

ABSTRACT

Vault SEED Homeschool to Build Racial and Intellectual Identity: A Qualitative Case Study

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Schools reflect the nation's social, political, and moral conditions and often perpetuate negative racial and intellectual identities for Black students more than any other group (Collins-White, 2018; Gadsden, 2017; Jay, 2009; Shelton, 2021; Vandivier, 2018). Black teachers' underrepresentation also poses issues for Black youth within public school spaces (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Because of the deep cultural connections shared, Black teachers understand the unique behaviors and cultural idiosyncrasies of Black youth (Lindsay & Hart, n.d.; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). With a debt owed to Black students, families of these students often look for alternative methods of education. Current studies support the notion that Black families choose to homeschool as a way to exercise freedom (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Lundy & Mazama, 2014). This qualitative case study described the practices of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (VSHC), a cooperative homeschool program formed by Black families, to create positive racial and intellectual identities among its students. Within the Vault SEED Homeschool collective, Black home educators used culturally relevant pedagogy to promote positive outcomes for Black students.

The Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998), rooted in social learning theory, formulated guiding principles toward understanding and facilitating learning within a community that informed the research methodology, research question, data collection, and analysis of this study. The central claim of this study indicated that by engaging and learning Black culture, and fostering a sense of community while attending to the academic needs of students, Black home educators promoted and maintained positive racial and intellectual identities for Black youth. Within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community, Black students developed positive self-images through a cultural awareness of their historical and present selves. In an effort to remove traditional, hegemonic practices, alternative forms of measuring Black students' achievement reflected their culture and efforts to belong and thrive in this world.

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Vault SEED Homeschool to Build Racial and Intellectual Identity: A Qualitative Case Study

by

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DEDICATION

To my twin sister and best friend, Latrise.

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Needs Assessment

Introduction

Black youth in public schools continue to suffer from the “education debt” Ladson-Billings (2006) identifies as historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components that have kept them from having real success at school (Collins-White, 2018; Shelton, 2021; Vandivier, 2018). Numerous research studies yielded some important insights into a so-called achievement gap between Black youth and their White counterparts (Bowman et al, 2018; Cokley et al, 2012; Evans, 2005; Flores, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mooney, 2018; Pitre, 2014). Standardized test data confirms biased results of Black students’ achievement scores in reading and mathematics (National Center of Education Statistics, 2020). With a debt owed to Black students, families of these students look for alternative methods of educating their students. Current studies on Black homeschooling support the notion that Black families may choose to homeschool to denounce the public school system and as a way to exercise freedom and for Black students to experience a successful education journey (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Lundy & Mazama, 2014).

With an emphasis on Black culture and academic scholarship within a community of practice, Black students excel. Although conducted within a novice homeschool collective, my study aims to present empirical evidence beyond homeschooling motivations and the scope of practices in a community that promotes

Black students' positive racial and intellectual identities. This study also describes a movement of Black homeschooling as an alternative to public schooling.

Statement of the Problem

Schools reflect the nation's social, political, and moral conditions and often perpetuate negative racial and intellectual identities for Black students more than any other group (Gadsden, 2017; Jay, 2009). Unfortunately, disparate academic outcomes, disparities in access to quality education, and discriminatory treatment (Howard, 2016; Gadsden, 2017) continue to prevent Black students from obtaining positive experiences within school spaces. Gadsden (2017) argues that a student's race provides access or creates barriers. For Black students, the obstacles are numerous. According to the congressionally mandated annual report *Conditions of Education 2020* prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), Black student data reveal ominous and disappointing outcomes. For example, "The National Report Card (NAEP) shows that from 1992 through 2019, the average reading and math scores for Black fourth-, eighth-, and 12th graders had always been lower than those of their white peers." (National Center of Education Statistics, 2021). Furthermore, "9% of Black students performed at or above proficient level in civics; only 13% of Black students performed at or above proficient level in math; and only 15% of Black students in grades fourth, eighth, and twelfth performed at or above proficient level in reading" (Nation's Report Card, 2019, Trend assessment section). With such startling statistics, an examination of the root causes and historical implications can illuminate what keeps Black students' academic performance behind their White counterparts.

Black teachers' underrepresentation also poses issues for Black youth within public school spaces (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Because of the deep cultural connections shared, Black teachers tend to remove Black students less often from classrooms to punish behavior infractions (Lindsay & Hart, n.d.; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Additionally, Black teachers understand the unique characteristics of Black youth, refer them to special education less (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011), and convey the importance of education and staying in school (Conditions of Education Report, 2020; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). The presence of a Black educator promotes success for Black youth.

Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that Black students experience difficulties in school that stem from the education debt made up of past social, economic, and moral struggles that relegate Black students to the margins of academic success. Today, public schools reflect, reinforce, and perpetuate inequitable treatment of Black students in the larger society because of this debt (Bowman et al., 2018; Green, 1972; Jay, 2009; Ravitch, 2000; Walker, 2000). Public schools continue to underserve, marginalize, and disenfranchise Black students because of the school system's lack of preparation for the cultural differences they bring to the classroom (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lundy & Mazama, 2013). Because of the emphasis placed on a Euro-centric curriculum, Black students, within these spaces, are often miseducated about their own culture and history (Mazma & Lundy, 2012), making it difficult for them to experience educational and social success. Due to systemic racism embedded within the structure, public schools consistently reproduce racial inequalities for Black students, creating what is known as the so-called "achievement gap" (Andrews, 2014).

Numerous studies examine the “achievement gap” (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter, 2001; Steele, 1999). Bowman et al. (2018) reveal that the achievement gap results from not addressing “the ill effects of prejudice and discrimination for Blacks” (p. 15). Other researchers suggest other factors contribute to the achievement gap like “stereotype threat” (Steele, 1999), culture mismatch (Irvine, 2003), and lack of culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In Evans's (2005) attempt to reframe the achievement gap, he argues that the achievement gap involves factors beyond schools’ control and acknowledges the complex nature of Black children before they enter schools. Framed as the opportunity gap (Gorski, 2018) and it is synonymous with the achievement gap for Black students today, and it reflects Black people's social and economic conditions generally and should not exist (Bowman et al., 2018; Evans 2005). Removing barriers faced in Euro-centric educational spaces and improving the so-called “achievement gap” (Delpit, 1995), closing the “opportunity gap” (Gorski, 2018), and repaying the “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) can affirm Black youth.

Before public education, former enslaved Africans established Black institutions staffed and financed by Blacks (Bush, 2004). According to a report provided by the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1866, 500 schools formed and maintained by Blacks operated in the South (Anderson, 1988). By 1869, at least 1500 Black church-sponsored schools existed (Anderson, 1988). In a review of common themes and characteristics of segregated schools in the south, Walker (2000) reports that these Black schools comprised well-trained teachers and principals, curricular and extra-curricular activities, reflectiveness of cultural values, parental support, and leadership strategies that uplift the

Black race. Between 1870 and 1900, political reconstruction, White resistance, the start of Jim Crow, and cultural differences led to the gap in achievement for Black students suffering today (Bowman et al., 2018; Levine & Levine, 2014; Walker, 2000).

A desperate need for alternative forms of schooling is necessary to change the academic and social outcomes for Black students (Bush, 2004). Institutions built by Black educators for Black students in the past can serve as a model to combat the historical, political, economic, and moral conditions reflected in traditional schools. In Walker's (2000) analysis of segregated schools in the South, she provides evidence that teaching and learning within these schools exemplified practices that received positive feedback from the community. Segregated schools of the South provided exemplary teachers and leaders and created ample opportunity for parental involvement. In other words, these Black schools provided a quality learning environment for Black youth. However, research that explores the outcomes of students within these Black centered educational spaces needs further examination.

Homeschooling has become more popular among non-White families over the past ten years (Ray, 2021). Among homeschooled families, 41% identify as non-White (Ray, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). An estimated 220,000 of the homeschool population are Black, becoming one of the fastest-growing demographics choosing to homeschool as an alternative to public education (Huseman, 2015). As the Black homeschool population grows, research on Black culture to promote positive racial identity, and scholarship to enhance intellectual identity within a homeschool community of practice can provide insight to improve the conditions Black youth face in traditional school spaces. Homeschooling, a viable option, provides an alternative to public

education that promotes and teaches Black culture and encourages scholarship for Black youth.

The Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, a hybrid learning environment for Black youth, promotes racial and intellectual identities of these youth by emerging them in culturally relevant pedagogy. Practices within the community reflect Black culture and scholarship to address the achievement gap, opportunity gap, and education debt public schools have historically perpetuated for Black youth.

Literature Review

This literature review includes studies that describe a historical perspective on Black institutions, desegregation, *Brown v. Board of Education*, unequal education concerning the achievement gap, and how culturally relevant pedagogy addresses this gap. It also includes studies of Black homeschooling motivations and practices that connect Black youth towards positive racial and intellectual identities. Consideration of research investigating the schooling experiences of Black youth in public schools reveals a detailed record of how Blacks continue to suffer from the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Historically, Black youth continue to fall behind on data collected using every instrument created to measure academic achievement. Because of the education debt owed to them, Black students rarely experience real success in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This literature review presents the conditions of Black learners and the present need for the transformation of Black education and consists of the following sections; (a) historical perspectives of Black institutions, desegregation, and *Brown v. Board of Education*; (b) the achievement gap; (c) culturally relevant pedagogy addresses

the Black achievement gap and promote racial and intellectual identities; and (d) Black homeschooling.

Historical Perspectives of Black Institutions and Brown v. Board of Education

Acknowledging the importance of literacy and education, Blacks, enslaved and free, formed learning institutions that provided absolute independence (Lundy & Mazama, 2013). During slavery, Blacks established methods to educate themselves, although learning to read was unlawful in the South (Williams, 2009). Enslaved Blacks learned to read and write in secretive schools, used prohibited books, and understood that literacy's advantages contributed to a better life and emancipation (Williams, 2009). Once freed, Blacks immediately began to establish more formal ways to educate. Black independent institutions employed Black teachers who taught Black students and provided a deep understanding of critical pedagogy and transformational learning (Andrews, 2014). Through Black funding sources, over 5,000 Negro schools (Franklin, 1974) provided organized, socially responsible institutions that petitioned the government and participated in political demonstrations (Walker, 1998, 2000). Black schools instituted protocols and practices that provided resources and strategies for learners to become literate, socially responsible citizens. Studies also reveal evidence of Blacks' desire for independence from their oppressors (Bush, 2004), even in a climate of overt racism (Walker, 2000). Learning institutions provided liberation and improved social conditions for Blacks.

Although Blacks created and sustained educational institutions and opportunities to edify their community, they faced several challenges rooted in racism and oppression. For example, while White high schools were well funded, Blacks, especially those living

in rural areas, lacked access to high school education (Walker, 1996; 2000). Government programs refused to allocate funds for Black education. Black schools' property was valued much less, and the Black teacher-to-student ratio was one teacher to every 93 students (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2000). Black schools suffered from little to no funding, lacked qualified teachers, and the attitudes of Whites toward Black education were also negative and dismissive (Walker, 2000). Northern philanthropists and Southern citizens sought to keep Blacks in industrial training, cemented to the service industry (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2000).

Black institutions faced apparent challenges and experienced a lack of resources to educate their students (Garrett, 1993). However, Black institutions saw beneficial outcomes, like having dedicated Black teachers at the height of segregation who informed improvements toward the conditions of Black education (Walker, 2000). Segregated, Black institutions were extensions of the community, reflecting Black culture values and providing protection against racism for the Black community (Irvine & Irvine, 2007; Lundy & Mazama, 2012; Walker, 2000). Danns and Purdy (2015) share accounts of Black educators “preparing young Black women for a wide range of occupations, gathering support, documenting educational practices and legacies of all Black high-schools, uncovering vibrant spaces and educational innovations, and training future teachers” (p. 577). Black institutions hired, trained, and supported Black teachers that educated, prepared, and protected their students.

Historically, Black teachers played a significant role in creating positive school experiences for Black youth. Evidence suggests that fewer Black students were suspended or expelled in institutions with sizeable Black teacher populations (Garrett,

1993; Irvine & Irvine, 2007). Black teachers placed more Black students in gifted and talented programs, and more graduated from high school (Irvine & Irvine, 2007). For example, in a qualitative study, Garrett (1993) examines the role of Black teachers and how necessary “transmitting knowledge, values, and beliefs to youth and promoting a sense of community” (p. 433) did something positive for Black students. Black institutions' unique response to the cultural needs of Black students addressed their deeper physiological needs (Irvine & Irvine, 2007) through Black teachers. However, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision changed how Blacks experienced education in the United States.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision revolutionized American schools (Poff, 2016) and impacted Black communities, Black institutions, and Black youth (Danns & Purdy, 2015; Irvine & Irvine, 2007; Poff, 2016). Many studies outlining the historical perspectives and implications of *Brown v. Board of Education* share the controversial results of desegregating schools (Carson, 2005; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Danns & Purdy, 2015; Franklin, 2005; Russo et al., 1994). On the one hand, Carson (2004) reported, “its forceful affirmation inspired Black Americans to initiate a decade of mass struggles that overcame the southern Jim Crow system and culminated in the passage of historic civil rights legislation” (p. 7). In comparison, Hudson and Holmes (1994) posit that although the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision is not to fault directly, the decline of Black teachers following the decision resulted in unanticipated consequences. Milner and Howard (2004) concur that the Black teaching force continued to decline, even in 2003. Russo et al. (1994) speak about the progress made and the work that needs to be done, stating, that the “Supreme Court has discontinued its previously

activist role in ensuring educational equality” (p. 307). *Brown v. Board of Education* ultimately failed to address the problem of power within a system that subordinates Blacks (Danns & Purdy, 2015; Gadsden, 2017). This decision resulted in Black students struggling to thrive in public school spaces and experiencing a decline in achievement (Milner & Howard, 2004). Because of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), many Black teachers and Black ways of being and knowing or cultural practices disappeared from the classroom, resulting in an “imbalance in the community” (Milner & Howard, 2004). Black teachers connect culturally to Black students (Whaley & Noel, 2012), are role models, and have high expectations for Black students (Jay, 2009; Milner & Howard, 2004). After the decision, Black students were left in classrooms with White teachers, who may or may not have opposed the decision. In contrast, Black teachers were treated poorly or forced to find alternative career fields (Milner & Howard, 2004). The removal of Black teachers left Black youth unprotected and vulnerable to the system and lead to gaps within the system.

Empirical evidence appears to confirm the notion that when Black students have access to Black teachers, they do better. Studies suggest that in Grades 3 through 5, Black students with at least one Black teacher perform better on standardized tests, are suspended or expelled less, and are more likely to go to college (Dee, 2004; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Papageorge, 2018). In a review of an ethnic study, Redding (2019) postulates that a “shared cultural understanding improves student outcomes” (p. 524). In a study comparing the disciplinary outcomes of students, Lindsay and Hart (2017) found that Black students assigned to Black teachers were less likely to be removed from school as punishment. Implications of these studies suggest that for Black youth to do better and to

close the achievement gap, public schools need to hire more teachers of color (Lindsay & Hart, 2017).

The Achievement Gap

Black students continue to “underperform” when compared to their White counterparts. Many studies have yielded insight into the education gap and the data disparities between Black youth and their White peers (Bowman et al., 2018; Evans, 2005; Jay, 2009). “By the end of fourth grade, Black youth are two school years behind their wealthier, predominately White peers in reading and math. By eighth grade, three school years behind, and by 12th Grade, four school years behind” (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021, Trend assessment section). Black youth are three times more likely to be referred to special education programs for behavior than academic needs and half as likely to be referred to gifted classes (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021).

Research contends that the achievement gap reflects the historically unfair, substandard, and inequitable treatment of Blacks and negatively impacts Black youth within the classrooms of Eurocentric school spaces (Evans, 2005; Jay, 2009). Evans (2005) writes, “schools reflect society much more than they shape it” (p. 586). The long-lasting effects of the differences in achievement between Black and White youth, linked to economic and social disadvantages, reflect generations of legal and illegal strategies that deny the humanity and lack cultural connections Black students need to be successful in the classroom (Bowman et al., 2018; Evans, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Whaley & Noel, 2012). Researchers and educators use the achievement gap to explain “the persistent inequality in our nation’s schools” (Bowman et al., 2018, p. 4). Bowman et al.

(2018) suggest that “past and present economic and social conditions are at the root of the achievement gap” (p. 15). Schools simply mirror society and should not be held accountable for the success of Black youth (Evans, 2005).

Gorski (2018) addresses the achievement gap as a gap in opportunities whereby identifying biases and removing deficit views can lead to equitable change for Black youth. Gorski (2018) also challenges educators to use their influence to disrupt the biases and inequities that exist in schools by applying an “equity lens” in every decision, even when it is uncomfortable (p. 17). Teach for America, a teacher training organization, believe that the term “achievement gap” places unfair blame and responsibility for injustice on students (Mooney, 2018). Flores (2018) addressed the opportunity gap by reconstructing the language of the achievement gap through school leadership. The counternarratives of Black female leaders reveal how a change in mindset, acknowledgment of racial issues, understanding and empathy towards Black youth, and real opportunity loss can reduce educational gaps (Flores, 2018). Like Gorski and Mooney, Pitre's (2014) position of shifting the focus from “blaming the victim” to recognizing the gaps in opportunity and strategies for change must happen beyond school spaces (p. 216). Instead, the opportunity gap implies that when given resources, all students can achieve, more so Black youth (Mooney, 2018; Gorski, 2018).

When compared to White youth, Black youth, 18 to 24 years old are only half as likely to complete high school or earn a GED (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). This means that only about 45% of Black youth complete or earn a high school diploma or GED. “Among 18- to 24-year-olds, about 90% of Whites have either completed high school or earned a GED” (National Center for Educational Statistics,

2021, p. 433). Success for White students appears embedded within the structures of the school system. The results suggest that mostly all White students have the chance to achieve.

Current research studies surrounding the achievement and opportunity gap emphasize the need to alleviate and reframe the deficit language used to describe Black achievement (Flores, 2018; Mooney, 2018; Pitre, 2014). Literature also supports that the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) of Black youth results from gaps in achievement and opportunity (Gorski, 2018; Mooney, 2018). Framed as the achievement gap or opportunity gap, the educational debt is accumulated through the inequities, disparities, and injustices that Black youth face in school and society that need to be repaid, replenished, and renewed, and again, is not just the school's responsibility (Evans, 2005).

Culturally relevant pedagogy addresses the Black achievement gap. Few studies examined the role of the racial identity of Black youth and its connection to academic achievement (Carter, 2006; Gunby, 2009; Harper, 2007; Altschul et al., 2006). Harper (2007) investigated the urban environment and how it shapes “an appreciation of the historical context for Black racial identity development and an acknowledgment of within-group diversity among African American adolescents as key in the development of a healthy racial identity.” (p. 230). Ford and Harris’ (1997) reported that the Black students identified as gifted by their schools (28%) had more positive racial identities compared to their non-identified Black peers. Surprisingly, Cokley et al., (2012) found racial identity as a negative predictor of achievement. Dennison et al. (2020) call for more research to examine how homeschool practices of Black families “may help improve academic achievement and promote healthy identities” of Black children (p. 22).

Limited studies explored Black intellectual identity (Jenkins, 2011; McCoy, 2018; Steele, 1997). Mazow et al. (2002) defined intellectual identity as how students interpret the world and information around them. Stelle (1997) identified the threat of stereotypes that shape the academic performance of Blacks. Jenkins (2011) examined intellectual identity in hip-hop music. With the lack of studies available, research regarding Black youth's intellectual identity would establish more discourse centered around students' understanding and perception of student learning and positive academic outcomes.

As a strategy to change the misinterpreted academic performance of Black students, Ladson-Billings (1995) presents culturally relevant pedagogy as teaching and learning as collective empowerment with three criteria: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Academic success, referred to as scholarship throughout this study, is measured by youth's intellectual growth, learning experiences, and instructional practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The second criterion, cultural competence, refers to students' ability to be authentic and appreciate their own culture and the teachers' ability to incorporate aspects of culture, like home language, music, and art, to enhance the learning experiences for students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The third criterion, critical consciousness, refers to students' abilities to understand, critique, and discern knowledge to engage and participate in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) presents numerous examples of how culturally relevant pedagogy, used by teachers, informs cultural practices in the classroom. Culturally relevant pedagogy informs the way Black youth should engage in educational experiences.

Culturally relevant pedagogy appraises numerous studies related to Black education (Cooper, 2001; Howard, 2003; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006;

Milner, 2011). Coard et al. (2004) presented culturally relevant preventive interventions and a review of the racial socialization of Black families. The ideas presented in Coard et al. (2004) of racial socialization, racial pride, racial equality, racial achievement, oral communication modeling, and exposure are closely connected to those presented in the culturally relevant frameworks. Lundy and Mazama (2013) acknowledge that Blacks' learning historical and cultural accomplishments provide a solid academic base and a sense of pride and promote positive outcomes for Black homeschoolers. Irvine (2010) shared non-examples and myths of culturally relevant teaching while providing practical insights practitioners can use in the classroom. She also stated that it is teachers' responsibility to promote change in society by confronting inequities, such as racism and classism (Irvine, 2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy continues to inform studies and provide insight for teaching Black youth.

Current research indicates that culturally relevant practices increase the positive outcomes of Black youth (Ani, 2013; Milner, 2010). Students experience empowerment and succeed academically and socially when they see themselves in the curriculum and instruction (Milner, 2010). Additionally, students who participate in culturally relevant pedagogy learn to understand and challenge sociopolitical views of society (Milner, 2010). Most studies agree that culturally responsive curriculum and teaching are beneficial for Black youth to value their race and ethnicity (Ani, 2013).

Afrocentricity. Culturally relevant pedagogy has roots in Afrocentricity. Sule et al. (2018) defined Afrocentricity as placing African ways of being and knowing at the center of learning, calling upon historical traditions and values that confirm and connect Black students to academic achievement. Asante (1991) affirms that when teachers allow

Black youth to engage in learning experiences that celebrate, highlight, and confirm African and Black contributions to society, they achieve. Like culturally relevant pedagogy, Afrocentricity aligns curriculum and practices in culture, where Black youth see themselves in what they are learning. When held accountable for their education, Black youth excel (Sule et al., 2018). Black students in White educational spaces were taught about the individuals who historically have enslaved, oppressed, and defamed Black people, become outsiders within their own race, questioning their self-worth and existence (Asante, 1991). Consequently, Black students carry a sense of inferiority and underperform academically in white learning spaces (Asante, 1991). By employing culturally relevant pedagogy rooted in Afrocentricity, Black student success is imminent (Sule et al., 2018).

Afrocentricity challenges the normalcy of Eurocentric views as common and standard, validates Black existence and contributions to society, defends and affirms Afro-centeredness, and rejects hegemonic perspectives (Asante, 1991). Schools have traditionally upheld Eurocentric ways of being and knowing that have excluded and alienated Black youth, dismantling their sense of self-worth, and leading to unsuccessful outcomes, like dropout or low academic performance (Asante, 1991). Instead of continuing the traditions of individualism, schools must move towards pedagogy and practices that promote cooperation and emphasis on the community (Asante, 1991; Dei, 1994). Afrocentricity is not the African version of Eurocentricity, yet recognizes and validates Black knowledge as legitimate, centering around recognizing marginalized groups' culture and historical perspectives in society (Dei, 1994).

In the spirit of the historical conditions rooted in Eurocentrism, African people and their descendants, principles, and practices remain unequal while supporting myths that keep African people and their descendants in subservient, low-class positions (Hoskins, 1992). Since schools reflect societies of their origin, schools in America reflect White supremacy and racist notions (Asante, 1991). Since the founding of the United States, White ways of being and knowing reflect classical or traditional knowledge (Asante, 1991; Bush, 2004; Levine & Levine, 2014). The miseducation of the African and falsification of history cannot allow the Black to fully appreciate, celebrate or love her heritage (Hoskins, 1992). Black educators must provide exposure to Black youth about their heritage and culture to undo the historical effects of slavery.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum to Promote Black Racial and Intellectual Identity

Afrocentricity influences African-centered frameworks that guide curriculum development and practices within the Black community. In efforts to present examples outside of the Eurocentric curriculum, in the first framework Karenga (2002; 2004) outlines basic principles for teaching, promoting, and celebrating culture within the Black community called the Nguzo Saba. Also known as the Kwanzaa, which translates to “first fruits,” is best known as a Black holiday season, beginning December 26 and continuing through January 1 (Karenga, 2002). During the non-religious, seven-day celebration, Blacks come together to honor ancestors and culture, celebrate heritage, and reaffirm bonds to the community (National Museum of Black History and Culture, 2021). Over the years, the Nguzo Saba or Kwanzaa principles, used by Black institutions as foundations, frameworks, and context for curriculum development, practices, and behavior, serve as accountability for and to the community (Baggerly & Parker, 2005;

Johnson, 2001; Wyatt, 2009). For example, Kalonji (2014) replaced the 12-Step Program, a Eurocentric strategy for addiction, with the culturally healing practice of the Nguzo Saba to address addiction in the Black community. In an empirical study, Lateef and Anthony (2020) compared the Nguzo Saba to the Positive Youth Development framework to change the way “at-risk youth were viewed and described” (p. 272). Robinson and Jeremiah (2011) share the school-wide learning goals of a charter school in Chicago, including the goal that “students will understand and use cultural knowledge (Nguzo Saba) to make informed ethical choices” (Robinson & Jeremiah, 2011, p. 313).

The Nguzo Saba (Kwanzaa Principles). The seven principles that make up the Nguzo Saba are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-determination), Ujima (Collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith; see discussion in Crosby 2021; Karenga, 2002). Each principle, unique on its own, works together to promote and celebrate Black culture's symbols, practices, and traditions and connect to African heritage. Derived from Karenga's Kawaiida Philosophy of Social Change, the Nguzo Saba synthesizes African values and practices into practical strategies for addressing social change for Black communities (Karenga, 2002; Lateef & Anthony, 2018). These values should be relevant to the positive development of Black communities, reflect African heritage, and values should have spiritual and cultural connections to Africa (Karenga, 2002).

Seven cardinal virtues of Ma'at. Another relevant system that informs Black culture and curriculum in Black learning spaces is the Seven Cardinal Virtues of Ma'at. A cultural, spiritual value system important to Egyptian practices has informed the Black community's ways of being and knowing and serves as curriculum practices for Black

institutions (Kalonji, 2014; Karenga, 2004; Potts, 2003;). The seven values that make up this system are truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity, and order (Kalonji, 2014; Karenga, 2002; San-aset, 2021). The meanings of each principle reflect modern teachings and training of the Black community (Kalonji, 2014). Virtues translated into youth-friendly language can serve as a framework to guide cultural teaching and learning for Black youth (Robinson & Jeremiah, 2011). Durden (2007) claims that by being and living Ma'at, students are responsible for themselves and their community and develop and use their talents to make their community better.

Both Black cultural knowledge frameworks serve as structure and context for creating a curriculum centered around culture and empowering Black youth and the community (Kalonji, 2014). The Nguzo Saba and the Seven Cardinal Virtues of Ma'at influence research, curriculum development, and practices within the community, including Black homeschools, leading to positive outcomes for Black youth and their racial and intellectual identities. Consequently, both value systems foster growth and development, empower youth, and are used to convey the messages of cohesiveness within Black communities in practice and application (Kalonji, 2014).

Black Homeschooling

Homeschooling has become more popular in the past decade (Hamlin, 2020; Lundy & Mazama, 2013, 2015). In the Spring of 2019, there were an estimated 2.5 million homeschooled students in grades K through 12, doubling to 5 million homeschooled students presently (Ray, 2017b; Ray, 2021). A wide variety of people with different religious and educational backgrounds, ethnicities, and political stances, choose to homeschool their children (Gathercole, 2005; Ray, 2021). Approximately 41% of

families choosing to homeschool identify as non-White/non-Hispanic (Ray, 2021). Estimates of the growth of the number of families choosing to homeschool outpaced student enrollment in charter schools (Watson, 2018). The Covid-19 pandemic present an opportunity for parents to move to such an option, like homeschooling.

Reasons Black families choose homeschooling. Much of the research surrounding Black homeschooling relates to the reasons Black families choose to homeschool their children. Many empirical studies on motivation examine homeschooling as a practice of resistance, protection, equity, and freedom (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; James, 2007; Lundy & Mazama, 2012). Motivations of Black families who homeschool to resist racism and protectionism have informed the needs of Black education in other school spaces (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Lundy and Mazama, 2012). Lundy and Mazama (2012) provided a historical view of Black experiences with racism in schools as motivation for homeschooling. Another study conducted by Lundy and Mazama (2014) provided insight into Black parents who homeschool because of discontent with most schools' Eurocentric curriculum. Beyond issues related to race, James (2007) added that Black families homeschool to counter negative attitudes about learning among peers and provide high-quality, culture-based education for Black youth.

Whether for student achievement, protection, or freedom, Black families choosing to homeschool at any point in their child's education do so for numerous reasons (Neuman & Guterman, 2021). Fields-Smith and Williams (2008) examined decisions to homeschool based on Black families' "beliefs, concerns, and desires for their children" (p. 370). Furthermore, this study revealed specific reasons for parental choice of curriculum and teaching moral, ethical, and cultural principles (Fields-Smith & Williams,

2008). Lundy and Mazama (2015) articulated reasons Black families choose to homeschool related to discontent with poor quality education, public and private. In their quest to exhaust reasons why Black families homeschool, Lundy and Mazama (2013, 2015) also presented ample evidence related to religious motivations, racial justice, and the quest for cultural dignity. Guterman and Neuman (2021) posited that although religious beliefs influence homeschooling decisions, Black families do so primarily as liberation. Lundy and Mazama (2015) explored how parents' concerns for their Black sons motivate them to homeschool. Homeschooling provides a safe space for these young Black males where healthy images of masculinity can be formed, protection from the criminal justice system, and shields biases of teachers and society (Lundy & Mazama, 2014). Dennison et al. (2020) affirmed that Black families choosing to homeschool do so as a response and resistance to public education. The research on Black homeschool motivation exposes that Black families choosing to homeschool do so to protect, educate, and promote culture.

Much of the research conveying reasons Black families choose to homeschool connects to discontented concerns about the public school system. Fields-Smith and Williams' (2009) study found that parents' motivations for homeschooling their children do so to "better facilitate learning, choose appropriate curriculum, or teach moral and cultural principles" (p. 384). Lundy and Mazama (2014) reported "quality of education" as the most frequent motive for Black families who choose to homeschool (p. 261). In a similar study, Lundy and Mazama (2014) shared the unique challenges Black boys face in the public school system naming homeschooling as an effective way to protect them from "biased expectations of teachers" (p. 53). Although Black families choose to

homeschool do so because of the lack of confidence in the public school system, the debate remains between choosing homeschooling as public school resistance or an expression of individualism. Neuman and Oz (2021) examined homeschooling as part of that social debate, supporting homeschooling to solve the education crisis.

In addition to social criticism of public schools, studies offered evidence to support homeschooling as a movement of Black empowerment while instilling a sense of identity in Black youth (Lundy & Mazama, 2013). Lundy and Mazama (2012) posited that homeschooling serves as an opportunity for Black families to create spaces of liberation, promoting self-knowledge and instilling a sense of Black pride. Dennison et al. (2020) posit homeschooling as a way to obtain the American dream, to become “self-made” (p. 22) and innovative. Educational spaces where Black youth experience positive engagement that promote a sense of self can significantly change the overall identity and academic achievement development of Black Youth.

Outcomes associated with Black homeschooling. Research studies examined Black homeschoolers' academic achievement (Ray, 1990, 2010, 2015, 2021). A recent study showed that Black homeschooled students constantly scored at the 65th percentile to 80th percentile on standardized tests compared to students in public schools who averaged near the 50th percentile (Ray, 2017a). Ray (2015) found that, on average, White students outperformed Black students enrolled in public schools. Although research revealed that Black homeschooled students outperform their Black public school counterparts on standardized academic achievement tests, little to no research show causation for this achievement (Ray, 2015, 2017a).

In a review of selected homeschool topics, Gaither (2017) opposed Ray's studies regarding the reporting of academic achievement of homeschoolers stating, "most of this work contains serious design flaws that limit its generalizability and reliability" (p. 222). Not accounting for variables such as race, socioeconomic, marital status, or parent educational attainment, Ray's recruitment strategy may misrepresent national norms or suggest that homeschool students consistently outperform public school students (Gaither, 2017). Other factors, such as academic goals and self-reporting of test scores must be considered when making such academic claims of homeschooled students (Gaither, 2017).

Practices of Black homeschoolers. In addition to the understudied aspects of Black homeschooling and student achievement, Black homeschool instructional and social practices research remains under-documented. To date, only one study, Mazama (2016), offered insight into Black homeschool practices by presenting empirical evidence linked to the instructional practices of Black home educators. Mazama (2016) contributed to the void by examining who teaches Black homeschooled children, the methods used to teach them, and the curriculum. Mazama (2016) contributed insightful data regarding underrepresented Black homeschool families.

While Black homeschooling deserves more research attention, online articles and print media provided additional insight into the practices of Black homeschooling and its culture. Ensley (2011) provided a personal account of the commitment and challenges she faces as a home educator. Anderson (2018), and Stewart (2020) cite racial protection as a motivation for more Black families choosing to homeschool, where most of the research on Black homeschooling tends to focus. Jonsson and Kenworthy (2016)

affirmed the research, provided perceptions of homeschooling parents, and cited several experts in the field. Fratti (2016), different from the others, told the story of the famous Black Gold Medal Olympian Simone Biles and how homeschooling contributed to her success.

Synthesis of Literature

An overwhelming amount of data suggest that Black youth continue to underperform in public schools because, like in society, Blacks, undervalued and marginalized, face barriers more than any other racial group in America (Bowman et al., 2018; Evans, 2004; Jay 2009). Academic measures, although biased in design, suggest a grim educational outlook for Black youth. Historical evidence suggests, however, that when Black students engage with Black educators in Black institutions (Bush 2004; Walker 2000), participate in culturally relevant practices (Billings, 2006; Kolanji, 2014; Milner, 2011), and understand their position in society by studying and embracing Black culture (Asante, 1991, Dei, 1994; Karenga, 2002, 2004), they can achieve (Anderson,1988; Danns & Purdy, 2015; Franklin, 1974; Garret, 1993; Hoskins,1992; Irvine & Irvine, 2007; Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Black institutions successfully educated their population and provided a sense of pride that accompanies a people's independence when caring for and educating their own. Addressing distinguishing discourses surrounding the achievement and opportunity gap can lead to Black youth's success in schools (Flores, 2018; Gorski, 2018; Mooney, 2018; Pitre, 2014). Homeschooling to combat inequities for Black youth can lead to real change and inform other educational spaces on how to change the trajectory of Black youth, pushing them forward towards

active participation in scholarship and support their racial and intellectual identities (Deets, 2007; Huseman, 2015; Ray, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

I explored learning as a process of social participation within a complex learning community. As my research explored the promotion of racial and intellectual identities among Black youth in a community homeschool setting, the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework, the lens I used to explore the intersection of community, social practices, meaning, and identity (Wenger, 1998). The CoP framework (see Figure 1) outlined three essential dimensions with distinct characteristics (Rodgers, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The three dimensions, “mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire” (Wegner, 1998, p. 85), served as themes to explain practices within this culture-sharing group and as a lens of “transformative perspectives” question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 85) that informed the research. Each dimension, with its unique characteristics, connected members of the community, reflected the complexity of the community, and cannot be reduced to single principles, such as power or dependence, success or failure, resistance or compliance (Wenger, 1998). Explanation of each dimension described what communities are and are not, and related practices within the homeschool collective to be a source of cohesiveness.

Mutual engagement referred to the membership and interactions within the community of practice. Mills (2011) posited mutual engagement as membership developed through shared engagement in discussion, negotiations, exchanges, and promoted relationships among people. Participants rarely made assumptions of mutual support and interpersonal allegiance until a community was formed (Wenger, 1998). For

example, the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective formed a learning community as a response to the global pandemic. The organization evolved and shaped the members' practices, and developed new ways of being, knowing, and belonging, thus enabling mutual engagement. Each member's unique contribution and role within the community helped shape the practices of the overall community.

In addition, the second dimension, joint enterprise negotiated to form public relations within the community that pushed a practice forward and kept it in check (Wenger, 1998). In other words, joint enterprises were interpretable, participative, and shareable communities. This characteristic of practice as a source of "community coherence" included three essential points that kept the community cohesive (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). First, a joint enterprise happened because of the understanding of complex relationships. When relationships were sustained, participants of the community felt connected, valued, and existed peacefully. Secondly, the joint enterprise defined itself as it developed (Wenger, 1998). Thirdly, a joint enterprise did not implicitly state it is a joint enterprise. However, it became integrated into the very soul of the community.

Additionally, a joint enterprise was defined by the participants in the process of pursuing mutual engagement. Members' pursuit of scholarship, those learning experiences related to themselves and their culture, reflected complex, unlimited practices and did not require homogeneity (Wenger, 1998). By learning together, members of communities "negotiate what matters and what does not, what to talk about and to leave unsaid, what to do and not to do, when actions and artifacts are good enough and when they need improving or refining" (Wenger, 1998, p. 81). In other words, defining joint enterprise produced accountability beyond the constraints or norms within

a community and is “interpretable, participative, and sharable” (p. 82). Joint enterprise included and considered all the voices of the community.

The last dimension of the Community of Practice framework is the shared repertoire. According to Wenger (1998), “the repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of existence” (p. 83). Like the previous characteristics of the Communities of Practice framework, shared repertoire reflects in the community over time. Shared repertoire involves assigning meaning to the everyday norms produced by the community. Like each dimension, shared repertoire establishes in the community over time, involving profound discovery and development.

Numerous studies have used the Communities of Practice framework to make sense of what happens within groups that choose to learn and socialize together. Handley et al. (2006) explored the communities of practice from the perspectives of the individual learners and the broader contexts within communities of practice. This study further proposed clearer definitions of “participation and practice” (Handley et al., 2006). Moule (2006) used the communities of practice framework to show how healthcare students, learning online, develop essential elements outlined by the CoP framework, like enabling access and developing trust. Gunawardena et al. (2009) referenced CoP as a structure to understand the learning that occurred, within a group of doctoral students, while using social networking tools to communicate and share knowledge with one another. More studies examined how the CoP framework serves as a conduit for analyzing communities

that learn together (Huzzard, 2004; Jagasia, 2015; Lindkvist, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Scarso et al., 2009; Swan et al, 2002; Wenger et al., 2001).

Although CoP showed up in various studies, one discussed the limitations associated with this framework. Kerno (2008) explored potential challenges that communities of practice may face when using such a framework. He argued how hierarchical design structures, culture, and time restraints can affect the framework's effectiveness. Because of the CoP's organic structure and informal nature, this framework may impair the "implementation and integration" within an organization (Kerno, 2008, p. 76). Although these limitations are present, the CoP framework continues to evolve.

The CoP framework, a complex social learning system, contained many characteristics. Relationships developed within the emergent structures of learners within organizations. Self-organized and self-regulated participants continually negotiated the meaning of identity and culture with the community (Wenger, 1998). To answer the central research question: How do community practices connected to Black culture, and scholarship add to the positive development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth? I used the CoP framework as a relevant structure of practices within a learning community that is directly related to the engagement of members and the development of racial and intellectual identities. The following figure 1 shows the three elements of the CoP framework with examples of what each element looks like in a community of practice.

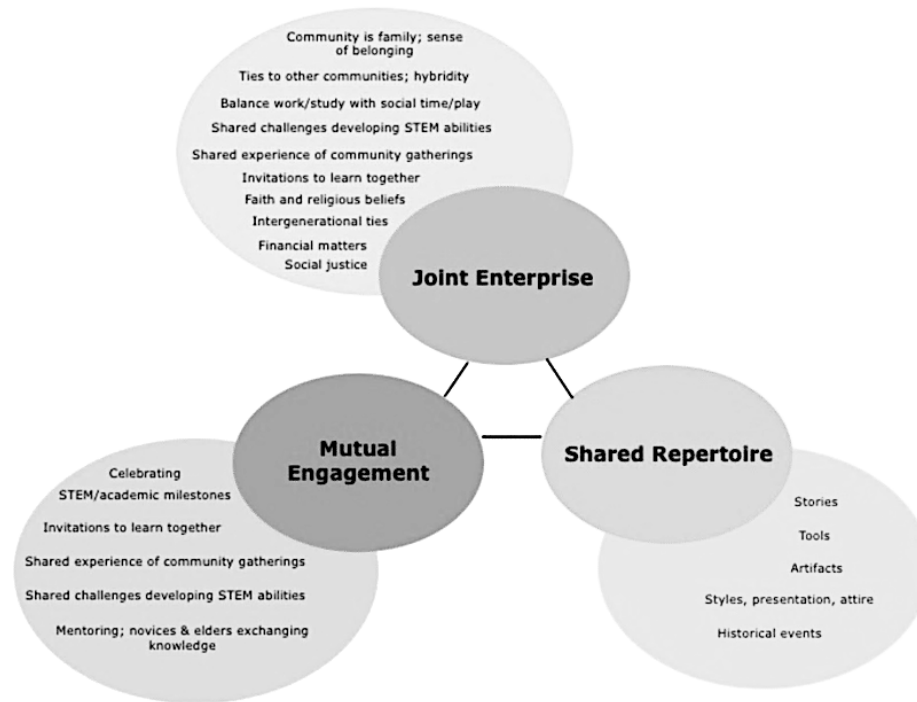


Figure 1. Communities of practice framework.

Conclusion: Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the practices the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (VSHC), a cooperative homeschool program formed by Black families, used to create positive racial and intellectual identities among its students. Within the Vault SEED Homeschool collective, Black home educators use culturally relevant pedagogy rooted in the Ma'at Cardinal Virtues (Karenga, 2004) and Kwanzaa principles (Karenga, 2002) to promote positive outcomes for Black students. I am interested in what can be learned from the practices of the families within this community and how participation in this group shapes the racial and intellectual identities of six students (5 boys and one girl), Andrea, Justin, Sincere, Hector, Tommie, and Charles.

The Communities of Practice Framework, rooted in social learning theory, allows me to formulate a consistent set of truths and guiding principles for understanding and

facilitating learning within the community (Wenger, 1998). Three dimensions, “mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire,” define and describe the organization and practices of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (Wegner, 1998, p. 85). The Communities of Practice framework was the lens to examine how families provided instruction and opportunities for the students participating.

Vault SEED Homeschool Collective served as a model to inform Black families of ways to reclaim the process of educating and uplifting Black youth while advancing their racial and intellectual identities. The central claim of this study is that by engaging and learning Black culture and fostering a sense of community while attending to the academic needs of students, Black home educators promote positive racial and intellectual identities for Black youth. My study is guided by the following research question: How do community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective? The following chapter details the research design and methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

More than any other group, Black students experience the unfortunate reactions of racism, discrimination, and the public educational system's decline (Lundy & Mazama, 2015). Black adolescents share many experiences where they feel discriminated against in school, especially related to discipline, academics, and other social domains (Berkel et al., 2009). Black youth continue to live and learn in a society that devalues them and their families (Coard et al., 2004; Lundy & Mazama, 2013). Few studies show the struggles of Black students and how they deal with past and present-day racism and inequities used to maintain an inequitable distribution of power and opportunities (Lofton & Davis 2015), especially in school. Schools have hosted environments that “contradict Black students' interest and humanity” (Kohi et al., 2017, p. 183). Many school practices do not consider Black values, and experiences, nor depict an honest reflection of the struggles Black youth face regularly.

As a result of unfair practices, racial discrimination, and the lack of cultural experiences offered by traditional education models, many Black families choose to homeschool to resist the status quo (Fields-Smith, 2013). Homeschooling is like providing a parent-led private education that happens at a home that “does not rely on either state-run public schooling or institutional schooling for a child's education” (Ray, 2013, p. 269). Black families who homeschool want different learning experiences for their children, outside of what has been traditionally offered.

Although homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, little research shares the voices of Blacks who choose to homeschool, especially as a collective. First, issues faced by Black youth and their families while homeschooling is not presented in the research. Federal researchers “found that the rate of Black families homeschooling their children in the United States nearly doubled from 1999 to 2012, yet very few studies have focused on the Black population” (Ray, 2015, p.71). Homeschooling has reached far more diverse populations in recent years, stretching beyond just Whites (Ray, 2015). Reasons for this phenomenon also lack research. Although representation of parents' voices concerning why they homeschool exists, more research representing Black families' homeschooling practices and Black homeschool collectives is needed to give movement to a practice that could improve the well-being of Black youth (Mazama and Lundy, 2015).

The purpose of this case study was to describe the practices of a group of Black families choosing to homeschool collectively to form Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (VSHC) and to identify how the practices of this group relate to Black culture, and scholarship, shaping the racial and intellectual identities of the students within the learning community. A case study design was used where qualitative data was collected to analyze the practices of the VSHC community to present cases that further identify dominant social and cultural contexts within the community (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Interview and participant observation data, collected from families participating in the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective during the 2020–21 school year captured perceptions of the community practices and personal expectations related to activism, culture, and scholarship. Participant observation allowed me to intimately engage long-term with the participants of this study and reveal the community's social structures

(Creswell and Poth, 2018). I used a qualitative case study design to build evidence by describing and observing the community practices and behaviors of the VSHC and connecting them to how Black students identify themselves within the shared learning space. The central question guiding this study is, what community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influenced the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective?

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

I must acknowledge my relationship with the community involved in this study. As a Vice-Principal and teacher of a small private school in a major metropolitan area, where most of the participants attended before committing to Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, I have established close professional relationships with the parents and students of this study. My work in education encompasses over 19 years as a public school classroom teacher, private school administrator, afterschool educational program provider, homeschool educator, and parent focuses on providing Black students with innovative educational experiences rooted in entrepreneurship, culture, and literacy to improve teaching and learning for my community. As the creator of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective and parent of a 10-year-old Black male, I aimed to continue this work and adjusted it to meet the needs of Black youth and my community's present conditions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I became interested in establishing and studying communities that serve Black families' and students' present needs. Alternative educational experiences other than face-to-face interactions with students have posed a considerable challenge for teaching and learning. Technological advances have changed

how content is presented to students. To combat the issues in learning Black students face while dealing with a global pandemic, Vault SEED Homeschool Collective was created to provide a different experience for students.

As a parent and teacher with mandated stay-home restrictions, homeschooling was a viable response to the coronavirus pandemic. Homeschooling can be a method for Black parents to take a chance to find alternative curricula that embraces the rich culture of Blackness. Homeschooling state laws in the state where this study took place, allow parents to become the sole educational provider for their children. During this time, parents who decided to homeschool could unburden an already overworked educational system while the world heals from the pandemic.

As a lifetime educator, a transformative worldview is a lens through which I view the world. This philosophical worldview allows me to examine the needs, issues, and changes within a Black community of homeschooled families to promote different teaching and learning methods (Creswell, 2018). Traditional roles of education disseminate and preserve a cultural model that already exists (Jackson, 2008), teach prescribed curriculums (Ladson-Billings, 2012), and create spaces of control and submission (Callejo-Perez et al., 2004). A transformative view of the world allows for change to drive decisions, practices, and theory while providing a logical approach to research (Jackson, 2008).

In addition to a transformative worldview, a progressive approach to research guides how I study and advance my educational practices. A progressive philosophical stance permits learners to experience education as whole beings, addressing needs beyond academic success (Arends & Winitzky, 2001). A progressive approach allows

teachers to employ and connect a variety of approaches to student development and adjust the purpose of education that can be individualized to meet the immediate needs of students. The purpose of education, according to progressivism, is to equip students to live and learn in a world that continually challenges the many changes society endures (Hargreaves & Centre, 1994). With the many changes and challenges I face as a classroom teacher, administrator, and homeschool parent, a progressivist approach allows me to make connections to practices and adjust these practices to fit my community of learners' needs.

As a founding member of VSHC, I position myself as a participant-observer, experiencing a unique opportunity to be a "real" participant. As a partnership with 13 families, we offer different resources for the homeschool collective. For example, one family purchased lockers for students to use while at the VSHC center. Another family provides access to space where the center is housed, formerly a bank, turned art gallery, and now a learning space for homeschool learners. As a certified teacher, leader, and parent, I provide supervision and direct instruction to members in grades 4th through 6th in English Language Arts, social studies, science, and mathematics, six hours a week. I also plan asynchronous activities for this group, consult with parents, supervise staff, and engage with students who visit the center.

Theoretical Framework Application

The Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998), rooted in social learning theory, formulated two guiding principles toward understanding and facilitating learning within a community that informed the research methodology, research question, data collection, and analysis of this study. First, individuals shape a domain of interest

where members contributed knowledge, form interpersonal relationships, and negotiate the meaning of practices in the environment as the community is formed. Because of a particular set of circumstances, community members created an environment where Black youth thrive together to learn safely. Second, by repeating interactions and creating supportive learning relationships, community members help each other by exchanging knowledge and forming interpersonal relationships. In other words, choosing to learn and interact regularly and forming mutual engagement leads to members of the community becoming intertwined over time (Wenger, 1998). The principles of this framework directly drive how this community of practice exchange knowledge, form relationships, and create artifacts reflective of themselves in the community.

Members of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective naturally produce practices within the community that center on achievement and failures as resistance to oppression and attainment of freedom and encourage self-reflection and community reflections (Wenger, 1998). According to Wenger (1998), “engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge and negotiation of enterprises hold the key to real transformation” (p. 85). The Communities of Practice framework was most appropriate for situating the research method, research question, data collection, and analysis.

To form the case that makes up this study and its research question, the three dimensions of the Communities of Practice framework were considered: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wegner, 1998). Mutual engagement “exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another” (p. 73). Practices within the community connected to activism shape members' ideals related to the social and political changes inside and outside the community. Since

engaged actions bind this community, the case study methodology fits this framework. The research method and question directly reflect the three dimensions within the Communities of Practice framework.

Data collected through observations, students' journals, and interviews show examples of how the community of practice produces artifacts over time, its shared repertoire. As the community engages in knowledge, does things together, form and maintain relationships, and withstand the social complexities of relationships, the community develops activities, artifacts, and symbols (Wegner, 1998). The Communities of Practice framework's shared repertoire informs the rehearsed characteristics of the community and availability for further engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998). Observation data collected about the practices themselves illuminated the community as a cohesive unit. Student journals and participant voices through their interviews serve as examples of artifacts representing the knowledge, practices, symbols, and perceptions that make up the community itself.

The Communities of Practice (CoP) framework also informed the data analysis of this study by providing a foundation of meanings that served as direct connections to practices and activities within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community as they relate to Black culture, and scholarship. I coded observation, interview, and artifactual data related to the formation of the VSHC as elements of mutual engagement. Comments related to scholarship and learning within the space, where members express how they navigate teaching and learning experiences and coordinate activities are described through joint enterprise. The CoP's shared repertoire catalyzed Blackness through the community members' culture and curriculum. During the analysis of

interviews and student journals, I interpreted routines, words, tools, procedures, and symbols of the community as representing its shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). The data analyzed showed how this community coordinates, solved problems, and planned its members' teaching and learning experiences through observations and interviews. Analyzed data-informed student identities and connected the CoP framework and community members to “places of engagement, materials, and experiences with which to build an image of the world and themselves, and ways of having an effect on the world and making their actions matter” (Wenger 1998, p. 271). The CoP framework served as the spark for the values, practices, beliefs, conversations, content, and products of a learning community that shapes the research methods and questions and informed this study's data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

To explore the process of the practices within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (VSHC), qualitative research was the best for the design of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach to research allowed for thick, rich descriptions of the VSHC community's practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is ideal for sharing nuanced information about participants’ unique perspectives and experiences, which is necessary to describe how community practices connected to Black culture, and scholarship influence the development process of racial and intellectual identities. The depth and complexity of understanding this process would not be revealed by merely responding to surveys (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To define the “real world” nature of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, case study qualitative methods were chosen for this study (Yin, 2017, p. 31).

Since this study evaluated the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, the case study research design explored the processes and practices within this program, and its activities, using various data collection procedures during the first term of the 2021–21 school year (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017). Participants of this study were bound by the number of hours they spent at the center per week and the activities they participated in during community practices. Data collected and analyzed using case study design methods allowed for an evaluative approach to the practices of the VHSC community. As a valuable tool for identifying dominant social and cultural discourse, the qualitative case study can lead to changes and challenge social norms through inquiry and analysis (Yin, 2017). Using case study research design methods, I interpreted open-ended qualitative data related to the homeschool collective as one case.

The single case study method design allowed me to focus on five students to understand better how they interacted within the community and analyzed what students did and said that connected them to their racial and intellectual identity. Selected students spent 15 or more hours at the center per week, identified as full-time members, and participated in offered activities.

Site Selection and Participant Sampling

Created out of a need for a safe and engaging environment due to COVID-19, Vault SEED Homeschool Collective comprises 13 Black families with children in grades ranging from second through sixth. Students complete tasks related to reading, English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies. Vault SEED Homeschool Collective provides learning space, access to learning facilitators, internet access, cultural experiences, financial literacy, gardening, and a host of other extra-curricular activities,

with instructional methods and content related to activism, culture, and scholarship the students who are members of this center. Families can send their students to the center for face-to-face and small-group face-to-face learning experiences and attend classes online.

Families can utilize the Vault SEED Homeschool collective as their primary mode of education or as supplemental to another educational choice. One family, for example, with second and seventh-graders who attend public school virtually, access the center for a safe learning environment while their parents are working. When time permits, they participate in art and gardening.

The Vault SEED Homeschool Collective is located in a suburb of a major metro area in the southeast. Families who access the center live within 25 miles of the location and arrive between the hours of 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. The center is open four days a week, Monday through Thursday, and closes at 5:30 p.m. EST.

The population of VSHC consists of families, students, and staff members. Students make up 40.5% of ($n = 15$) of the population. There is a total of five second-graders (two boys, three girls), five fourth-graders (two boys, three girls), four fifth-graders (four boys), and one sixth-grader (one girl). Parents represent 51% of the total population ($n = 19$), including 11 mothers and eight fathers. Four staff members (10.5%) do not have children who belong to the VSHC.

Members of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective represent parents choosing to homeschool their students using the learning center for any amount of time during the week to engage in safe small-group learning experiences. Families provided demographic through an online application. Participating families benefit by having access to a safe

learning space for their students and a monthly group meeting with staff to discuss student progress and update student academic plans.

Participants

Participants were bound to this study by their need for educational services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective signed consent and assent forms to participate in this study. The partnership agreement between families and the homeschool collective includes potential research opportunities for the space and participants of VSHC. By providing innovative teaching and leadership experiences, space, and connections to partnerships, the participants of this study provided data that "defines and legitimizes" (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 33) the community practices of this group, adding to the necessary research needed for Black homeschool collectives. Students of these families contribute data in the form of artifacts and activity logs. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants.

I used purposeful sampling to focus on six students belonging to VSHC to identify and provide rich narratives that answer the research question (see Table 1). As a participant-observer, I included my son to explain this phenomenon in-depth and breadth. The students I interacted with were chosen to focus on the experiences and perceptions through this homeschool collective model. The participants for this study were in fifth and sixth grades, spent more than 10 physical hours a week at the Vault for instruction, and participated in weekly activities.

Table 1

Case Study Member Family Profile

Pseudonym	Grade	# of Active Parents	Average Age of Parents	# of Children Belonging to Homeschool Collective	Highest Education Level of Parent	New to Home-school	# of hours At VSHC Per Week	# of Online Hours Per Week
Andrea	6th	2	35	2	Bachelor	Yes	16	4
Justin	5th	2	40	1	Bachelor	Yes	24	2
Sincere	5th	2	49	1	Bachelor	Yes	10	4
Tommie	5th	2	45	1	Master's	Yes	30	2
Charles	5th	1	32	1	Master's	Yes	14	6

Data Collection Procedures

Principles of case study research for data collection were employed throughout this study. Collecting multiple data sources is a distinctive characteristic of case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observation data, student journals, and interview data provided insight for this case study. First, recordings revealed examples of when students referred to their racial and intellectual identities during morning learning sessions. Participant observation data collection allowed me to record information as it took place, gave a firsthand account of the experiences with participants, and was beneficial to explore my personal views as an active community member (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017).

Observations (see Appendix A) of student interactions identified practices students engaged in that related to Black culture and scholarship and how those activities formed racial and intellectual identities. Field notes and memos from observations were recorded and later transcribed to develop detailed descriptions. To increase the clarity of students' social connections and express behaviors related to their racial and intellectual

identities, observations served as the best tool to create a comfortable learning and research environment.

Next, the collection of student journals (see Appendix B) provided insight into students' attitudes toward learning, race, and themselves. Students wrote in their journals daily. Students shared their journals via their Google Drive. Students' journals allowed me to interpret language related to the research question and represent further findings of the five individual cases represented in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017). Including qualitative data beyond interviews and observations strengthens the participants' voices, allowing multiple sources for interpretation (Yin, 2017).

Lastly, collected interview data was added to students' perspectives about their experiences within this Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. Interviews (see Appendix D) were used to understand and interpret the students' experiences written in their journals and to explain further what was happening in this learning space related to their racial and intellectual identities. Semi-structured interviews provided one-on-one time with participants and were conducted with students during September 2021, 30 minutes per student. Open-ended questions were asked to elicit the views and opinions of participants within the VSHC program (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017). I recorded participant responses to interview questions using a voice recording application. During the interviewing process, the qualitative data collected allowed themes to emerge related to Black culture and scholarship.

Multiple sources of evidence, including observational data, interview data, and four student journals were collected for this case study (Yin, 2017). As a research participant, I was immersed in the data for an extended period and served as the

instrument and benefited from an opportunity to report on families new to homeschooling, along with the teaching and learning experiences of a collective community during a global pandemic (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Involved in the participants' day-to-day routines and activities, I provided thick, rich descriptions of the community and accurately portrayed how this group changed over time using observational data. Observational data collection took eight times within a six-week period. See figure 2 for the data collection timeline. Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants and provided clarity and ensured accuracy of data reporting.

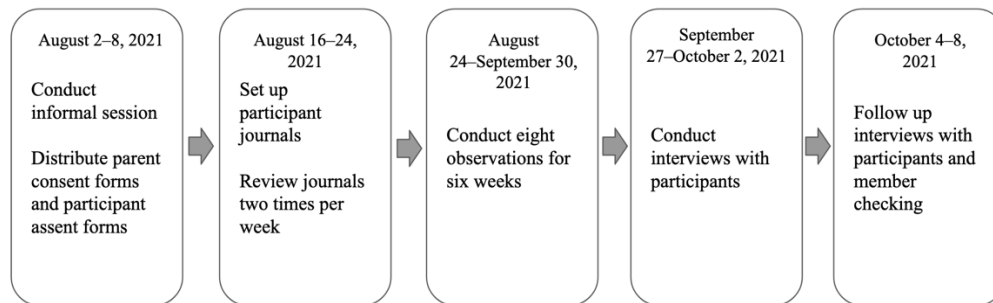


Figure 2. Data collection timeline.

Data Analysis Procedure

To make sense of the qualitative data I collected through observations, student journal responses, and interviews, I used six steps to analyze the data in this case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). First, I prepared the data for analysis by transcribing the observations, reading student journals, and transcribing interview data. While transcribing the observations and interviews, I explored the text by highlighting and making preliminary notes to understand the participants' relationship to the VSHC space and community practices (Dowling et al., 2016). Student journals were used as an interactive tool between researcher and participant to triangulate the data and share

participants' thinking regarding their identity in and throughout the VSHC learning environment (Janesick, 1998). Observation notes and field notes described how participants moved, used, and changed throughout this study. As I draw upon my transformative worldview, my notes also served as a way for me to process my point of view and assumptions as an observer participant (Jackson, 2008). To prepare the data for software analysis, I formatted the data to fit the NVivo software requirements. Preparing the data for analysis included cataloging and sorting the data visually.

Next, I explored the data by organizing interview transcripts, printing and highlighting phrases and other related content from five collected student journals, and noting the similarities, differences, and discoveries throughout the notes. To accurately convey participants' voices, I acknowledged that what learners see, hear, imitate, shape and reshape, and transmit learning experiences within the VSHC. space (Yin, 2017). I wrote initial thoughts to begin formulating codes. A qualitative codebook organized themes and the initial codes by the theoretical framework.

Categories from the Communities of Practice framework were used to analyze the data by coding words and phrases. Codes were developed based on emerging information collected from participants and three predetermined themes from the Communities of Practice framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Coding is a way to index and map dense data to make sense of it (Creswell, 2015; Elliot, 2018). Included in the discovered themes were the themes connected to the framework influencing this study. Following Tesch's (2013) eight steps of the coding process, I considered and found expected codes, surprising codes, and unique codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I read through all transcripts to get a sense of the wholeness of the data. I recorded my thoughts about the underlying

meanings of the information I found throughout my observation and notes, interview transcripts, and students' journals. I grouped the data into ten alphabetized codes to develop descriptions and abbreviated the categories. I drew lines between categories to those themes showing interrelationships. Data representing each category was then assembled to perform preliminary analysis. To view the data beyond one lens, the software NVivo was used to add to the reliability of the data analysis. I used code sequencing and themes extracted from the data to formulate the case study participants' narratives and answer the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Next, I represented the data in multiple ways. First, I described data through discussion and narratives, using observational data, connecting the homeschool community's practices reflected within the learning space. A model framework outlining participants' experiences and practices related to the Community of Practice framework, racial and intellectual identities, and cultural experiences were developed to show how teaching and learning happen within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. Next, evidence of student racial and intellectual identity themes was shown through rich narratives from the case study participants' data. Using student journals to compose their narratives allowed me to experience how students represented themselves in a whole and open-ended way (Janesick, 1998). Student journals also provided explicit evidence for this case study's central research question related to racial and intellectual identity among Black youth. Narratives were written to represent emerging themes to explain and discuss the findings of this case study. A conceptual map showed the flow of ideas among the codes and themes of the findings from the student journals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Afterward, I interpreted the meaning of the results of this case study through pattern matching and reflexivity (Yin, 2017). Pattern matching was used to connect how community practices related to Black culture and scholarship shape the racial and intellectual identities of Black youth. Since predetermined themes were developed, pattern matching provided internal validity that strengthened the results of this case study (Yin, 2017). By summarizing the significant findings, comparing the findings to the literature, and how the findings answer the research question of this study, I used my voice to understand and translate the practices of the VSHC. community to those homeschool practices done by other groups shown in previous research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017). Through the process of reflexivity, I revealed my perceptions, setbacks, and interpretations of what was happening within this learning space (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Members of the VSHC came together amid a global pandemic to teach and learn through reflective and culturally relevant practices that directly shaped and influenced them as a collective community.

Lastly, I triangulated the data, through member checking and NVivo, providing and analyzing multiple data sources (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Yin, 2017). Observations within the community, writing journals, and participant interviews served as the several data sources analyzed for this case study. Participants inspected documents and recordings of interviews, during follow-up interviews, to ensure their truth and accuracy. By openly sharing summarizations of findings with the participants of this study, through member checking, I ensured that my interpretations reflected their experiences accurately (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants shared their thoughts regarding this study before, during, and after the research process. Triangulation of the

data was done throughout the data collection and analysis process. Data from multiple sources and participants built the evidence for the codes and themes used within this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2017). To add to the reliability of this research, the software, NVivo was used during the coding of data to develop a cross-thematic procedure to corroborate findings. The VSHC participants represent a homeschool collective, of Black families, with diverse backgrounds, and the information gathered from them is considered creditable and reliable. See Figure 3 for a visual representation of the data analysis steps.

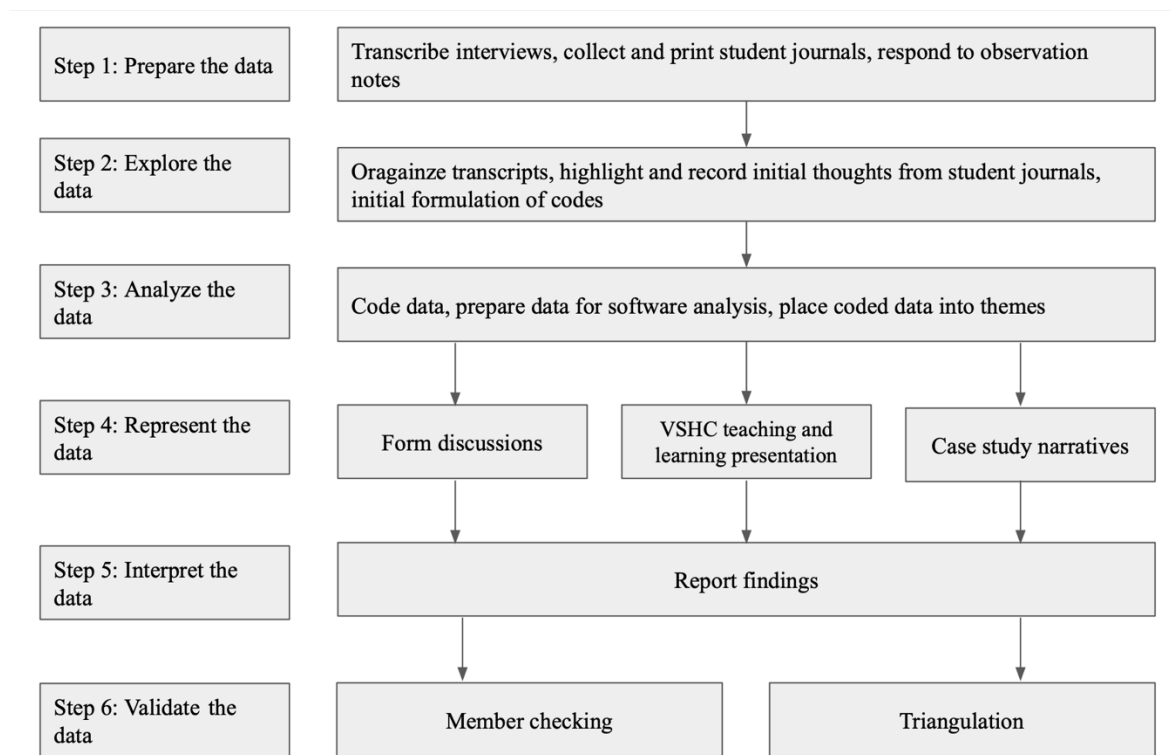


Figure 3. Data analysis steps.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Four steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and analysis. First, I used triangulation methods to strengthen the internal validity and trustworthiness of this

study. Observation, interview, and artifact analysis were conducted to confirm and corroborate the data collected and analyzed during this study (Yin, 2017).

Second, I applied member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All participants in this study could read if they desired, written descriptions, observation data, and interview transcripts to check for accuracy. Participants felt positively connected to this study and wanted to be involved in all stages of development. After the analysis phase, I contacted participants to share with them the results section of the study to ensure interpretations were accurate as well.

Third, I used a qualitative practice where I copied participants' quotes from observation, interview, and journal transcripts and placed them underneath a priori themes and those that emerged from the analysis. To maintain a "chain of evidence" to increase the "construct validity," themes and codes were extracted from the data (Yin, 2017, p. 130). This strategy allowed for enough transcript data to support the results that I reported in this study.

Lastly, using a digital database also increased the reliability of the "entire case" (Yin, 2017, p. 129). NVivo provided a way to organize and analyze unstructured information and served as a tool to classify data into themes and patterns. NVivo also provided a visualization of the data for further interpretation. Using case study principles for data collection and analysis at each phase of the data collection process adds to this case study's overall reliability and validity (Yin, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations within this case study are important to note since I include myself as a researcher participant and my son as a case study participant,

reporting and disclosing this information is mentioned throughout this study. Because of the complex nature of my relationship with the participants of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community, regular check-ins with participants were imperative. Obtaining and maintaining consent was also necessary for the reliability and reporting of evaluative findings for space practices. Sound qualitative practices guided how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Jackson (2008) explains how ethical practices or norms of a group where context emerges, the process of "reflection, imagination, and experimentation" can create innovative ways of being in their part of their worlds (p. 122). In other words, I make these ethical considerations to be as transparent and open as possible to interpret and report the data as is, through the eyes of the participants, with reliable results, telling their true stories.

I submitted it to the Office of Research Compliance for review and received a non-human subjects research determination (Appendix E). Parent consent and student assent forms were distributed and signed. Before signing permission, an informational meeting was held to review both documents with parents and participants. Participants were able to leave the study at any time. This study is as open and reflective of the community which it represents.

Limitations and Delimitations

There were four main limitations within this study. Since this study was conducted within an established learning community, where membership was fluid and everchanging, the first limitation of this study was the number of participants. Although committed to the community, members may leave the community at any time. With more long-term participants, generalizability could be established. The second limitation was

participants might have falsely represented their thoughts and behaviors since I am considered a leader in the community. Although provisions were made to ensure participants were comfortable during observations and interviews, chances still exist where participants could hold back their perspectives. The third limitation was that this study was conducted during a global pandemic. Lastly, because of their income and education levels, the Black families that make up the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective do not necessarily represent the average Black family in America.

The delimitations set for this study set boundaries to answer the research question. Delimitations of this study included not interviewing the adult family members of the participants within this study, including only those students taught by me, and the unique point of view and position I held within this community. Excluding the voices of the parents of this community allowed for a complete focus on student participation and responses. Not including interviews with parent members of the community made the amount of collected data manageable and meaningful. Secondly, I included student participants that were directly taught by me. As a community member, convenience sampling served as the best way to engage participants in this study.

Conclusion

Qualitative data were collected and analyzed to explore how community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective. This case presented empirical evidence beyond homeschooling motivations and presented the scope of practices amongst the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective participants that promote Black students' racial and intellectual identities. This case study has implications for a

movement of Black homeschooling collectives forming as an alternative to public schooling.

Using case study design, I analyzed empirical evidence to support ideas related to the practices in this community. The insights learned from this study add to the missing research on Black Homeschool Collectives. Practices of homeschool collectives have yet to be added to the scope of Black Homeschool research.

Chapter Two of this study explained the methods used to answer how the practices within a shared community shape the racial and intellectual identities of a group within the VSHC Case study design methods allowed the exploration of practices within a bounded community. Data collected through participant observation provided immediate, contextual information to analyze. Student journals provided insight into students' perceptions of Black culture and scholarship. Interviews offered a targeted approach to explain student perceptions further and to ensure accurate reporting of the data. Data were analyzed using pattern-matching (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Validation of the data, done through member-checking and triangulation, provided accurate reporting. The following chapter examines the results and discusses the implications of the research findings and results.

CHAPTER THREE

Results and Implications

Introduction

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology to describe the practices of a group of Black families that have chosen to homeschool cooperatively to form Vault SEED Homeschool Collective (VSHC) and what community practices related to Black culture and scholarship contribute to VSHC students' racial and intellectual identities. Data from interviews, student journals, and observations answered the central research question, how do community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective? This chapter reveals the results of how a community of Black home educators promotes and maintains positive racial and intellectual identities within a homeschool collective. Two major findings emerged as I analyzed the data. One finding reveals that members of this community, through a reflective process, have committed to belonging and evolving together. The second finding indicated that through the use of Black culture and scholarship, homeschool educators provide ways for learners to accept, understand, and affirm positive racial and intellectual identities. These findings from this study lead to the development of Black homeschool practices that serve as a base for the development of frameworks, curricula, and teaching strategies.

In this chapter, first, I offered detailed descriptions of the community, participants, and data collected, analyzed, and interpreted. In addition to the interpretation of the data, references to the literature and theoretical framework support the findings of

this study. Furthermore, I related elements of the Communities of Practice (CoP) framework to associate its themes, joint enterprise, shared repertoire, and mutual engagement, to the evolving practices within the community and explored those themes that emerged from the data analysis process. I consider the CoP themes as I interpreted observed interactions within the community, and shared ideas presented by learners from their interviews and journals to tell the story of a unique homeschool collective and its members. Lastly, through consideration of the research question, I offered stakeholders significant data-informed solutions for homeschool practitioners to use with homeschool collectives and communities for future research.

The Community

The learning space, located in the middle of a small city, used to be an art gallery and event space, housed the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, four days a week, up to nine hours a day. The floorplan provided much space for students to run around, feeling free and comfortable. Two main rooms transformed into classrooms for morning instruction, with dry-erase boards, student work, and other supplies. Students enjoyed their learning space and often adapted it to meet their own needs.

Families and other members belonging to this community often contributed to the space in significant ways. One family provided the space, while another donated lockers and physical education equipment. Other members of the community, like the Gardening instructor, provided instruction related to plants, cooking, and organizing events. Students were exposed to art, business, leadership, and wellness due to the overwhelming support and contributions of its members.

Participants

Demographic descriptions of participants and sampling rationale appear in Chapter Two of this dissertation. I offer further descriptions of the five participants of this study below. This phase of the qualitative case study focused on collecting interview data from student participants. I purposively selected three of the student interviews to bring to light scholars' perspectives of the community and to identify aspects of their racial and intellectual identities. Participant journals also provided perspectives on the development of the findings of this case study. As a research participant, this phase included observation notes, thoughts, and personal perceptions of the community. Observation notes considered all participants as I connected themes to the Communities of Practice framework and the literature. I use notes from two home educator interviews to emphasize and share additional home educators' voices other than my own. I provide a brief profile of each participant.

Participant Andrea. Andrea was 12 years old during this study and the only girl among the middle school scholars. Andrea spent several hours a week at the center with her younger sibling and younger cousin. Although Andrea was assigned to 6th grade, she often completed 7th-grade math and reading activities. Her mother worked in human resources for a home improvement company. Her father worked as an engineer. Both parents brought her to the center and picked her up. Andrea's family often donated supplies, food, and time to the community. While at the VSHC center, Andrea enjoyed making slime, being the leader, and playing Monopoly.

Participant Charles. Charles was 10 years old during this study and the youngest among middle school scholars. Charles spent about 14 hours a week at the VSHC center

and was an only child in his family. Assigned to 5th grade, Charles participated in a wide range of above-grade-level activities. Charles' parents were entrepreneurs and donated lockers for the scholars. While at the center, Charles enjoyed playing online games and going outside the most.

Participant Justin. Justin was 11 years old at the beginning of this study. He spent about 24 hours a week at the center. His mother served others as a life coach and his father as a personal trainer, both entrepreneurs. Justin's mother donated safety supplies, like traffic cones and Covid-19 protective gear to the center. Justin starred in his own YouTube channel series and used humor to connect to others quite often.

Participant Sincere. Sincere, 11 years old during this study, spent the least time at the VSHC center, about 10 hours a week. Sincere's mother, the owner of the space used by the collective, was a real estate investor. Sincere's father's occupation is unknown. Sincere was quiet and reserved. He often spent time alone. While at the VSHC center, he would reluctantly participate in group activities.

Participant Tommie. Tommie was also 11 at the time this study was conducted. He spent the most hours at the VSHC center. He often voiced his opinion about not liking school, although his mother is an educator. Tommie's father owns a convenience store. Tommie's personality is laid back. While at the center, Tommie spent time playing online games, engaging with other scholars, and leading others.

Case Description and Thematic Analysis

The Vault SEED Homeschool Community, created out of a need to provide a safe learning environment for youth during a global pandemic, presented a unique opportunity

to study participants and the practices of a close-knit group of Black families brought together to educate youth during this time of uncertainty. This community offered a learning environment dedicated to this group of learners to ensure their schooling experience during a global pandemic remained positive and engaging. This learning space provided tailored experiences for Black youth with the flexibility of content, processes, and procedures. The Vault SEED Homeschool Collective learning space provided Black families a place to belong and evolve during an unprecedented moment in time. In addition to a safe learning environment, this opportunity allowed home educators to add content related to Black culture and work closely with members to analyze how they view themselves racially and intellectually. Black home educators incorporated traditional Afrocentric content while introducing social and restorative justice.

Data collected, analyzed, and interpreted provided insight into the guiding research question, namely, how do community practices related to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective? Observation data, interview transcripts, and participant journals postulated evidence to support the findings of this study.

As discussed in previous chapters, the Communities of Practice framework serves as the anchoring system for the classifications and descriptions of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective practices. Rooted in social connections, this framework provided structured examinations of how the members, artifacts, language, and views of this community-generated meanings and knowledge, established social practices, and formed racial and intellectual identities (Wenger, 1998).

The research question guides this case study to describe the practices of this close-knit group, the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, and how their practices related to Black culture and scholarship contributed to the racial and intellectual identities of the Black scholars within this group. After completing a case framework analysis, I discovered corresponding elements within the homeschools' practices comparing them to those present in the Communities of Practice framework to formulate the findings of this study.

One finding that emerged from the data analysis phase insisted that community members, through a reflective process, have committed to belonging and evolving together. As evidence supported in Chapter One of the dissertation disclosed, institutions built by Black educators for Black students changed the academic and social outcomes for these Black communities (Bush, 2004; Walker, 2000). Belonging to such a community involves members bringing their entire Black selves, containing their culture, languages, and ways of being, to the learning environment, including those elements of self that are constantly evolving and changing. Even more importantly, during the present global pandemic, it is imperative that this community united and evolved as the needs of Black youth increased and changed.

Another finding that emerged during the data analysis phase of this study indicated that members of the community, home educators, and scholars, who committed to belonging sought to change in some way as they moved through the learning process and social structures of the community. Because of the present conditions and mistreatment of Black students in public school spaces, the evolution of education must occur. Positive changes in the way Black youth engaged in Black culture, viewed their

own race and intellect, and committed to the evolving learning community were present within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. In other words, this Black homeschool community made up of Black home educators, scholars, and other contributors decreased the “education debt” owed to Black youth (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As the members navigated through deficit views of their own race and intellect, a transformation happened. Members of the community contributed their skills, interests, and talents by engaging in and with the community, which created a rich context for learning to take place. Members contributed to the learning environment with their own resources, whether it was knowledge, relevant content, ideas, or the actual building where the community could engage and learn together.

In the following sections, I present evidence from the data analysis phase of this case that supported the findings of this study. The sections, contributions to belonging, and reflective practices of the community presented data to support one finding, that members of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective belong and evolve through reflective participation within the community. Two sections, transformation of racial and intellectual identities, opportunities to develop positive racial identity, and the identity profiles of three participants, connect to both findings of this study. While disrupting negative views of Black culture and Black curriculum show how community members used Black culture and scholarship to promote the affirmation and shared understandings or racial and intellectual identities of Black youth, the second finding of this study. Table 1 outlines the findings of this study, the element of the communities of practice framework its related to, themes found within the data analysis phase, and the data that it represents.

Contributing and Belonging

Members of the community, through reflective learning practices, are committed to belonging and evolving together. Black home educators created an open and honest learning environment for Black scholars to express themselves freely. As discussed in Chapter One, Black educators understand the underpinnings of belonging to the Black community and play a significant role in creating positive schooling experiences and outcomes for Black youth (Garett, 1993; Irvine & Irvine, 2007). Black home educators in this community committed time, knowledge, money, and resources so that the community can thrive. In addition to these resources, calculated and tangible, members contribute intellectual resources like accountability, affirmation, and understanding to the community.

The community's well-being depends on the contributions made by committed members who constantly create a positive learning environment, question the status quo, share unique Black perspectives, and contribute to the community in various ways. Such contributions keep the community moving forward and connect each member through accountability, commitment, and dedication to the success of each of its members. The Community of Practice framework identifies such contributions as shared repertoire that within this Black community, produced positive concepts of belonging to the greater Black community and lead to the positive development of students' racial and intellectual identities. (Wenger, 1998). Table 2 provides a connection between the findings, themes found in the Communities of Practice Framework, data analysis, and data sources.

Table 2

Findings and Data Analysis

Findings	Communities of Practice Framework	Themes	Data
Members of the community commit to belonging and evolving together, through a reflective learning process.	Joint Enterprise (negotiations & interpretations of self and community)	Contributions to belong	<i>Participant interviews</i>
		Transformation of identity	<i>Participant journals</i>
	Mutual Engagement (relationships & maintenance of community and identity)	Reflective practices of the community	<i>Participant interviews</i>
		Opportunities to develop positive racial identity	<i>Observations</i> <i>Observations</i>
Members of the community used Black culture and scholarship to promote acceptance, understanding, and affirmation of racial and intellectual identities.	Shared Repertoire (reflective practices)	Disrupting negative views of Black culture and Black curriculum	<i>Observation notes</i>
		Transformation of identity	<i>Participant interviews</i> <i>Participant interviews</i>
	Joint Enterprise (transformation)	Opportunities to develop positive racial identity	<i>Participant journals</i>
		Shared Repertoire (Black curriculum)	

Evidence of reflective learning and contributions to the community emerged from the observation notes with home educators. This home educator served as the main morning instructor for scholars' online learning sessions. She began our conversation

with how our partnership impacts her as a teacher and business owner. The Community of Practice framework identifies “modes of belonging” that constitute our identities and create distinct bonds that tie us to the community through investment (Wenger, 1998). Through this partnership, she has spent more time with her family and has rethought what education could look like. She described teaching during the pandemic as an opportunity to rebuild education for the better: “Together, we can resolve the historical harm that has been placed upon our students for so long.” She added, “And I am prepared to stay with them as long as I need to.” In Chapter One, the literature exposes positive outcomes for Black homeschooled youth. Committed Black home educators’ model for Black youth, a practice of this community.

In another conversation, a local artist and home educator expressed her love for art and the reasons she wanted to contribute to the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective learning community. Her overall hope for the project she created for scholars was to understand what made them tick and not so much technique. She confessed, “Technique is not the thing that students need to know.” She continued,

Many students lack effective ways to express their pain, hurt, or fear. Understanding the why was what we want for our scholars -teaching them to think about the purpose and the people who mean something to them and their community. (Homeschool Educator)

She recalled not having conversations about why things were happening in the world when she went to school. She continued to reflect on more content that she did not receive while attending traditional school settings. “This course will be about students and what they want to say to and about the world.” As disclosed in the literature review, when Black youth participate in culturally relevant content and practices, they experience empowerment and academic success (Ani, 2013; Milner 2010). Using charcoal and

paper, scholars captured expressions, use different artistic techniques related to charcoal drawing, and learned positive ways to express themselves. Through the process of creativity, Black scholars engaged in culturally healing practices that affirm Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991) and positive views of their racial and intellectual identities.

Members of the community often contributed their talents to the space. Another home educator invested in the community by providing gardening and Entrepreneurship lessons for scholars twice a week. During an afternoon gardening lesson, I observed members working together to create pot gardens in the space behind the center. Since the center was once a bank, the drive-thru served as the perfect shaded area for scholars to plant all types of seeds. Scholars concentrated on the tasks, of filling pots with soil, watering seeds, and arranging and rearranging their pots in their assigned areas.

As I continued to observe students during their gardening lessons, I noticed scholars showing concern for one another while negotiating different meanings and perspectives of the tasks at hand. Discovering ways of doing things shows up in the Community of Practice framework as shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). One scholar reminded another of how much soil to use. Another was able to share techniques from his previous gardening experiences. The repertoire combines the reflection and participation of community members where they create meaning for the membership and form aspects of their intellectual identities (Wenger, 1998). Participants continuously depended on one another to make meaning of the world around them.

Contributions to the community come from all stakeholders. As I observed scholars during free time outside, Sincere, a 6th grader and leader amongst the scholars, led a physical education activity. On his own, Sincere appointed one scholar to lead the

group in exercises. He continued the activity, modeling dribbling drills, then having scholars do what he did. Sincere sounded like a home educator. Although no home educator assigned Sincere to do this, he contributed to the learning space with what he knew about basketball. Another scholar, with unused flowerpots and a small ball, created a game. Members of the community naturally contributed to the learning environment.

In the examples of the contributions made to the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, belonging and evolving in various ways, each member of the community contributed unique perspectives, skills, experiences, and knowledge to the learning environment. Black home educators and scholars reflective in their practice, and modeled ways to contribute and belong to the community of practice. Through the interactions of the community's share repertoire, participants positively shape aspects of their racial and intellectual identities.

Transformation of Racial and Intellectual Identities

The Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, a reflective community, examined ways to transform the racial and intellectual identities among its members. Although the Vault Seed Homeschool Collective focused on Black culture and curriculum, centered activities around Blackness, and celebrated and praised scholarship, during interviews and in their journals individual scholars talked very little about their own race and intellect yet represented positive Black (self) and intellectual identities in subtle ways. In the next sections, I shared the voices of the three interview participants Tommie, Justin, and Charles. Their unique voices illuminated how the Black youth of this community thought about and viewed their own racial and intellectual identities.

Tommie's racial and intellectual identities. More so than other participants, Tommie spoke freely about his beliefs and feelings about himself. Tommie, a 6th-grade scholar, spent about 30 hours a week at the center; he described himself as “a gamer, a hustler, lazy, and different,” and refers to himself as Black. When I asked him to explain what different meant, he concluded, “I don’t like what everyone likes, and I don’t do what everyone else [does]”. He also described himself as “cool,” like his mom and dad. His journal contains an image of NLE Choppa, his favorite music artist. A SMART goal Tommie shared through his journal was, “By the end of the year, I want to make more YouTube videos and hit 40 subscribers”. While responding to a writing prompt, do you think voting is important or not, Tommie responded, “I don’t think it is important to vote because as a Black [person], there is no point in voting if the president does nothing for Black people.” Tommie continued to speak freely.

Tommie’s willingness and ability to share his true views about how he and his race spoke to the open and honest learning environment established by Black home educators, where Black youth evolved as scholars. For example, Tommie described himself as “cool” like his parents, who affirmed Tommie’s place in the community. He valued this quality in himself and his heritage. Tommie’s honest response about voting confirmed his membership in this community of practice as mutual engagement. In the Communities of Practice framework mutual engagement happens when members of the community do what they can do, define the community, and is not just declaring allegiance (Wenger, 1998).

Tommie’s belonging and evolution to and with the community, along with aspects of his racial and intellectual identities, showed up in various ways during observations.

While observing Tommie, I noticed he spent much of his nonacademic time gaming or watching YouTube videos. At times, he invited other scholars to play along with him. He shared images he thought were funny or interesting. When scholars asked for his attention, he readily participated with little to no resistance. During academic time, showed his face on camera during class, asked and answered questions, and participated the entire time, regardless of the activity or subject.

Justin's racial and intellectual identities. During the interview with Justin, he demonstrated a subtle reluctance when referring to and describing his Black culture. Justin's family identified Black as their race on the registration form completed at the start of the program. When asked about his race, Justin, a 6th-grade scholar, identified more with a Native American heritage during his interview. Although he is not Native American, he identified with this heritage because he viewed a Native American heritage to be superior to his own. Instead of the word "Black" to describe himself, he preferred "Brown." This scholar did not initially identify with being Black because of negative views placed upon what he has learned from previous educators in previous school spaces. Justin's comment about his hair, "I have nice hair," also illustrates a skewed view of what it means to identify as Black and be proud of his racial identity.

When describing his intellectual identity, Justin described himself as "funny and smart." I observed both qualities during daily interactions, morning learning sessions, non-academic times, and during the interview process. Justin often used his sense of humor to calm intense situations and his intellect to engage in Black, culturally relevant content and solve problems with and within the community.

Over time, I observed changes in how Justin viewed and presented his identity. Justin, a member of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community evolved as a result of embracing his Black heritage and participation within this Community of Practice. After spending significant time with this community that affirmed Blackness and used Black culture to engage scholarship, Justin wrote in his journal that “Instead of having this negative look upon my people, I've changed to what how I see them, so thank you for that.”

Charles's racial and intellectual identities. Charles, a 5th grader, was the youngest participant I interviewed. During the interview, Charles displayed confidence and smiled the entire time. When I asked Charles to describe his race, he replied, “I am a Black man.” Immediately, I recognized the sense of pride he felt regarding his race. He also revealed that his father had Caribbean roots. Charles did not know where his mother was from. When asked about whom he admired most, he replied, “Me, myself, and I”, another indicator of Charles's positive view of himself. Although Charles's jokingly replied, he did not offer any explanation for his statement.

During his interview, Charles described his intellectual self as “funny and smart.” Like Justin, Charles valued his sense of humor and viewed his intellect as positive. Charles continued the interview, with positive statements about his language and family's cultural practices. When asked about some of the cultural practices he enjoys with his family, he replied, “When we celebrate Kwanzaa, making gifts is my favorite.” Charles and his family regularly practiced and celebrated Black culture.

I observed Charles's interactions and behaviors within the community several times. Charles often stayed on his computer playing games and watching videos. Charles

interacted with the students often and seemed comfortable in the learning space. Charles was vocal and spoke up for himself with home educators and peers and often asked questions concerning the reasons behind activities and assignments.

Opportunities to Develop a Positive Racial Identity

During other observations of the Vault SEED Collective community, I observed home educators that created an honest and open community for Black youth. Discussing with community members about experiences dealing with racism and other situations unique to Blacks increased the chances for Black scholars to respond intellectually against injustice. The home educator informed scholars to express themselves honestly and freely in the learning community. For example, while speaking to the scholars before a morning lesson, one home educator said, “I want you to feel as comfortable as possible.” I observed on several occasions home educators reminding scholars that “this is a safe space” and “you could just talk freely.” The home educator recognized the importance of letting scholars know that they are valued and their voices matter. Feeling comfortable in the learning environment allows students to feel free to express themselves honestly.

Although scholars did not often refer to their race explicitly, they understood what it meant to be Black in America and were offered opportunities by home educators, to examine negative views of race or culture. To deepen this understanding, one home educator invited a Black war veteran to share his story with the community during an online learning session. Scholars listened to the stories and to the experiences of the Black war veteran and asked questions as he went along. This example illustrated how scholars concluded and dispelled beliefs about what it means to be Black. Through his

stories about fighting for and giving to this country and being treated unjustly upon his return, students recognized that Blacks could be mistreated just for the color of their skin even when veterans are usually viewed in positive ways. The veteran sent a message of determination and will. He also reminded scholars that, “Although I was mistreated, I understood the reasons why I was there, and [you] just adapt and do your job,” the veteran closed. During this learning experience, an exchange of knowledge occurred where students received insight into the life of a Black veteran, and the Black veteran modeled a process of healing. At the end of his presentation, the Black vet expressed belonging to the community and had not felt this in other school spaces.

During other observations of the Vault SEED Collective community, I observed home educators that created an honest and open community for Black youth. Discussing with members of the community about experiences dealing with racism and other situations unique to Blacks increased the chances for Black scholars to respond intellectually against injustice. For example, while speaking to the scholars before a morning lesson, one home educator said, “I want you to feel as comfortable as possible.” I observed on several occasions home educators reminding scholars that “this is a safe space” and “you could just talk freely.” The home educator recognized the importance of letting scholars know that they are valued and their voices matter. Feeling comfortable in the learning environment allows students to feel free to express themselves honestly.

Reflective Practices of the Community

Each morning, the Vault SEED Homeschool community would begin the day by reading statements that affirmed who they were as scholars. The class would not begin without the home educator having students, one by one, read through each statement.

Sometimes reluctant, at other times excited, this ritual remained in place. These affirmations, from observation notes, served as a reminder that learners must speak aloud positive statements about themselves and whom they believe they will become as successful scholars. For example, the affirmations, “I will be the best version of myself, I will treat people the way I want to be treated today, and I am responsible for the things I say and do” place responsibility and awareness of self on the learner. Learners who speak positive language regarding themselves repel influences that may cause self-destructive behaviors. In other words, as scholars speak each statement, beginning with “I”, the sense of agency and accountability places responsibility and awareness of self on the learner. As a part of the community, students are asked to take responsibility for their actions and act in ways that serve the community.

Scholars that engaged in these self-affirming practices daily, had an overall positive self-image, spoke respectfully and positively about others, and corrected language that hurt the community. While giving her opinion about another scholar, Andrea responded, “She has a dazzling smile and a free spirit.” Speaking positively about themselves and others is a regular practice in the community.

Reflective communities often provide opportunities for their members to ask questions to clarify and challenge the status quo. For example, observation data exposed home educators often asking scholars questions to get them to think further about how the content scholars learned about related to them as individuals, like “What do you really feel, what do you think, and what do you mean?” This line of questioning allowed scholars to arrive at their own answers, draw conclusions, and further explain their thought processes. During the conversation with the Black veteran, Justin asked, “How

did they [Whites] treat you during the war?” Charles, asked, “Why were you being disrespected when you put your life on the line?” In traditional learning spaces, scholars are not provided the opportunity to ask hard questions that are uncomfortable for scholars to ask. Members of this learning community asked tough questions.

Disrupting Negative Views of Black Culture and Black Curriculum

Homeschool educators presented many opportunities for learners to talk about, respond to, and engage in all things related to Black culture. Black culture must be embedded within the curriculum to promote positive racial and intellectual identities of Black learners. Because Blackness and Black ways of being are often portrayed negatively throughout history, it is important for Black learners to understand on a deeper level where that negativity stems from. During a lesson about Black women and the history of wrapping their hair, scholars were able to learn about Tignon Laws, hear opinions related to the laws, and share their own ideas regarding the topic. Andrea responded, “We have been oppressed for so long that the things that we do [wrapping our hair] have been looked at as negative.” During the discussion another scholar expressed the following conclusion, “We have the freedom to live the way we want, do what we want, and we wanted to wear hair dress or repurpose pajamas and slippers, then those are the things that we should be able to do because we've been oppressed for so long”.

During this lesson on Tignon Laws, one scholar confessed, “I used to go through hair stuff because I remember when I didn't have my hair.” Another scholar arrived at the conclusion that [it] “is okay for women to wear their hair wrap for fun.” Opposing views were also welcomed during the lesson, one scholar mention that wrapping hair or wearing bonnets in public was “considered ghetto” while another member expressed “we are

against wearing bonnets in public.” While learning about Black culture and the many contributions Black individuals have made throughout history and presently, scholars feel affirmed about being Black themselves.

Because scholars work closely with Black home educators that are aware of Black culture and practices, scholars express themselves freely and can learn about topics and beliefs that affect their view of themselves. One home educator expressed, “Together, we can resolve the historical harm that has been placed upon our students for so long.” Because of their unique perspective on Black culture and the need for its interpretations, Black home educators provide content that moves Black youth towards positive feelings and beliefs about their race.

Changing negative views of Black culture begins with relevant, truthful information. During a video presentation on Colin Kaepernick, scholars were asked to play close attention to the facts that the influence he had on others. While viewing the video, I observed scholars taking notes while a few responded with surprise when unknown information was shared. Scholars were asked to respond to the following text below:

A man who is known for lighting up the football field in the Golden State and also standing up by kneeling down. Colin Kaepernick gained national attention on August 26, 2016. That is where during a preseason game, he was photographed not standing during the national anthem. This later turned into many players in the league and other sports kneeling to voice their frustration with problems in the United States. (Homeschool educator)

While discussing Colin Kaepernick during the daily Black history lesson, scholars learned about what kneeling during the Nation Anthem meant for him and other Blacks who choose to protest during the National Anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner”.

Students were able to express their true feeling regarding their own practices. “I don’t stand for the pledge of allegiance either,” Tommie inserted.

It is important for Black youth to have numerous opportunities to learn their history and express themselves freely about how that history fits into how they see themselves as Black people. Tommie not standing for the National Anthem or his comments about voting could be insubordinate in some learning spaces. He may be judged as non-patriotic or disrespectful. In this learning community, Tommie was free to be his “real” self. He expressed opinions freely, with the ability and freedom to change his views as well.

Discussion

Themes found in the literature review connected to the results interpreted for this qualitative case study. As the fastest-growing alternative to public school, homeschooling was a viable option for this group of Black families during a global pandemic (Ray, 2021). With discontentment with most educational spaces, the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective provided positive educational experiences for Black scholars, while protecting them from residual harm that would be caused by schools as they struggled with processes and procedures during the pandemic. Although not examined explicitly in this study, other studies cite various reasons Black families choose to homeschool, like resisting the status quo, protecting their children from racism, and as a sign of freedom from oppressive systems (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; James, 2007; Lundy & Mazama, 2012). This community’s reason aligned with homeschooling representing a Black empowerment movement where Black families create learning spaces that instill a positive sense of Black pride in scholars (Lundy & Mazama, 2012). With the many issues

Black students experience in schools, homeschooling solves the education crisis (Nueman & Oz, 2021).

Within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community, Black scholars developed positive self-images through a cultural awareness of their historical self and present self. In an effort to remove traditional, hegemonic practices, alternative forms of measuring academic and social outcomes for Black students must represent and reflect their ways of being and knowing. As a regular practice within the homeschool learning environment, Black scholars of this study expressed themselves honestly and openly and displayed a sense of freedom and uniqueness. However, the academic and social outcomes of Black homeschooled scholars need more examination. Previous studies (Ray, 2010, 2015, 2021) showed Black homeschooled scholars outscored, about 23 to 43 percentile points, those Black students in public schools on standardized tests. Participants in this study demonstrated positive racial and intellectual identities, however, traditional standardized measures were not considered.

Because of systemic racism embedded within the structure of public schools (Andrews, 2014) and the education debt owed Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2006), Black educators (Garrett, 1993), Black curriculums (Asante, 1991), and positive educational experiences for Black scholars support the transformation that validates, defends, and affirms Black scholarship and identity. The Black home educators of this study created a culturally relevant learning space and used an African-centered framework in an effort to provide Black scholars with ways to honor their ancestral cultures, accepted their Black selves, and bonded them to the community. Numerous studies presented culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework to combat historical

injustices, improve academic outcomes, and promote racial pride and equality (Coard et al., 2004; Cooper, 2001; Howard, 2003; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2011). Future studies using instruments that measure Black academic achievement, as it relates to culturally relevant practices should illustrate positive results and begin to change the deficit view of Black scholars.

The themes from this study are also connected to the Communities of Practice theoretical framework. Three dimensions of the Communities of Practice framework, “mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998) served as the themes to explain the practices within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community. Each dimension is further connected to the findings of this study answering the research question, how do community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities of Black scholars within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective?

Mutual engagement, membership, and interactions within the community of practice (Wenger, 1998), were often reflected as members committed to the formation of this community, uniquely contributed to the learning space, and developed new knowledge. Members of this community often contributed resources and ideas to constantly improve and evolve the learning environment. Several studies identified mutual engagement in a community as sustained relationships, group competencies, and connecting participants in diverse and complex ways (Huzzard, 2004; Jagasia, 2015; Scarso et al, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

The joint enterprise dimension was used to represent the cohesiveness of the community. The Vault SEED Homeschool Collective community demonstrated three

points Wenger (1998) explains that keep a community of practice together. First, since joint enterprise is the result of a “collective process of negotiation” practices of this community reflected the full complexity of the formation of VSHC (p. 77). Secondly, the joint enterprise was defined by the participants in the pursuit of the community. Members belong, in spite of the “forces and influences” represented in this case as the global pandemic and society norms. Thirdly, a joint enterprise creates relations of accountability among participants. Joint enterprises pushed this community forward and kept it in check (Wenger, 1998).

The last dimension, shared repertoire, showed up in the VSHC throughout this study. The repertoire of the community was represented by the community’s routines, ways of doing things, stories, symbols, actions, histories, and artifacts, that were produced or adopted over the course of the VSHC community’s existence (Wenger, 1998). As numerous studies indicated, the Communities of Practice framework serves as a channel in which communities thrive from learning together (Huzzard, 2004; Jagasia, 2015; Lindkvist, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Implications and Recommendations

This case study described the practices of a group of Black families choosing to homeschool during the global pandemic. Black home educators used culturally relevant pedagogy and Black curriculum frameworks to provide positive learning experiences for Black youth, therefore shaping their racial and intellectual identities. Little research exists exploring Black youth achievement or instruments for measuring such achievement, especially for homeschooled students. This study provided implications for Black home educators, community partners, homeschool curriculum developers, and public officials.

Since the traditions of the American educational system have been to assimilate and accept value systems outside of their own culture, many Black students fail to receive positive views of being Black. Black educators, through the struggles of liberation for themselves, must also present knowledge in ways that teach Black students to survive and eventually thrive in the place that, for centuries before they were born, pushed them towards the margins of society, diminished cultural contributions, and kept Black students from feeling a sense of belonging in their own country. Black educators understand the struggles of being Black in America and can shape learning experiences that uplift Black youth, increasing their chance for success.

National educational platforms, where Black educators can share insight and data can also increase the chances for success for Black youth in other academic environments. Because of the lack of public schools' preparation for the cultural differences Black students bring to the classroom (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lundy & Mazama, 2013), many Black students are miseducated about their own culture. Educational spaces where Afrocentric values, knowledge, and ways of being should be openly provided and used for all Black students. Teachers responsible for Black students need access to resources that highlight, uplift, and evolve Black communities in positive ways.

Euro-centered achievement measurements do not provide a real picture of Black achievement. Since there is a desperate need for alternative forms of schooling for Black students to experience social and academic success (Bush, 2004), the measurement of Black student achievement needs further examination. Past and present social conditions of the nation indicate that Black youth continue to fall behind their White counterparts.

However, because of these conditions, new, equitable measurements would provide clearer insight into the achievement of Black youth. Until true measurements of Black achievement are developed, Black youth cannot be compared to their White counterparts.

To ensure success for Black youth, Black educators must engage a community of stakeholders with knowledge of Black experiences and develop unique partnerships.

Because of the unique experiences of Black youth, it is important for them to see themselves embedded into the curriculum. Afrocentric principles and curricula can be used to promote unifying and uplifting practices that shape their racial and intellectual identities in positive ways, therefore changing the trajectory of their own lives and communities and erasing generations of damage caused by being miseducated.

Carefully crafted partnerships formed within this community provided opportunities for Black youth to connect to resources and opportunities outside of what public schools require. Because many arts, music, and physical education programs have been limited, Black students within public school spaces may not consider themselves valuable and miss opportunities to learn about their heritage and contributions.

Partnerships, with those organizations aligned to uplift the Black community contribute to the growth and development of young Black minds, empowering and connecting them to better performance and better outcomes.

Four main practices used by Black Home Educators and community partners within the homeschool collective led to the positive development of participants' racial and intellectual identities. The first practice, parental and community involvement, ensures support, provides resources, and provides positive influences for learners. The second practice provides adequate time for learning and reflection allow for learners to

connect content and dismantle the idea that subjects are separate. The third practice engages in open and honest dialogue, with no judgment allows students to bring their true selves to conversations and learning. The last practice engages in a cultural reflective curriculum, giving students the opportunity to see themselves in the content and processes of teaching and learning. The four overarching practices of the Vault Seed Homeschool Collective inform how homeschool educators can approach instruction and engagement.

Black Home Educators

Increased numbers of Black families are choosing to homeschool for various reasons, yet aspects of Black homeschool instructional and social practices remain understudied. Black homeschool collectives, comprised of Black home educators, provided insight into the best practices, curricula, and strategies for teaching Black youth. Culturally relevant pedagogy and Black curriculum frameworks served as roadmaps to provide engaging learning experiences for Black youth in this study and are significant in influencing the ways educators plan for Black students. Accessing Black home educators to serve as subject matter experts can inform research studies and educational policies that improve educational experiences for Black youth in other educational spaces.

The key perspectives of Black homeschool educators, Black curricula, and community practices of Black homeschool collectives provide the apparition for how schools can improve the outcomes for Black youth. Few studies examined Black achievement beyond measurements that compare Black students to their White counterparts. Measurements designed to analyze Black youth achievement should reflect

Black culture, account for the debt owed to Black students, and consider Afro-centered ways of being and knowing.

A national educational platform where Black home educators share best practices, and provide lesson plans and consultation resources would provide access for schools teaching Black students. This online platform would include standards-based lessons and activities that incorporate and consider culturally relevant pedagogy, Afrocentrism, Black identity history, and identity. This platform would also link educational resources, allow for cross-discipline opportunities and be free to all teaching Black students. A one-stop resource to improve the outcomes of Black youth is owed to them.

Many resources would be needed to create a platform of this magnitude. First, sponsorships from community partners would provide the funding needed for such a platform. Ideal sponsors would include those companies and individuals that aligned their missions with the advancement of the Black community. Next, management of content would be needed to determine appropriate and useful resources Black home educators can use with Black homeschooled students. Lastly, continued monitoring, funding and updates would be necessary for this platform to remain a resource Black Home Educators could use to provide a comprehensive education for Black students.

Community Partners

With strategic partnerships, Black communities can provide an engaged, culturally relevant education for Black youth. Because Black youth have to play catch up to White counterparts, drastic measures must be taken to ensure Black youth receive knowledge and educational experiences that propel them forward. With creative and innovative partnerships and missions aligned to the advancement of Black youth,

communities can thrive. Investments in Black youth, at every level, ensure that Black youth have the chance to improve the outcomes and conditions of the Black community.

Community partners can provide much-needed resources for Black communities to thrive. Investments in Black educators and Black curriculums can combat historical hegemonic practices, legitimizing Black ways of being and knowing. Investing in Black youth elevates their sense of self-worth and provides resources for success in school, therefore giving them a better chance for the future success of Black communities and the youth they serve.

The types of community partners that contribute to Black youth are equally important to the resources they provide. Partnerships should align with empowering Black communities, confirming Black contributions to society, denouncing racism, and recognizing Black knowledge as legitimate and important. Community partners should recognize the importance of culturally relevant education for Black youth and contribute to the accumulated debt owed to Black students.

Community partners should contribute to developing more Black Homeschool curriculums. Few homeschool resources available reflect Black values and principles, incorporate Afrocentric community practices, or include a truthful depiction of history. With the growth in the population of the number of families choosing to homeschool, the need for resources will increase the success of families educating their learners at home. The curriculum developed for Black families should reflect culturally relevant strategies and Afro-centered principles. Since homeschooling shows promise for Black youth, more Black families will rely on such practices to educate their children. With millions of

Black students being homeschooled (Ray, 2021), the need for resources and curriculum is also rising.

Black youth deserve optimal learning conditions tailored to their needs, reflective of their culture and truth, and sensitive to their past. Since public schools serve about 7.4 million Black students today (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021), the responsibility for ensuring educational success for these students relies on the public school's ability to provide the best experiences for this population.

Summary and Conclusion

Schools have undervalued the existence of Black students and the cultural uniqueness they bring to the learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Shelton, 2021; Vandivier, 2018). The lack of Black teachers' unique perspectives contributes to the appearance of underperformance of Black students (Bowman et al, 2018; Evans, 2005; Mooney, 2018). Because of this debt owed to Black students, alternative forms of educating Black youth can lead to change that uplift, celebrate, and include their heritage and culture

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology to describe the practices of a group of Black families that have chosen to homeschool cooperatively and how their community practices related to Black culture and scholarship contributed to the students' racial and intellectual identities. To present empirical evidence beyond homeschooling motivations I provided thick, rich descriptions of the community and accurately portrayed how this group changed over time using observational data. Positive changes in the way Black youth engaged in Black culture, viewed their own race and intellect, and committed to the evolving learning community were present within the

Vault SEED Homeschool Collective and were captured through interviews and student journals.

For stakeholders, this study affirms that an immediate need for change can shift the trajectory and outcomes for Black youth. Black home educators and Black families choosing to homeschool serve as a model for public school officials to create new methods of measuring and reporting the success of Black youth. In this study, Black students excelled with an emphasis on Black culture and academic scholarship within a community of practice. Stakeholders should aim to promote the racial and intellectual identities of Black youth to ensure success at school.

CHAPTER FOUR

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

Schools reflect the nation's social, political, and moral conditions and often perpetuate negative racial and intellectual identities for Black students more than any other group (Gadsden, 2017; Jay, 2009). Traditional roles of education disseminate and preserve a preexisting cultural model (Jackson, 2008), teach prescribed curriculums (Ladson-Billings, 2012), and create spaces of control and submission (Callejo Perez et.al, 2014). In other words, schools continue to undervalue the existence of Black students and the cultural contributions they bring to their own learning. Statistically, Black students appear to underperform in public schools on standardized assessments. According to the congressionally mandated annual report, *Conditions of Education 2020*, prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics (2020), African American student data reveal ominous and disappointing outcomes. For example, from 1992 through 2019, average reading and math scores for Black fourth, eighth, and 12th graders remain lower than those of their White peers (National Center of Education Statistics). Furthermore, only about 10% of Black students performed at or above the proficient level in civics, math, and reading (Nation's Report Card, 2019, Trend assessment section).

Empirical evidence from research studies on Black homeschooling supports the notion that Black families may choose to homeschool to denounce the public school system and as a way to exercise freedom (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Lundy & Mazama, 2014). Other studies examined Black homeschoolers' academic achievement

(Ray, 1990, 2010, 2015, 2021), homeschooling to promote Black empowerment and identity (Lundy & Mazama, 2013), and outcomes associated with Black homeschooling (Ray, 2015). More studies that address distinguishing discourse surrounding the achievement and opportunity gap can lead to Black students being successful in school (Flores, 2018; Gorski, 2018; Mooney, 2018; Pitre, 2014). However, few studies identified the cultural and academic practices of Black homeschoolers or the successful outcomes of homeschooling for Black students. Even fewer studies examined the role of racial and intellectual identity and its connection to academic achievement.

The purpose of this study was to present empirical evidence beyond homeschooling motivations and presented the scope of practices amongst a community that promoted Black students' positive racial and intellectual identities. This study answered the research question: What community practices connected to Black culture and scholarship influence the development of racial and intellectual identities for Black youth within a homeschool collective?

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

To conduct this study, I employed a qualitative case study approach. Multiple sources of evidence collected for this case study included observational data, interview data, and student journals (Yin, 2017). As a research participant, I was immersed in the data for an extended period and served as the instrument and benefited from an opportunity to report on families new to homeschooling, along with the teaching and learning experiences of a collective community during a global pandemic (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Involved in the participants' day-to-day routines and activities, I provided thick, rich descriptions of the community and accurately portrayed how this group

changed over time using observational data. Interview data collected from three participants provided insight into how the Black scholars of this homeschool collective viewed themselves within this learning environment.

To make sense of the qualitative data I collected through observations, student journal responses, and interviews, I used six steps to analyze the data in this case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). First, I explored transcriptions from interviews, observation notes, and student journals by highlighting phrases and formulating codes connected to the Communities of Practice framework. Tesch's (2013) eight steps to coding were employed to develop and discover emerging themes. Next, to represent the data in multiple ways, I described data through discussions and narratives, using observational data to connect this community's homeschooling practices and to show evidence to support scholars' racial and intellectual identities. Then, to interpret the meaning of the results, I used pattern matching and reflexivity (Yin, 2017). Lastly, data and results were validated through member-checking and triangulation, consulting with participants to ensure their voices were represented truthfully and to support the key findings.

Summary of Key Findings

I used the Communities of Practice framework (Wenger, 1998) as a theoretical approach to interpreting the belonging and evolving practices of the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. One finding that emerged from the data analysis phase insisted that members of the community, through a reflective process, have committed to belonging and evolving together. Belonging to such a community involves members bringing their entire Black selves, containing their culture, languages, and ways of being

to the learning environment, including those elements of self that are constantly evolving and changing. The second finding that emerged during the data analysis phase of this study indicated that members of the community, home educators, and scholars, who committed to belonging sought to change in some way as they moved through the learning process and social structures of the community. Because of the present conditions and mistreatment of Black students in public school spaces, the evolution of education must occur. Positive changes in the way Black youth engaged in Black culture, viewed their own race and intellect, and committed to the evolving learning community were present within the Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. In other words, this Black homeschool community made up of Black home educators, scholars, and other contributors, decreased the “education debt” owed to Black youth (Ladson-Billings, 2006). As the members navigated through deficit views of their own race and intellect, a transformation happened. Community members contributed their skills, interests, and talents by engaging in and with the community, which created a rich context for learning to take place. Members contributed to the learning environment with their own resources, whether it was knowledge, relevant content, ideas, or the actual building where the community could engage and learn together.

Informed Recommendations

Based on the data and findings presented in Chapter Three of this study, changes in the ways Black scholars engage and participate in schooling can be informed by the practices of this homeschool collective. Below I identified recommendations for key stakeholders considering improved outcomes for Black youth. Those key stakeholders include Black homeschool educators and community partners.

Black families choosing to homeschool do so for various reasons. Whatever the reason, Black home educators face challenges in providing culturally appropriate curricula that respect and reinforce student culture. Black homeschool educators can leverage resources by sharing their practices, lessons, resources, stories, and voices. Together, Black homeschool educators can develop curriculums for collectives to use and share. Resources should align with Black homeschool educators' goals to transform how Black students experience schooling.

Community partnerships are imperative for Black homeschool collectives to thrive (Anderson, 2018). In addition to providing opportunities for Black scholars to experience a wide range of educational content, community partners provide resources that sustain and grow Black homeschool collectives. With strategic partnerships, Black communities contribute to the "education debt" owed to Black scholars.

Developing positive identities in Black students must remain a primary goal for Black homeschool educators. Few homeschool resources available reflect Black values and principles, incorporate Afrocentric community practices, or include a truthful depiction of history. When Black homeschool educators engage students in culturally relevant curricula that reflect positive images, their racial and intellectual identities flourish.

The Black families belonging to this community represented only a fortunate few Blacks with college degrees, contributions from at least two parents, and a six-figure income. However, these families represent possibilities of what public school communities can do to meet the unique needs of Black youth. Investments from

community partners in Black educators, Black curriculums, and innovation on how to measure Black achievement can positively change the outcomes for Black youth.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The purpose of developing the findings distribution proposal is to contribute to the scope of Black homeschooling research beyond motivations, share the impact on improving education outcomes for Black youth, and provide access to Black homeschool families looking to incorporate culturally relevant practices that promote positive racial and intellectual identities. In addition, this study informs educators responsible for teaching Black youth in other learning environments. In developing the finds distribution proposal, I consider the target audience, distribution methods and venue, and the type of distribution materials.

The target audience for this study includes those responsible for teaching Black students. Several considerations are necessary for Black youth to thrive in educational spaces. Black educators provide a unique perspective on being Black in a nation that historically has shoved Black practices and knowledge to the margins of society. By investing in Black educators, while providing a voice to this population, the community can share best practices for engaging Black youth can be shared on a greater scale. National attention on Afrocentricity can increase achievement for Black youth being educated by public school systems. Black youth need Black educators.

Black home educators can provide models for teaching Black youth in public spaces. Although homeschooling is a viable option for some, most Black students will continue to be educated in public school spaces and may be taught by teachers that do not share their unique cultural experiences. The findings of this research study provide

perspective to those responsible for educating Black students and can influence the change needed for Black youth to be successful within potentially hostile learning spaces. Teaching practices, curriculum, and achievement measures should reflect Black youth's culture if they are to be successful.

The distribution method and venue for this study include a paper submission at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, held in Chicago, Illinois, April 13–17, 2023. Specifically, the Teacher as Researcher Special Interest Group called for proposals from PreK–12 classroom teachers to share research from the K-12 practitioner perspective. To participate, data must be collected and discussed by April 1, 2023. A 500-word synopsis of this project, including objectives and purpose, how this study informs Critical Teacher Leadership, methods, data sources, results and findings, and the significance of this study was submitted to the AERA review board on July 22, 2022.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fundamental changes for Black youth in school require educators to consider what has happened historically in traditional school spaces. School's reflection of society continues to confirm the devaluing of Blacks, their contributions, and their knowledge. Practices within a Black homeschool collective, choosing to learn together through an unprecedented time revealed how a Black community educated their own. When Black families choose to homeschool, practices that promote positive intellectual and racial identities can lead to better outcomes for Black students. Black educators, through a reflective process, commit to belonging and evolving together so that Black youth do better in school and experience more success, thriving in their learning

communities. This belonging involves members bringing their true selves, their culture, languages, and practices to the learning environment, including those elements of self that are constantly evolving and changing.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Vault SEED Homeschool Observation Form

Date and Time: _____

Related Observations	Number of Times Witnessed Description/Comments
Black Culture (Activities, language, materials, artifacts, comments, etc., related to Kwanzaa and/or MA `at principles, blackness, culture and racial identity)	
Scholarship (Activities, language, materials, artifacts, comments etc., related to intellectual identity)	

Notes:

APPENDIX B

Student Journal Prompts

Student Journal Prompts

What would your ideal world look like?

What is the difference between good versus evil? How do you know?

What do you find to be the most beautiful things in the world?

How does one know what is innately good?

You wake up one morning and all the prisons are shut down releasing dangerous criminals into your neighborhood.

Write about yourself.

If the world could be a color, what would it be and why?

List your 3 favorite (or least favorite) subjects. Explain.

What are some activities we do during the school day that you would like to do more often? Less often?

What is the most important thing you would like to add to your school day?

What are the best things about belonging to your family?

What holidays do you celebrate?

List 3-5 of your favorite small surprises?

Describe your home, school, and world.

What do we say and do to make you feel supported?

What are the best things about being Black?

List some things that bring you shame.

What are you curious about learning?

APPENDIX C

Assent Form for Research

Baylor University
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Assent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Vault SEED Homeschool Collective to Build Racial and Intellectual Identity: A Case Study
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Denise Johnson

What is a Research Study?

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. Research studies help us to learn new things and test new ideas. People who work on research studies are called researchers. During research studies, the researchers collect a lot of information to learn more about something.

What is this study about?

We are doing this study because we would like to learn more about your experiences while you learn and interact at Vault SEED Homeschool Collective. We are asking you to join this study because your story is an important one to tell. By sharing what we do here at Vault SEED Homeschool Collective, we can make a difference in the lives of Black youth around the world.

What will I do if I am in this research study?

During this study, you will be observed, respond to writing prompts in your journal, and be interviewed. The information and data collected from you will be held confidential. Made-up names will be given to you so that others do not know who you are.

We would like to make an audio recording of you during this study. Audio recording is required for this study to make sure I remember and accurately report what you say during the interview. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study. If you decide to be in this study, we will ask you to respond as honestly as possible and have fun.

This study will take approximately eight weeks to complete, and there will be five of you participating in this case study.

Can anything wrong happen to me while I am in this study?

There should be no discomfort during this study. If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to or do not want to answer, you are free to say so. At any time, you are uncomfortable, please let me know. You can refuse to participate in this study at any moment.

You will be interviewed during this study. I will communicate with you before, during, and after the study. I will read your journal responses and may ask follow-up questions.

Will being in this research study help me?

This study won't help you, but we will learn more about the racial and intellectual identity of homeschooled Black students.

What else should I know?

You do not have to be in this study. It is up to you. You can say "yes" now and change your mind later. No one will be upset if you do not want to do this. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop.

We will limit the use of the information that we collect to people who need to review this information. We cannot promise to keep everything a secret, but we will work to keep your name and other information private. Your responses may be used for a future study, or we may share your answers with other researchers.

If you tell us that someone is hurting you, the law says that you have to let other people know to help you. If you tell us you might hurt yourself or someone else, we will have to let people know.

Who do I talk to if I have questions?

Denise Johnson
Phone: (404) 268-1775
Email: denise_johnson1@baylor.edu

Statement of Assent

If you want to be in the study, write your name below.

Signature of Subject (Participant)

Date

APPENDIX D

Student Participant Interview Protocol

Question	Research Question	Framework Connection
1. Tell me about yourself. Whatever comes to mind first.	Racial and Intellectual Identities	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
2. Where were you born?		Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
3. Where do you live now?	Community Practice	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
4. Describe your neighborhood.	Community Practice	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
5. What are 5 words you would use to describe yourself? Physical self? Mental self? School self?	Racial and Intellectual Identities	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
6. How would you describe your race?	Racial Identity	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire

7. What do you enjoy learning about most?	Intellectual Identity	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
8. Who is the person you most admire?		Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
9. How do you think others perceive (see) you?	Racial Identity	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
10. Describe any traditions your family may participate in.	Community/Family practices	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
11. What are some experiences or identities that are central (important) to who you are?	Racial and Intellectual Identities	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
12. How do you feel when you are ignored or “not seen”?	Racial and Intellectual Identities	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
12. What are some of your goals for the future?	Intellectual Identity	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire
13. What religious/or spiritual activities do you and your family practice?	Community/Family Practices	Joint Enterprise Mutual Engagement Shared Repertoire

APPENDIX E

Notice of Determination of Non-Human Subject Research



Baylor University

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD — PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

NOTICE OF DETERMINATION OF NON-HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Denise Johnson
Study Title: Vault SEED Homeschool Collective to Build Racial and Intellectual Identity: A Case Study
IRB Reference #: 1763628
Date of Determination: June 7, 2021

The above referenced research project has been determined to not meet the definition of human subject research under the purview of the IRB according to federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.102(e) & (I). Specifically, sample size is insufficient to generate generalizable findings.

The following documents were reviewed:

- Initial Application Form, submitted on 05/14/2021
- Protocol, dated 05/19/2021

This determination is based on the protocol and/or materials submitted. If the research is modified, you must contact this office to determine whether your modified research meets the definition of human subject research.

If you have any questions, please contact the office at (254) 710-3708 or IRB@baylor.edu

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Deborah L. Holland'.

Deborah L. Holland, JD, MPH, CHRC, CHPC
Assistant Vice Provost for Research, Research Compliance

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH | RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

One Bear Place #97310 • Waco, TX 76798-7310 • (254) 710-3708

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