used the theory of planned behavior to explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they have towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness.
Behavioral Attitudes. Behavioral attitudes are the favorable or unfavorable evaluations a person has about a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For example, a Black Church leader may think that teaching African-American students critical consciousness is a good or bad idea. Behavioral beliefs about a behavior form the behavioral attitude. Behavioral beliefs develop because of a person’s perception of the consequences associated with a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The consequences of the behavior may include whether it will be enjoyable or not, or whether it will be beneficial or harmful. For example, a Black Church leader may have a belief that teaching African-American students critical consciousness is beneficial because it will prepare the students for the situations they may face in life. The particular behavioral belief is likely to contribute to favorable attitudes towards teaching critical consciousness to African-American students. On the other hand, the behavioral belief might be that a Black Church leader may believe that teaching critical consciousness to African-American students is beyond the scope of religious responsibilities of the church and would invite scrutiny from church members. The belief will likely contribute to an unfavorable attitude towards teaching critical consciousness. Factors that affect behavioral beliefs, and ultimately attitudes are the strength of each behavioral belief and the belief that a particular consequence may take place (Ajzen, 1991). For example, a Black Church leader may have an overall favorable attitude towards teaching critical consciousness if they have a strong belief that the tenets of critical consciousness align with biblical messages even if he or she also has a lesser belief that there would be scrutiny from church members.

Subjective Norms. Ajzen (1991) describes subjective norms as the perceived social pressure a person feels to perform or not perform a particular behavior. For
example, a Black Church leader might feel social pressure (or not) to teach critical consciousness from other ministers within the same denomination, from parents, or from higher levels of leadership within the denominational community. Normative beliefs form subjective norms. Normative beliefs are the social pressure beliefs a person perceives in the performance (or not) of a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In simple terms, would others encourage and/or participate in the behavior? To what extent is the person motivated to comply with the norms? A Black Church leader that observes other ministers teaching critical consciousness to African-American students may feel the social pressure to do the same, especially if the leader values staying current and relevant with the trends in ministry.

*Perceived behavioral control.* According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioral control is the perceived ease or difficulty a person views about the performance of the behavior. A key assumption is that perceived behavioral control reflects experiences and anticipated obstacles (Ajzen, 1991). Does the individual feel capable of performing the behavior and does he or she feel confident that they are able to overcome any challenges that may arise in performing the behavior? Perceived behavioral control forms because of control beliefs. Control beliefs are a person’s beliefs about the things that could be barriers or enablers to performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For example, a Black Church leader may or may not believe that adding critical consciousness to the curriculum taught to African-American students is within their control. While one leader may have the control belief that they cannot add critical consciousness to the curriculum due to time constraints, another may have the control belief that they can overcome the constraint of limited time with students.
Not only does perceived behavioral control predict behavioral intentions, it also predicts the performance of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Regardless of the actual challenges to performing the behavior, people with high levels of perceived behavioral control are likely to exert more effort in trying to execute the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Overall, the theory of planned behavior considers the perception of barriers and enablers that an individual may or may not perceive that they have control over, which in turn affects the individual’s ability to execute the behavior, regardless of intention (Ajzen, 1991).

Limitations of the Theory of Planned Behavior. As previously mentioned, researchers used the theory of planned behavior for decades to predict behavioral intentions. However, some such as Sneihotta et al. (2014), criticize the theory conceptually and on its predictive validity. For example, they claim that the theory is static in nature, the concepts presented in the theory’s model do not fully account for planned human behavior, nor does it address the role of emotions, unconscious behavior, or future actions (Sneihotta et al., 2014). In addition, while the theory does predict intentions, it does not always lead to behavior. Ajzen (2014) addressed each criticism directly as he pointed out that many of the objections stemmed from a misunderstanding of the theory, oversimplification, or misguided arguments. For example, he pointed to the evidence of the predictive validity of the theory. Furthermore, he noted that the model is an oversimplification of the theory and that supporting texts fully explain feedback loops associated with cognition and future intentions and actions (Ajzen, 2014).

Chapter Summary

The chapter reviewed the literature to support the present study. The review of literature for the study began by providing the sociohistorical and political context for the
linkages between race and education in America. It demonstrated how individual and societal structures limited African-American access to and attainment of education. Next, the text reviewed critical consciousness with special attention to its impact on improving minority student outcomes. The literature review established the foundation of the behavior the study seeks to explore, the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The review included literature on the Black Church, the historic role in supporting the African-American community, and the ways in which the Black Church continues to support African-American student success. The discussion pointed to why the study chose the context of the historic Black Church to explore the intentions of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The researcher included relevant literature on the theories to support the conceptual framework for the study which consisted of human capital theory, critical race theory, prophetic activism, and the theory of planned behavior. Together, they provided a theoretical lens for the exploration of Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they have towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology for the study. The chapter begins by discussing the research objectives and the study’s qualitative research design. It will cover the development and the content of the instrumentation. Next, the chapter will explain the study's population, sample, and sampling procedures. Finally, the chapter will conclude with information on the data collection and analysis procedures and the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis procedures.
CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

African-American students experience human capital opportunity and achievement gaps (Pitre, 2014). Researchers have called for culturally relevant strategies to help close the gaps (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Johnson, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Pitre, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001). The historic Black Church, a part of many African-American students’ culture and community, serves as a historic and current source of social capital for positive human capital development outcomes (Billingsley, 1999; Harvey et al., 2016; Johnson, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2001, 2003; Pinn, 2017; Sinha, 2007). Critical consciousness also develops positive human capital outcomes, such as academic achievement, in African-American and other minority students (Cabera et al., 2014; Cadenas et al., 2018; Carter, 2008; Dee & Penner, 2016; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Ginwright, 2010; O’Connor, 1997; Rogers & Terriquez, 2013; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). Fulgham (2013) calls for churches’ direct involvement in initiatives that can improve academic achievement of low income and minority students. Chism (2013) demonstrates the presence of critical consciousness in the motivation of a Black Church denomination’s struggle to address racial injustice. Black Churches may have the opportunity to close the achievement gap for African-American students if they are willing to help develop critical consciousness. Much of the literature on critical consciousness is quantitative in nature and therefore does not include the intentions or the willingness of organizations to develop critical consciousness (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016).
The purpose of the study was to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. More specifically, what are Black Church leaders’ perceptions of their intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness? Because critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics (Carter, 2008), Black Churches that intend to teach it will be an example of a culturally relevant strategy to close African-American student opportunity and achievement gaps.

Ajzen (1991) postulates that intentions reflect motivational influences: behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The study explored Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they had towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The current study used a qualitative approach to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. Using qualitative research methods enables the researcher to collect rich descriptive data about the participants’ perceptions (Stake, 2010). The current chapter will discuss the methodology for the study. The chapter begins by discussing the research objectives and the study’s qualitative research design. The chapter covers the development and the content of the instrumentation. Next, the chapter will explain the study's population, sample, and sampling procedures. Finally, the chapter will conclude with information on the data collection and analysis procedures and the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis procedures.
Research Objectives

The study explored the intentions of Black Church leaders. The subsequent list of research objectives enabled the researcher to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness so that they are able to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice.

RO1 Describe the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, denominational affiliation, the position held within the church, and years of experience in the current position.

RO2 Explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

RO3 Explore Black Church leaders’ subjective norms towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

RO4 Explore Black Church leaders’ perceived behavioral control towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

RO5 Explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design. Qualitative research enables investigation of a research problem to ascertain insights into an individual’s or group’s perspective concerning a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), the phenomenological approach draws from philosophical, psychological, and educational backgrounds and is best suited for research problems where it is important to “understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences
of a phenomenon” (p. 60). The goal in phenomenological research is to describe what participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon and to reduce the experiences into a description of the very nature of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). The study explored Black Church leaders’ intentions to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

In implementing a phenomenological approach, the researcher is required to identify and remove or bracket his or her own experiences during data collection and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). In qualitative research, the researcher should avoid inserting their views and preconceived ideas into the study (Creswell, 2013; McMillan, 2012). However, the task is a notable challenge to the approach (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). LeVasseur (2003) suggests that instead of bracketing, the researcher should seek to suspend understanding in a reflective manner that elicits curiosity and allows the researcher to decide how and in what ways the researcher will account for personal understandings during the study.

Instrumentation

Phenomenological research uses in-depth interviews to collect data from the study’s participants (Creswell, 2003). Interviews are more likely to generate discussions and stimulate conversation that will provide the researcher with rich data (Kalowitz, 2001). The researcher typically records and transcribes the interviews (Bailey, 2008; Matheson, 2007; van Manen, 1990). An aim in qualitative research is to produce a convincing analytical narrative based on rich, complex, and detailed data (Baker and Edwards, 2012). After conducting a study with expert qualitative researchers, Baker and
Edwards (2012) concludes that selecting the amount of interviewees to have rich data depends on:

- whether the focus of the objectives and of analysis is on commonality or difference or uniqueness or complexity or comparison or instances. Practical issues to take into account include the level of degree, the time available, institutional committee requirements. And both philosophically and pragmatically, the judgment of the epistemic community in which a student or researcher wishes to be or is located, is another key consideration. (p. 42)

The researcher also mentioned that interviews could range from 12 to 60 participants. Many of the researchers Edwards interviewed recommended conducting interviews until saturation is reached. For the present study, the researcher sought to conduct a minimum of 12 one-on-one semi-structured interviews, until saturation is reached, using open-ended interview questions to collect the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The data reached saturation with 11 interviews. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), a qualitative researcher can determine if they reached saturation “when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible” (p.1408). During analysis, the researcher determined that the 11 interviews generated enough information for others to replicate the study. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that no additional information could be attained based on the similarities within the participants’ responses. Lastly, through coding, theme development, and clustering, the researcher determined that there were no additional codes.
The in-depth interviews consisted of a series of nine, open-ended and demographic questions (see Appendix A). Critical race theory (Bell, 1970) and the theory of prophetic activism (McRoberts, 203) were used to focus the study on the perspectives of Black Church leaders on the human capital competency of critical consciousness. The researcher adapted questions from the theory of planned behavior’s constructs (behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) for intention (Ajzen, 1991; Montaño, 2008):

- Positive and negative beliefs about teaching African-American students critical consciousness (behavioral attitude) (Q1-Q4)
- Individuals or groups that might favor or oppose teaching African-American students critical consciousness (subjective norms) (Q5-Q6)
- Facilitators and barriers to teaching African-American students critical consciousness (perceived behavioral control) (Q7-Q8)
- Intentions of teaching African-American students critical consciousness (Q9)

The researcher created a survey map to align research questions to the study’s research objectives as a means to ensure content validity (Phillips et al., 2013). Table 1 demonstrates the alignment of interview questions to research objectives.
Table 1 *Mapping of Research Objectives to Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objectives (RO)</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO1 - Describe the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, denominational affiliation, the position held within the church, and years of experience in the current position.</td>
<td>Demo-graphics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO2 - Explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO3 - Explore Black Church leaders’ subjective norms towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Q5, Q6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO4 - Explore Black Church leaders’ perceived behavioral control towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Q7, Q8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO5 - Explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.</td>
<td>Q9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher developed the interview instrument and interview protocol to carry out data collection for the study. The researcher executed a pilot study to test the sampling procedures and instrumentation used by the researcher during data collection. Kim (2011) suggests that conducting a pilot study in qualitative phenomenological research could help a researcher identify issues and barriers that may arise with recruiting potential study participants. Kim (2011) also reports that a pilot study could identify the difficulties in conducting phenomenological inquiry and may create the need to modify interview questions. Therefore, the researcher conducted the pilot study to test the study’s recruitment procedures, the interview questions, and the inquiry process.

The researcher conducted the pilot prior to the beginning of the data collection phase of the study. The pilot included participants that met the study’s criteria.
Recruitment was among the researcher’s network of colleagues via an invitation email. The researcher scheduled a date and time to conduct the interviews at the participants’ convenience. The researcher incorporated lessons learned from the pilot into the study’s recruitment procedures, interview questions, and inquiry process. The researcher did not use the data gathered from the pilot during the analysis phase of the study. The researcher only used the pilot to ensure that the data collection procedures produced intended results. The pilot occurred before the IRB application so that the researcher could add any alterations to procedures prior to seeking approval to conduct research.

Role of the Researcher

While Given (2016) notes that the qualitative researcher should authentically describe information within a study, she also contends that researcher bias may still be present. Creswell (2013) also notes the difficulty of bias in data collection, analysis, and developing conclusions by the qualitative researcher. LeVasseur (2003) suggests that instead of trying to remove researcher bias, the researcher should seek to suspend understanding in a reflective manner that elicits curiosity and allows the researcher to decide how and in what ways personal understandings will influence the study. Furthermore, Given (2016) posits that researcher bias in qualitative research can be beneficial when the researcher is aware and embraces his or her own bias. The researcher for the current study is an African-American and currently attends a Black Church. The researcher’s father was a Black Church leader and the researcher is married to a Black Church leader.

As a child, the researcher experienced Black Church prophetic activism. Prophetic activism describes the activities that Black Churches execute, beyond their membership,
to improve economic, social, political, and education outcomes for African-American communities (Barnes, 2004; Jordan & Wilson, 2017; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2003). The researcher participated in youth and community programs aimed at spiritual and personal growth, economic empowerment, and physical and financial support to churches in Africa. The researcher has attended a Black Church for 40 years and has held various youth teaching roles for 10 years. The researcher acknowledged her own bias that she believes Black Churches should be involved in teaching critical consciousness to African-American youth. Therefore, the researcher used journaling and reflection (Meyer & Wills, 2018) as validation strategies to ensure the study remained objective.

Population and Sample

Trochim (2006) defines a research population as a group of individuals central to the study and have similar characteristics. From the research population, the researcher selects a sample to participate in the study (Trochim, 2016). In phenomenological research, the sample is small, typically 3-25 individuals, and homogenous (Creswell, 2013). The research population for the study were African-Americans leaders with membership in Black Churches in the southern United States. Warf and Winsberg (2010) report large concentrations of Black Churches in the southern United States. Chatters et al. (2011) report that African Americans in the southern region of the country were more likely to seek assistance for problems from Black Church leaders. Williams et al. (2019) contend that Black Churches in the South were less likely to promote social advocacy programs than churches located in other regions. Southern congregants may be interested in seeking assistance for improving outcomes for African-American students from the
Black Church, but the same churches may not be as interested in social advocacy. Therefore, the study’s sample included Black Church leaders in the southern United States.

Sampling Procedures

The current study used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that “the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2). According to Etikan et al. (2016), researchers typically use purposive sampling to “identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources” (p. 2). When conducting purposive sampling, the researcher identifies a set of criteria relevant to the study and then selects individuals that are knowledgeable enough to speak to the phenomena the study addresses. For the present study, the researcher identified and selected individuals that are Black Church leaders in the southern United States that currently hold a teaching/preaching position. The researcher recruited participants meeting the study’s criteria from the membership of churches listed in an online Black Church directory. The directory includes 1,075 churches of various Black Church denominations across the United States. The directory divides the country into four regions: northern, midwestern, western, and southern. The southern region consists of 113 churches in 15 southern states. The researcher used the directory to contact Black Church leaders with teaching/preaching roles to participate in the study. The researcher sent a recruitment email to Black Church leaders located through the directory to invite study participants.
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The University of Southern Mississippi’s (USM) IRB is a committee that reviews and monitors university research to protect the rights and the welfare of human subjects. The IRB at USM can approve or disapprove research. The IRB may also require researchers to modify their study in order to gain approval. The goal of the IRB is to ensure that there is minimal risk to the human subjects, that the researcher protects the participants’ privacy, and that all data collected remains confidential. The researcher submitted the study for IRB approval (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

The current study used semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to collect data. Semi-structured interviews enable a verbal exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee by asking questions from a predetermined list (Longhurst, 2003). However, the interviewer may ask additional questions based on the interviewee’s responses. In-depth interviews are the most common form of data collection used for the phenomenological research method (Creswell, 2013). Interviews enable the researcher to obtain a complete description of study participants’ perspectives of the phenomena (Giorgi, 2009). The use of semi-structured interviews will enable flexibility during the interview process and foster a discussion between the interviewer and the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Semi-structured interviews also allow space for original and unexpected issues to arise and allow the researcher the flexibility to investigate it in more detail (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The interview protocol in Appendix C guided the interview process.
The data collection for the study took place during the summer and early fall of 2021 during year two of the global 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The federal pandemic guidelines suggest adherence to the practice of social distancing and avoiding crowds to reduce the spread of the virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Therefore, the researcher used electronic means of communication and data collection to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Creswell (2013) suggests that new and innovative data collection techniques are useful to qualitative researchers because they can reduce study costs and increase efficiency. The use of web-based meeting applications during the data collection for qualitative research is becoming increasingly common (O’Connor Madge, 2008; Gray et al., 2020). The researcher used a private Zoom meeting with each interviewee to gather data. The researcher addressed privacy concerns by having a unique password to the Zoom meeting session for each interview conducted. The web-based Zoom meeting platform audio recorded the interviews for later transcription.

Transcription allows the researcher to manage and analyze large amounts of qualitative data (Matheson, 2007). Automated transcription software with voice recognition technology has enabled researchers to transcribe digital recordings (Matheson, 2007). To transcribe the recorded interviews, the researcher used Zoom’s automated transcription feature for cloud recording. The researcher read and reread the transcript produced by the software multiple times while listening to the original recording to fix errors in the text (Wardell et al., 2020) Table 2 identifies the data collection procedures.
After the USM IRB approved the study, the researcher emailed potential participants to request their participation in the study (see Appendix D). The email explained the nature of the study and included a consent form to gain informed consent for participation from each participant. The researcher sent the consent form with the option for participants to electronically sign the consent form (see Appendix E). The researcher asked the participants to sign and return the consent form prior to starting the interviews. The researcher scheduled interviews within a five-week window at the convenience of the participants. All interviews used the web-based Zoom meeting platform. Participants received a reminder email prior to the interview with the Zoom meeting link and unique session password. Before the interviews, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to conceal the identity of each participant for confidentiality. The researcher intended to collect 12 interviews (Edwards, 2012), however the researcher conducted 11 one-on-one interviews because the data reached saturation. The researcher conducted the audio data from the interviews into text using voice-recognition transcription software within the Zoom platform to transcribe the recorded interviews.

After the transcription process, the researcher sent an email to each participant with a copy of the interview transcript for review for member checking (see Appendix F). Member checking, or participant validation, is a technique used to support the credibility of the data in qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). The email asked the participant to review the transcript for accuracy and address any errors within the data. The researcher allowed one week for participants to member check the transcription. If the researcher did not receive a response by the end of one week that time, the researcher assumed that the transcript was accurate. The researcher did not receive any responses. Once the accuracy
checking was complete, the researcher began reading the transcripts to develop codes and themes. Table 2 describes the 12-week data collection plan.

Table 2 Data Collection Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pre-Study | Obtain University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board approval  
Conduct pilot study  |
| 1 | Email participants information on the purpose of the study and request participation via Zoom  
Schedule date and time of interviews  |
| 2-6 | Gain informed consent, conduct and record one-on-one interviews  
Begin reflective journaling  
Transcribe audio data using Dragon transcription software  
Read and edit transcripts for accuracy  
Send participants post-interview email describing the next steps and ask for member checking of transcripts for accuracy  |
| 7-10 | Analyze interview transcripts to identify themes, coding, and comparing transcripts  |
| 11-12 | Create report detailing findings and key themes  
Email participants to thank them for their participation  |

Data Analysis

According to Stake (2010), data analysis and synthesis is an ongoing, interactive, and habituated inquiry process to understand the data. The qualitative researcher must simultaneously engage with some form of data analysis while collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the study, the data analysis coincided with the data collection
beginning with the use of reflective journaling. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic data. Table 3 outlines the data analysis plan.

Table 3 *Data Analysis Plan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Data Category</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RO1</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Interval</td>
<td>Frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>Frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td>Ordinal</td>
<td>Frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denominational affiliation</td>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>Frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position held within the church</td>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>Frequency distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of experience in current position</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>Mean, Standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO2</td>
<td>Behavioral attitudes</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>IPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO3</td>
<td>Subjective norms</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>IPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO4</td>
<td>Perceived behavioral control</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>IPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO5</td>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>IPA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher used the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework to analyze the data collected through journaling and from the audio and transcribed interview data. Data analysis for the study consisted of descriptive statistics and IPA analysis. The researcher analyzed the demographic data using descriptive statistics: frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. The researcher analyzed the text based data using a qualitative data analysis technique, IPA analysis. According to de Casterle et al. (2012), qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to grasp the meaning of a large volume of data by extracting significant facts, determining relevant
themes, ascertain meanings that lay behind the facts, and communicating the participants’ ideas on a conceptual level. The researcher used the IPA framework to analyze the data collected through journaling and from the audio and transcribed interview data. The researcher identified and isolated her preconceptions and allowed the data to speak for itself (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher sought to view the data from the subjects’ point of view, within their unique contexts, and made meaning comprehensible by translating it (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher used reflective journaling throughout the data collection process in alignment with Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) observation that the qualitative researcher simultaneously analyzes data as the researcher collects it.

The IPA framework provided flexible data analysis guidelines that were adapted by the researcher according to the study’s research objectives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The guidelines include multiple readings of the transcript, making notes of observations, conducting an initial coding process, transforming the notes into emergent themes, seeking relationships and clustering themes, employing the guidelines for each transcript, and determining patterns across participant transcripts. For the present study, the researcher read each transcript while listening to the audio transcript to verify accuracy. The researcher further checked for accuracy by emailing each participant a text based transcript of the interview to validate the transcripts for accuracy (member checking). The researcher conducted multiple readings of the reflective journal entries and the interview transcripts. During the readings, the researcher made notes of insights and reflections. In alignment with Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), the researcher made notes from the transcripts that were detailed, comprehensive, and reflected the original
data. The researcher identified initial codes and annotated the codes in the left outer margin of the transcript, aligning it with each research objective. Next, the researcher transformed the notes into emerging themes. The researcher used the notes to formulate themes. The researcher used the themes to seek connections between the themes, group the themes with similar concepts into clusters, and provide a descriptive label for each cluster according to the recommendations of Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014).

The researcher used the process described in the previous paragraph for the analysis of each transcript individually to maintain the uniqueness of each case (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2014). Codes and themes were elicited from each transcript individually. The codes and themes were placed on a matrix corresponding to the participants’ coded names. Finally, the researcher used the matrix to examine patterns and cluster themes that emerged across the cases. The researcher noted the overarching themes in the first column on the matrix. In consultation with the dissertation chair, the researcher determined that she achieved data saturation after completing the analysis for 11 interviews.

Trustworthiness

Roberts (2010) reports that qualitative researchers use the term trustworthiness to refer to the study’s reliability and validity. Trustworthiness provides credibility to the study and ensures the reader has confidence in the researcher’s data collection and analysis (Roberts, 2010). The following section describes how the researcher used an informal interview setting, journaling, member checking, and triangulation to establish trustworthiness for the present study.
Informal Setting

The researcher employed various methods to support the trustworthiness of the study. To ensure accuracy during data collection, the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews. The researcher conducted the interviews in informal interview settings which were interview conditions established by the participant, rather than the researcher. Because informal interview settings are more trustworthy than means that are more formal, the interviewees chose the time, date, and their location during the interviews facilitated via Zoom (Shank, 2002). Therefore, the researcher conducted the interviews at the interviewee’s convenience enabling a comfortable atmosphere for open and honest communication.

Journaling

While Given (2016) notes that the qualitative researcher should authentically describe information within a study, she also contends that researcher bias may still be present. Creswell (2013) also notes the difficulty of bias in data collection, analysis, and developing conclusions by the qualitative researcher. To address researcher bias in the current study, the researcher used reflexive journaling. According to Meyer and Wills (2018), “engaging in reflexive journaling can facilitate understanding of unexpected research encounters and improve awareness of researcher positionality in order to render a more complete understanding of interview data, to contextualize findings, and support development of independent researchers” (p.3). Therefore, the researcher used journaling throughout the data collection process to note changes in facial expressions and body language, capture responses to questions, and to address bias concerns.
**Member Checking**

Another strategy used to establish trustworthiness within the study was member checking. Member checking, or participant validation, is a technique used to support the credibility of the data in qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking helps ensure that the participants’ perspective is accurate. The researcher emailed each participant a copy of his or her interview transcript for the participant to review for accuracy. The researcher edited the transcripts based on the feedback from two participants.

**Triangulation**

The final strategy the researcher employed to ensure the credibility of the study was triangulation. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods, resources, and practices during research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation provides a broader view of the phenomena being investigated. For the study, the researcher interviewed three additional southern Black Church leaders that were not listed in the online directory that supported the recruitment of the study’s participants. The researcher compared the data with the data from the participants and found similar codes and themes.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter III described the research methodology that the researcher will use to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The current chapter discussed the qualitative methodology for the study. The chapter began by discussing the research objectives and the study’s qualitative research design. It covered the development and the content of the instrumentation. Then, the chapter explained the study's population,
sample, and sampling procedures. Finally, the chapter concluded with information on the
data collection and analysis procedures and the trustworthiness. The next chapter
provides an overview of the results.
CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The study employed a qualitative interpretive phenomenological investigative approach to explore southern Black Church leaders’ intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness. The chapter describes the research results based on Pietkiewicz and Smith’s (2014) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework. The researcher used the IPA framework to analyze the data collected through journaling and from the audio and transcribed interview data. IPA is concerned with addressing the way things appear to individuals in their experience with an aim of identifying the essential components of phenomena that make the findings unique (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Chapter IV includes descriptions of the participants and demographic tables to familiarize the reader with the participants and the perspective they each brought to the study. The bulk of the chapter reports the findings from the data collection in terms of the study’s research objectives.

Participant Demographics

RO1 - Describe the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, denominational affiliation, the position held within the church, and years of experience in the current position.

The researcher satisfied the first research objective by gathering demographic data of the interview participants from the interview instrument. 11 southern, African-American Black Church leaders that hold primarily teaching or preaching positions within their church participated in interviews. The following section includes summaries
of each participant’s background and demographic Tables 4-10. To protect their identities, the researcher provided a pseudonym for each participant.

Table 4 *Frequency Distribution for Age*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>100%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative percentage is 100% due to rounding

Table 5 *Frequency Distribution for Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 *Frequency Distribution for Educational Attainment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;High school diploma/GED</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma/GED</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/Associate’s degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 *Frequency Distribution for Denominational Affiliation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist (National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, Progressive National Baptist Convention)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E)</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodist Church (U.M.C)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church (USA)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
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Table 8 *Frequency Distribution for Position Held in Church*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deacon/Deaconess</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Pastor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Pastor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 9 *Descriptive Statistics for Years of Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Experience</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>11.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Leadership</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.36</td>
<td>14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Matt</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Mark</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Luke</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 John</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tim</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Paul</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Josh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Titus</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Jake</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Mary</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Peter</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 1 – Matt

Matt is a 41 year old African-American man with 17 years of work experience in Black Church leadership. Matt has 5 years of experience as Senior Pastor at his current southern church under the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) denomination. Matt earned his doctorate in transformational leadership from a university school of theology.

Participant 2 – Mark

Mark is a 29 year old African-American man with three years of experience in Black Church leadership. Mark has five months of experience as a Youth Pastor at his current southern church under the National Baptist denomination. Mark earned his bachelor’s in sociology with a specialization in critical race theory. He is currently working on his master’s in discipleship ministries at a seminary.

Participant 3 – Luke

Luke is a 61 year old African-American male with 19 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Luke has 6 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church under the Apostolic denomination. Luke earned his master’s in human resource management, is a retired law enforcement administrator, and attended various types of training in law enforcement and racial equity and reconciliation.

Participant 4 – John

John is a 62 year old African-American man with 35 years of experience in Black Church leadership. John has 10 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church the Church of God in Christ (C.OG.I.C.) denomination. Luke is a military veteran who earned his high school diploma and received training in ministerial studies.
Participant 5 – Tim

Tim is a 50 year old African-American man with 28 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Tim has 15 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church under the National Baptist denomination. Tim earned his doctorate in expositional preaching.

Participant 6 – Paul

Paul is a 74 year old African-American man with 21 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Paul has 17 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church. Paul pastors a church independent of a denomination that follow a Reformed tradition and Presbyterian polity. Paul earned his master’s in theology and is currently working toward a doctorate in divinity.

Participant 7 – Josh

Josh is a 33 year old African-American man with 15 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Josh has 2 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church. Josh pastors a non-denominational church that follows the Pentecostal tradition. Josh has some college, is widely read and frequently attends conferences on Black Church history, Black Church theology, and racial equity and reconciliation.

Participant 8 – Titus

Titus is a 63 year old African-American man with 45 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Titus has 10 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church under the C.O.G.I.C denomination. Titus earned a vocational/technical degree.

Participant 9 - Jake
Jake is an 81 year old African-American man with 56 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Jake has 42 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at his current southern church under the C.O.G.I.C denomination. Jake earned a doctorate in education administration and retired as an administrator at successive levels within the public school system. Jake currently holds regional and national positions within his denomination.

Participant 10 - Mary

Mary is a 77 year old African-American woman with 33 years of experience in Black Church leadership. Mary has 11 years of experience as a Senior Pastor at her current southern church under the Fire Baptized Holiness Church denomination. Mary has some college, two years of bible college, and retired from a technical field.

Participant 11 - Peter

Peter is a 54 year old African-American man with 29 years of Black Church leadership. Peter has 6 years of experience as an Assistant Pastor at his current southern church under the Pentacostal Apostolic denomination. Peter has an associate’s degree and teaches financial literacy within the community.

Themes

The participants in the study answered several semi-structured, open-ended questions surrounding their intentions to teach African-American youth critical consciousness. The analysis of the qualitative data produced by the study yielded 34 emergent themes, clustered into 14 overarching themes. The following section provides a discussion on the themes that are a result of analysis of transcribed audio interviews and the reflective journal.
• Theme 1 Formally and Informally Trained
• Theme 2 Lessons of Injustice and Oppression
• Theme 3 Elements of Critical Consciousness
• Theme 4 Positive Identity Development
• Theme 5 Personal and Community Development
• Theme 6 Taught with Caution
• Theme 7 See Positive Gains
• Theme 8 Misunderstanding and Fear
• Theme 9 Training and Training Aids
• Theme 10 Community Concerns and Current Events
• Theme 11 Lack of Societal Acknowledgement
• Theme 12 Prioritizing Political Affiliations
• Theme 13 Continue to Teach
• Theme 14 Programming, Community Engagement, and Mentorship

Themes Associated with Behavioral Attitudes

RO2 Explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

The second research objective explored the behavioral attitudes that Black Church Leaders had towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness in a church setting. The researcher asked the participants semi-structured, open-ended questions to gather their behavioral attitudes in terms of:

• Participant perceptions of the education and training received related to critical consciousness concepts
Participant perceptions of the Bible’s teachings on injustice and oppression in general and racial injustice and oppression specifically

Participant perceptions of their church’s teachings to youth aligned with components of critical consciousness

Participant perception of the advantages of teaching critical consciousness to youth

Participant perceptions of the disadvantages of teaching critical consciousness to youth

Six themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the questions and the reflective journal. The following section discusses the themes and provides examples of participant statements that support the themes.

**Theme 1. Black Church Leaders Feel Formally and Informally Trained to Teach Elements of Critical Consciousness.** The researcher found that participants had received a combination of formal and informal training in concepts related to critical consciousness in preparation for teaching the competency to African-American students in a church setting. The training of seven of the participants included formal training classes and attending conferences on biblical teachings of racial injustice, critical race theory and racial equity, injustice, and reconciliation.

• …I studied sociology for my undergraduate major from [XYZ] University and graduated in 2014 with a minor in philosophy. But um, I was in school during a time where Mike Brown happened and Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner. All these things were happening when I was an undergrad and as I was being taught a lot of different things that critical race theory exposes…I had to wrestle with these
things for a long time. Again, I’m knowledgeable in the area because I studied it
for four years. (Mark)

- I’ve attended racial equity training through the [Racial Equity Training
organization] based out of [southern state]. I’ve been in racial discussions here
through the [student institute on race relations]. I am a member of [county
community organization]…what they’re doing is trying to address these critical
issues in a way that will change some of the disparities that exist in [southern
county] regarding education, health, and job and economic opportunity. So I’ve
been actively involved over the last two decades in this kind of activity. (Luke)

Five of the participants mentioned that preparation also came from widely reading
books and articles on the topics of Black Church history, Black Church theology,
whiteness, the new Jim Crow in America, whiteness and white privilege, biblical
teachings of racial injustice, critical race theory and racial equity, injustice, and
reconciliation.

An unexpected source of preparation was lived experiences. Three of the
participants gained knowledge from living through the Civil Rights Era and experiencing
and overcoming systematic and individual racial injustice. Furthermore, the lived
experiences included positive growth, learning, and change within the Black Church
leaders alongside the students.

- In my experience with teaching youth, it’s really fun. We make it fun…We have a
good time and it could be a time of learning not only them learning, but for me
also. I’m learning from them. (Matt)
I have been teaching teenagers, I’d say from ages 11 to 19 in a church setting um since 2000 so about 15 years… that experience has been challenging but I’ve tried, as best as possible, to grow with them…I grew a lot in that time frame, so I wanted them to grow with me. Especially as I grew in my own understanding of critical consciousness and in my understanding of racial injustice. (Josh)

Another unexpected source of preparation was from learning from historical figures. One participant spoke about learning to teach concepts related to critical consciousness from studying the writings, speeches, and actions of prominent African-American civil rights leaders.

Theme 2. Black Church Leaders Believe the Bible has Lessons on Injustice and Oppression. The researcher found that all 11 participants perceived that the Christian Bible had lessons and examples of various types of injustice and oppression and specifically examples of racial injustice and oppression.

Yes we do. We do we teach about how you see it in the scriptures, repeatedly about oppression and injustice. Every part of the Bible you see that… We teach them that when we see that in scripture, that it’s wrong. So many of the things they see in the American context is wrong based on what we find in the scriptures. (Matt)

A lot of people don't realize it, but it’s in the Bible. Jesus himself taught his disciples about racial injustice because they were discriminating against people who were not ethnically or culturally Jews. They would not associate with them and saying that others could not really receive salvation…Jesus had to show them that God made salvation available for all people groups…When Jesus asked the
Samaritan woman at the well for water, she was shocked and spoke to how she was used to Jews not associating with Samaritans because they considered them unworthy enough to even associate. To her surprise, Jesus talked to her and offered her salvation. He taught His disciples to treat everybody right…God wants us to love everybody of all races…I use scriptures a lot because it’s in there it really shows us about life, the injustice and oppression and how it can be overcome. When we look and allow God to show us…it shows us about the issues of life. (Titus)

Five of the participants’ responses centered on the recognition of racism as sinful and the message of the Bible’s gospel message being applicable to all people groups. Four of the participant responses included the notion that the Bible teaches about salvation of people for eternity in heaven, but it is also concerned with poverty, treatment of oppressed groups, and equity in the treatment of people despite ethnicity. Six of the participants believed the Bible teaches that all people are morally responsible to God for how they treat others and that engaging in racial injustice is against the high standards of how we are to treat other people.

Theme 3. Black Church Leaders Believe Their Teachings Include Elements of Critical Consciousness. The researcher found that although several of the participants did not specifically call their teachings critical consciousness, the elements of critical consciousness (analyzing, navigating, and challenging racial injustice) were present in what the participants explained as the knowledge, skills, and abilities they taught African-American students. All 11 participants began by describing their teachings as centered on God and the teachings of the Bible.
• … being in church, we’re always centered on the gospel. We want the students to have a biblical worldview. (Mark)

Participants discussed teaching students to recognize and analyze instances of racial injustice. Specifically, the participants spoke of teaching students to recognize instances of injustice and understand why the issues occurred and how the issues evolved. The participants also put emphasis on being able to distinguish between natural, negative consequences from poor choices and behavior and problems that arise as a result of racial injustice.

• OK, so I would say yes. That’s I mean, that’s what the heart of the gospel is, right? Uhm I even spoke on this last week, on Sunday. God created us in His image that we may have dominion and authority. Um but since that image was corrupted, we’re not exercising that authority that God has given us. Therefore, the world does not reflect His kingdom. So we try to empower students to know that God has created them on purpose and for a purpose, so we can work together and bring, make His kingdom reality here on earth. Here within in our communities, in our schools. And then we bring up some statistics. Uh you know, one study said that, uh Black boys had a 38% chance of staying in poverty if they were raised by low income families. And [we] just use that connection. We had a service project recently where we went to a local apartment complex here in [southern city] and we served that community. Our kids loved it! That’s what they want to do. Consistently build relationships and be the hands of the church, making connections, and living out the gospel, and loving our neighbors. And the sad reality is that statistics say close to 40% of these young boys that we’re
serving and we're loving, on paper says that they're gonna stay in poverty. And just bringing them and making them aware of these things, and just really allowing God to touch their hearts so they have a desire to make change. And empowering them, knowing that they are equipped to make change because the spirit of God dwells in them. But also giving them eyes so they can see the opportunities of where God’s image is not reflected and how can we get creative in making some solutions that are centered in the gospel. (Mark)

- …just making them aware. Did you know this? Did you know that? Do you see this? Do you see that? Does that reflect God’s kingdom to you? Did you know God has empowered you to be able to make a difference and that that makes a tangible way where students can live out their faith. (Mark)

Four participants mentioned that they teach youth how to navigate racial injustice in various ways such as navigating situations with law enforcement officers. One included fostering empowerment through knowing their value and worth because all people are created in the image of God. Another way focused on using biblical teachings as guides to correct injustice and oppression and use biblical teachings as a source of strength. Seven participants mentioned that they used the process of discipleship in biblical principles to encourage the conformity to living by certain standards that enabled students to both overcome and avoid inflicting racial injustice. The researcher found the deliberate incorporation of academic and social skills training into youth programming at three of the churches with goal of teaching the skills to navigate the education system and life as way of overcoming racial injustice.
• We also have vacation Bible school where we invite guests from the community like police officers from the city or county level. We teach them about how that looks to you know, avoid some of the race-based casualties that have happened because of improper instances of law enforcement. (Titus)

• …there were a lot of problems that were brought to the surface but there really were no solutions. Uhm so as far as that area, I know I’m not too familiar with solutions are rooted in critical consciousness. So what I’ve been led to do is find solutions that are found in the Bible, God's word, and seeing what God says and how can we bring solutions to these issues in that path. (Mark)

• I didn’t judge them or condemn them you know I would just be there listening and trying to help him navigate tough situations of dealing with racial injustice. (Peter)

Participants explained how the teachings to African-American students that occurred within their church focused on challenging racial injustice. The challenge was teaching youth to strive for excellence in academics and in all areas of their lives. It also centered on teaching youth to address race and economic based oppression through community engagement which aimed to demonstrate genuine care and concern for others. Other teachings encouraged students to have the qualifications and the navigational skills to confront injustice in an effective manner.

• The older kids, the teens or early teens and up we have them to do little skits that demonstrate how [challenging racial injustice] looks. (Titus)

• Even now in the midst of COVID we are able to have some virtual things where we teach them lessons that can be applicable to their lives, uh about friendship,
about making the right choices, and about different things. So we teach them these things that are biblically-based from the beginning. But we also teach them essential qualities. [We teach students] about the importance of education. That's something that they'll continue to hear. We try to prioritize getting a formal education, the importance of being a responsible person with their parents and with their peers, and so we try to teach them things that will be applicable to every part of their lives. And we also teach them about the history of the A.M.E church which is very important to this conversation [on critical consciousness]…Absalom Jones, yes Richard Allen. (Matt)

- ...tell young people “hey you are just as smart as anybody else, but you can't play into this role of coming to class underprepared, coming to class behaving any kind of way, being a class clown. That’s not the reason you’re there. Academic achievement is cool. It’s going to be something that’s gonna help to develop who you are and what you can do for your family but every day you have to make that conscious effort to go into the classroom, to do your work, to go home to do your homework, to ask questions because you need to be able to do the things that God is giving you the opportunity to do to reach your full potential”. (Matt)

At least two participants mentioned that their teachings of critical consciousness not only applied to the youth that were members of their church, but it was also spread to African-American students within the community.

Theme 4. Critical Consciousness Fosters Positive Identity Development. The researcher found that five of the participants perceived that an advantage of teaching critical consciousness was the ability to foster positive identity development among African-
American students. Three of the participants discussed that one of the advantages of teaching critical consciousness was that it engendered a sense of value, pride, and worth among African-American students. Two of the participants spoke of critical consciousness affirming the identities of African-American youth in terms of “who they really are”.

- Well number one it lets them know that they did not start as being on the margins of society, by being marginalized. One of the things that comes out of teaching them about this, uh that this viewpoint lets them know “You are made in the image of God. You are God’s child. Your potential is great. God has gifted you with many gifts.” And so the beginning of this teaching has to start with information of who they really are and once we start with who they really are, then you can say when you hear these racial things, when you hear that difficult people try to put you in a box, know that that’s not who God created you to be. So when you hear things that tries to compartmentalize who you are and tries to put you in this inferior racial identity, recognize that for what it is. Don’t let that discourage you from being who God called you to be… I think one of the major benefits is that the young people actually get affirmed into their God given identity and not have to be relegated. (Matt)

One participant mentioned how critical consciousness creates a previously inaccessible level of awareness. Another participant spoke to the ability of critical consciousness to give students confidence. Two participants mentioned that learning critical consciousness exposed African-American students to a deeper level of Black History than what is commonly taught in public schools. Furthermore, it exposed the
students to Black Church history and demonstrated that exercising critical consciousness aligns to the rich traditions and history of the Black Church.

Theme 5. Critical Consciousness Fosters the Drive for Personal and Community Development. Seven of the participants discussed that an advantage of teaching critical consciousness is that the competency fosters a drive for personal and community development among African-American students. For personal development, one participant mentioned that teaching critical consciousness encourages African-American youth to succeed despite the adversity they may face within a racialized American society, especially academically. Concerning academic achievement, another participant mentioned that critical consciousness fosters an appreciation for access to a quality education.

- I think an advantage is that when they see and grow up in a racialized society that they are still able to maintain a sense of dignity and pride to succeed in spite of adversity and not to get discouraged… When you teach them that there was a time that enslaved people could not read, could not write because it was against the law and that there was a time when Black children were relegated to segregated schools, although there were some positives in that, but they were given, you know, hand me down books. We cover different things. When we make the history of that known and we tie it into their daily performance in the classroom, hopefully that will give them a foundation to put their best foot forward academically in order to really allow them to take advantage of formal education because formal education is going to be very important… What you do every night determines the grades you get. The grades may determine the colleges
you attend. The college you attend determines the kind of job you get and the
careers you can have in order to take care of your families. So it’s important to
make those connections in order that they can be able to be successful in a system
that’s often built for them to fail. (Matt)

Two participants spoke of critical consciousness giving African-American students a
pathway to a life characterized by recognizing and overcoming challenges.

For community development, one participant spoke of the ability of critical
consciousness to create a sense of community among students and foster unity.

- There are many bad things that happen. There are a lot of ways to fix them like
getting together to sign a petition…if we stand together, we can get it together.
We can make it together if we agree that this is wrong. It’s important to teach
them. Then they come to learn and understand people and their problems and
want to reach out to help them overcome. (Mary)

Another participant mentioned that critical consciousness created a call to action to
address community problems.

- It think it is beneficial because it teaches them that we can really do a better job. It
activates a lot more people and it brings a consciousness that they may not have
had before. (John)

One participant mentioned how critical consciousness benefits the people who are
members of the Black Church collectively. That participant further stated that it benefits
development within the community by integrating thoughts on pervasive issues with the
 teachings of the Bible.
Finally, eight participants discussed how critical consciousness created a sense of love for people within the participants’ community and even towards the people who caused injustice.

- …it’s really the next step in our faith. Um from the beginning, when God told man to go have dominion and authority, sin happened. And you know things got put on hold, but now after Jesus died and rose from the grave and before he ascended into heaven he gave his disciples a command to “go therefore and make disciples”. You know in Genesis, God said go be fruitful and multiply. By that, bearing that image, His image, in the world and now Christ is giving that same command. “Go therefore and make disciples and teach and everything I taught you baptizing in the name of the father son Holy Spirit”. So these are intangible ways that we can go out and make change. By first being changed by becoming disciples, and then going out loving our neighbors as ourselves and seeing the issues and opportunities where we’re not seeing God’s kingdom. Giving them a kingdom mindset… knowing that God has empowered us to be able to make that change. So I think it’s beneficial for making them aware of the different areas.

(Mark)

Theme 6. Critical Consciousness Should Be Taught with Caution. Participants voiced an almost unanimous warning that critical consciousness should be taught with care, thoughtfulness, and caution. The participants warned that apart from grounding the teachings within the biblical narrative and providing a balanced teaching that offered lessons on both injustices and solutions, critical consciousness could elicit feelings of anger, resentfulness, and hatred towards Whites who committed injustices.
• I think that the foundation always has to be Christ. And I think that the only way it could be a disadvantage is that if at the center of your work is works based faith, rather than a faith based in God…so I’m basically saying that, um we have to first experience transformation ourselves in order to see the transformation we desire to see in our communities. If we make it so it’s centered on the works and not centered on the faith it would be a sad reality for our students 10 to 20 years from now. So you could do so much work caring for others that you’ll never truly get the care that you need spiritually to have long lasting change that we desire to see in our students, so they can make generational change in our communities. If I could think of a disadvantage, it would only be if Christ is no longer the center in the root of our foundation and it's somehow shifted. (Mark)

• I had to wrestle with these things for a long time. Again, I’m knowledgeable in the area because I studied it for four years. Uhm but I saw that when you don’t have solutions, especially for me, kingdom solutions, it was like there’s so many problems and I didn’t know where to start. You know going and being involved in protests and sharing things on social media and speaking to things and going back and forth with people. I look back on some posts and I was saying some harmful things to people that are on the other side and did not see the love of Christ through it. So I saw how it worked. I got into it and that’s why I’m saying I was like that’s the one danger. I could see it then that’s the one main thing. It could truly lead you to hating other people on the other side. And that’s where I found myself before I had my found my calling. So I went a couple of years without even speaking on anything but I spent enough time with the Lord and He renewed
my mind. I learned His word. I see what God says so now I’m comfortable enough to be able to speak on these things with a Kingdom mindset and saying this is what God said. These are the issues and this is what God says. (Mark)

- If we aren’t careful in the way we do it, it can be harmful. What we don’t want to do is to get them to hate White people. What we don't want them to do is to get so resentful and they try to throw the baby out with the bathwater and resent the system as a whole. So I think it’s a way to do that to say hey, you know hating anybody is bad. Understand your history in the context that it motivates you to be the best God fearing person you can be and to achieve the most you can. But don’t get to the point where you begin to hate somebody else that you know. (Matt)

One participant also warned that teaching students critical consciousness could make others adversarial towards the people who teach critical consciousness and their students.

- …everything you do you may make enemies. You are not gonna be able to please everybody…by teaching it of course you're gonna make enemies, I would call that a disadvantage. (Titus)

Themes Associated with Subjective Norms

*RO3 Explore Black Church leaders’ subjective norms towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.*

The third research objective explored the subjective norms the Black Church leaders held toward teaching African-American youth critical consciousness within a church setting. The researcher asked the participants semi-structured, open-ended questions to gather their subjective norms in terms of participant perceptions of individuals or groups that might favor or oppose teaching African-American youth
critical consciousness. Two themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the questions and the reflective journal. The following section discusses the themes and provides examples of participant statements that support the themes.

*Theme 7. Supporters Want to See Positive Gains in the African-American Community.*

The researcher found that the participants perceived support for teaching African-American students critical consciousness came from others who wanted to see positive gains in the African-American community. Seven participants discussed how the majority, however not all, of their African-American congregants were in favor of students being taught critical consciousness concepts.

- Who will approve or support me? Of course, uh I believe the people that most support me teaching it are minorities of course…They have experienced injustice first hand and would be interested in learning how to deal with it. (Titus)

- Who has supported me? The congregation has been very supportive. The overwhelming majority of our congregants are Black people and in this context, here at [this church], it is a congregation of Black people who are highly educated. They’ve been able to overcome racial injustice through their belief in God and through their own self-awareness. So they support [teaching critical consciousness]. (Matt)

Three participants said that they receive support from denominational and church leadership while teaching critical consciousness.

- Here in [major metropolitan southern city], [city denominational association] is a local multi ethnic association that we partnered with… the [state denominational association] was proactive about racial reconciliation, as well as the [national
denominational association]…They were proactive about it. These are parachurch organizations religious entities that were really supportive of dealing with inequality to a certain degree. (Tim)

- …it’s one of the things where you know, we just follow the lead of leadership. [critical consciousness] aligns with our…I make sure I’m just in line with leadership. So if I see if leadership speaks on things to a certain level, to a certain degree from the pulpit, then I take that as, you know, a sign that we’re able to speak on that. UM that’s something that’s not frowned upon and our church is intentional on doing more in that area as well. So just from the top down, I know that’s the vision for the church. So I just make sure that I’m in line with that. (Mark)

- Being in the A.M.E. system, our Bishop is very supportive. He supports us teaching our young people our history about who God created us to be, about history in general, and how we have to use our history in order to make a better future for our young and the children that they have. (Matt)

Two participants said that they have received support from White congregations and pastors.

- There have even been some White congregations that have been supportive in order to do this. Not all of them, but some pastors have been supportive. Those who have been more cognizant of the past want to try to make a better future. (Matt)

- As you know most congregations are segregated. Sunday morning is one of the most segregated times in the United States. You have your White congregations,
you have your Hispanic congregations, you have your Black congregation and so on. But we need to be putting forth an effort to come together and find out that we have things in common… I went to a meeting the other night with the leading White pastors… We all met and said how can we come together and get to know each other better. (Jake)

Another participant mentioned that he believed ideally, every Christian would be in favor of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. Finally, one participant expressed that incarcerated people who engage in the church’s prison outreach ministry would be supportive of teaching critical consciousness.

- You know we can see the racial disparity when it comes to being incarcerated… a large number of minorities are incarcerated… so I’ve done jail ministry… and of course those that have experienced that racial injustice and are incarcerated would definitely want us to do what we’re doing… they definitely approve of us, you know, standing up and teaching that because they have been affected by it. (Titus)

**Theme 8. Opposition is Due to Misunderstanding and Fear.** The researcher found that the participants identified groups that opposed Black Churches teaching critical consciousness did so because of misunderstanding the tenants of critical consciousness and fear. One participant felt like Christians who opposed teaching critical consciousness were misled. Two participants expressed that their belief is that people who oppose teaching critical consciousness misunderstand the terminology and its tenants.

Five participants explained that people in opposition of teaching critical consciousness disapprove because of fear. The fears associated with false perceptions, fear of exposing wounds of “tragic racial trauma”, being afraid to acknowledge the
systemic injustice of the past and the present, the fear of losing control/authority, and the fear of inciting rage and revenge.

- Many times, people are fearful of one another because of what they’ve heard about the other race, what they’ve heard about the other people. We are all made in God’s image and we need to share our abilities and our help together to get to know one another. (Jake)

- It's been a lot of people [that discouraged teaching critical consciousness]. Number one, not a lot, but most of the people who disapprove have been some White people who said we need to put that in the past and we need to move forward. I have even had a couple parishioners who felt the same way saying “hey, you know, we need those White folks, we need to put this in the past”. I’m like well, how can we appreciate who we are and understand our God given identity and try to move our relationships forward if we can't address current racial injustices that resulted from the past. But I will say that those who have been supportive, greatly outnumber those who have been discouraging… The number one reason I think [they want to leave this discussion in the past] is because they don’t want to confront the issues of the past. They don't want to go back and look. It's hard to go back and look at something that you know your ancestors have gotten wrong. By the same token, there were some Whites who from the beginning who have been proponents of a Black church or Black people. uh But I think that’s the number one issue. That people don’t want to go back and deal with things that can be muddy and murky. They want to try to avoid that but
you can't avoid that and build a future. Until you deal with the past, it’s no path forward. (Matt)

• …people in positions of power want to keep that power…some of the ones in power are responsible for the injustice…they are afraid that teaching it would somehow threaten their power and undermine their authority…it’s like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the priests in the Bible in Jesus’ day felt threatened by what Jesus did and taught. (Titus)

Themes Associated with Behavioral Control

RO4 Explore Black Church leaders’ perceived behavioral control towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

The fourth research objective explored the perceived behavioral control the Black Church leaders held toward teaching African-American youth critical consciousness within a church setting. The researcher asked the participants semi-structured, open-ended questions to gather their perceived behavioral control in terms of participant perceptions of facilitators and barriers to teaching African-American students critical consciousness. Four themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the questions and the reflective journal. The following section discusses the themes and provides examples of participant statements that support the themes.

Theme 9. Critical Consciousness Training and Training Aids Would Make it Easier to Teach. The research found that eight of the participants had similar statements that addressed the need for more training on critical consciousness and access to training aids within Black Churches. Four of the eight participants discussed the need for Black Church leaders to have a deeper understanding of the tenants of critical consciousness.
• …to grow more in this area, we need people like you who could come and speak on the topic…and provide a better understanding. (Titus)

Some of the eight participants expressed the need for formal curriculum and the accompanying skills of translating ideas to students in a manner that is not overwhelming. Five of the eight participants expressed that the curriculum would need to be grounded in biblical teaching.

Four of the participants pointed out that due to a lack of a holistic approach to teaching American and Black history, there was a need to deconstruct misconceptions, teach critical consciousness regularly and consistently to both Black Church leaders and African-American students. Furthermore, three participants pointed out that the teachings needed to be accompanied by viable solutions that individuals and Black Churches are able to implement.

• One barrier sometimes with young people is that it takes a minute to get to the heart of what has to be told because we have to deconstruct everything that’s contributed to their own way of thinking. Sometimes it can be hard to say “hey listen, you are just as valuable as anyone else. You are made in the image of God. You can be whatever you want to be”. When they repeatedly see images on the television of people who look just like them constantly going to jail, constantly on drugs. You know we might want to talk about the drug issue in the Black community, without talking about the intentional efforts to make Black communities economically impoverished. I mean when you take a community, when you strip that community of economic opportunities, when you restrict formal education, then people who have ability, who were outside of that
community to introduce illegal narcotics into that community to make money yet the community is stigmatized as being a bad place. Part of the challenge is that a lot of times before the young people can become excited and hear there's a lot of deconstruction that has to go on. OK and not just with them, sometimes even with older people you know we forget sometimes we confuse age with wisdom and that's not always the case because sometimes it’s older Black people who have bought into this system that can be oppressive and racialized. Sometimes deconstruction has to take place not in the seven year old only, but also has to take place in the 70 year old in order to see things as well. I think that’s one of the biggest obstacles with the young people themselves is to counter the reality with perceptions you know because you see the newspaper, and the first thing you see is Black people doing this and doing that without looking at the greater good that is taking place. When the greater good greatly outweighs the negatives but it’s the perception of evil that is being forever put in front of them, we have to deconstruct in order to reveal. Even though they get excited to hear the truth spoken it's one thing to be excited about hearing the truth it's, another thing to start to hold on to the truth and live in that reality. (Matt)

**Theme 10. Community Concerns and Current Events Facilitate Teaching Critical Consciousness.** The researcher found that three of the participants felt that teaching critical consciousness needed to include the broader community concerns and the inclusion of using current events. Broader community concerns included economic injustice, inequities in housing and healthcare, and laws that encourage injustice. The
participants mentioned that the concerns are evident in the current events displayed within the 24 hour news cycle which routinely include racial injustices.

- …although I don’t like it happening, but many times there are events in the news and instances of injustice that occur to be able to use in teaching how to recognize and deal with it…Also, they make laws and policies that sometimes encourages racial injustice…or remove policies that encourage justice like affirmative actions. (Titus)

Theme 11. There is a Lack of Societal Acknowledgement and Repentance. The researcher found that three participants felt that the lack of societal acknowledgement of systematic racism and the accompanying repentance for it are barriers to teaching critical consciousness.

- I guess for me, what would make it more difficult to teach is people who don’t really appreciate it…maybe because they haven’t experienced it themselves or they don’t want to recognize the things that are happening around them. (Titus)

Theme 12. Prioritizing Political Affiliations above Biblical Principals is Harmfully Divisive. The researcher found that the habit of putting political affiliations above biblical principles within the broader Christian community created a harmfully divisive environment that makes it challenging to teach critical consciousness to African-American students. Five of the participants spoke to the recent widening of the gap in ideals between political parties and how the party ideals tended to supersede Christian principles.
Themes Associated with Adoption Intentions

RO5 Explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

The fifth research objective explored the intentions of Black Church leaders to teach critical consciousness to African-American youth in a church setting. The researcher asked the participants semi-structured, open-ended questions to gather their intentions in terms of participant perceptions of whether or not they planned to teach critical consciousness to African-American youth within a church setting. Two themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the questions and the reflective journal. The following section discusses the themes and provides examples of participant statements that support the themes.

Theme 13. Black Church Pastors Intend to Continue to Teach Critical Consciousness.

The researcher found that the 11 participants unanimously intend to continue teaching critical consciousness because they believe the concept is taught in the Bible and that it is needed among African-American students.

- 100%, that's who we are as a people, as a church. We're going to continue to teach them. The only thing that may change, may be the methods. Maybe a way to try to address the young people a little bit more. As times change, the lessons are going to be the same but the methods are going to change. (Matt)

- Very likely. As long as there's issues and people in need in our local communities and things happening. Our pastor is very involved. I believe he leads an African-American pastor’s coalition. I believe he’s a leader of that. Um so top down we’re
very aware and we’re involved so as long as the issues don’t go away, the church was going to remain active in this space. (Mark)

• …definitely! I’m quite sure I would continue to do it because I know it’s within God’s word and I just have to point it out to others and let them see it in the word…Oh, yes. The likelihood that I would teach that is very high but definitely it reminds us…we should treat everybody right and make sure we do not find ourselves as the ones that are performing the injustice…the likelihood is very high that I would continue to teach that. (Titus)

One participant did note that if they were teaching critical consciousness in a multiethnic setting that the methods and messaging may need to be altered.

*Theme 14. Black Churches Foster Critical Consciousness through Youth Programming, Community Engagement, and Mentorship.* The researcher found that the participants described multiple methods and strategies for teaching youth critical consciousness. The methods included church sponsored programming that targeted both students who were regular members of the church and also youth in the local community. This youth programming included specific classes on critical consciousness concepts, tutoring in academics, having youth teach topics relevant to their observations in society, the teaching of social skills, leveraging community leaders as guest speakers, joint reading of justice literature, and having youth engage in pilgrimages and field trips.

• We have something in the A.M.E church called the YPD, young people in the children’s division. So there are things that they do within their group in order to teach about not just biblical narratives but to also teach about history, teach about who you are. So the YPD is big on teaching that. As a church we would continue
to offer church school. We will continue to once a year offer the vacation Bible school. Pre-COVID we had a summer youth camp that ran for eight weeks and so they would come to the church every day from about 8 to 5. They went on big and different field trips. We began teaching children different things because in school, they no longer teach children how to write in cursive. So we had teachers who would come in and teach them how to write in cursive. Teachers to reinforce reading skills. Every day that started with a daily devotional… They had a weekly trip to the library to read and to do things. So it was interesting. (Matt)

- We’re also doing financial empowerment through financial literacy. Um [we also do] college 101 education, things like career coaching, and other things of that nature for our students. (Mark)

- One of the things I identified that I want to do at the church is to start a STEM program because we have a lot of youth interested in that area. My wife is a science educator. We have a lot of science educators. We have a lot of professors. A lot of engineers who are willing to address STEM programming. For a long time, Black kids have fallen behind in math and science… I think I’m excited most about is that we’re going to develop a robotics team. (Matt)

Participants discussed that community engagement included joint worship services and fellowship with churches of other ethnicities, service learning projects, encouraging voting, signing petitions, partnering with community organizations, and participation in civil demonstrations.

- We expose youth to other congregations. We have built a relationship with a White congregation within a United Methodist Church where we actually a
couple times swap pulpits so that was interesting. That pastor had a heart for
working across racial lines. (Matt)

- Yeah so well one thing the Lord put on my heart was that community
development was going to be a large assignment for me for my ministry. And um
the first day I joined, I won’t say joined, but like my first unofficial day as youth
pastor, um we had a service project going on. We were serving a local community
apartment complex [*southern city*] and um the kids loved it and had fun and built
relationships. The youth group provided food, games, and was really just loving
people in our local community. Our kids, a majority of them, come from probably
working class/middle class families so for them to go out there and see people
who look like them who aren't as advantaged, that really touched their hearts. And
that's what they believe the church should be doing outreach. That's what they
want to do and so that's something where we’re actually partnered with the church
to do that project. So we're actually in the works of looking to adopt an apartment
complex ourselves so we can engage um whether it's bi- weekly or monthly, um
with an apartment complex and go ahead and be the church and making our
students into disciples…leading with the gospel message…living it out by loving
our neighbors. (Mark)

- We do work hand in hand with our Christian community development center
where they have a week monthly food pantry. I mean we have a daily food pantry,
but as far as the monthly service opportunities [*for the students*]. So we’re taking
part in that with the students. (Mark)
One participant noted that they encouraged participation in community engagement as private citizens but not as a church organization.

Finally, participants discussed how Black Churches fostered critical consciousness through formal mentoring and modeling.

Research Objectives and Theme Correlation

The analysis of the qualitative data produced by the study yielded 34 emergent themes, clustered into 14 overarching themes. The researcher fulfilled the analysis for RO1 through displaying participant demographics in Tables 4-10 followed by brief descriptions of each participant. The thematic analysis that yielded Themes 1 through Theme 6 satisfy RO2. Theme 7 and Theme 8 support findings and analysis for RO3. Themes 9 through 12 satisfy the analysis for RO4. Finally, Theme 13 and Theme 14 support RO5. Table 11 provides an outline of the theme correlation between the research objectives and the themes for the study.

Table 11 Research Objectives and Theme Correlation

<table>
<thead>
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<th>RO</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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| RO2         | • Theme 1 Formally and Informally Trained  
| Behavioral  | • Theme 2 Lessons of Injustice and Oppression  
| Attitudes   | • Theme 3 Elements of Critical Consciousness  
|             | • Theme 4 Positive Identity Development  
|             | • Theme 5 Personal and Community Development  
|             | • Theme 6 Taught with Caution |
| RO3         | • Theme 7 See Positive Gains  
| Subjective  | • Theme 8 Misunderstanding and Fear |
| Norms       |                                                                 |
| RO4         | • Theme 9 Training and Training Aids  
| Perceived   | • Theme 10 Community Concerns and Current Events  
| Behavioral  | • Theme 11 Lack of Societal Acknowledgement  
| Control     | • Theme 12 Prioritizing Political Affiliations |
| RO5         | • Theme 13 Continue to Teach  
| Intentions  | • Theme 14 Programming, Community Engagement, and Mentorship |

115
Summary

Chapter IV began with an overview of the data analysis process used for the study. The chapter also included descriptions of the participants and demographic tables to familiarize the reader with the participants and the perspective they each brought to the study. The majority of the chapter reported the findings from the data collected in terms of the study’s research objectives. The analysis of the qualitative data produced by the study yielded 34 emergent themes, clustered into 14 overarching themes. Table 11 provided an outline of the theme correlation between the research objectives and the themes for the study. The following Chapter V presents a brief summary of the study, the study’s conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations. It concludes with sections centered on the implications of the study’s limitations, recommendations for further research, and concludes with a discussion.
CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

The study explored the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The study employed a qualitative interpretive phenomenological investigative approach to explore southern Black Church leaders’ intentions to teach African-American students critical consciousness. The preceding Chapters I-IV offered background information that articulated the need for the study, a review of literature, the study’s methodology, and the results of data collection. Chapter V presents a brief summary of the study, the study’s conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations. It concludes with sections centered on the implications of the study’s limitations, recommendations for future research, and a discussion.

Summary of the Study

African-American students experience human capital opportunity and achievement gaps (Pitre, 2014). Researchers have called for culturally relevant strategies to help close the gaps (Colgren & Sappington, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Pitre, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001). The historic Black Church, a part of many African-American students’ culture and community, is a historic and current source of social capital for positive human capital development outcomes (Billingsley, 1999; Harvey et al., 2016; Johnson, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRoberts, 2001, 2003; Pinn, 2017; Sinha, 2007). Critical consciousness develops positive human capital outcomes, such as academic achievement, in African-American and other minority students (Cabera et al., 2014; Cadenas et al., 2018; Carter, 2008; Dee & Penner, 2016; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Ginwright, 2010; O’Connor, 1997;
Therefore, there is a need to understand the intentions of historic Black Churches towards developing critical consciousness among African-American students from the perceptions of Black Church leaders.

The purpose of the study was to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The study used the theory of planned behavior to explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to determine the intentions they have towards teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The study employed a qualitative interpretive phenomenological investigative approach to collect data. The following research objectives guided the study:

**RO1** Describe the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, denominational affiliation, the position held within the church, and years of experience in the current position.

**RO2** Explore Black Church leaders’ behavioral attitudes towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

**RO3** Explore Black Church leaders’ subjective norms towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

**RO4** Explore Black Church leaders’ perceived behavioral control towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness.

**RO5** Explore the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students critical consciousness.
The current study used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. The research population for the study were African-Americans that are leaders within Black Churches in the southern United States with primarily teaching/preaching roles. The researcher conducted 11 one-on-one semi-structured interviews, until saturation was reached, using open-ended interview questions to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders. The researcher collected data using the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) method. Demographics and data related to the research objectives were collected using the interview instrument. The IPA process produced 34 emergent themes, clustered into 14 overarching themes:

- Theme 1 Formally and Informally Trained
- Theme 2 Lessons of Injustice and Oppression
- Theme 3 Elements of Critical Consciousness
- Theme 4 Positive Identity Development
- Theme 5 Personal and Community Development
- Theme 6 Taught with Caution
- Theme 7 See Positive Gains
- Theme 8 Misunderstanding and Fear
- Theme 9 Training and Training Aids
- Theme 10 Community Concerns and Current Events
- Theme 11 Lack of Societal Acknowledgement
- Theme 12 Prioritizing Political Affiliations
- Theme 13 Continue to Teach
- Theme 14 Programming, Community Engagement, and Mentorship
Summary of the Results

The researcher fulfilled the analysis for RO1 through displaying participant demographics in a table followed by brief descriptions of each participant. The analysis of the qualitative data produced by the study yielded 34 emergent themes, clustered into 14 overarching themes. All 14 themes supported RO2-RO5. The researcher used excerpts from the participants’ interview transcripts to support each theme.
Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Finding 1: Black Church leaders teach and have strong intentions towards continuing to teach African-American students critical consciousness

Flores et al. (2019) posits the literature record needed more research to understand how critical consciousness beliefs are promoted among youth. Recently, Seider and Graves (2020) explain how critical consciousness develops among Black and Latinx youth within the school context. Prior to the current study, it was unknown how critical consciousness can develop in other contexts within African-American student’s ecosphere, such as their local Black Church. The study found that the southern Black Church setting does foster the development of critical consciousness among African American youth.

The study found that critical consciousness is fostered in a variety of ways within the Black Church setting. The methods include tailored youth programming, community engagement, and mentorship. Church sponsored programming targeted both students who were regular members of the church and extended to youth in the local community. The youth programming included specific classes on critical consciousness concepts, tutoring to foster excelling in academics, having youth teach topics relevant to their observations in society, the teaching of social skills, leveraging community leaders as guest speakers, joint readings of justice literature, and having youth engage in pilgrimages and field trips. The methods observed from the participants’ comments were similar to the findings of Graves and Sieder (2020) that schools used methods of youth teaching youth and focusing on excelling in academics to foster critical consciousness. Community engagement ranged from service learning projects to supporting civil demonstrations.
Sieder and Graves (2020) report that schools that used community engagement, fostered critical consciousness by giving students the opportunity to effect change and engage in real-world assignments. Participants of the study identified that community engagement helped students to identify disparities and see how their efforts could directly address the disparities. The churches also used mentorship and modeling from Africa-American professionals within the church and the local community. According to Little et al. (2010), mentoring is a widely supported educational experience for adolescents because mentors spur academic development and present relevant models for students’ possible future career interests. Bryant and Zimmerman’s (2003) study on exploring the effects of role models finds that “having someone to look up to is critical for African-American youths’ development” (p. 36). The study aligns with Buckley’s (2017) findings that Black Church youth mentoring programs provide relatable advocates for African-American students while providing motivation for future aspirations to attend college.

The study found that Black Church leaders had strong intentions to continue to teach critical consciousness. The participants in the study unanimously expressed a commitment to continue teaching critical consciousness concepts with the motivation of staying in alignment with the larger biblical narrative of confronting oppression and injustice. The participants’ motivation also included preparing students to navigate and thrive in the world in which the youth live and through the racial challenges that they may face. Participants’ mentioned sharing their personal struggles with racial injustice with students and how they overcame them. Sieder and Graves (2020) observe that a teacher’s “willingness to share with students their own personal experiences with
oppressive social forces such as racism” helped to foster critical consciousness development in students.

Historically, the Black Church was a refuge for African-Americans, providing a context for racial identity, and a place of restoration amidst the historic and modern oppression experienced as a marginalized minority group within the United States (Haight, 2002; Sinha, 2007). The study found that Black Church leaders perceived that critical consciousness taught within the church fostered positive personal and identity development. The finding is in alignment with what other researchers have found as benefits of developing critical consciousness in youth such as connections between high levels of critical consciousness among minority youth and their ability to demonstrate higher levels of vocational identity, resilience, mental health, self-esteem, academic achievement, high professional aspirations, and civic and political engagement (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Godfrey et al., 2019; Nicolas et al., 2008; O’Leary & Romero, 2011; Seider et al., 2020; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1999).

**Conclusion.** The present study demonstrated how the Black Church continues its historical role of being a support system for African-American students. In alignment with its past, the Black Church also continues to make human and social capital investments that could translate into improved outcomes for African-Americans students. Barber (2015) argues that the Black Church has the ability to fight racism and provide for the members of the community in areas that the public sphere either will not or cannot achieve. Findings from the study indicate that southern Black churches teach students to fight racism through the development of critical consciousness, a competency that is not
widely taught within the public school system. Findings also suggest that Black Churches put considerable emphasis on affirming the students’ identity, both identity as a Christian and identity as an African-American. The Black Church may be a source of African-American identity development for youth within the church and the people within the community that benefit from churches’ youth programming.

**Recommendation.** Teachers, education administrators, and education reformers should recognize the Black Church for its role in providing human and social capital investments that support student achievement. Black Churches support identity development, provide direct academic support through tutoring, and vocational identity development through mentoring. The education community’s partnership with Black Churches as a culturally relevant solution partner could make measureable, positive impacts on student achievement.

Community organizations should seek strategic partnerships with Black Churches. The study highlighted that Black Churches actively engage youth in community development efforts. Many community organizations have goals and objectives that align with the work that the churches are executing. By working together, the two entities could form mutually beneficial partnerships that provide service learning opportunities for African-American students that further foster critical consciousness, while providing the community organization with a new pool of diverse volunteers.

**Finding 2:** Black Church leaders desire access to more training and tools to support learning about and teaching critical consciousness aligned with biblical principles.

Black Church leaders are interested in non-secular sources of training and supportive tools to teach critical consciousness to youth. Unfortunately, at the time of
concluding the study, the researcher was unable to find formal curriculum that taught
critical consciousness through a biblical lens. However, several participants listed or
referenced books that provided knowledge on the subject.

The study’s participants hinted at a unique African-American biblical
hermeneutic that highlighted themes of injustice and oppression, especially racial
injustice, found in the Bible. The apparent interpretive lens appears to be unique to the
Black Church context in America and spurs leaders to commit to teaching critical
consciousness concepts to African-American students for their spiritual, moral, social,
and academic edification. The view of the Black Church leaders that participated in the
study are in alignment with Fulgham’s (2013) call for churches to be directly involved in
initiatives that can improve academic achievement of low income and minority students.
The participants’ views also support Mason’s (2018) call for American Christians to
confront racism and injustice in the country. Furthermore, their views also speak to what
McCaulley (2020) refers to as Black ecclesial interpretation which presents a model for
biblical interpretation which is “willing to listen to the ways in which the Scriptures
themselves respond to and redirect Black issues and concerns” (p. 21).

Conclusion. In order to fully implement and align critical consciousness teachings
within youth programming for African-American students, Black Church leaders need
access to training and tools such as curriculum in alignment with biblical principles.
Sieder and Graves (2020) observe that schools used specific theoretical frameworks to
foster critical consciousness among African-American and Latinx students. In the present
study, the researcher did not observe the use of a theoretical framework to guide the
teachings of critical consciousness. Instead, the leaders used the lens of Biblical teachings
and the interpretation of historical and current events to guide teaching key concepts. Perhaps frameworks such as Mc Caulley’s (2020) Black ecclesial interpretation model offers a theoretical lens to develop books and formal curriculum for Black Churches to use in the development of critical consciousness among its leaders and students.

**Recommendation.** Scholars interested in addressing racial injustice through a Biblical lens should consider developing and publishing reading lists of existing historic and contemporary writings of African-American theologians that address issues of racial injustice and corresponding solutions to overcome its challenges. Critical consciousness researchers should articulate and further explore frameworks that can be used for developing curriculum. Scholars should also look for ways to ensure that the curriculum is effective and relevant to the African-American context. Perhaps curriculum developers could use Alexander and Hjortso’s (2018) suggestion of using a stakeholder perspective to design and implement a participatory curriculum development process that employs activity system and stakeholder analyses during planning and implementation.

**Finding 3: Black Church leaders believe that critical consciousness should be taught carefully without engendering hatred or hopelessness.**

The study found that there was a specific manner in which Black Church leaders believed that critical consciousness should be taught. Each study participant expressed the use of caution in teaching critical consciousness. Many believed that keeping the teachings grounded in biblical principles, such as views towards treating others with fairness and respect for their humanity, prevented the tendency to become angry and bitter toward the people executing the injustice. Several of the participants believed that it was important to couple the teachings on racial injustice with solutions of addressing and
overcoming it to avoid provoking feelings of hopelessness. Sieder and Graves (2020) express findings that students who attended charter schools that emphasized the social analyses aspect of critical consciousness while not accentuating political agency and social action, felt like their teachings were aimed at producing disdain for the people who execute injustices.

**Conclusion.** The concern that participants expressed for the results of poorly teaching critical consciousness speaks to the need to ensure that teachers of it approach the topic in a fair and balanced manner. Critical consciousness theory emphasizes the importance of teaching students about racial injustices and the associated outcomes, such as how the legacy of systemic discrimination and racism in the education system in America produced the modern phenomena of disparate education outcomes by race and socioeconomic status. Critical consciousness theory balances the awareness with the political agency that promotes the self-efficacy that students can effect positive change. Furthermore, critical consciousness theory balances the social analysis of racial injustice with the strategies and methods of social action to confront and overcome the injustice. The way in which Black Church leaders carefully present the challenges of racial injustice balanced with political agency and engagement in social action may serve as an example to new critical consciousness practitioners of how to effectively implement its teachings.

**Recommendation.** Critical consciousness practitioners should ensure that they teach the competency in a manner that does not engender hatred or hopelessness within students. Researchers in the field should articulate teaching strategies and approaches to curriculum development that present the competency in a balanced manner. Care should
be taken that equal emphasis is placed on all three components of critical consciousness (analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice) so that problems are presented with strategies and solutions.

Recommendations for Future Research

The main conclusion from the study is that local Black Churches should be viewed as culturally relevant sources of critical consciousness development for African-American students. Future research should further explore the ways in which critical consciousness develops. Research should identify any existing frameworks that serve as a guide for teaching critical consciousness. Researchers should also address the ways in which educators and community organizations could or already partner with Black Churches to foster positive student outcomes.

The current study focused on the intentions of Black Church leaders to teach critical consciousness. Future research should explore the presence and level of critical consciousness among African-American students who attend churches where elements of critical consciousness is taught and incorporated into youth programming activities. Furthermore, the study found evidence that the teachings may also be taught to the adult membership within the churches. If the latter is true, the members who are parents within the church may be communicating critical consciousness to the African-American students as well. Future research should explore the critical consciousness of adult members of the church. Research should also explore the transmission of and to what extent parents who attend Black churches teach elements of critical consciousness within the homes of African-American students.
The present study found evidence that churches focus specifically on African-American identity development. Future research literature should explore linkages between the Black Church and African-American identity development theory as expressed by researchers such as Cross’ (1991) with the Nigrescence theory. The exploration should include whether existing theories address the development that occurs within Black churches or if there is a need to create new models of identity development specific to the Black Church context.

Implications of Limitations

Inherent to qualitative research, researcher bias poses limitations on the study. While Given (2016) notes that the qualitative researcher should authentically describe information within a study, she also contends that researcher bias may still be present. LeVasseur (2003) suggests that instead of trying to remove researcher bias, the researcher should seek to suspend understanding in a reflective manner that elicits curiosity and allows the researcher to decide how and in what ways personal understandings will influence the study. Furthermore, Given (2016) posits that researcher bias in qualitative research can be beneficial when the researcher is aware and embraces his or her own bias.

The researcher acknowledged that she is an African-American, raised in and currently attends a Black Church. The researcher’s father was a Black Church leader and the researcher is married to a Black Church leader. The researcher acknowledged her own bias that she believes Black Churches should be involved in teaching critical consciousness to African-American youth. Therefore, the researcher used journaling, reflection, and triangulation as validation strategies to ensure the study remained
objective. To remove the threat of potential bias, researchers who seek to replicate components of the study may need to consider a quantitative research approach.

Although the researcher was exploring the intentions of Black Church leaders to teach critical consciousness, it did not include an examination on the existence of critical consciousness from the student’s perspective. Previous studies included measurements of minority student’s levels of critical consciousness through quantitative and qualitative means (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer & Li, 2011; Ginwright, 2010; Godfrey et al., 2019; Nicolas et al., 2008; O’Leary & Romero, 2011; Seider et al., 2020; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1999). While the researcher found evidence that critical consciousness is taught to African-American students, it does not address the extent or the effectiveness of the teachings.

Another limitation of the study is that it only involved leaders within historically Black Churches in the southern United States with primarily teaching/preaching roles. For the study, Black Churches were “those independent, historic, and totally Black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 1). Southern churches were chosen because Warf and Winsberg (2010) find large concentrations of Black Churches in the southern United States. Also, Chatters et al. (2011) report that African Americans in the southern region of the country were more likely to seek assistance for problems from Black Church leaders. Although the study found that southern Black churches support social advocacy through community engagement, it did not explore the phenomena in other regions of the country. For example, findings may be different among northern churches.
Discussion

Although there were multiple themes and findings produced from the study that speak to some similarities among Black Churches, the researcher notes that Black Churches are not monolithic. They are diverse in multiple ways such as in doctrine, polity, size, membership socioeconomic status, and level of community involvement. Educators, education reformers, and community development organizations that may begin to seek strategic partnerships with Black Churches as a culturally relevant strategy to support African-American student achievement and personal development should thoughtfully engage the church’s leadership in discussions with the consciousness that their doctrine and practices may or may not align with the findings of the study.

The researcher designed the study to explore the intentions southern Black Church leaders have towards teaching African-American youth critical consciousness. However, the research found that not only did the participants have strong intentions of teaching, but they were already teaching critical consciousness and planned to continue. Human capital development is concerned with building the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals in order to accrue personal, organizational, and societal returns. As organizations, the study found that Black Churches develop the competency of critical consciousness among African-American students. Black Church organizations employ multiple strategies to develop the competency. The development of the competency is intentional and aims to provide African-American students with spirituality, resilience, a positive identity, and survival skills to successfully overcome challenges associated with racial injustice.
The people who teach critical consciousness within Black Churches received formal and informal training on the topic. Although formal training occurred through conferences and workshops, many of the participants sought further development through literature on the topic. Several mentioned that their lived experiences contributed to their understanding of navigating racial injustice. Participants desired more formal training and associated curriculum to support teaching critical consciousness. There is a need for human capital development practitioners to work with church organizations to develop formal training and curriculum for students. However, practitioners should ensure the development of training and curriculum is participatory and includes the stakeholders from within the Black Church community to ensure that the resulting training and student curriculum is culturally relevant to the African-American Christian context.

Finally, the study found that the participants were sensitive to the presentation of critical consciousness to African-American students. There was a collective concern that the outcome of teaching social analysis without accompanying strategies to address injustice would result in feelings of hatred and hopelessness. The participants focused on respect for all people groups, regardless of race or the injustices that they may be responsible for inflicting. Human capital development practitioners may want to explore connecting diversity and inclusion training with spirituality.

Summary

The study explored the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. The study employed a qualitative interpretive phenomenological investigative approach to explore southern Black Church leaders’ intentions to teach African-American students critical
consciousness. Chapters I-IV offered background information that articulated the need for the study, a review of literature, the study’s methodology, and the results of data collection. Chapter V presented a brief summary of the study, the study’s conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations. It concluded with sections centered on the implications of the study’s limitations, recommendations for future research, and a discussion on implications for the field of human capital development.
APPENDIX A– Instrument: One-on-One Interview Questions

Before we begin the interview questions, I would like to take a moment to explain the concept of critical consciousness that the study aims to address. Critical consciousness for the study means to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice. This means that a person has the ability to name and begin to understand how the social, political, and economic forces in America contribute to inequality (Sieder & Graves, 2020). With understanding inequality and injustice, a person is able to begin to learn and believe that there are things they can do to change that inequality. Finally, a person who understands the source of inequality and believes that they can help change it will engage in activities that confront oppression (Sieder & Graves, 2020). For example, a young person with critical consciousness may be interested in understanding the social, political, and economic forces that lead African-American youth to struggle with academics. This may lead them to find ways to help and ultimately engage in activities to help African-American youth to succeed.

1. Let’s begin with you telling me about your experience teaching youth in church. What is your experience in teaching youth at church?

2. Tell me about how your church teaches youth.
   Possible prompt: What kinds of things are taught to them?
   Possible prompt: What are the goals of those teachings?

3. What do you know about teaching youth critical consciousness which means to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice?
   Possible prompt: Have you attended any training, conferences, or read any books about the topic?

4. Does your church currently teach critical consciousness? If so, how does it teach it?
   Possible prompt: If so, do you teach it to youth within the church only or do you also teach it to other youth in the community? If so, how?

5. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) What do you think are the advantages of teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice?
   (If the church does teach critical consciousness) What have been some of the advantages of teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice?
   Possible prompt: How do you think those things are beneficial?

6. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) What do you think are the disadvantages of teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice?
   (If the church does teach critical consciousness) What have been some of the disadvantages of teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice?
   Possible prompt: How do you think those things are hurtful or harmful?
7. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) Who do you think would approve or support you if you teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
(If the church does teach critical consciousness) Who has approved or supported you as you taught youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: Why do you think that they would be/are supportive?

8. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) Who do you think would disapprove or discourage you from teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
(If the church does teach critical consciousness) Who has disapproved or discouraged you from teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: Why do you think that they would be/are discouraging?

9. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) What are the things that would make it easy for you to teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
(If the church does teach critical consciousness) What are the things that made it easy for you to teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: Why would/did those things make it easier?

10. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) What are the barriers or things that would make it difficult to teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
(If the church does teach critical consciousness) What are the barriers or things that made it difficult to teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: Why would/did those things make it difficult?

11. (If the church does not teach critical consciousness) Discuss the likelihood of your church teaching youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: What are some of the ways that you could see a church implementing the teaching into the church’s activities (if positive intentions)? 
   Possible prompt: Why do you think that you would not teach it (if negative intentions)?

(If the church does teach critical consciousness) Discuss the likelihood of your church continuing to teach youth to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice? 
   Possible prompt: What are some of the ways that your church has implemented the teaching into the church’s activities (if positive intentions to continue)? 
   Possible prompt: Why do you will not continue to teach it (if negative intentions to continue)?
Demographics

Age range: 20-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61-70  71+
Gender: Male        Female
What is your highest level of education or degree attainment? ______
What is your denominational affiliation? ________________
What is your current position within the church? ________________
How many years have you been in your current position? ______
How many years have you been in a leadership position within the Black Church? ______
APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter

IRB-21-250 - Initial: Sacco Committee Letter - Expedited and Full

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Tue 6/10/2021 10:55 AM

To: Dale Lunsford <Dale.Lunsford@usm.edu>; Taheesha Quarells <Taheesha.Qquarells@usm.edu>; Sue Fayard <Sue.Fayard@usm.edu>; Michael Howell <Michael.Howell@usm.edu>; Jonathan Snyder <Jonathan.Snyder@usm.edu>

Office of Research Integrity
118 College Drive #5125 • Hattiesburg, MS | 601.266.5576 | USM EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident Template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-21-250
PROJECT TITLE: Will the Church Help? An Exploration of Black Church Leaders' Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness Among African-American Students
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Human Capital Development
RESEARCHER(S): Taheesha Quarells, Dale Lunsford

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: August 10, 2021
APPENDIX C – One-on-One Interview Protocol

An Exploration of Black Church Leaders’ Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness among African-American Students.

Date: _____________________________

Interviewer: _______________________

Interviewee__________________

Position Title: _________________ Pseudonym__________________

Start Time: ________________________ End Time: ________________________

1. Before the interview begins:
   1. Check to ensure that notepads and pens are available to capture non-verbal details and points that may require additional explanations.
   2. Test Zoom software recording feature.
   3. Ensure that the participant has the signed informed consent form.
   4. Review study criteria.

2. Interview Guide:
   Hello__________. I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me. I am Taheesha Quarells, a PhD candidate conducting this research.

   The goal of this study is to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice by excelling in academics.

   These questions will focus on your perceptions as a Black Church leader in hopes of understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and intentions of African-American Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness which for this study means to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice. The interview session will last approximately one hour. With your agreement, I would like to record this interview to ensure that I accurately capture your perceptions. Please know that the recordings are solely for the purposes of making a written transcript of our conversation and will not be released in any publications or reports. The recording will be audio only as I will ask you to turn off your camera before I begin recording. If you do not want to be recorded, I will be taking notes throughout the interview to reflect our conversation. I will be the only person with access to these recordings. Your name and personal information will not be associated with anything that is said today. All the information that I receive will be treated as strictly confidential. You will be identified in the research by a fake name to conceal your identity. Only a
summary of data will be presented at meetings or in publications. Please be assured that none of the information obtained today will make it possible for anyone to identify you. Is it okay if I record our conversation?

The interview questions are designed to elicit responses about your attitudes, beliefs, and intentions. I want to encourage you to be honest and provide accurate accounts of your perceptions and personal feelings. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, please feel free to skip those questions.

I want to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, for any reason. The information that I collect from you today will be transcribed by software. Once the transcript is verified as accurate, I will delete all of the information and recordings associated with this interview from the software.

Before we begin, please read and sign and electronically sign the Informed Consent Form that I previously emailed you with the invitation to participate in the study. I will walk you through how to sign and send it to me if you would like. I will email you a copy for your records and I will keep a copy for my records.

3. Start the recording:
   a. Verbal identification of the recording: Date, time, and Zoom format
      Interviewer’s name: ____________________
      Interviewee’s name: ____________________
   b. Ask semi-structured, open-ended interview questions.
   c. Use prompts, and deeper questions as needed to assist the interview in answering the questions and to help the discussion refocus should the conversation go in a different direction

4. After the interview:
   a. Explain that I will use transcription software to transcribe the interview and that a copy of the transcript will be emailed to them for validation.
   b. Explain the importance of “member-checking”.
   c. Request that the participant respond to the member checking request within one week of receiving the transcript.

5. At the end of the meeting:
   a. Thank the participant for their participation and their support to this research project.
   b. Ask if they would like a copy of the results from the study once it has been finalized and approved by the university.
   c. Answer any remaining questions
Dear Recipient,
I am a Doctoral Candidate seeking a Ph.D. in Human Capital Development from the University of Southern Mississippi. My research centers on church-based, culturally relevant strategies to promote academic achievement among African-American students. Specifically, my work explores the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice by excelling in academics.

I will be collecting data this summer and would like to invite you to participate in an interview about your attitudes, beliefs, and intentions to teach African-American students how to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice. If you agree to participate in one of the interviews, please email me with possible dates and times that will work with your schedule. Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews will be held virtually using the Zoom meeting platform that can be accessed from your computer or mobile phone. The interview process will last approximately one hour and depends on the richness of the conversation. I have a few questions that will be used to guide our discussion.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in participating in my study titled: *An Exploration of Black Church Leaders’ Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness among African-American Students.*

I am available to discuss and questions, concerns, or my topic in greater detail. Please do not hesitate to contact me. Attached you will find a copy of the Informed Consent Form. If you agree to participate, please electronically sign and return the form.

Sincerely,
Taheesha R. Quarells
Doctoral Candidate, University of Southern Mississippi
taheesha.quarells@usm.edu
850-221-1646

The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi reviewed and approved this project, which ensures research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Direct any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant to the Chair of the IRB at (601) 266-5997 or irb@usm.edu. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time.
APPENDIX E – Informed Consent Form

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES

The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online.

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**PROJECT INFORMATION**

| Project Title: An Exploration of Black Church Leaders' Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness among African-American Students |
| Principal Investigator: Taheesha Quarells | Phone: 850-221-1646 | Email: taheesha.quarells@usm.edu |
| College: Arts and Sciences | School and Program: School of Interdisciplinary Studies; Human Capital Development |

**RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

1. **Purpose:**

   The purpose of this study is to explore the intentions of Black Church leaders towards the adoption of teaching African-American students critical consciousness. Because critical consciousness about racism may also motivate African-American students to resist oppressive forces through excelling in academics, Black Churches that intend to teach it will be an example of a culturally relevant strategy to close African-American student opportunity and achievement gaps. Data collected from this study can provide vocational psychologists with insights into designing interventions that develop critical consciousness that is embedded within African-American students' social institutions, such as their local historically Black Church. Church leaders around the African-American community can use data collected from this study to understand the way similar churches view enhancing youth programming by including elements of critical consciousness to support African-American student achievement.

2. **Description of Study:**

   This study uses a qualitative phenomenological research design. For the present study, the researcher will conduct a minimum of 12 one-on-one semi-structured interviews, until saturation is reached, using open-ended interview questions to collect the intentions of Black Church leaders to adopt teaching African-American students to analyze, navigate, and challenge racial injustice by excelling in academics. The researcher will conduct the interviews for approximately 60 mintues using the Zoom meeting platform. The interviews will record only audio.

3. **Benefits:**

   The study will not use any monetary benefit. Participants will benefit from knowing that they contributed to research that enables others to understand the way similar churches view enhancing youth programming by including elements of critical consciousness to support African-American student achievement.

4. **Risks:**
The participant will spend approximately 60 minutes during the interview.

5. Confidentiality:

All data collected will remain confidential throughout the study. The research will assign code names to participants to conceal the identity of each participant. The researcher will send each participant a private Zoom link that is password protected. The researcher will use transcription software that is stored on a local computer vice using cloud software that will limit possible exposure of the data.

6. Alternative Procedures:

N/A

7. Participant’s Assurance:

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

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<th>CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH</th>
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<td>I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.</td>
</tr>
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Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

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<tr>
<td>By clicking the box below, I give my consent to participate in this research project.</td>
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</table>

☐ Check this box if you consent to this study, and then click “Continue.” (Clicking “Continue” will not allow you to advance to the study, unless you have checked the box indicating your consent.)

If you do not wish to consent to this study, please close your browser window at this time.
APPENDIX F – Member Check Email

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the research study titled: *An Exploration of Black Church Leaders’ Intentions to Develop Critical Consciousness among African-American Students*. As we discussed earlier, your interview was recorded, transcribed, and is attached to this email for your review. Please take some time to read the entire transcript and mark any places that you think are inaccurate or would like to change. If it will be beneficial, I can meet with you through Zoom to review the document. Please do not hesitate to call or email me with a date and time if you would like to review the document together.

If I don’t hear back from you within seven days of (date), I will assume that you are satisfied with the transcript, and I will move forward with my work.

Once again, thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

Taheesha R. Quarells
Doctoral Candidate, University of Southern Mississippi
taheesha.quarells@usm.edu
850-221-1646

The Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi reviewed and approved this project, which ensures research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Direct any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant to the Chair of the IRB at (601) 266-5997 or irb@usm.edu. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time.
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169


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